

At Work on the Science Committee

The big discussion on the Science Committee this year related to the importance of basic research (i.e. - the initial research, usually in new areas of science, which may not yield products for immediate commercial exploitation). Without basic research, there can be no new applied or "useful" science ... no new drugs, no new inventions, no new technologies. Furthermore, with all of our universities, hospitals and innovative businesses, basic research is critically important to the economy of this district.

After these discussions, the House re-authorized the Small Business Innovative Research Program (SBIR),

which now awaits action in the Senate, and saved the Advanced Technology Program (ATP). These programs provide more than **\$65 million per year to more than 400 research programs in the 8th District** alone. We also funded several research programs that benefit local universities and hospitals, NASA research, the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institute of Health (NIH) and more. Rest assured that many of the new medical cures and improvements to our quality of life in the new millennium will start here in the 8th district.

A Regional Solution for Logan

As you probably know, I was the first elected official to publicly oppose Massport's plan to build another runway at Logan Airport. Certainly, the regional economy needs a good transportation system, but the 8th District would suffer disproportionately if this proposal were implemented.

Massport's simplistic proposal to build this runway is not a viable solution to their problems. First, Massport admits that delays will return to existing levels within five years of building this runway. What will we do then? Massport offers no plan. Second, Massport has

thus far refused or been unable to supply specific data on the origin and destination of their passengers and cargo. How can any regional transportation plan be implemented without such basic data? Certainly, the airport is a critical component of our regional economy. However, if it brings regional benefits, the detriments (i.e. - noise and pollution) should be proportionately spread across the region as much as possible.

As your Congressman, I will continue to seek a broader and more comprehensive solution to our transportation issues. A **regional approach** has worked elsewhere and it must be a priority in Massachusetts.

Congressman Capuano during a recent tour of East Boston with Boston Mayor Tom Menino and Greenway members. Massport currently owns some of the land designated for greenway expansion. Left to right: Ken Krasco, Mayor Tom Menino, Tony Zambuto, Congressman Capuano, and Valerie Burns



Federal Budget

You heard a lot about the federal budget this year. I realize much of this is confusing to many of us (including me). I offer for your consideration the following observations that I accept as accurate at this time:

- Social Security produce surplus revenues that have been used to balance our budget for the last several years... but less is being used than in prior years. Therefore, we are heading in the right direction.
- Most objective professionals believe that Social Security is funded for another 30+ years.
- Most objective professionals believe that Medicare is funded for only another 10+ years.
- The proposed trillion-dollar tax cut would have targeted 60% of the cut to the wealthiest 5% (those with taxable income over \$124,000). Only 17% of the cut would have gone to those earning below \$63,000.

The entire Massachusetts delegation voted against the trillion dollar tax cut. To put it in perspective, one trillion dollars reads like this... **\$1,000,000,000,000...** and that amount would fund every program in the Massachusetts state budget for the next 45 years.

It's Census Time

Starting in April, the federal government will conduct Census 2000. You should receive a census form and information about the program in the mail. It is very important that you complete the form. The last time the federal census was conducted, at least 28,000 people in Massachusetts were not counted because they did not return their forms.

Why does this matter to you? The answer is simple - MONEY!!! **Census numbers are used to distribute millions of dollars.**

Need daycare? Head Start funds are distributed based on the census. Want better schools in your community? School aid is distributed on the basis of the census. Want more development funds? All these funds are based on the census too. Virtually every state and federal program that distributes money to another governmental agency, an organization or a program uses information from the census to decide whether the application qualifies ... and how much it is qualified to receive.

Please, take a minute to complete the census form. All your personal information collected during the census is **CONFIDENTIAL by federal law.** It is not shared with any other agency or organization.

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CONGRESSMAN
Michael E. Capuano
8th Congressional District, Massachusetts



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Dear Friend:

Having recently completed the first year of service as your Congressman, it's a good time to report on my activities. The year started off with appointments to the Banking Committee (and its Subcommittee on Housing) and the Science Committee. The New England delegation also elected me a **Regional Whip**. Members of the whip organization are involved in every major issue that comes to the floor.

During the year I worked hard to learn issues and procedures, and to stay in touch with constituents. I visited Armenia and Azerbaijan along with several colleagues. I also toured more than two dozen schools in the 8th District, scores of businesses, and hosted or attended hundreds of other meetings on every subject imaginable in both Massachusetts and Washington. In June, we opened a second district office at Roxbury Community College.

Last month, my Democratic colleagues elected me **President of the freshman class**. This leadership position will help to advance issues that matter to this district, to learn more about the workings of the House and to rebuild a truly bi-partisan work environment.

In general, during this first year, I focused on affordable housing, Medicare reform, bank mergers, updating banking laws, and fighting against Massport's new runway at Logan Airport. Working together with the entire Massachusetts delegation, we secured \$1 million to continue funding the urban ring mass transit project, \$2 million to improve our Harbor Islands and \$3.6 million to continue funding the Empowerment Zone in Boston (it's not enough, but the fight will go on). We also got more than \$280 million to protect teaching hospitals, nursing homes, community health centers and home health care, and millions more for private and public research programs.

It's been a busy year. It's also been a productive and successful year. In fact, one of Capitol Hill's most respected newspapers, *Roll Call*, issued a Report Card on every House Freshman. They wrote, "Capuano's unassuming style hides a sharp understanding of politics ... **Capuano is one of the very small number of freshman Democrats who has been able to show any success legislatively.**"

Thanks to all of you who have helped us learn this new job. Thanks also to the many folks who have visited or contacted the office. With best wishes for the millennium —

How to Use Your Congressional Office

One of the great benefits of an effective congressional office is the opportunity to provide constituents with a variety of services. Whether you have questions about legislation or are simply wondering which federal agency to contact about a particular issue, we can point you in the right direction. If you are looking for information regarding Social Security, veterans' benefits or immigration, we can provide assistance. You may also contact us for information about congressional internships, service academy nominations and Washington, D.C. tour information. Please feel free to write, telephone, contact us online or visit one of our offices.

Working to Improve Education

On every school tour, I met with students, teachers, administrators, volunteers and parents. There are great people and programs in our schools. There are also deficiencies; we need adequate space, better technology and broader programs. This is why I supported the President's proposal to add 100,000 teachers across our country and fought to allow local budgetary flexibility if communities did not need or did not have the space to add teachers. This is also why I support the "Public School Modernization Act of 1999" and the "School Construction Act of 1999". Interestingly, some members of Congress are trying to amend these bills to circumvent the Davis-Bacon labor laws that have helped build and protect America's middle class ... I am fighting those amendments. Many of us are also trying to involve the federal government in school technology – wiring schools, upgrading computers, and training teachers.

I have started using the "bully pulpit" of this office to speak out about the MCAS tests our children are taking. I do not believe that 40% of our children cannot pass a fair test. **I believe the test is flawed – not our children.** If you think these tests deal with issues that are essential for our children to master for graduation, then I ask you to take the tests. You can find them on the web at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas. The tests at this site have the answers checked off next to the question - try not to peek.

Certainly, we MUST hold students to high standards and tests are one way to measure our success. However, those standards must fairly measure what society wants to measure. America is the only multi-cultural country that has ever tried to offer an equal, decent education to every child who wants one - including those who are not college-bound, and those who are physically or emotionally challenged. Equal educational opportunity



Congressman Capuano and State Rep. Tim Toomey toured the Robert F. Kennedy Elementary School in Cambridge to talk with students about how Congress works.

made America the strongest economy in history. It made us the leaders in medical and scientific research.

Our political leaders should stop blaming our children, our teachers and our parents. They should reconsider their approach and re-think curriculum requirements. Should society require every child to be familiar with the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, as asked on the 10th grade history test ... or is it that we want them familiar with basic constitutional concepts? Must they know what mitochondria are ... or do we want them to be generally familiar with how a living organism works? Our society has not had this debate. We have lots of work to do – we should stop scapegoating and get to work fixing our problems.

Human Rights

As in most years, the US Congress considered, and I supported, many issues of concern to women. This past spring, however, one issue in particular horrified the world. America learned about the use of systematic rape as a weapon-of-war in Kosovo. After discussions with the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC), I immediately sought funding to **help Kosovar women and their families.** I am proud to report that for the first time in our history, \$1 million is now earmarked to help victims

of rape as a war crime. Unfortunately, Congress still refuses to advance most proposals to ensure human rights across America and abroad. We did not address the Employment Non-discrimination Act (ENDA). We did not require foreign trading partners to improve the conditions and treatment of their workers (especially the child laborers). In short, we took virtually no action to expand the protection of human rights at home or abroad.

Addressing the Housing Crisis

It's no secret that this region is in the middle of the most severe housing crunch in memory. Poorer people watch their subsidies cut. Middle class people watch as their children are priced out of their own neighborhood. Tenants struggle to pay the rent. Even financiers wonder if the mortgages will continue to be paid. It's a tough market for everyone.

I've been working on many fronts to save and expand affordable housing options. Together, the Massachusetts delegation was instrumental in **convincing HUD to change its policies** relative to expiring use buildings. Two decades ago, a program was enacted to encourage private developers to enter the affordable housing market. The developers got low interest loans in exchange for below market rents. After 20 years, the agreement "expires" and the developer can bring the units up to market rent. Of course, in the current market, developers are anxious to cash in. In Massachusetts alone, there are about 30,000 of these units (two examples are Huron Towers and Symphony Plaza). Under the new HUD policy, tenant subsidies will be increased to reflect current market rents ...

Health Care...for all

In Massachusetts, health care is both policy and economy. We want all people to have access to health care and we need our health care system to remain strong because it employs so many of us, directly and indirectly. During this past year, our delegation regained some of the cuts inflicted on our hospitals, community health centers, nursing homes and home health care - more than \$280 million worth. **Jobs were saved, services were maintained and research continues.** We also stabilized our children's hospitals with a \$40 million infusion.

I am working hard to broaden Medicare coverage for our seniors, our vision-impaired and others. Success has been elusive. However, the Massachusetts delegation did lead the fight to stop the original FY 2000 level-funded budget request for Veterans Administration healthcare. If approved, that measure would have hurt the Commonwealth's 550,000 veterans ... including closure of the clinic on Causeway Street. Again, we succeeded and the final legislation actually **increased funding** for VA

and, therefore, developers will not be under as much economic pressure to take those units to the open market as the only way to get higher rents.

As member of the Housing Subcommittee, those of us who support housing programs had to fight hard to simply level-fund the many HUD housing programs. We did see a few slight increases, such as the number of Section 8 certificates and HOPWA funding, but not many. We are currently searching for ways to fund homeless programs in a more equitable and sufficient manner. Most importantly, we are educating many members of Congress, staff and bureaucrats about the all-too-real market conditions in Greater Boston.

We are living in what many believe to be the best economy of our lives, yet many people are being left behind. I will continue to work with my colleagues in the Congress and with housing advocates in the district and across this country to find ways to protect and expand affordable housing. This is a battle that we simply cannot afford to lose.

health care in FY 2000 by \$1.7 billion ... and Causeway Street will remain open. Despite this increase, the VA still deserves another \$1.3 billion to fulfill America's promise to our veterans and provide adequate medical care. Congress also **increased funding** for AIDS research and programs by \$194 million. Additionally, we **increased funding** for cancer research by almost \$450 million, including \$10 million earmarked for prostate cancer research and another \$40 million for breast cancer research.

This coming year, there will be many debates about our health care system. Congress will try to pass a Patients' Bill of Rights – again. We will try to pass prescription drug coverage for seniors – again. We will try to stabilize the future of Medicare and Medicaid - again. We will continue fighting for our hospitals and veterans. We will push for passage of my proposal to cover vision rehabilitation services under Medicare. There is a lot to do and we will make whatever progress we can on any front we can.

At Work on the Banking Committee

As a member of the House Banking Committee, I worked on modernizing banking laws, protecting privacy, prohibiting redlining, safeguarding financial markets, stabilizing our economy, housing our seniors, and much more. On a local level, I closely monitored both the Fleet Bank/BankBoston merger and the Citizens/US Trust merger. We fought to maintain commitments to local communities.

In Washington, I helped lead the fight against discrimination in the financial services industry. During our Committee's debate on the "Financial Services Modernization Act", a bill that will allow banks, insurance companies, and investment firms to merge, I co-sponsored several amendments to preserve and strengthen the Community Reinvestment Act. Unfor-

tunately, just about every amendment we offered to ensure protection for people and local community concerns was defeated at one stage or another. Although the legislation was passed and signed into law without those protections, I am one of many members of Congress who will **continue to fight to protect consumers and communities.**

For example, during a recent debate on a bill relative to disaster insurance, I offered an amendment to prohibit insurance companies that engage in discriminatory practices from receiving new federal subsidies. That amendment passed in Committee – we'll have to wait and see what happens to it during the rest of the process.

Protecting Young Witnesses

Last June, a news story about a young boy who witnessed a robbery highlighted a serious gap in our criminal justice system. When asked by authorities, he identified the young boys who he believed committed the crime. He did what we all hope our children would do, what we teach children to do every day... he did the right thing.

The problem arose when friends of the boys who had been arrested started threatening and harassing the young witness and his family. The system is not adequately equipped to address these situations. The boy's mother decided to keep him out of school and the entire family went into seclusion.

At that time, Congress was working on the "Consequences for Juvenile Offenders Act of 1999". I offered an amendment to add **juvenile witness assistance initiatives** to the list of programs that qualify for federal funding under that program. This amendment allows state and local authorities to develop their own programs to meet their specific needs. Different versions of this amended bill passed both the House and the Senate and await final action in a Conference Committee. I also filed a



Congressman Capuano meets with 8th district student participants in the Voices Against Violence Conference sponsored by the Democratic Leader, to discuss his juvenile witness assistance legislation. Left to right: Yerimee Gutierrez, Amanda Abreu, Congressman Capuano, Peer Mediator Alice Comack, Pierre Laurent. separate bill that would add funding specifically for these programs.