

December 2004

# Congressman Michael E. Capuano

8th Congressional District, Massachusetts

*Serving Cambridge, Chelsea, Somerville, and most of Boston*



Congressman Mike Capuano talks with a student from Mattapan's Solomon Lewenberg Middle School about his work in Congress.

## E-Update

**M**y office issues periodic e-mail updates as a constituent service. Several times a month, those who sign up receive updates on recent Congressional votes, upcoming legislative activity and my work in the district. If you are interested in receiving this service, simply visit my website at [www.house.gov/capuano](http://www.house.gov/capuano) and click on the "subscribe" icon located on the welcome page. You may unsubscribe at any time, either through the website or at the end of each update. Some recent e-updates are archived on the website if you'd like to check them out. As always, we welcome your thoughts and suggestions.

## Dear Friends,

As the 109th Congress prepares to convene, our nation is at a critical juncture. Now is not the time to stop fighting for our principles and our priorities. I know that I will work with renewed purpose in the next Congress to broaden support for the issues I believe matter most to my constituents.

There is concern about the continuing war in Iraq, instability in Afghanistan, and the persistent threat of terrorism. The President's spending priorities put many important domestic programs at risk - from affordable housing and health care to education, transportation and veterans' services. More funding is needed for homeland security, particularly for first responders in cities and towns all across this country. Our military personnel are in need of essential supplies and equipment.

I hope that the President and the Majority Leadership are serious about reaching across the aisle and working with Democrats. I fear, however, that we will see much of the same partisanship in the 109th Congress.

I am extremely proud to represent the people of Cambridge, Chelsea, Somerville and Boston and to serve as a public official from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

While I know the coming months may be extremely difficult, I will never stop fighting for you. As always, if you have any questions, concerns or comments, please do not hesitate to share them with me. I am honored to represent you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike".

## War

Military action in Afghanistan and Iraq continues, and the challenge of protecting our homeland remains. I supported action in Afghanistan because of the clear connection to those who did us harm on September 11th. We must finish the job in Afghanistan, including rebuilding the country. Although I voted against giving the President the unfettered power to wage war in Iraq, we have been engaged in battle there for many months. The President must be more forthcoming about the future of Iraq. Thus far, the Administration seems unwilling to acknowledge the scope of the on-going violence. At this writing, elections are scheduled for January of 2005. If a viable Iraqi government emerges, the White House must set forth a responsible exit strategy. If not, we must have what I know will be a difficult national debate about our presence there.

Service personnel continue to face an unknown number of additional deployments to Iraq. That is unacceptable. However, the Administration has consistently fought against increasing the total number of Army and Marine personnel, even by as few as 40,000 members. Instead, the President is relying on continual year-long deployments, stop-loss orders and Individual Ready Reserve call-ups. This is not the way to treat our uniformed personnel. Our men and women in combat have sacrificed much for our freedom and they deserve to know how long they are expected to serve overseas. Moreover, our military needs flexibility to recruit more personnel. Congress tried to provide that flexibility by passing legislation increasing the size of the armed forces, but the President opposed this.

Congress will soon consider additional funding for war efforts. This request will probably not be the last. Before submitting this request, the President must better explain how the funds will be used. Most important, we must make sure that those in uniform have the resources they need. We've all heard the shocking stories of troops without body armor and humvees not equipped for combat. This is unconscionable. These basic items should be part of the regular defense appropriations. The safety of our troops should be the highest priority.

## Affordable Housing



Congressman Capuano tours the site of the Brian J. Honan housing complex in Allston, which will include 50 units of affordable housing.

Since taking office, I have fought to increase the federal government's role in providing affordable housing opportunities. While we have had some success, I am concerned that even the small gains we have made will disappear. Over the last four years, the Bush Administration has repeatedly requested insufficient funding for housing assistance programs, putting many of our most vulnerable citizens at risk. This year, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) jeopardized the Section 8 Housing Program by creating a funding crisis that could have cost over 600 families in the 8th District their homes.

In April, HUD abruptly changed the way it funds the Section 8 voucher program, leaving housing authorities across the country with too little money to pay for vouchers they had already given to tenants. This happened despite the fact that Congress provided HUD with enough money to fund the program. HUD finally reversed course and announced it had "found" the money. Unfortunately, thousands of families throughout Massachusetts spent almost a month not knowing if they would be evicted.

This funding refusal is one of a long line of efforts by the Administration to weaken the Section 8 Program. In August, HUD tried to end the practice of grouping

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# Transportation

A major issue in 2004 was reauthorization of the surface transportation bill, which funds road and transit projects nationwide for the next six years. In April, the House passed its version of the Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users. This \$275 billion bill contained \$3.38 billion over six years for Massachusetts' highways and \$1.42 billion for transit projects. **These funds will provide 38,000 direct jobs for Massachusetts annually.** These jobs will generate additional jobs to feed, clothe, house and otherwise support these workers. The Senate bill authorized \$318 billion.

Unfortunately, President Bush would not sign a bill for more than \$256 billion. This amazed me because the necessary funds were already collected through the federal gasoline tax. No new taxes are required and the President does not suggest lowering taxes in return for lower spending. I believe this approach is questionable because the transportation funds cannot be used to reduce the general budget deficit – gas tax dollars are kept in a trust fund to be used only for highways and mass transit. In short, the President's approach won't cut taxes, will employ far fewer people and won't use our tax dollars for the purpose promised when collected.

## Affordable Housing . . . continued from page 2

together similar communities when calculating voucher value. This would have reduced the value of Section 8 vouchers in many urban areas, putting many families at risk of losing their homes. After a significant outcry from Congress and housing advocates, HUD did not pursue this approach.

President Bush and Republican Congressional leaders have not even participated in efforts to establish an Affordable Housing Trust Fund. In July, I led the fight to force consideration of the "National Affordable Housing Trust Fund Act" by filing a discharge petition in the House. This legislation has 214 bipartisan co-sponsors and is endorsed by over 5,000 community and business organizations. The bill establishes a grant program to expand affordable housing opportunities nationwide. Yet the Republican leadership did not even schedule a vote. The President should insist that this important legislation be brought to the floor for a vote. Instead, I am concerned that we will see even greater reductions in funding for housing programs.

He refused to compromise, even though most Members on both sides of the aisle believed the President's number was insufficient. The bill languished in Conference Committee for much of the year. House and Senate Republican leaders did not want to send the President a bill he would veto, so they opted to do nothing. Instead, Congress passed a series of bills extending the existing legislation. The current extension expires in May. In 2005, I am hopeful that this bipartisan legislation will pass quickly and at a level that provides a significant investment in our transportation infrastructure. It is unclear, however, if the President will agree.

The Department of Transportation's own analysis calls for higher spending, not simply to maintain our highway and transit systems, but also to improve them. The bottom line is this, the Bush Administration has the opportunity to provide the level of investment needed to address crumbling transportation infrastructure all across this country by accepting a higher level of funding.

This bill is essential to our nation's infrastructure needs. For the 8th district alone, it includes funding for many regional transportation projects. As a few examples, it provides resources for improvements to Massachusetts Avenue, the Chelsea Street Bridge, Rutherford Avenue, the East Boston Haul Road, Melnea Cass Boulevard, the North Washington Street Bridge, Huntington Avenue, Longwood Avenue, the Longfellow Bridge, Warren Street, Blue Hill Avenue, and Somerville's Union Square. There are dozens of other projects in the 8th District and hundreds more across the state that are being held up because the President's proposal does not adequately fund our transportation needs.

The bill also helps to advance several critical transit projects including the Silver Line, the Urban Ring and the Blue Line extension. I am eager to get back to work in the new Congress to pass this bill and get this money working for our state.

## The Federal Deficit

When this newsletter went to print, our federal deficit was \$7,463,772,882,278. Since January of 2001, our national debt has grown at an average rate of \$1,017,237 PER MINUTE. If you'd like to review more deficit stats, log onto our website at [www.house.gov/capuano](http://www.house.gov/capuano).

www.house.gov/capuano

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*Michael E. Capuano*  
M.C.

## Community Meetings

Over the next several weeks, I will hold community meetings throughout the district. They provide me with an excellent opportunity to hear directly from you about the issues that matter most. So please consider joining me at one of the meetings listed below. If you cannot attend and would like to share your opinion, give us a call or send us an e-mail:

Dorchester House, Fields Corner, Dorchester  
from 10:00–11:30 AM on Saturday January 22nd

New Boston Pilot School, Uphams Corner, Dorchester  
from 12:00–1:30 PM on Saturday January 22nd

First Unitarian Universalist Church, Jamaica Plain  
from 6:30–8:00 PM on Monday January 24th

Tobin School Auditorium, Cambridge  
from 6:00–7:30 PM on Thursday January 27th

Curtis Guild Elementary School in East Boston  
from 10:00–11:30 AM on Saturday January 29th

Bunker Hill Community College, Room C-202, Charlestown  
from 12:00–1:30 PM on Saturday January 29th

For more information, please call my district offices at (617) 621-6208.