CONGRESSMAN
TOM LANTOS
12TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

Spring 2004

Newsletter

Firefighters Deserve the Best

Tom Lantos knows how important it is for local fire departments to get the financial support they need to fulfill their roles as first responders to emergencies of all kinds. That's why he takes an active role in ensuring that they receive additional federal funds through grants.

Earlier this year, the Congressman visited the Millbrae Fire Department to discuss the $31,155 that he had helped Millbrae obtain from the national Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. The funds went toward a rescue trailer to be used wherever emergency personnel need compact ventilation and communication equipment to work in tight spaces.

Tom met with (from left) John Murphy, Dave Turchet, Mark Ladas and Tony Spiteri at the Millbrae Fire Department to discuss federal grants.

In the past few months, five Peninsula fire stations have either been shut down or had their working hours cut back. Millbrae fire personnel discussed the pending plans to close a fire station in that community, and the effect that it is likely to have on response times when an emergency strikes.

Last December Tom met with fire chiefs from six jurisdictions on the Peninsula. He also announced that the Daly City Fire Department would receive a $401,794 Assistance for Firefighters grant for additional equipment and training to enhance firefighter safety.

Tom is a member of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus, which fought for the grant program in 2000 and enhanced it in late 2001 to shore up homeland security after September 11. The Caucus is working for changes to funding mechanisms that currently prevent financial resources from getting to fire departments that need it most.

A Solid Record of Environmental Protection

The Sierra Club gave Tom top marks for his votes on the major environmental legislative issues of 2003. On the votes that the Sierra Club considered to be the most important, he voted their preferred position 100 percent of the time.

"It is rewarding to know that the Sierra Club, which is highly respected and universally recognized, has taken note of my record and its perfect match with the Club's own views on the major issues," Tom said.

And for his consistent efforts to protect the environment, Tom has earned 95 points out of 100 on the latest Congressional Scorecard released by the League of Conservation Voters.

"There is no more comprehensive indicator of a legislator's environmental record than the LCV ratings," he said. "I am honored by this recognition of my work to preserve California's coastline, clean water and clean air."

The LCV represents the political voice of more than nine million Americans who are members of environmental and conservation organizations. It is a national, bipartisan organization that educates citizens about the environmental records of federally-elected officials.

The organization has published a National Environmental Scorecard for every Congress since it was founded in 1970. Over the years, the LCV has continuously commended Tom's voting record on environmental issues.

New Mini-Census

Starting in June, you may receive a questionnaire by mail from the U.S. Census Bureau. Called the American Community Survey, this confidential new study will provide current demographic, housing, social, and economic data to help governments at all levels make decisions on funding and administering their programs. Until now, such information has been collected on the "long form" sent to households nationwide at random during the decennial census.

The American Community Survey will be distributed at random each month, and the information will be processed year by year rather than every 10 years, providing an evolving and up-to-date information base. If you have any questions about the American Community Survey or the reengineered 2010 census, feel free to visit the U.S. Census Bureau website (www.census.gov), or contact Tom's San Mateo office

Understanding New Prescription Drug Discount Cards

The Medicare Reform Bill that the majority in Congress passed through the House of Representatives late last year has some serious drawbacks – for example, it prohibits government authorities from negotiating lower prices on prescription drugs. House Democrats are proposing some alternatives to reverse these shortcomings, and Tom Lantos will continue to work to improve the Medicare program.

He is also insisting, along with other members of the Government Reform Committee, that the Administration provide Congress with full access to all information regarding the potential cost of the Medicare overhaul – information that was suppressed before the vote was taken last November.

But in the meantime, some price breaks on prescription drugs are becoming available to more people through the new Prescription Drug Discount Cards, and Medicare beneficiaries are being bombarded with advertisements and mailings for competing discount cards. Here are some resources for sorting out the differences between the cards.

Further Information

Phone:

- Medicare Information Line: 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)
- Medicare fraud hotline (800) 447-8477

Internet:

- www.medicare.gov – "Prescription Drug & Other Assistance Programs"

Richard and Linda Snyder join their son Eric as he receives the Silver Congressional Award Medal from Congressman Lantos.

Young Man's Achievements Receive Congressional Recognition

Congressman Lantos has just presented the Silver Congressional Award Medal to Eric Snyder. The award is open to all Americans ages 14-23 who set and achieve personally challenging goals that build character and personal development.

The Congressional Award is a public partnership created by Congress in 1979 to promote and recognize achievement, initiative, and a sense of community service in America's youth.

Eric graduated from Serra High School in San Mateo in 2003. In his spare time, Eric has assisted the Marines in their Toys for Tots program and backpacked through the Tahoe National Forest. This summer he will travel to Washington to receive a Gold Congressional Award Medal, and he will attend college at the Citadel in South Carolina this fall.

Programs to Preserve and Create Jobs

Long-term unemployment continues to plague our nation and our communities in Northern California, which are particularly hard-hit by reductions in the high-technology sector and the shipping of jobs overseas.

Congressman Lantos, who holds a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of California, Berkeley, recently wrote a piece for *The San Mateo County Times* that addressed these issues. In it, he suggested ways that the job picture gradually could be improved through "a combination of sound national economic policy, job-creating programs, and incentives to job-providing U.S. businesses." At the same time, he wrote, "we need to ensure that the unemployed receive proper support."

Here are further excerpts from Tom's op-ed, which the newspaper published in April:

- "The administration and congressional Republicans are promoting tax breaks for corporations that ship jobs overseas. During the past three years, 2.6 million manufacturing jobs have been lost, and high-tech firms have benefited unconscionably from loopholes in immigration laws that facilitate this practice."
- "Instead of giving companies a tax subsidy to move jobs abroad, our tax code should be re-written to reward businesses that employ American workers."
- "The Broadband Internet Access Act offers a tax credit to telecom companies that extend high-speed Internet infrastructure to regions that are technologically isolated, benefiting millions of Americans and stimulating further growth in the high-tech sector, which is so important to our area."
- "Such steps ultimately will produce more jobs. But in the meantime, we must also address the serious challenge of widespread unemployment. … Instead of letting Congress pass necessary legislation that would keep unemployment benefits flowing to those who need them, as has been the tradition during past recessions, the Republican leadership and the Bush administration are opposing the extension of unemployment benefits. … If the benefits were extended, as I and other Democrats have advocated, jobless workers in the Bay Area alone would receive almost $175 million to spend on needed goods and services."
- "And we must do more to help the unemployed. I believe that every jobless worker should be able to learn new skills and find out about new employment opportunities using these skills, which would let that worker move more quickly to a good job, a higher income, and a successful future."

Helping UCSF Meet its Goals to Grow and Adapt

Earlier this year, Tom visited the UCSF Medical Center to tour its facilities and to speak with top administrators, physicians, nurses, and other staff about how he could help them meet the world-renowned hospital and medical school's goals for the future.

UCSF Chancellor J. Michael Bishop, MD, and Chief Executive Officer Mark Laret discussed the challenges the medical center faces as it strives to meet community needs, including plans for an eventual move of some facilities to Mission Bay.

Dr. Bishop thanked Tom for helping secure $450,000 in federal funding last year for additional security at UCSF. Laret mentioned that one-quarter of UCSF's patients covered their costs through Medicare and one-quarter through Medicaid; therefore, he said, implementation of the new Medicare Reform Law will have a profound effect on UCSF operations.

Dr. Mary Ann Koda Kimble, dean of the UCSF School of Pharmacy, noted that the poison control center at UCSF is unique in the region, and receives emergency phone calls from throughout the United States. Despite its valuable service, however, she said the center is at risk of closure because of mounting costs.

And Dr. John Greenspan, director of UCSF's AIDS Research Institute, expressed his gratitude to Tom for protecting researchers' independence by decrying the ideologically-motivated circulation in Washington of a "hit list" of scientists working on HIV/AIDS-related projects that receive federal grants.

After the discussion, Tom and his wife Annette were taken on a tour of the UCSF Children's Hospital, California's highest-rated children's medical service and among the top 10 in the nation, according to *U.S. News and World Report*.

Tom discussed Asia-Pacific American affairs with the annual assembly of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, which represents a broad cross-section of San Francisco's Chinese-American community and makes innumerable contributions to community life, from promoting education to supporting charitable causes. He is pictured above with Association members, as well as Assemblyman Mark Leno, San Francisco Assesor-Recorder Mabel Teng, and San Francisco Supervisor Fiona Ma. At right, Tom and Mabel Teng in the Sunset District.

Stay Up to Date Via E-Mail

Tom sends an e-newsletter on relevant issues in Congress that affect California. This is a great way to keep up on the legislative issues that are important to you. To receive these email updates, visit www.house.gov/lantos and provide your e-mail address. Your contact information will be kept private -- the U.S. House of Representatives Privacy and Security notice is available on the Web site.

Transportation a Top Priority

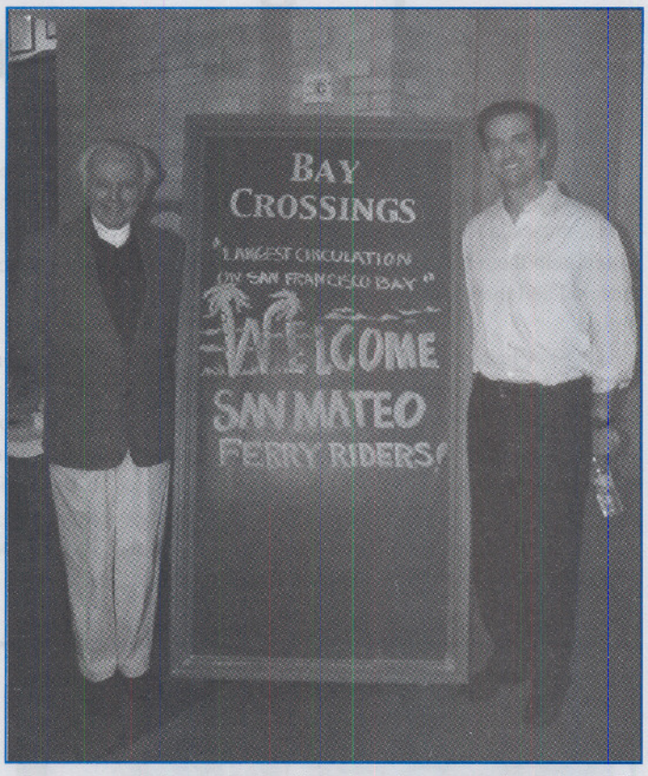
Our region continues to attract residents and commerce, which can further enhance our already high standard of living, but can also be a detriment if growth is not managed well. That is why several major transportation projects, both ongoing and on the drawing board, are high priorities during this congressional session.

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has decided to include several important local projects in a transportation funding bill now making its way through the legislative process. Congressman Lantos advocated strongly for these project proposals in his discussions with committee members. Given the federal budget constraints, it will take sustained support to retain these funds in the bill as the House version is reconciled with the legislation that the Senate has passed.

Part of the new funding would go toward the San Francisco Bay Area Water Transit Authority's next ferryboat stop, planned for Oyster Point in South San Francisco. With backing from Congressman Lantos and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, this expanded ferry service is expected to provide commuters in the East Bay, San Francisco and the Peninsula with convenient and dependable service.

Congressman Lantos also ensured that the transportation bill includes support for the Glen Park Transit Oriented Project. This program is designed to resolve existing traffic, transit, and parking problems, improve connections and pedestrian safety, enhance local business vitality, and build housing served by mass transportation.

Under the new transportation bill, the City of Pacifica will receive funds to make much-needed improvements to Manor Drive and the San Pedro Creek Bridge, and the State Transportation Improvement Program will receive support for one of the region's priority projects, adding auxiliary lanes to U.S. Highway 101 from Third Avenue to Millbrae Avenue to ease the flow of traffic.



Congressman Lantos recently took a demonstration trip on the proposed ferry line from Oyster Point to the ferry terminal in San Francisco; San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom came to the terminal to meet passengers and to show his support.

How Can I Help You?

Internet
www.house.gov/lantos/

California
San Mateo County
telephone: (650) 342-0300
San Francisco
telephone: (415) 566-5257

Washington D.C.
Telephone: (202) 225-3531
2413 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Spotlight on Legislation:

The End Racial Profiling Act

Congressman Lantos is an original cosponsor of the End Racial Profiling Act (H.R. 3847), which reverses some of the unfortunate effects of the way the Patriot Act has been implemented since its passage in October 2001. The new bill calls for strong action to protect the rights of racial and ethnic minorities. It has been endorsed by the American Civil Liberties Union and other civil liberties advocates.

"No person should be singled out for law enforcement attention because of the color of his skin or his family heritage," Tom said. "This bill will put an end to such practices, which stand in marked contrast to our nation's ideals."

The End Racial Profiling Act is now before the House Judiciary Committee. The new legislation provides financial support to local law enforcement agencies to fund anti-profiling training and technology. It makes federal law enforcement assistance to states and localities conditional upon on the adoption of effective policies that prohibit racial profiling. It requires the Attorney General to issue periodic reports on the prevalence of this discriminatory practice. And it allows victims of profiling a mechanism by which they can seek legal relief.

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