



Todd Platts

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M.C.
PRSRT-STD

**Congressional
Update**

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Summer/Fall 2001

Dear Friend,

This newsletter is intended to update you on the actions of Congress during the past few months. Also included is information about how to contact me, along with a schedule of upcoming town meetings. Please attend one of these meetings and share your thoughts about issues pending before Congress.

It is an honor and a privilege to represent you and all residents of the 19th District in Congress. Best wishes!

Sincerely,

Todd R. Platts

President's Education Plan Advances

By a vote of 384-45, the House passed H.R. 1, President Bush's *No Child Left Behind* education plan, on May 23. I voted in favor of H.R. 1. There is no more important challenge before our Nation than ensuring that the next generation of schoolchildren is fully equipped with the skills and knowledge they will need to succeed in work and life. Books and computers, good teachers and a safe learning environment – these are the ingredients for a better future.

H.R. 1 consolidates education programs, increases flexibility for states and local schools, and requires accountability through annual testing. Additionally, children trapped in persistently failing schools will have more choices and thus more chances to succeed. H.R. 1 treats literacy as a "new civil right" by proposing an investment of \$5 billion in literacy programs to guarantee every student can read by Grade 3. Too many children, because they come from broken families and shattered communities, first arrive at school already at a tremendous disadvantage. Quality pre-K programs, such as those envisioned in the President's Early Reading First program, can help to ensure that kids will not have to spend their entire elementary years merely trying to catch up.

With the Senate having passed the President's education plan in a form different than H.R. 1, the House and Senate have appointed members of a conference committee to work out the differences. For more information about H.R. 1, please visit the Education and the Workforce Committee's web site at <http://edworkforce.house.gov>.

Putting Patients First – Platts Votes to Hold HMOs Accountable

Believing that medical treatment decisions should be made between doctors and their patients, not by insurance company officials, I was pleased to join with my House colleagues in passing a comprehensive Patients' Bill of Rights on August 2. H.R. 2563 will ensure that HMO patients receive the medical care that they need, while also helping to make health insurance coverage more affordable. This strong Patients' Bill of Rights accomplishes three key principles.

H.R. 2563 improves health care quality by providing strong patient protections such as access to emergency room care, direct access to OB/GYNs and pediatricians, and access to needed prescription drugs and clinical trials. H.R. 2563 also outlaws gag orders by which HMOs prevent doctors from discussing all medical treatment options with their patients.

H.R. 2563 holds HMOs accountable by allowing patients to sue in state or federal court if their HMO does not provide the care they

promised. H.R. 2563 also provides for an expedited review by an independent panel of medical experts when an HMO denies care.

H.R. 2563 makes health care more affordable and accessible by allowing families to put up to \$2,000 tax-free into Medical Savings Accounts each year, and by allowing small businesses and other groups to join together to create Association Health Plans for their employees. For more information about H.R. 2563, visit www.gop.gov.

Platts Spends Career Awareness Day with Medic 97 Crew

I initiated a Career Awareness Program while serving in the State House as a means to experience, first-hand, what citizens encounter everyday and to gain insight regarding policy issues. My first Congressional Career Awareness Day involved riding with the Medic 97 Advanced Life Support Unit for an evening shift. In addition to responding to several emergency calls with Medic 97 crew members Denise Alsted and Kevin Arthur, I also interacted with members of the York Hospital Emergency Department. The work of these dedicated individuals well documented both the high quality of emergency services that Americans enjoy and the challenges facing our emergency service providers.

Previous career awareness days included working on a dairy farm, with a high school teacher and principal, with a truck driver, at the post office, with high school cafeteria employees, in an automobile repair shop, with a police officer, at a potato chip factory, on a fruit and vegetable farm, and with an emergency room doctor. By experiencing the joys and frustrations citizens encounter on the job, I am better prepared to represent you in Congress.



Denise Alsted of Medic 97 shared details of the realities of emergency care with me during a Career Awareness Day. (Photo credit: Bill Kalina of the York Dispatch)



Summer Interns – As part of the 19th District Internship Association's annual program, six college students interned with our office. These outstanding students spent six weeks in Washington and six weeks in the Carlisle, Gettysburg, and York district offices. This summer's interns were (pictured left to right): **Neal Rice**, a Conestoga Valley H.S. graduate, senior at Shippensburg University, and son of Jeffrey Rice and Nancy Fidler; **Jennifer Brown**, a West York H.S. graduate, junior at the University of Richmond, and daughter of Bradley and Jane Brown; **Tom McKee**, a York Catholic H.S. graduate, sophomore at Penn State University, and son of Frank and Jane McKee; **Rebecca Rinehart**, a Biglerville H.S. graduate, senior at Ursinus College, and daughter of Merle and Deb Rinehart; **Nicole Nucelli**, a Gettysburg Area H.S. graduate, junior at Johns Hopkins University, and daughter of Ralph and Eleanor Nucelli; and **Stephen Linebaugh**, a Central York H.S. graduate, senior at Franklin & Marshall College, and son of Michael and Wanda Linebaugh.



Veterans Honored – As part of this year's Memorial Day program in York, I was honored to present World War II veterans with the French Jubilee of Liberty medal for their courageous service during the Normandy Campaign, helping to liberate France from the Nazi Germans. Veterans honored in this year's ceremony included: Lee D. Byers, Anthony J. Cappello, Paul E. Dellinger, Millard F. Dinges, Jr., James R. Gable, Sr., Henry E. Garbrick, Eugene W. Gross, M. Duane Hamme, Daniel W. Heyne, Raymond P. Kettl, Joseph J. McCluskey, Frank R. Miller, James P. Morgan, Robert L. Morton, Carlton E. Ness, Elmer R. Parrish, Dietrich H. Rauscher, William H. Reed, Emory B. Schwartz, Jr., Ellis B. Scripture, Wayne E. Senft, George H. Shenberger, Paul W. Shepperd, Jr., Lynn D. Slothour, Sr., Charles H. Walters, Dale R. Wilkerson, and John F. Willard.

Comprehensive Energy Plan Adopted by House

SAFE Act Seeks to Protect Nation's Economic Vitality and National Security

On August 2, the House of Representatives approved the Securing America's Future Energy (SAFE) Act, H.R. 4, by a vote of 240-189. I voted in favor of H.R. 4. This comprehensive energy plan seeks to meet our nation's current and long-term energy needs in an environmentally safe, affordable, and reliable manner. With nearly 60% of our Nation's oil supplies now coming from foreign imports and a growing share of our natural gas supplies also coming from imports, our Nation's lack of a comprehensive energy plan poses a significant threat to our economic vitality and national security. For example, Iraq is our fastest growing source of oil imports, yet the Iraqi government is vehemently hostile to our Nation and routinely fires upon our military pilots patrolling the No-Fly Zone in northern and southern Iraq.

The basics of H.R. 4

H.R. 4 takes a comprehensive approach to our energy needs. First, H.R. 4 seeks to modernize and expand our Nation's conservation efforts by increasing funding for energy efficiency programs, by encouraging the development of fuel-efficient vehicles by requiring a reduction in sports utility vehicle (SUV) and other light truck fuel consumption by at least five billion gallons over the next six years, and by creating tax credits to encourage consumer conservation. Second, H.R. 4 proposes to modernize our energy infrastructure, such as the manner in which we transmit electricity and natural gas from region to region.

Third, H.R. 4 seeks to better diversify our energy supplies by using the latest technologies available to increase environmentally-friendly exploration and production of domestic energy resources and by promoting the advancement of alternative and renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, biomass, and geothermal power. Finally, H.R. 4 proposes to protect our citizens – especially low-income individuals – from wild fluctuations in energy prices by increasing funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Act and the Weatherization Assistance Program.

Two hot topics: ANWR and the fuel efficiency of SUVs

Two of the most debated provisions of H.R. 4 concern the issues of exploring for oil and natural gas in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) and raising the fuel efficiency standard for SUVs and other light trucks to 27.5 mpg by 2007. Please allow me to address the basis for my votes pertaining to these important issues.

The total size of ANWR is approximately 19.6 million acres. In 1980, Congress set aside 1.5 million acres of this total for oil and natural

gas exploration. Under H.R. 4, oil and natural gas exploration and production activities, including support facilities and airstrips, would be permitted in no more than 2,000 acres of ANWR's 19.6 million acres. Thus, only about one one-hundredth of one percent (0.000102) of ANWR's surface acreage may be disturbed by drilling-related activities. H.R. 4 also requires the Secretary of Interior to ensure that the oil and gas exploration and production activities in ANWR will not have a significant adverse effect on fish and wildlife, their habitat, or the environment.

Additionally, H.R. 4 mandates the use of best commercially available technology for oil and gas exploration and production in ANWR, and requires that the federal government's share of revenues from such production must be allocated to two new permanent funds – one to promote renewable energy technology and the other to improve our National Parks and public lands. Finally, H.R. 4 prohibits the export of oil produced in ANWR to any foreign country. Conservative estimates of the amount of oil that could be recovered in the 2,000 acres permitted for production activities equals approximately 50 years worth of oil imports from Iraq. I voted with a bi-partisan majority of my House colleagues to allow for oil and natural gas exploration and production in ANWR to occur within the above-stated parameters.

Regarding the issue of fuel efficiency of SUVs and other light trucks, I voted in favor of raising the mandatory fuel efficiency standard to 27.5 mpg – the current standard for passenger cars – by 2007. Unfortunately, this amendment to H.R. 4 was defeated 160-269. Although H.R. 4 mandates for SUV and other light truck fuel consumption to be reduced by a minimum of five billion gallons over the next six years, such a reduction will only result in a minimal increase in the fuel efficiency standard for these vehicles. A recent in-depth study of this issue by the National Academy of Sciences seems to warrant a much more significant increase in the fuel efficiency standard.

We need H.R. 4

In conclusion, I supported H.R. 4 because our Nation can neither conserve nor drill its way out of our pressing energy challenges. We need to adopt a balanced and comprehensive energy policy that protects our national security and promotes economic prosperity in an environmentally-safe manner. H.R. 4 is such a national energy policy. H.R. 4 is now before the Senate. For more information about H.R. 4, please visit <http://resourcescommittee.house.gov>.

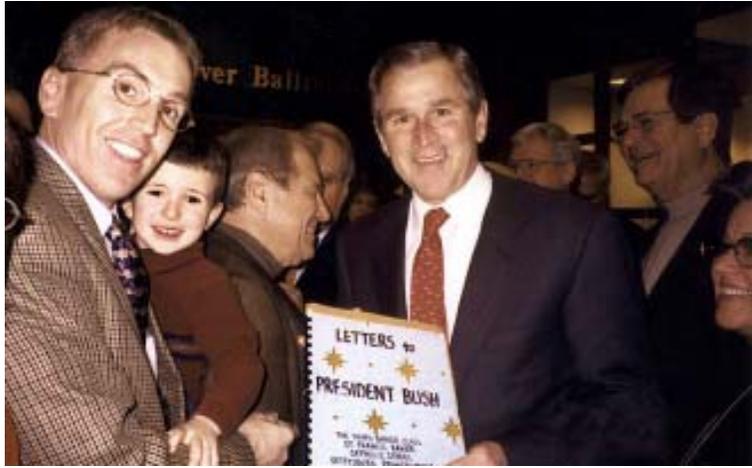
Platts Proposes Special Education Funding Legislation Seeks to Lessen Local Property Tax Burden

Last month, I introduced H.R. 2616, the “Forty-in-Four Act,” which would reform the funding practices for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The IDEA was enacted in 1975 to ensure that all children with disabilities receive a quality public education. IDEA programs are critically important to countless disabled students.

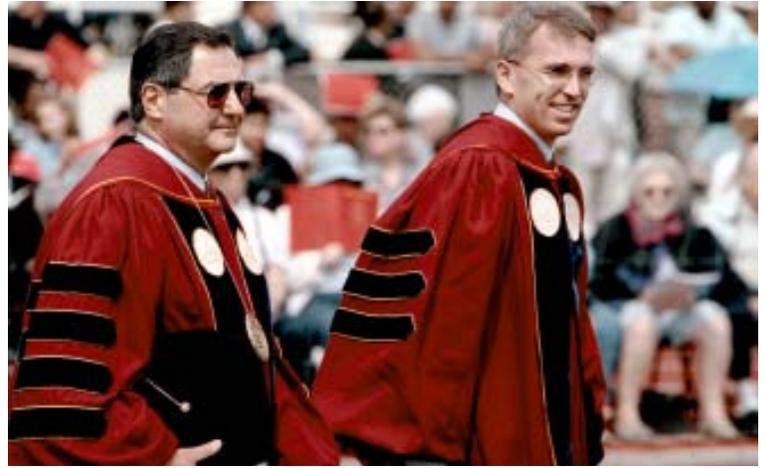
Recognizing that IDEA programs would place a significant cost burden on states and ultimately local school districts, Congress authorized the federal government to pay up to 40% of a state’s IDEA-related costs. Congress, however, has never come close to achieving the 40% level. This year’s funding level of 15% is the highest level of funding in the IDEA’s history. Under H.R. 2616,

federal funding for IDEA programs would be mandatory and would systematically increase from 15% of IDEA-related costs schools incur to educate special needs children to a full 40% in four years.

Special needs children, local schools, and local property taxpayers all benefit if the federal government pays its fair share of the costs of IDEA programs. The “Forty in Four Act” would free up resources for our local schools, giving them the flexibility to use those resources to do such things as reduce class sizes, improve school facilities, and address other local educational needs without raising local taxes. H.R. 2616 is currently pending in the House Education Committee.



Advice for the President – One of the more enjoyable assignments I have received as a member of Congress came from the second and third grade students at St. Francis Xavier Catholic School in Gettysburg. As part of an assembly at the school earlier this year, these students asked that I hand deliver a collection of their very thoughtful words of wisdom to our Nation’s new chief executive. My son T.J. and I were very pleased to fulfill the students’ request.



Commencement Address – As a proud 1984 graduate of Shippensburg University, I was honored to have been invited by University President Tony Ceddia, pictured above, for the privilege of representing Congress and presenting the Spring Commencement address. The President’s Education Plan (H.R. 1) has well documented the societal benefits of early education programs and the importance of positive adult role models in children’s lives, and I was pleased to have the opportunity to challenge the graduating students to “make a difference” in the life of a child.

President’s Faith-Based Initiative Receives House Approval

The Community Solutions Act, H.R. 7, encompasses President Bush’s faith-based initiative. This proposal seeks to allow funds for social programs addressing issues such as crime prevention, job training, homelessness, domestic violence prevention, and hunger relief to be available to all providers of such services, regardless of the provider’s religious affiliation. This legislation ensures that funding decisions focus on the service provided, not the religious affiliation of the provider. Importantly,

H.R. 7 includes safeguards to ensure that recipients of federally funded services have the right to receive such services from a non-religious provider.

H.R. 7 also seeks to promote charitable giving by expanding tax deduction opportunities. H.R. 7 allows the nearly 80 million non-itemizing taxpayers who file the short 1040 form to deduct a portion of their charitable contributions; it permits tax-free distributions from an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) to a qualified

charity; it allows all trades or businesses to be eligible for an enhanced deduction for donations of food inventory; and it exempts a business entity from frivolous lawsuits that result from the use of equipment, facilities or vehicles donated by such entity to a non-profit organization.

I voted in favor of H.R. 7, which passed the House by a 233-198 vote. It is now before the Senate for further consideration. For more information on H.R. 7, please visit www.gop.gov or www.whitehouse.gov.



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How to Contact Us

Listed below are the street addresses, telephone/fax numbers, and the web site address for all 19th District Congressional offices. Please note that all offices are open 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Additionally, in order to help save tax dollars, please use the toll-free telephone number only if no local district office is within your local calling area.

Washington, DC Office
The Honorable Todd Platts
1032 Longworth
House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-5836
Fax: (202) 226-1000

Adams County District Office
22 Chambersburg Street
Gettysburg, PA 17325
Phone: (717) 338-1919
Fax: (717) 334-6314

Cumberland County District Office
59 West Louther Street
Carlisle, PA 17013
Phone: (717) 249-0190
Fax: (717) 218-0190

York County District Office
2209 East Market Street
York, PA 17402
Phone: (717) 600-1919
Fax: (717) 757-5001

Web site
www.house.gov/platts
Toll-free Phone No.
1-877-902-1919



Returning to the Classroom – As a House Education Committee member, I welcome opportunities to visit with students and teachers. In May, I spoke with 5th grade students at Crestview Elementary School in the Carlisle Area School District about my duties as a Congressman. Jim Goodman, Quartermaster for Carlisle VFW Post 477 and a regular aide at Crestview, arranged for my visit. (Photo credit: Eden Hindley of The Sentinel)



Donating Blood – As a co-sponsor of House Congressional Resolution 31, which addresses the importance of blood donations, I was pleased to participate in the American Red Cross's Capitol Hill Blood Drive in July. Some donations collected from the Congressional blood drive will be used to serve residents in Adams and York Counties within the 19th District. (Photo courtesy of American Red Cross.)

Campaign Finance Reform: Myths and Realities

In 1981, a Louisiana Congressman admitted that his vote for a tax cut bill was influenced in part by a promise of support for higher spending on subsidies for sugar growers. When asked whether his vote could be bought, he famously quipped, "No, but it can be rented." The American people's sense that votes can be rented, if not outright purchased, is what drives the current debate over campaign finance reform.

On July 30, I signed a "discharge petition" that would require the Speaker of the House to allow a vote on campaign finance reform. So far, a total of 205 members have signed the petition, within 13 of a majority.

I support legislation introduced by Congressmen Shays and Meehan that is the House companion to the McCain-Feingold bill which passed the Senate 59-41. Shays-Meehan would bar national parties from receiving or spending unregulated soft money contributions, prohibit federal candidates from soliciting soft money, and prohibit the use of union dues and corporate dollars to finance radio or television ads that clearly identify a candidate for federal office within 60 days of a general election or 30 days of a primary election ("sham issue ads"). There are many myths about Shays-Meehan that need to be individually addressed.

Myth #1. Shays-Meehan violates the right to free speech of independent groups. The Supreme Court has ruled that it is constitutionally permissible for Congress to regulate contributions for "express advocacy," in which the election or defeat of a candidate is advocated. Shays-Meehan would close the soft money loophole that has caused a proliferation of sham issue ads by requiring television and radio ads which are paid for by a corporation or union, are broadcast near an election, and which refer to a candidate in the election to be financed by "hard money." Additionally, although Shays-Meehan requires disclosure of large personal expenditures on radio and television ads, it does not at all restrict the right of individuals to spend any amount of their own money

on such ads. Significantly, the soft money ban on sham issue ads in the current Shays-Meehan proposal (H.R. 2356) does not apply to printed materials. I declined to cosponsor an earlier version of the bill (H.R. 380) because I believed it went too far in this direction by banning printed materials like the voter guides issued by groups such as the Sierra Club, the Christian Coalition and the NRA.

Myth #2. Shays-Meehan increases the liberal media's influence. I trust the people. Good citizens will actively seek out a multitude of viewpoints. The popularity of the Fox News cable channel and of conservative talk radio shows supports this conclusion.

Myth #3. Shays-Meehan increases the influence of unions at the expense of corporations. There is not a single provision in Shays-Meehan that does not apply equally to unions and corporations. In fact, Shays-Meehan is opposed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the AFL-CIO, the United Autoworkers, and the National Education Association.

Myth #4. Shays-Meehan undermines political parties. The survival of political parties should not hinge on large contributions from unions, corporations, and wealthy individuals. A ban on soft money contributions can help to reinvigorate parties and make them more responsive to local grassroots activists.

Myth #5. Shays-Meehan won't work. People will always try to find loopholes in campaign finance laws, but that does not mean we should not try to end the corrupting influence of money on the democratic process. The campaign finance laws enacted in the 1970s worked fairly well until the early 1990s. Shays-Meehan will work so long as Americans remain committed to upholding both the letter and spirit of the law. It is my sincere hope that Congress will embrace substantive campaign finance reform. The American people deserve to feel secure in knowing that when a member of Congress casts a vote, the vote was not bought or rented, but was rooted in that member's conscience.



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Town Meetings Scheduled

Feedback from 19th district residents is critical to my effective service in Congress. I am thus pleased to announce the next series of Town Meetings planned throughout the district. The dates, times, and locations are listed below.

Mon., Sept. 17

Citizens Hose Company, No. 1
109 S. Baltimore St.
Dillsburg
9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Mon., Sept. 17

Shippensburg Senior Center
115 N. Fayette St.
Shippensburg
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Mon., Sept. 17

Fredrickson Library
100 N 19th St.
Camp Hill
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Tues., Sept. 18

Red Lion Senior Center
20-C Gotham Pl.
Red Lion
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Tues., Sept. 18

Maple Avenue Middle School
75 Maple Ave.
Littlestown
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.