



# Todd Platts

**U.S. Congress, 19th District**

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*Todd R. Platts*  
M.C.  
PRSR-TSTD

Don't miss the  
Town Meeting  
schedule below!

Winter 2008

**Congressional  
Update**

*This mailing was prepared, published and mailed at taxpayer expense.*



Dear Friend,

With the first year of the 110th Session of Congress now completed, I am pleased to update you on the actions of the U.S. House of Representatives. I encourage you to contact one of my offices listed above if you have any questions regarding the issues discussed in this newsletter or there is a federal matter for which my staff and I can be of assistance to you.

I hope you will plan to attend one of my upcoming town meetings. The dates, times, and locations of the meetings are located below. I always look forward to engaging discussions at the meetings about the many challenges facing our nation. Your input is greatly welcomed and will be well considered.

In closing, please join me in keeping our troops and their families in your thoughts and prayers. But for the selfless service of these true American heroes our freedoms would not be. God bless them, their loved ones, and best wishes to all for a happy and healthy 2008!

Sincerely,

Todd Russell Platts

## Middle-Class Tax Increase Averted - Permanent Fix Needed

Congress recently - and belatedly - avoided a huge tax increase on the middle-class by enacting the Tax Increase Prevention Act (H.R. 3996). This legislation extended for one year a so-called "patch" in the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT). Without the patch, the number of taxpayers having to pay the AMT in 2008 would have jumped from 4.2 million to over 25 million. But the patch is a temporary solution where a permanent fix is needed.

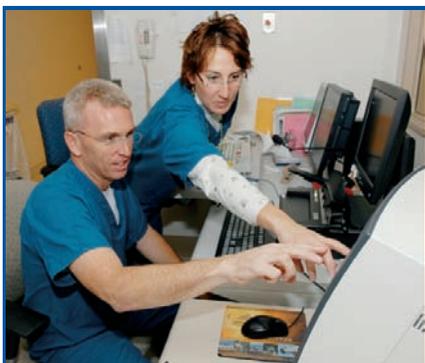
By way of background, the AMT was enacted in 1969 as a way to ensure higher-income families pay a minimum amount in taxes. At the time, the AMT was aimed at 155 extremely wealthy individuals who paid no income taxes. The AMT is a tax system that runs parallel to the regular income tax. If a taxpayer's income exceeds a certain threshold, then he or she must pay the higher of either their income tax liability or the AMT. Because the threshold for paying the AMT is not automatically adjusted for inflation, however, a growing number of middle-income taxpayers are finding themselves having to pay it.

Congress sought to permanently repeal the AMT in 1999 as part of a broader tax relief package. However, President Bill Clinton vetoed the legislation. In recent years, Congress has enacted temporary patches to protect middle-income families and individuals from the AMT. These patches raise the income threshold for taxpayers to be exempted from the AMT, but they need to be renewed by Congress periodically in order to remain in effect.

This year, Congress took longer than usual to renew the AMT patch. This is because, despite overwhelmingly bipartisan support in the Senate for a straight extension of the AMT patch, the House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee Chairman, Representative Charles Rangel, and other leaders in the House insisted that any extension of the patch be coupled with a tax increase elsewhere. In fact, one proposal would have delayed the AMT tax hike for just **one** year while **permanently** increasing taxes elsewhere, largely on certain investment funds, to the tune of more than \$70 billion over ten years.

An attempt by House leadership to adjourn without ensuring the passage of an AMT patch failed by a vote of 184-218 on December 17, 2007. Subsequently, two days later, the House passed the final version of H.R. 3996 by an overwhelming margin of 352-64. I voted against the adjournment proposed on December 17<sup>th</sup> and in favor of the final version of H.R. 3996.

Of course, the enactment of H.R. 3996 does not end this issue. Without additional action by Congress, the AMT patch will expire in 2008 and the AMT will once again threaten to impose a significant tax increase, \$2,000 on average, on approximately 21 million middle-income families and individuals. Rather than trying to use the AMT as leverage for tax increases elsewhere, House leaders should work with Members on both sides of the aisle and in both chambers to enact a permanent fix to this tax problem.



*Career Awareness Day – During my most recent Career Awareness Day, Registered Nurse Nicole Sheedy described an interventional cardiac cath-*

*eterization procedure at The Ortenzio Heart Center at Holy Spirit Hospital in Camp Hill. Career Awareness Days help keep me well grounded in the values of Central PA and provide valuable insights into the workdays of 19th District residents and the real-life impact that legislation in Congress has on our community.*

## Town Meeting Schedule

**Wednesday, January 30**

**Golden Visions Senior Community Center**  
1157 Eichelberger Street  
Hanover  
9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

**Wednesday, January 30**

**Gettysburg Borough Office**  
59 East High Street  
Gettysburg  
1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, January 30**

**Springettsbury Township Administration Building**  
1501 Mount Zion Road  
York  
7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

**Thursday, January 31**

**Wormleysburg Borough Office**  
20 Market Street  
Wormleysburg  
9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

**Thursday, January 31**

**Cumberland County Old Courthouse**  
1 Courthouse Square  
Carlisle  
7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

## Energy Bill Signed into Law

### Markey-Platts Fuel Efficiency Standards Adopted

On December 17, 2007, the House passed the Energy Independence and Security Act (H.R. 6). While this legislation promotes renewable fuels and other efforts focused on energy independence, the important centerpiece of H.R. 6 is the first increase in fuel efficiency standards for cars and light trucks in over 30 years. The Senate previously passed H.R. 6 on December 13, 2007. The President signed the measure into law on December 19th.

Fuel efficiency standards require automobile manufacturers to produce vehicle fleets that achieve a minimum miles per gallon (mpg) average. Federal law had been set at 27.5 mpg for cars and 22.2 mpg for light trucks since 1975, despite subsequent improvements in technology and engineering that have allowed even larger vehicles to run in a much more fuel efficient manner. H.R. 6 will gradually increase fuel efficiency standards to an overall average of 35 mpg for both cars and light trucks by model year 2020, a 40% increase over today's overall average of 25 mpg. In implementing this increase, the Department of Transportation will be given flexibility to set the mpg standard higher or lower for different types of vehicles, so long as the 35 mpg by 2020 target is reached for the total vehicle fleet manufactured for sale within the United States. This flexibility is intended to ensure that American automobile manufacturers such as Ford and General Motors, who frequently specialize in SUV's and light trucks, are not put at an unfair competitive disadvantage against foreign manufacturers such as Honda and Toyota.

Fuel efficiency is an important national security issue. America imports more than 60% of its oil from foreign countries, including countries - such as Iran and Venezuela - that are hostile to our interests. The fuel efficiency standards included in H.R. 6 will decrease our need to import foreign oil by 1.1 million barrels of oil per day by 2020 and 2.5 million barrels of oil per day by 2030.

Fuel efficiency is also a consumer issue, with high demand for fuel helping to sustain higher gasoline prices. H.R. 6 will save consumers approximately \$22 billion at the gasoline pump in 2020, even after paying for the costs associated with new fuel efficiency technology, and approximately \$72 billion in 2030. And at today's oil cost of almost \$100 per barrel, decreasing our import of oil by 1.1 million barrels of oil per day also means that Americans will be sending approximately \$110 million less of their hard-earned funds overseas everyday to foreign oil-producing countries.

Finally, fuel efficiency is a significant environmental issue. The fuel efficiency standards in H.R. 6 will help to reduce global warming air pollutants by approximately 192 million metric tons in 2020 and 420 million metric tons in 2030. This reduction in air pollution, achieved through greater fuel efficiency, is equivalent to taking 28 million of today's average cars and trucks off the road in 2020 and 61 million such cars and trucks off the road in 2030.

The increase in fuel efficiency standards contained in H.R. 6 is the result of a long-fault battle. Since 2001, amendments to increase fuel efficiency standards have been offered in the House and have failed by vote margins of 160-269, 162-268, and 177-254, due to the determined opposition of the automobile industry. Representative Edward Markey and I have been the lead Democratic and Republican sponsors of this session's fuel efficiency legislation (H.R. 1506). A slight variation of the fuel efficiency provisions of H.R. 1506 were incorporated into the final language of H.R. 6. H.R. 6 passed by a vote margin of 314-100 in the House and 86-8 in the Senate.

H.R. 6 was nearly derailed when approximately \$20 billion in tax increases unrelated to the fuel efficiency provisions were added by House leadership. Thankfully, the Senate voted to remove the tax increases unrelated to the fuel efficiency provisions from H.R. 6, clearing the way for final passage in both chambers. I opposed the version of H.R. 6 that included the \$20 billion tax increase and voted in favor of the final version of H.R. 6.

It is important to note that fuel efficiency standards alone will not allow America to achieve energy independence. We need to continue pursuing alternative and renewable energy sources and further enhance and promote technological developments that will allow us to better access and utilize our nation's oil, natural gas, and coal reserves in an efficient and environmentally sound manner. Such a comprehensive approach to America's energy needs is critically important to our long-term economic, environmental, and national security.



*Disability Awareness* – In 1988, Congress designated each October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). I was pleased to join Mechanicsburg Mayor Jack Ritter, other local officials and citizens, and members of the Chairiot Express Wheelchair Athletic Association in a NDEAM recognition event. This wheelchair basketball game, hosted at Mechanicsburg Middle School, highlighted the skills citizens with disabilities possess and the contributions they make to our society and economy.



*Taking a Stand* – As ranking member of the Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities, I voted in favor of H. Res. 762, which promotes greater public awareness about the dangers of bullying. I was pleased to speak at and be an honorary co-chair, along with Miss York County's Outstanding Teen 2007 Tristalyn Bixler-Kint, of a bullying prevention program sponsored by Family-Child Resources of York in October.

## **Spending Restraint, Better Priorities Needed for the Federal Budget**

The federal budget deficit has fallen from a high of \$413 billion in fiscal year 2004 to an estimated \$163 billion in 2007. This decrease in the budget deficit is largely attributable to increased federal revenues generated by growth in the private sector economy. If the gains made in reducing the deficit are to be sustained as the economic future becomes less certain, however, Congress must better restrain spending than it has in the past. This does not mean that we cannot fund proper budget priorities - it just means that we must make better choices.

On December 17, 2007, the House voted 253-154 to pass an omnibus appropriations bill (H.R. 2764) funding federal agencies in fiscal year 2008. Officially, the domestic discretionary spending cap in this bill is set at the same number proposed by the Administration - \$474 billion. This is an important win for taxpayers, as Democratic leadership was pushing for an additional \$22 billion. Nonetheless, I voted against the bill for a number of reasons.

First, H.R. 2764 contains approximately 9,000 "earmarks" - special projects for particular Congressional Districts - costing a total of \$12 billion. While many of these projects are likely worthy endeavors and were publicly disclosed during the House and Senate's original consideration of appropriations bills, others certainly are not appropriate recipients of taxpayer dollars and received little or no scrutiny prior to passage. The text of H.R. 2764 - weighing in at a massive 3,500 pages - was made available to rank-and-file House members less than 24 hours before the vote on the legislation. While such abuses of process regrettably occurred under past Congresses too, it is long past time that Congress reformed the way that it conducts the people's business.

Second, to some degree, the \$474 billion spending cap was circumvented by designating some additional \$11 billion in funds as "emergency spending." This "emergency spending" includes such non-emergencies as security arrangements associated with the national presidential conventions later this summer. While emergency spending is not built into the budget baseline, and therefore does not create upward pressure on spending in future years, there should have been a greater effort at finding offsets for any additional spending above the cap. Eliminating the earmarks in the bill, or at least cutting their number in half, would have gone a long way in producing such savings.

Third, a policy "rider" was included in H.R. 2764 to frustrate attempts at improved border security. Specifically, H.R. 2764 places more bureaucratic restrictions on the siting and construction of the 850-mile fence currently being built along the southern border. At the same time, a provision that would have prevented the federal government from suing employers who adopt English-in-the-workplace policies, as recently happened with the Salvation Army, was removed from the bill. This language protecting employers had been added to a previous version of the bill by a vote of 218-186 in the House.

Finally, H.R. 2764, as presented to the House on December 17th, failed to fund one of our nation's most important priorities - the needs of our troops serving in harm's way in Iraq. Funding for the troops has unconscionably become mired in partisanship. The request for funds for the troops was submitted in February 2007, yet the request had still not been approved as of the time the House considered H.R. 2764 in December 2007.

On December 18th, the Senate voted 70-25 to add funds to H.R. 2764 for the troops serving in Iraq. On December 19th, I joined the majority of my colleagues in the House in voting 272-142 to approve this Senate amendment.

As we look towards the new fiscal year, Congress must be more responsible in its approach towards spending. The final version of H.R. 2764 could have been a worse deal for taxpayers, and the eventual inclusion of the funding for troops made final passage necessary. Nonetheless, both the process leading to the passage of H.R. 2764 and the policies reflected in many of its priorities are not in the best interests of our nation.

## **Open Government Act Passes Congress**

During the last week of session in 2007, the Senate and House both voted unanimously to pass S. 2488, the Openness Promotes Effectiveness in our National (OPEN) Government Act. This legislation would amend the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to help those requesting information from federal agencies to obtain more timely and complete responses.

The final version of S. 2488 was the product of House and Senate negotiations that reconciled the differences between an earlier Senate passed version of S. 2488 and House passed legislation (H.R. 1309) also focused on strengthening FOIA. I was pleased to be the lead Republican cosponsor of H.R. 1309 with the lead Democratic sponsor of the legislation, Representative Lacy Clay.

Specifically, S. 2488 will create stricter time limits for agencies to respond to requests as well as allow requests to be tracked by telephone or the Internet. S. 2488 will also open the FOIA process up to independent journalists, such as bloggers. Finally, S. 2488 will establish an Office of Government Information Services to provide informal guidance to requesters who are denied information.

Last session, as chairman of the House Government Management, Finance, and Accountability Subcommittee, I held several oversight hearings on improving FOIA and worked with the Administration on an Executive Order to improve the overall transparency of the FOIA process. Thomas Jefferson once said that "Information is the currency of democracy." FOIA is an essential tool to ensure that the citizens of our nation have access to information in the way Jefferson envisioned. The OPEN Government Act is a continuing part of that process and will help bring FOIA into the 21st century.

## Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) Update

The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) - a federal program which provides funds to states to help parents who do not qualify for Medicaid to instead purchase health insurance for their kids - continues to be a topic of debate in Congress. There have been multiple proposals to reauthorize this program. I have supported some of these proposals and opposed others.

The first major SCHIP bill (H.R. 1535) was introduced by Rep. John Dingell, the Chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. This legislation would have increased eligibility for SCHIP to 400% of the poverty line - or \$82,000 for a family of four. H.R. 1535 was never voted out of committee, though I would have strongly opposed it if it had been considered by the full House.

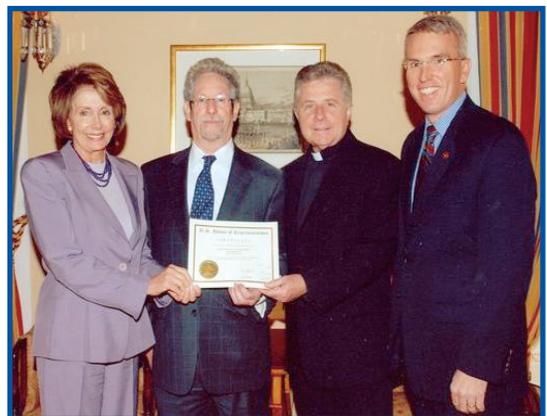
A second SCHIP bill (H.R. 3162) did not expressly raise SCHIP eligibility to 400% of the poverty line. However, it failed to limit states from doing so, and it even contained financial incentives for states to expand eligibility to the 400% level or higher. In addition, H.R. 3162 would have partially offset its costs by cutting \$200 billion from Medicare, including funding for Medicare Advantage, a voluntary program which provides expanded Medicare benefits to nearly 15,000 seniors in the 19<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. I voted against H.R. 3162.

Two other SCHIP bills considered by the House (H.R. 976, H.R. 3963) would limit SCHIP eligibility to 300% of the poverty line. Importantly, this reflects limits already in place with Pennsylvania's SCHIP program. Specifically, a family of four in Pennsylvania can qualify for fully subsidized SCHIP if their income is \$41,300 or less. In addition, neither H.R. 976 nor H.R. 3963 would have impacted Medicare. I voted in favor of both H.R. 976 and H.R. 3963.

Because an agreement on the reauthorization of SCHIP could not be reached before the end of the year, Congress enacted legislation (S. 2499) which temporarily extended the program through March of 2009. Additional legislation related to SCHIP is therefore expected to be considered later this year or early in 2009.



*Future Leader* – One of the most rewarding duties associated with my official position is the presentation of Certificates of Special Congressional Recognition to Boy Scouts on the occasion of their achieving the rank of Eagle Scout. Troop 27 Scout **Caleb Bosley** of North Hopewell Township was one of the most recent scouts recognized for this high honor.



*Guest Chaplain* – Rabbi **Irwin Goldenberg** of Temple Beth Israel in York served as guest chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives on November 7, 2007. With Rabbi Goldenberg's retirement set for June 2008, after 25 years of service to the community, I was pleased to join with House Speaker **Nancy Pelosi** and the House Chaplain, Father **Daniel P. Coughlin**, (to my right) in awarding Rabbi Goldenberg with a certificate of recognition for his service.

## Academy Nominations Announced

I am honored to annually nominate outstanding young residents to the United States Service Academies, including the U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA), the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA), the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA), and the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, NY (USMA). The desire of these young men and women to serve the United States at this critical time in our nation's history should be an inspiration to us all.

Twenty-three students received nominations to one or more academies this year. These students are as follows, with their primary academy selections identified in parentheses: **Graham Blyth** of York (USAFA), **Christopher Bream** of Dallastown (USNA), **Conor Brown** of Mechanicsburg (USNA), **Douglas Buckel** of York (USAFA), **Eric Bush** of Spring Grove (USMA), **John Cowen** of Spring Grove (USAFA), **Alexander Graf** of Mechanicsburg (USNA), **Christopher Gumke** of York (USMA), **Taylor Hartman** of York (USMMA), **Daniel Humenuck** of New Freedom (USMA), **Andrew Juba** of Dillsburg (USNA), **Kyle Kubisiak** of Abbottstown (USMA), **Peter Lindhome** of Camp Hill (USNA), **Matthew Linnehan** of Camp Hill (USMA), **Joseph Lucas** of Camp Hill (USMA), **Christopher Manta** of Etters (USMA), **Emily Nunez** of Carlisle (USNA), **Salvatore Parascandola** of Lewisberry (USMA), **Erik Red** of Mechanicsburg (USAFA), **Natalie Shuntich** of Lemoyne (USAFA), **Brandon Telatovich** of Camp Hill (USNA), **Rodrigo Trevino** of Shiremanstown (USNA), and **Jeremy Wallace** of Boiling Springs (USMA).

The nomination process begins in the Fall of each year. Students are selected for nomination based on the combination of excellence in academic accomplishments, extra-curricular involvement, recommendations from school and community leaders, and interviews. I am honored to be assisted in the nominating process by an Academy Selection Committee consisting of previous graduates from the service academies. Students interested in applying for next year's academy nominations should contact my York District office at (717) 600-1919. The application deadline is October 1, 2008.

## Immigration Update

Border security and illegal immigration understandably remain top concerns of constituents of the 19<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. Since the last Congressional Update, I have cosponsored two bills related to the issue of illegal immigration that may be of interest to you.

**Prevention of Unsafe Licensing Act.** In 2005, Congress adopted legislation requiring states to verify the legal status of an applicant before issuing a driver's license or official identification ("ID") card. Unfortunately, a loophole in the law inappropriately allows states to still issue driver's licenses and ID cards to illegal aliens for non-federal purposes. In addition to rewarding illegal conduct, issuing drivers' licenses or ID cards to illegal aliens constitutes an obvious national security risk. Such documents can be used to rent cars and apartments, open bank accounts, purchase firearms, and commit voter fraud.

In response to the State of New York attempting to exploit this loophole in federal law, I joined with Representative Peter King, Ranking Member of the House Committee on Homeland Security, in cosponsoring H.R. 4176, the Prevention of Unsafe Licensing Act. This bill prohibits states from issuing driver's licenses or ID cards to illegal aliens for any purpose. H.R. 4176 is currently pending in the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

**SAVE Act.** Knowingly employing an illegal alien is a clear violation of federal law. However, due to a growing industry of document fraud, it can be difficult for employers to ascertain whether someone is truly eligible to work in the United States. Additionally, past failures to actively enforce the prohibition against employing illegal aliens has resulted in more employers willing to risk hiring such individuals. Employers who have worked diligently to play-by-the-rules when it comes to filling job openings have thus been put at a greater and greater economic disadvantage when competing with companies willing to employ illegal aliens. The bottom line is that the current process of verifying employment eligibility has encouraged more illegal immigration.

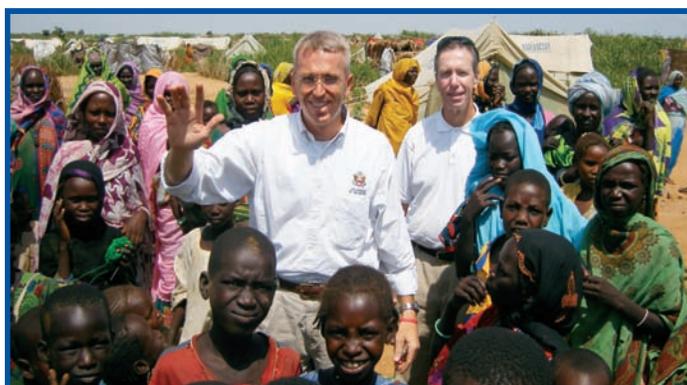
In response to the growing number of illegal aliens openly or fraudulently gaining employment throughout our nation, I joined with Representative Heath Shuler in cosponsoring H.R. 4088, the Secure America with Verification and Enforcement (SAVE) Act. H.R. 4088 requires employers to participate in the federal "E-Verify" program. This program allows employers to electronically verify the legal status of their workers through a federal database - similar to federal instantaneous background checks conducted for gun purchases. H.R. 4088 would also increase the number of Border Patrol agents by 8,000, employ more Immigration and Customs Enforcement investigators, and help train local and state law enforcement officials in immigration enforcement. The SAVE Act is currently pending in the House Committee on Homeland Security.

Hopefully, the House of Representatives' leadership will allow H.R. 4176 and H.R. 4088, along with other legislative proposals focused on better securing our borders, to be brought before the full House for consideration in 2008. It is time for Congressional leadership to recognize and respond to the overwhelming sentiment of our nation's citizens who are demanding that Congress fully secure our borders to prevent additional illegal immigration and enforce our laws against illegal aliens already present in the United States and unethical employers who knowingly hire them.

## House Passes Consumer Product Safety Bill

On December 19, 2007, the House of Representatives passed the Consumer Product Safety Modernization Act (H.R. 4040). I joined all of my colleagues present in voting in favor of this legislation. H.R. 4040 was the culmination of an eight-month bipartisan effort, including numerous public hearings on the issue of consumer product safety - especially as it relates to toys.

H.R. 4040 creates stricter lead standards for children's toys and requires third-party testing of toys by accredited labs to ensure that these standards are met. Toys built for children age 12 or younger will have to contain a tracking label to help in recalls, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission will have greater legal authority to quickly halt the distribution of unsafe toys. H.R. 4040 is now pending in the Senate. Hopefully, the Senate will act on it or similar legislation in the near future so that parents can be better assured that the toys they buy for their children are safe.



*Mission Update – U.S. Reps. Brian Higgins (NY-7), Stephen Lynch (MA-9) and I recently participated in a bipartisan Congressional Delegation trip to Pakistan, Afghanistan, the U.S.S. Enterprise in the Persian Gulf and Africa. The trip focused on the military, diplomatic and humanitarian efforts of U.S. troops and civilian personnel. The photos above show the delegation visiting with Darfur refugees at a United Nations refugee camp in Chad and receiving a briefing at a forward operating base in the mountains of Afghanistan along the Pakistan border.*

## Receive Congressional Updates on the Web or Via E-Mail

If you are interested in receiving regular updates on what is happening in the U.S. House of Representatives, I encourage you to visit my website ([www.house.gov/platts](http://www.house.gov/platts)) and sign up for my monthly E-Newsletter. You need only provide your name and e-mail address. **This information will be used for the E-Newsletter only and will not be disseminated to others in any way.**

The E-Newsletter is e-mailed to subscribers periodically to discuss recent House votes and other legislative activity, such as upcoming town hall meetings. The E-Newsletter is sent only to those who specifically "opt in" to the e-mail list.

## Congress Should Not Micro-Manage Intelligence Agencies

Congress has a legitimate role to play in ensuring proper oversight of U.S. intelligence agencies, but a bill recently passed in the House by a vote of 227-189 (H.R. 3773) goes beyond this oversight role and falls into the category of micro-managing our intelligence community. I voted against this bill.

H.R. 3773 would require intelligence agencies to obtain a warrant in order to conduct surveillance on a foreign terrorist suspect located **outside** the United States whenever the suspect “**may**” be communicating with anyone located inside the United States. The warrants would be issued by a special court established by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). In essence, this legislation would provide foreign terrorists in other countries the same constitutional rights as law-abiding American citizens.

Especially now in a time of e-mail and cell phones, when communications bounce freely back-and-forth between countries, the bureaucratic requirement that would be imposed on the intelligence community by H.R. 3773 would substantially interfere with America’s ability to gather critical intelligence in a time-sensitive manner. H.R. 3773 would effectively repeal the Protect America Act, enacted just five months ago by bipartisan majorities in both the House and the Senate. The Protect America Act allows intelligence agencies to spy on terrorist suspects abroad so long as reasonable safeguards are in place to determine the targets of the surveillance are outside the country.

Unfortunately, the Protect America Act will expire in February 2008 unless Congress acts to renew it. The Senate began consideration in December of a bill to extend and modify the Protect America Act (S. 2248), but the bill was subsequently pulled from the floor by the Senate Majority Leader prior to a vote. Defeating the ill-conceived provisions of H.R. 3773 and enacting an extension of the Protect America Act prior to February must be top priorities for both the House and the Senate.



*Training to Protect Us* – I was pleased to join Pennsylvania Fire Commissioner **Edward Mann** and local officials in recognizing the Gettysburg Fire Department for having 75 percent of its active members exceed nationally recognized training standards. I strongly commend firefighters and other emergency personnel who risk their own safety to protect and serve our communities.



*Student Elections* – I was pleased to have the honor of announcing the student council election results at Kralltown Elementary School in the Dover Area School District. As a member of the House Education and Labor Committee, it is helpful for me to interact with students firsthand and encourage their academic success and civic engagement.

## Summer Food Program Targets Underprivileged Children

Earlier this year, I introduced the Summer Food Service Rural Expansion Act (H.R. 2968). This legislation is meant to build on the success of a two-year pilot program that I sponsored as part of the Child Nutrition Act of 2004. It would modify the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), which provides free or low-cost meals to underprivileged children during summer months, in order to encourage greater participation in rural areas.

Many schools, local government agencies, and non-profits in poor rural areas of Pennsylvania did not participate in the SFSP prior to the 2005-2006 pilot program due to high-overhead costs. The pilot program encouraged greater participation by lowering the threshold to openly enroll children in rural areas. Specifically, instead of 50% of the children in the area having to qualify for free or reduced-price school lunches, 40% of the children had to qualify.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education reported that, during the first year of the pilot program, total meals served in rural communities increased 11 percent from the previous year. Over the summers of 2005 and 2006, the number of rural sponsors increased 57 percent and the number of sites serving summer meals increased 47 percent. A total of over 175,000 meals were fed to underprivileged children during the two-year pilot program.

The Senate companion to the Summer Food Service Rural Expansion Act (S. 1755) was introduced by Senators Bob Casey and Arlen Specter. H.R. 2968 and S. 1755 would make the Pennsylvania pilot program permanent and expand it nationally to all rural areas. Both bills are currently pending in committee.

## Bill Proposes Clarification Regarding Veterans Saluting the Flag

A small but important provision in the most recent defense authorization bill (H.R.1585) seeks to clarify the law with respect to veterans saluting the flag when not in uniform. The law currently states that veterans and servicemen not in uniform should place their hand over their heart, but does not specify whether they can or should salute the flag. H.R.1585 proposes to clarify this uncertainty by amending the law to read as follows: “Members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform [when the United States flag is hoisted, lowered, or passed] may render the military salute.” I voted in favor of H.R.1585 which passed the House by a vote of 370-49 on December 12, 2007 and the Senate by a vote of 90-3 on December 14, 2007. H.R.1585 is pending consideration by the President.