

congressman

**PETE  
STARK**

**13th District  
107th Congress**

**UPDATE**



Washington, D.C.  
May 2002

Dear Friends:

As I write to you, many important issues are being discussed and debated in Washington. We have all watched, with horror and sadness, the deteriorating situation in the Middle East and hope that it improves soon. In other matters, after a seven-year struggle, the House and Senate have passed landmark campaign finance legislation which the President signed it into law.

The debate over the federal budget is heating up. President Bush's tax cut proposals continue to threaten the solvency of Social Security and Medicare. Your overwhelming response to the "budget poll" in a previous newsletter expressed enormous support for protecting these programs, so I will continue to make this my top priority.

While working to protect these programs which are so important, I have also recently introduced bills to address other national problems, including issues you have brought to my attention. For example, I introduced legislation to prevent corporations, like Enron, from misstating their earnings by using "stock option loopholes." I've also introduced the "No Room for Racism Resolution," which builds on an effort by citizens of Hayward to promote tolerance in California and throughout the country. Please read this newsletter for information on these and other new initiatives of mine.

I also invite you to visit my newly redesigned website, [www.house.gov/stark](http://www.house.gov/stark). This site has information on my legislative priorities, as well as other important information on contacting government agencies, applying for grants, planning a trip to Washington and applying for student internships. Please check it out and let me know what you think!

PETE STARK

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# ***Stark Legislation Protects Nurses and Patients***

Hospitals and other health facilities today are requiring nurses to work longer hours than nurses believe are safe to ensure quality patient care. Known as "mandatory nurse overtime," this practice is endangering patient safety and simultaneously causing nurses to

Steven LaTourette (R-OH), have introduced the Safe Nursing and Patient Care Act.

Our bill would protect quality of patient care and stem the growing shortage of nurses by strictly limiting the use of mandatory nurse overtime.

This bill would set strict limits

We have standards today which limit the number of hours that pilots, flight attendants, truck drivers, railroad engineers and other professionals can safely work, but no similar protections exist for our nation's nurses. Nurses care for us at the most vulnerable times in our lives and need to be rested and alert. They should not be forced to make life

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*Nurses care for us at the most vulnerable times in our lives . . . They should not be forced to make life or death decisions when they're exhausted.*

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leave the profession. Current projections show that by 2020, we will face a nursing shortfall that may exceed 20%.

To address this growing problem, I, along with my colleague Rep.

on the ability of health facilities to require mandatory overtime for nurses. While nurses would be allowed to continue voluntary overtime at their discretion, mandatory overtime would only be allowed when an official state of emergency was declared by the federal, state or local government.

or death decisions when they are exhausted.

Mandatory overtime is dangerous for patients and dangerous for those who care for them. I hope that my colleagues in Congress will join with me to enact this important bill and address this growing problem.

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## ***Stark Introduces Bill to Improve Corporate Accounting***

The collapse of the Enron corporation has revealed several problems in the accounting practices of large firms. Enron used a number of accounting gimmicks to artificially inflate their earnings. One such gimmick was Enron's practice of listing their stock option compensation as a footnote in their financial statements, instead of including these costs in the company's expenditures. This prevented investors from seeing Enron's true financial status.

Current law allows companies to hide stock options from their financial reports while still deducting millions of dollars from their income taxes. This loophole misleads investors, financial analysts, and workers who have their pension funds linked to companies and their stocks. As we've seen all too

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*No company should be able to enrich its executives while hiding its true financial circumstances from investors or employees.*

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# Stark Opposes Government Interference in Marriage

This year, Congress must consider new legislation to reauthorize the welfare program. This is an opportunity to direct our welfare program toward the important goal of lifting the poor out of poverty. President Bush, however, disagrees. The Administration's goal is to take people off of welfare and push them into marriage.

Stable, healthy marriages are very important for raising our children. However, it is not the role of government to influence, promote or coerce individuals to marry or to stay married.

Deciding to get married is a personal, private choice between two adults. Government interference in decisions about marriage simply is not warranted. In addition, there are many dangers if the government became involved in encouraging people to marry. According to a Department of Justice report, 25% of women say they have been raped or physically assaulted by their current or former spouse. Furthermore, research shows that 60% of women on welfare have suffered from domestic violence. Clearly, encouraging or coercing these people into marriages could cause mental or physical harm to women and their children.

Spending government resources to promote marriage also takes money away from programs that help struggling families. Evidence shows working parents lack reliable, quality childcare. Providing childcare, therefore, is a proven solution to helping these families. Additionally, this money could be better spent helping young people make better decisions and teaching teenagers how to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

The government should not be spending millions to intrude on the personal decisions of its citizens, and the American people agree. According to a recent poll by the Pew Research Center, 79% of Americans believe the government should not develop programs to encourage people to get married.

I have introduced a resolution "To Protect Private Decisions About Marriage." I hope my colleagues will support this resolution and send a message to the President to spend government resources on important priorities, not to interfere with private decisions about marriage. I'm interested in hearing your thoughts on this matter.

clearly from the Enron, the consequences of such accounting techniques can be disastrous.

I recently introduced H.R. 4075, the "Ending the Double Standard for Stock Options Act" to correct this problem. My bill would force companies to report the stock option expenses on their financial reports. Companies that fail to report stock options on their financial reports would be prevented from deducting those expenses from their income taxes.

This change is one step government can take to improve corporate accounting practices today. If this legislation were enacted into law, the savings alone could produce \$56 billion annually. We could then use this to fund a comprehensive Medicare prescription drug benefit.



## from my mailbox

Dear Pete,

Please do not let President Bush endanger our Social Security.

Stella, Fremont

Dear Stella,

*This will be a tough battle, but I'm ready!*

Dear Pete,

I oppose the President's proposal to change the rules protecting patient confidentiality.

Addie, Hayward

Dear Addie,

*I will vote against any measure that compromises the confidentiality of medical information.*

Dear Pete,

I urge you to support the National Park Service's decision to protect Yellowstone by phasing out snowmobile use there.

Tony, Union City

Dear Tony,

*I strongly support this proposal.*

Dear Pete,

Attorney General Ashcroft and the investigations being conducted by the FBI have gone too far. Don't let them muzzle our civil liberties.

Ian, San Jose

Dear Ian,

*Protecting our civil liberties is one of my top priorities. I just wish it were a priority for the Justice Department.*

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# Stark Introduces “No Room for Racism” Resolution

Since the horrific attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, our country has come together in remarkable ways. Our citizens have donated blood, volunteered their time and contributed money to help those victimized by the attacks. Despite this unity, however, some people have misplaced their anger at the terrorists by discriminating against their fellow Americans. Although this had not been widespread, even a few reports of discrimination are cause for concern.

Citizens in our community of

Hayward, concerned about reports of racism, have taken concrete action to promote tolerance and social justice. Last fall, they launched an effort called “No Room for Racism” condemning all acts of discrimination against people because of their appearance. Their “No Room for Racism” campaign is promoting tolerance and acceptance throughout the East Bay.

Not satisfied to restrict their campaign to California, these Hayward leaders approached me

about bringing their campaign to Washington, which I was very happy to do. I have recently introduced H. Res. 345, the “No Room for Racism” resolution. Modeled after the one organized by the citizens of Hayward, this resolution states that judging people by their appearance, color of skin, or religious belief is contrary to the fundamental principles of our country. I applaud the citizens of Hayward for their campaign against racism and am pleased to introduce this resolution to the Congress on their behalf.

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## PETE'S TOWN MEETINGS



### Saturday, May 18, 2002

*Let me hear your views.*

#### FREMONT

**8:30 - 9:30 am**

City Council Chambers  
39700 Civic Center Dr.

#### HAYWARD

**10:00-11:00 am**

Westminster Hills  
Presbyterian Church  
27287 Patrick Ave.  
(across from Weekes Park)

*Doors open 10 minutes before meetings start.*

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