

SPECIAL REPORT FROM CONGRESSMAN PETE STARK



Working to Improve Women's Health and Economic Security



"I'm sending you this special report to inform you about the work I'm doing in Congress to help women." *Pete Stark*

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— CONGRESSMAN
PETE STARK

PROTECTING WOMEN’S REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH – A STARK PRIORITY

In Congress, I am working to increase women’s access to reproductive health services and family planning. Women need to have all the facts and the best medical services available when it comes to their health and choices regarding sex and pregnancy.

Today, HIV/AIDS is the fifth leading cause of death for women aged 25-44. In fact, the number of female AIDS cases has tripled in the past 15 years with women comprising 30% of new HIV infections in the last year alone. As the fastest growing segment of the population becoming infected, it is vital women have access to contraception to protect themselves and others from this disease. This is why I am a cosponsor of the Equity in Prescription Insurance and Contraceptive Coverage Act of 2003 to require equitable coverage of prescription contraceptive drugs and devices, and contraceptive services many health plans simply don’t cover today.

Obviously, the benefits of improving access to contraceptives don’t begin and end with preventing disease. Improving the availability of contraceptives can help prevent millions of abortions and unintended pregnancies each year. But not if we fail to first empower women—and younger women in particular—with the tools to make responsible decisions about sex.



If women have access to family planning counseling, they will make informed choices for themselves and their futures. I am a cosponsor of the Freedom of Choice for Women in the Uniformed Services Act of 2003. This bill protects the right of all women to benefit from family planning by preventing those women who serve in the military from being singled out and denied these services. I continue to oppose cutting off funding for international family planning for women across the globe. These women are as deserving of the right to make informed choices about their lives and their future as are women in our country.

It is here at home, however, that the right of reproductive choice is being threatened by Republicans in Congress and the current Administration. Like most Americans, I don’t believe politicians should interfere in a woman’s deeply personal decisions about her reproductive health. They should be left to the woman, her family and her physician.

“Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death and disability among women. An astounding *one in five* women suffer from at least one form of heart disease. That’s why I am cosponsoring the WISEWOMAN Expansion Act.”

— CONGRESSMAN
PETE STARK

PROMOTING BETTER HEALTH CARE

When listening to women in the 13th District voice their concerns, I often hear about their desire for better health care. Providing better treatment, improving access to routine health screenings and preventive care, and expanding research and awareness of women’s health in general are important priorities. We must pass legislation to increase investments in these efforts.

Today, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death and disability among women. An astounding one in five women suffer from at least one form of heart disease. At the same time, the incidence of breast cancer is growing. A woman in the U.S. has a one in eight chance of developing invasive breast cancer during her lifetime - up from a one in eleven chance in 1975. In addition, 80% of the 10 million Americans diagnosed with osteoporosis are women and they make up the vast majority of the 34 million people at risk of developing this disease.

To help women beat the odds and promote lifelong health, I am cosponsoring the WISEWOMAN Expansion Act. Its goal is to expand preventive health services by providing federal funding to make routine health screenings more available to women for heart disease, diabetes, breast cancer and osteoporosis.

Promoting women’s health is also a reason that I am cosponsoring the Annie Fox Act, a bill to provide funding for breast cancer research and outreach programs at the National Institute of Environmental Health and Science that will focus on younger women who fall victim to this disease. I am also cosponsoring the Better Screening Test for Women Act, to authorize additional funding for the National Institutes of Health for research on the early detection and reduction of mortality rates attributed to breast cancer. And I am working to pass the Mammogram Availability Act of 2003, requiring that individual health insurance and group health plans provide coverage for annual screening mammography for women 40 years of age or older.

On the broader scale of expanding access to health care, I continue to work toward universal coverage and have introduced MediKids legislation to provide universal health care to all our children. I support allowing people to buy into Medicare early and want to lengthen COBRA health insurance continuation availability to provide options for coverage for people between jobs. All of these are steps that help women and their families gain greater access to quality, affordable health care they need and deserve.



STARK WORKING TO MAKE FAIR PAY A REALITY

Women have made great advances toward equality in the workforce over the last quarter century. Over a quarter of California's businesses are owned by women today. Yet, as the doors of equal opportunity have opened, many women are not working at wages equal to their male counterparts. On average, women earn seventy-six cents compared to each dollar earned by a man — and minority women lag further behind. This is unfair to all women, but is especially devastating to households in which a woman is supporting her family with her sole income.

I am a cosponsor of the Fair Pay Act of 2003, to prohibit discrimination in the payment of wages on account of sex, race, or national origin. This bill addresses the prevalence of low wages in female dominated occupations, such as nursing, teaching and social work. It would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to redefine the standards for pay equality, comparing jobs by the skill, effort and responsibility required, not merely the duties performed.

In addition, I am a cosponsor of the Paycheck Fairness Act of 2003 that would eliminate gender based wage discrimination by instituting a new outreach initiative by the Department of Labor to work with employers to eliminate pay disparities. It would also provide new penalties under the Fair Labor Standards Act for employers who engage in wage discrimination.



“Women continue to lag nearly 25% behind men who do similar work.
I believe the federal government can help right this wrong.”

— CONGRESSMAN
PETE STARK

ENDING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

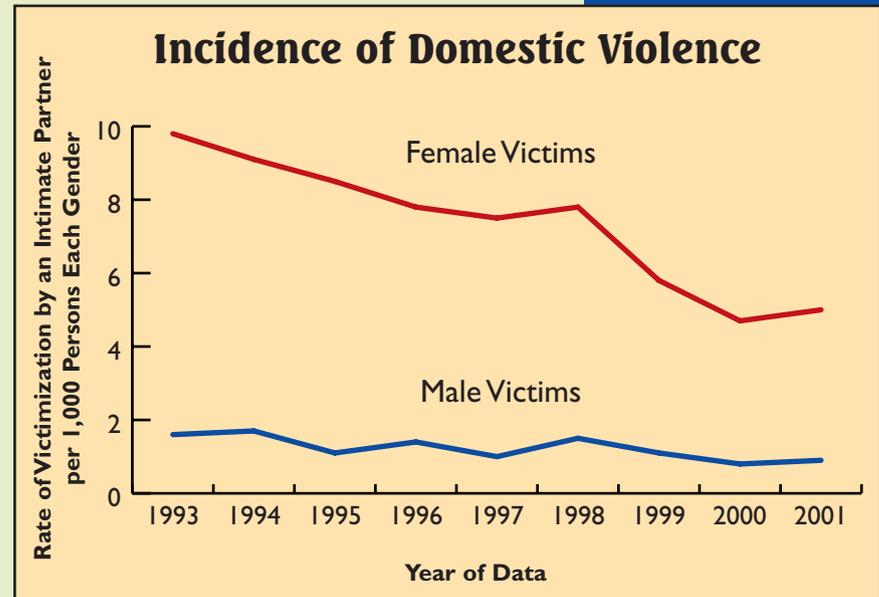
According to the Justice Department, some 700,000 violent crimes are committed in the home and 84% of those who fall victim to domestic violence are women. Yet, many women don't report this violence. It is equally alarming that an estimated 50 to 70% of those men who abuse their spouses also abuse their children. This type of abuse and violence is unacceptable. Too many women live their lives paralyzed by fear for themselves and their children. In fact, domestic violence often scars a child for life and, more often than not, creates a cycle of abuse that is carried out from one generation to the next.

I am working to make resources available to communities to prevent domestic violence and provide treatment for women and families who have been victimized. To that end, I am a cosponsor of the Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act of 2003 that seeks to reduce domestic violence by implementing gun confiscation policies, reforming stalking laws, creating integrated domestic violence courts, and hiring additional personnel for initiating protection orders. To address the causes of domestic violence, I am an original cosponsor of the Domestic Violence Screening, Treatment, and Prevention Act of 2003. This bill would fund family violence research, train health care professionals and equip community health centers to treat family violence, and provide coverage for domestic violence treatment to poor families.

In the effort to crack down on violence targeted toward women, I have cosponsored the Violence Against Women Civil Rights Restoration Act. It would allow victims of violence motivated by gender to bring suits against their perpetrators, forcing them to pay civil damages for their crimes.

Legislation and federal funding are essential, but we must all work together to end domestic violence.

As this chart shows, the rate of domestic violence has dropped almost 50% in the US over the past decade.



Unfortunately, some 700,000 of these tragic crimes still happen each year. In Congress, I'm working to pass legislation to prevent domestic violence and provide treatment to women and families who have been victimized.



CONGRESSMAN PETE STARK
39300 Civic Center Drive, Suite 220
Fremont • California • 94538
(510) 494-1388
DC: (202)225-5065
Email: petemaildirect@stark.house.gov
www.house.gov/stark

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Important Resources for Women

**The Office of Women's Health,
U.S. Department of Health and
Human Services**

<http://www.4woman.gov/owh/index.htm>

**Office on Violence
Against Women**

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/>

**National Domestic
Violence Hotline**

1-800-799-SAFE

1-800-787-3224 (TDD)

**State of California Commission
on the Status of Women**

<http://women.ca.gov/>

**U.S. Department of Labor
Women's Bureau**

<http://www.dol.gov/wb>

Pete Stark

M.C.
PRESORTED STANDARD

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Pete's Town Meetings Saturday, October 18th

Fremont

9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Fremont Senior Center
40086 Paseo Padre Parkway

San Lorenzo

10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

San Lorenzo Village Homes Association
Community Hall
377 Paseo Grande

Alameda

Noon – 1:00 p.m.

Alameda City Hall
2263 Santa Clara Avenue