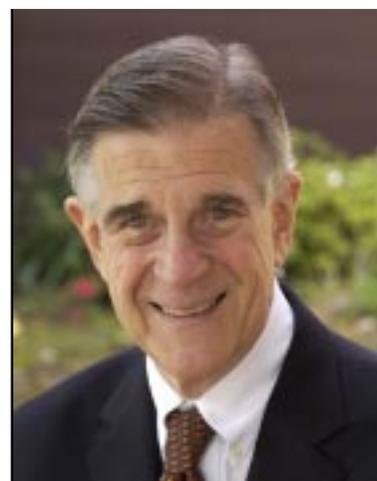


13th District
108th Congress

UPDATE



WASHINGTON, DC

NOVEMBER 2003



KEY VOTES

Below are some of the key votes that Congress has taken this fall. They've been selected based on inquiries received from East Bay residents.



DO NOT CALL REGISTRY – HR 3161, a bill to ratify

the authority of the Federal Trade Commission to Establish a Do-Not-Call Registry. This bill was quickly written, passed by the House and Senate, and signed into law by the President to override a court determination that put the Do-Not-Call Registry at risk. Passed 412-8. Stark voted YES.



BANKING PRIVACY – HR 2622, the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act. De-

signed to enact national standards to protect consumers from identity theft, improve consumer access to credit reports, and improve dispute settlements. Unfortunately, the House bill overrides stronger banking privacy laws enacted in California. Passed 393-30. Stark voted NO.

Continued on page 2.

Stark Working To Protect Overtime Pay

The Bush Administration has proposed to expand the number of employees who are exempt from receiving overtime pay when they work more than 40 hours in a week. If these rules are allowed to go into effect, more than 8 million American workers could lose their right to overtime pay. This translates into a huge pay cut for working families who depend on overtime pay to maintain their standards of living. This change would also encourage employers to require employees to work longer hours, leaving them with less time to spend with their families, without any financial tradeoff. There is no question that working families deserve better.

I've heard from hundreds of constituents urging me to oppose any change in the existing law. Unlike many other anti-worker initiatives pursued by

this Administration, I'm pleased to report that we've been successful so far in fighting this attempt to narrow overtime protections. Earlier this year, the Senate voted to prohibit this policy from moving forward. In October, in a rare defeat for the President in the House, the House of Representatives also said "NO" to Bush's plan to take overtime protections away from millions of workers.

The President intends to veto any measure that prevents implementation of his proposed overtime regulation. But, with a strong vote in the House and Senate to prohibit these regulations from going into effect, it is unclear whether the President will actually do so. What is clear, however, is that this Administration does not like to lose. Therefore, to keep these regulations from going into effect, I am delivering a strong message that America's workers are watching and oppose any effort to limit their access to fair pay. I will continue to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to defend overtime pay for working families.



Pete Stark meets with workers at the Fremont NUMMI plant regarding issues affecting America's workers.

Key votes,

continued from page 1.



SCHOOL VOUCHERS – HR 2765, District of

Columbia Appropriations bill. This funding bill for DC included a provision to institute a school voucher program in DC. Often, Congress uses the DC appropriations process to test programs they cannot yet enact nation-wide. Even though DC residents have never voted for school vouchers, this would force them upon the city. Passed 210-206. Stark voted NO.



REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS – S 3, Par- tial-Birth Abortion Ban

Act. This bill prohibits physicians from performing a particular abortion procedure even if they believe it is the best procedure to protect the life or health of the woman. If enacted, it would be the first time in our history Congress overrode medical decision-making by banning a specific procedure. Passed 281-142. Stark voted NO.



PROTECTING CALIFORNIA'S COAST – Motion to

Instruct Conferees on HR 6, the Energy Policy Act. This motion instructs the conference committee for the energy bill not to include any provision in the conference report that would require an inventory of resources in the Outer Continental Shelf. Inclusion of such a provision would endanger our environment by undermine longstanding agreements against new oil and gas drilling on California's coast and elsewhere. Passed 229-182. Stark voted YES.

Stark Introduces the Keeping Families Together Act

Every day across our country, parents are being forced to turn over custody of their seriously emotionally disturbed children to state child welfare agencies or the juvenile justice system as their only means of obtaining desperately needed mental health services. These mostly middle class parents find themselves trapped between having not enough health insurance to cover treatment that can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars a year and making too much money for their seriously emotionally disturbed children to be eligible for Medicaid. With no other way to get their kids treatment, many parents are forced to choose between custody or care—an inhumane choice no parent should ever be forced to make.

This horrific problem is indicative of the inadequacy of our nation's health care system. The U.S. Census reported that 43.6 million people had no health insurance coverage in 2002, which was an increase of 2.4 million people over 2001. Even for those who have health insurance, the benefits are often inadequate. This is particularly true with mental health benefits, where private health insurance companies routinely provide less comprehensive mental health benefits than they do for other medical and surgical care.



Strong efforts to expand health insurance and provide mental health parity are needed, but President Bush and the Majority in Congress refuse to move such proposals. However, there are still steps we can take to improve the status quo. That's why I've recently introduced the "Keeping Families Together Act," a bill to help reduce the incidence of child custody relinquishment.

This bill has bipartisan support here in the House of Representatives and has been introduced in the Senate by Senator Susan Collins (R-ME). Our legislation provides \$55 million in new funding to improve access to state mental health and family support services for families in danger of losing their children because they cannot afford mental health care. States are eligible if they are willing to end the practice of child custody relinquishment and create alternate avenues to care while keeping children in their families. The bill also creates an interagency task force so that disparate federal agencies will work together to find solutions to end this practice. It also expands the ability of states to use home and community based care as an alternative to institutionalization for these children.

This legislation is the first step toward eliminating child custody relinquishment. Because it has strong bipartisan support, I am hopeful we can act on it quickly. Once Congress has learned what has effectively worked at the state level to restructure these programs, additional legislation to eradicate the practice of custody relinquishment throughout this nation is necessary.

Free Trade Agreements Must Protect Workers' Rights

The Bush Administration is in the midst of negotiating a new, free trade agreement with Costa Rica, Honduras and Guatemala. With Congress likely to ratify a final agreement early next year, I joined several of my colleagues on an official fact finding mission to these nations. Our job was to investigate the potential ramifications of this proposed free trade pact, known as the Central America Free Trade Agreement or CAFTA.

In my mind, trade agreements should benefit the citizens of all countries involved. In Costa Rica, the most well-off of these countries, the daily wage is \$8.00. In the other countries, it is no more than \$3.00. People in these countries desperately need economic prosperity. Unfortunately, CAFTA is a quick fix solution that won't achieve that goal if it is passed in its current form. Instead, it will only take advantage of a very vulnerable population to exploit workers until cheaper labor can be found elsewhere.

At present, CAFTA is as weak as the North American Free Trade Agreement with Mexico and Canada. That agreement lacked strict, enforceable labor standards which has led to a mass exodus of American jobs. Our community knows this all too well—we lost the Caterpillar plant among others.

The standard of living for many Americans has declined under NAFTA and other trade agreements as companies have moved good-paying manufacturing and high tech jobs to countries where labor is cheap and workers don't have the same bargaining rights as in the US. In fact, many of the 2.3 million private sector jobs lost since 2001 have been relocated overseas and will never return.

Less apparent to most Americans are the harmful impacts these trade agreements have had in partner countries. NAFTA, while drawing jobs away from the US to Mexico, has not improved wages or living standards for most Mexicans.

On our mission to Central America, we met with labor advocates who are courageously seeking to improve labor standards amidst conditions where kidnappings, beatings and assassinations of fellow trade union leaders are common. They are working to organize unions to bargain for better wages and working conditions despite threats of government prosecution.

However, as proposed, CAFTA fails to include any enforceable

labor standards to guarantee worker protections in these Central American nations. Not only would the governments of Costa Rica, Honduras, and Guatemala be free from adopting equivalent labor standards as the United States, but they could go on to deny their workers even more basic rights.

Without guaranteeing workers the tools to improve their livelihoods, this type of trade agreement only guarantees ongoing poverty and suffering. As multinational corporations flock to countries with cheap workers and weak labor standards, good paying jobs are lost here at home while workers abroad are trapped in low-wage jobs and unfair work conditions. On either end, working families suffer as multinational corporations turn huge profits.

Increased trading opportunities between the United States and Central America can be mutually beneficial. But, unless major changes are made to CAFTA that protect jobs here at home while improving the rights of workers in Central America, I will do my best to defeat it.

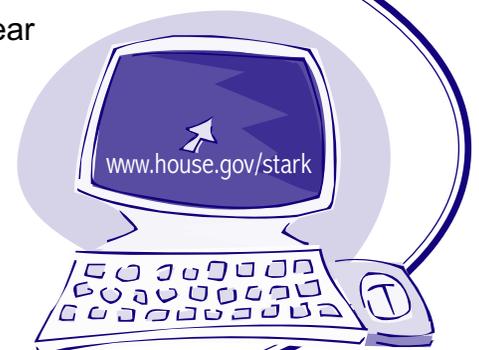
"In my mind, trade agreements should benefit the citizens of all countries involved."

- Rep Pete Stark

Subscribe to my new email update program!

As your representative in Congress, it's important that I hear from you about your priorities in Washington and that I keep you informed about the work I am doing.

To facilitate our communication, I'm implementing a new program to send periodic email updates to constituents who would be interested in receiving them. If you would like to participate in this program, please visit my webpage at www.house.gov/stark and subscribe for my new email update program.



Stark Opposes \$87 Billion Blank Check for Iraq

In October, Congress voted to approve the President's request for \$87 billion in additional funding for reconstruction and ongoing military operations in Iraq. I voted against this measure. Too many questions were left unanswered for Congress to continue to throw good money after bad

Our troops are walking targets as daily casualties continue to mount. Terrorist groups have found safe haven in Iraq and now pose a threat far greater to our security than any previously posed by Saddam Hussein. And not one shred of evidence has been recovered showing Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction as the President led us to believe.

Bush's tax cuts to the richest 1% of Americans to pay for ongoing military operations. This would have saved \$125 to \$150 billion to finance these Iraq expenditures. Unfortunately, Republican House leaders refused to even allow the amendment to be considered for a vote.

*"...the American people deserved more accountability before borrowing billions more for this open-ended effort."
- Rep Pete Stark*

in approving this funding. The vote before Congress was an important opportunity to hold the President accountable. I could not stand with a majority of my colleagues in writing a blank check to fund this disaster without a clear strategy to end it.

We do have a responsibility to finish what the President started in Iraq. We must honor our commitment to help the Iraqi people rebuild. Our troops must have the resources to safely complete their mission. But, the American people deserved more accountability before borrowing billions more for this open-ended effort.

We have already spent a total of \$141 billion on Iraq. Yet, living standards for many Iraqis have not improved. Running water and electricity have not been fully restored. Chaos, crime and violence persist in the streets.

In the midst of it all, our commander-in-chief has not shown the vision and leadership to right the course. His Administration is divided and confused. He has shunned international cooperation in reconstruction efforts. Still it remains unclear how and when authority will be transferred to a new, unified Iraqi government.

The President's supplemental request provides Iraq with billions in new funding for roads and infrastructure, housing, schools, hospitals and medical care, while his budget cuts these same investments here at home. There are 9 million Americans out of work. The U.S. has lost 3.2 million private sector jobs since January 2001. Yet, this same President wants us pay for the creation of 3 million new jobs in Iraq.

I am a cosponsor of the American Parity Act that would require that investments made in Iraq be matched for domestic priorities here at home. I also supported efforts to suspend President

Investments made abroad must be made at home and the sacrifices being made for Iraq must be shared. I will continue to urge my colleagues to hold this President accountable to the American people by demanding a clear strategy for the future of Iraq.

PETE'S TOWN MEETINGS

Saturday
Nov. 22, 2003

NEWARK

9:00-10:00 a.m.
Silliman Activity Center
Community Meeting Room
6800 Mowry Ave.

SAN LEANDRO

10:30-11:30 a.m.
Marina Community Center
15301 Wicks Blvd.

ALAMEDA

Noon -1:00 p.m.
Bay Farm Island School
Multipurpose Room
200 Aughinbaugh

Let me hear your views.

Congressman Pete Stark
39300 Civic Center Dr., #220
Fremont, CA 94538

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