

# CONGRESSMAN PETE STARK

## JULY 2005 REPORT



# RETIREMENT SECURITY UNDER PRESSURE

Personal savings, private pensions and Social Security have long made up the trinity of retirement savings. Each may function separately, but a secure retirement is based on the three growing in concert. Unfortunately, recent events have underscored the difficulty many are having building a safe retirement.

Regrettably, most employers no longer provide defined benefit pensions that pay a guaranteed amount for life during retirement. Today, several major industries like the airlines and automakers are filing for bankruptcy and considering defaulting on their pension promises, a route already taken by IBM Corp., Avaya Inc., and, most recently, United Airlines.

I am working hard in Congress to ensure that the pension system is strengthened and other retirement savings options are safe and affordable, especially for the middle-class. I am a cosponsor of legislation that would keep executives from getting huge pension guarantees while their employees get benefit cuts. And I continue to fight for employer-based retirement savings incentives that benefit all



Representatives Pete Stark and George Miller join United Airlines employees to speak out for pension reform.

workers, not just those high-income earners who get a big tax break from their savings.

It is regrettable that despite the recent evidence that private pensions may not be as secure as many once believed, the President and Republicans in Congress have decided to weaken the only guaranteed benefit available to all retirees: Social Security.

### **Congress' Duty: Keep Social Security's Promise**

With big companies failing to keep up their end of the bargain in providing retirement benefits, it is Congress' duty to keep Social Security's promise of providing guaranteed benefits. Instead, the only guarantee if Social Security is privatized is that Social Security benefits would be cut for middle class workers.

I will oppose any attempts to cut Social Security benefits, especially when the reliability of corporate pensions are so uncertain. Social Security is a promise we've made to our senior citizens, surviving children and widows and it is a promise we must keep.

## ALAMEDA POINT: A REFUGE, NOT A REFINERY



A city development plan for the Alameda Naval Air Station on Alameda Point includes a new National Wildlife Refuge to protect the California brown pelican and least tern, a business park, marina, golf course, housing, retail, and a hotel. President Bush's plan for Alameda Point is to convert the closed base into an oil refinery.

The President recently presented his proposal to convert closed military bases into refineries on the heels of other ill-conceived energy plans put forth in his Energy Bill that passed the House of Representatives this Spring. I was proud to vote against that Energy bill. Thankfully, the bill is currently stuck in the Senate and Congress seems unwilling to pass the President's plan.

The President's own advisors admit that his plan will raise, not lower, gas prices by three to eight cents per gallon. It includes a new requirement to use Midwestern ethanol, further increasing the cost of gasoline. The bill also offends our belief in wise and respectful use of public lands, as it would open thousands of acres of Alaska's pristine Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to destructive drilling – all for a six-month supply of oil at most.

As his own bill remains stalled in Congress, the President's recent proposal to convert military bases seems like he is grasping for any answer he can find to our national energy problem, regardless of how wrong that answer is.

I will continue to press the Administration and Republican leaders in Congress to address our energy needs with sustainable and environmentally sound solutions. I will also continue to oppose any effort to convert Alameda Point into a pollution-riddled oil refinery.

## PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM IMPROPER RECRUITING

With the reality of the Iraq war discouraging young Americans from joining the military, U.S. Army recruiters have resorted to appalling tactics in an attempt to boost their numbers of new recruits. Recruiters have recently been caught showing teenagers how to create a fake high school diploma and telling them what products to buy to pass a drug test.

The Army recently asked every recruiter to take a course in military ethics and the laws that govern what can and cannot be done to enlist someone into the Army. While I am encouraged the Army has finally recognized the problem, I am not convinced that "training" was anything more than a PR stunt.

To ensure this issue is dealt with appropriately, I have taken several steps:



Congressman Pete Stark meets with high school students from the 13th District to discuss issues before Congress.

- With several other members of Congress, asked U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales to appoint a special counsel to look into the Army's illegal and dishonorable recruiting tactics.
- Offered an amendment to the 2006 Defense Authorization bill requiring the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to report to Congress several aspects of illegal and improper military recruiting tactics. The amendment passed, as did the bill, and the President is expected to sign the bill into law before August.

*(continued on back page)*

## KEY VOTES

*Below are some of the key votes that Congress has taken so far this year.*

### CHILD INTERSTATE ABORTION NOTIFICATION ACT – H.R. 748

The bill does nothing to either prevent unintended pregnancies or strengthen troubled families. Worse still, it includes new, confusing reporting mandates on doctors and a provision that would prosecute responsible adults – such as grandparents or ministers – who help young women whose circumstances prevent them from confiding in their parents. Passed 270-157.

**STARK VOTED NO.**

### CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET – H. CON. RES. 95

A resolution putting forth a budget for fiscal year 2006 for the US government. The resolution, passed along partisan lines, required cuts to almost all important domestic priorities including Medicaid, Head Start, environmental initiatives, childcare and education. These cuts were made in order to maintain increased defense spending and tax cuts for the rich. Passed 214-211.

**STARK VOTED NO.**

### STEM CELL RESEARCH ENHANCEMENT ACT – H.R. 810

This bill increases the number of lines of stem cells eligible to be used in federally funded research by allowing the use of embryonic stem cells taken from fertilization clinics that are scheduled to be discarded. Passed 238-194. **STARK VOTED YES.** The Senate is expected to approve the bill by a similarly wide margin, however President Bush has promised to veto the legislation, his first as President.

### ENERGY BILL – H.R. 6

The bill gives away millions in tax breaks to the oil industry and ethanol producers. It protects the MBTE industry that

has endangered California's water supply, and threatens our environment. Even the Bush Administration admits it will not reduce gas prices and would perversely cause gas prices to increase by several cents a gallon. Passed 249-183.

**STARK VOTED NO.**

### IRAQ SUPPLEMENTAL – H.R. 1268

A resolution to provide additional funding to the war in Iraq. These funds present a blank check for the Administration to spend funds without adequate oversight. The bill fails to offer any plan for a withdrawal of American troops from Iraq. Passed 368-58, 1-present.

**STARK VOTED NO.**



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## PETE'S TOWN MEETINGS

SATURDAY, JULY 23, 2005

**Fremont: 9:00 – 10:00 AM**  
Fremont Senior Center, Wing A  
40086 Paseo Padre Parkway

**San Leandro: 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.**  
Marina Community Center, Thunderbolt Room  
15301 Wicks Boulevard

**Alameda: Noon – 1:00 p.m.**  
Alameda City Hall, Council Chambers  
2263 Santa Clara Avenue

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### **Protecting Students' Privacy**

On a related matter, I have joined Representative Mike Honda (CA, 15th) to co-sponsor the Student Privacy Protection Act to ensure military recruiters can only have access to a student's personal information with their parents' permission.

Currently, a provision in the No Child Left Behind law requires schools to give military recruiters access to children's personal records without parental consent. A form is available which will shield a child's information from military recruiters. You can access that form at: [http://www.house.gov/stark/issues/03-24\\_recruiters.htm](http://www.house.gov/stark/issues/03-24_recruiters.htm).

Recruiters are flagrantly breaking the law in order to meet increasing recruitment quotas at the risk of the young people they recruit. These illegal and immoral practices put our national security in jeopardy and those responsible must be held accountable. I will continue to work to protect the privacy of our children and to maintain a high ethical standard for how our young people are recruited into the armed forces.