

CONGRESSMAN PETE STARK

A NEW DIRECTION FOR AMERICA JANUARY 2007 REPORT

Dear Neighbor:

I'm honored to serve as your representative in Congress and excited about the opportunity before us. After more than a decade in the minority, Democrats will take over the majority in the 110th Congress and California's own Rep. Nancy Pelosi will become the first woman to serve as Speaker of the House. It is a historic time.

As the majority party, we will control the schedule for the House floor, we will be in charge of committee hearings, and we plan to return civility and bipartisan cooperation to Congress. Many pressing issues immediately confront us.

The War in Iraq grows more tragic each day. As the Iraq Study Group noted, the situation is "grave and deteriorating." Bold action is needed. But despite public support for troop withdrawal, George Bush continues to oppose an end to the Iraq War. Along with like-minded colleagues, I will continue advocating that we bring our troops home now.

Our health care system demands reform. Forty-six million people lack health insurance and another forty million are underinsured. As Chairman of the Ways and Means Health Subcommittee, I'll work to provide quality affordable health care to all, protect and preserve Medicare for future generations, and work to improve the prescription drug benefit so that it provides an affordable benefit to America's seniors – not just a boon to the pharmaceutical industry.

Our budget priorities must also be re-aligned. Spending billions on tax breaks for corporations and the wealthy at the expense of educating our children makes no sense.

In the 110th Congress, my colleagues and I will take America in a new direction. Rather than rubber-stamp efforts to undermine the Constitution, the environment, Medicare, and Social Security, we'll preserve civil liberties, protect our air and water, and defeat ongoing efforts to privatize our most important and effective social programs.

I invite you to attend my town meetings on January 20th and look forward to updating you throughout the year on my legislative efforts. I encourage you to visit my website, www.house.gov/stark, where you can always find information about upcoming town meetings and my work in Congress.

Sincerely,

Pete Stark



NEW DIRECTION

In the first 100 legislative hours of the 110th Congress, my colleagues and I intend to take America in a new direction. We'll work together to help working families by taking important first steps to address the rising costs of health care, gas, and college tuition; provide real security at home and abroad; and ensure seniors a dignified retirement.

EDUCATION

Every student deserves the opportunity to pursue higher education. But last year, Congress enacted a raid on student aid, slashing billions from the federal programs that provide students with much-needed financial support.

In January, my colleagues and I will help make college more affordable by increasing federal funding for financial aid. We'll reduce the interest rates on new student and parent loans, saving undergraduates thousands of dollars over the life of their loans. Finally, we'll boost the maximum Pell Grant and work to make a larger proportion of a student's tuition count as a tax-deductible expense.



Rep. Stark visits a Fremont child care program to emphasize the importance of federal funding for child care.

HEALTHCARE

Our government should write health care laws to benefit working families, not just drug and insurance companies. But the law that created the Medicare prescription drug program expressly prohibited the government from using its bulk purchasing power to negotiate for cheaper prescription drugs.

In January, we'll repeal that prohibition and encourage the Administration to use its leverage to help seniors. We'll also promote federal funding for embryonic stem cell research that could unlock the doors to treatments and cures for several diseases, including diabetes, Parkinson's disease, and Alzheimer's.



JOBS AT GOOD WAGES

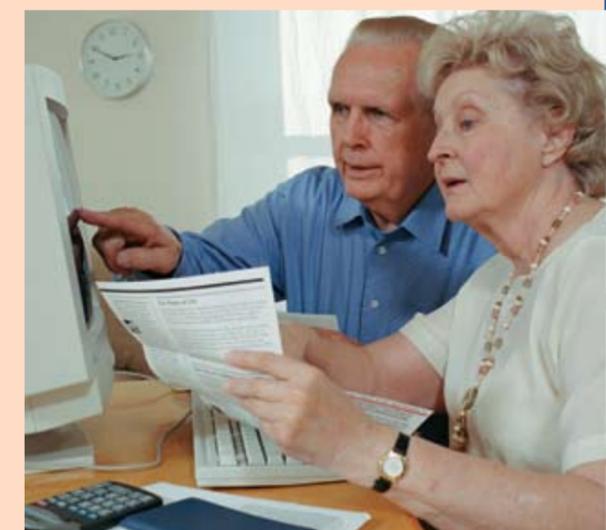
In California, workers are fortunate to have a minimum wage that while still too low, is higher than the national requirement. But because the last increase to the federal minimum wage occurred in 1997, millions of Americans in other states are making less today, adjusted for inflation, than at any time in the last 50 years. Yet time and time again, the 109th Congress rejected proposals to increase the minimum wage.

In the New Year, our new Congress will raise the federal minimum by nearly \$2, to \$7.25 an hour. This increase will directly boost the wages of 6.6 million people, almost 60 percent of who are women and 40 percent of who are people of color. We'll also repeal tax subsidies that encourage companies to move jobs overseas.

RETIREMENT SECURITY

Every American should retire with dignity. Yet traditional retirement plans are at risk, with bankrupt firms eliminating pensions and profitable companies cutting benefits. These realities make Social Security, our most popular and effective social program, all the more important. Unfortunately, it too came under attack in the last Congress, with free-market advocates hoping to privatize the program and eliminate the guaranteed benefits on which 49 million older Americans rely.

We'll stop plans to privatize Social Security. We'll also work to make certain employees receive the benefits they have been promised by reforming bankruptcy and pension laws to prevent companies from unfairly dumping pension plans.



ENERGY

In 2006, gas prices hit record highs while the big six oil companies made record profits. Proposals to end price gouging and eliminate billions in subsidies for oil and gas companies, however, never made it to a vote in Congress. All the while, America remained dependent on foreign oil, polluting our environment and hastening global warming.

In the new Congress, we'll increase fines for price gouging and repeal billions in tax breaks and tax loopholes for big oil companies. We'll also plan to increase incentives for energy-efficient technologies and alternative fuels.





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HOMELAND SECURITY



Two and a half years after the independent 9/11 Commission released its public report, many of its recommendations for American security have yet to be implemented. As a result, the equipment, communications, training and staffing needs of first responders are still unmet. Though air travelers may have their shampoo or lip gloss confiscated, a majority of the cargo entering our ports continues to go uninspected.

In the next Congress, we'll implement the Commission's recommendations and secure America's ports. Instead of a stubborn refusal to acknowledge our mistakes, we'll also reclaim American leadership with a tough and smart plan to transform failed policies in Iraq and around the world.

TOWN MEETINGS

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20, 2007

FREMONT

9:00 a.m. -10:00 a.m.
Fremont Senior Center
40086 Paseo Padre Parkway

SAN LEANDRO

10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
San Leandro Library
Estudillo Room
300 Estudillo Avenue

ALAMEDA

12:00 Noon - 1:00 p.m.
Alameda City Hall
Council Chambers
2263 Santa Clara Avenue

NEWSPAPER INFORMATION