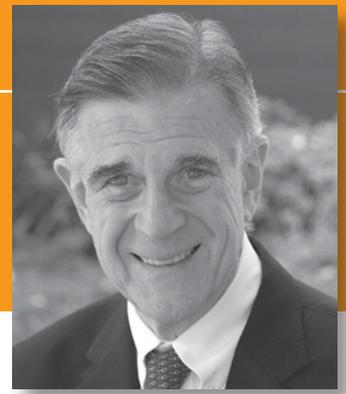


SEPTEMBER 2007

PETE STARK'S LEGISLATIVE REPORT



THE CHAMP ACT: PROVIDING HEALTH CARE FOR CHILDREN AND SENIORS

The richest nation on earth should guarantee quality health care for all of its people – especially its children and seniors.

In August, the House took a significant and important step toward this goal. It passed the Children's Health and Medicare Protection (CHAMP) Act, a bill I authored with Representatives Charlie Rangel, John Dingell and Frank Pallone.

This important legislation extends the popular and successful Children's Health Insurance Program (known as Healthy Families in California) to provide health care to 11 million kids. Five million of these children currently lack health insurance. The other six million kids receive care through CHIP, but are at risk of losing their coverage when the program expires at the end of September.



CHAMP also improves Medicare for seniors and people with disabilities. The bill:

- **Ensures** Medicare beneficiaries' access to the doctors of their choice by stopping scheduled cuts to physician reimbursement rates.
- **Eliminates** all co-payments and deductibles for preventive services.
- **Reduces** Medicare's co-payment for outpatient mental health services.
- **Enables** more low-income seniors and people with disabilities to take advantage of programs that help them pay for Medicare's drug costs, co-payments, and deductibles.

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SUPPORTING QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION

It's that time of year – summer vacations are over and parents and children are stocking up on school supplies.

A strong public education system is key for all children to achieve economic and social equality.

Because children begin learning as soon as they are born, it makes no sense for society to wait until children enter kindergarten to care about their education. Instead, we should provide all kids with access to quality childcare, early childhood education, and universal pre-kindergarten programs.

Enabling low-income families to benefit from a refundable federal tax credit for childcare is an important step toward this goal. So is subsidizing additional care for families living in or near poverty.



These measures would build on the progress Congress began this Spring when we passed legislation to renew Head Start, double funds for Early Head Start, and make more children eligible for both programs. That bill should be sent to the President for his signature soon. Studies have shown Head Start and Early Head Start help low-income families

prepare for school and improve children's social and cognitive development.

Once kids begin K-12 schooling, it is incumbent upon the richest nation on Earth to provide them with the best public education money can buy. Created five years ago, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was supposed to include tens of billions of additional dollars for schools and teachers to enable them to meet high standards. Unfortunately, the Administration under-

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SECURING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In the past few months, we've suffered two setbacks that threaten the hard-won rights of America's women.

First came a Supreme Court ruling upholding a Congressional prohibition of so-called "partial-birth abortions" of late-term pregnancies. Though rare, the procedure is necessary in certain instances to save women's lives.

I was disappointed by the court's decision because I do not believe government officials or judges should be in the business of dictating medical procedures. Instead, women, their families, and their doctors should make the difficult decision of whether or not to proceed with an abortion.

In Congress, I am doing everything I can to protect women's right to choose. I am a co-sponsor of the Freedom of Choice Act (H.R. 1964). This important legislation would codify the Roe v. Wade decision into law.

The Supreme Court also delivered a second blow to women's rights. Its ruling in Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire made it significantly more difficult for women to successfully challenge acts of pay discrimination.

Lilly Ledbetter, the only female supervisor at a tire plant in Alabama, had sued her employer for discrimination after learning she had been consistently

paid less than her male coworkers during her nearly two decade long career with Goodyear. Despite the overwhelming evidence in Lilly's favor, the court ruled against her. It found that she had not filed her complaint within 180 days of the initial discriminatory paycheck as required by the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Such a short timeframe, however, is unrealistic because few employees learn of wage discrimination shortly after it occurs. Since most companies do not disclose employee salaries, a significant length of time often passes before employees become aware that their salaries are lower than those of their coworkers. Women, who make 77 cents for every dollar made by men, will thus find it much more difficult to sue for discrimination and deter companies from continuing to pay unequal wages.

In response to the decision, my House colleagues and I passed the Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2007 (H.R. 2831). If signed into law by the President, this legislation will alter the Civil Rights Act so that every discriminatory paycheck given to an employee will restart the 180-day clock in which an individual can dispute unfair treatment.

I will continue to fight for women's rights by supporting the right to reproductive choice and the right to receive equal pay.

CHAMP: PROVIDING HEALTH CARE FOR CHILDREN AND SENIORS

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- **Allows** beneficiaries adversely affected by private prescription drug plans' midyear formulary changes to change plans and access the drugs they need.

The bill pays for itself through two measures that would significantly improve health care in America. First, it increases the federal tobacco tax by 45 cents. This would prevent more than one million kids from becoming addicted to tobacco, reduce smoking by both children and adults, save hundreds of thousands of lives, and lower health care costs.

Second, CHAMP protects Medicare from privatization by equalizing payments between private plans and fee-for-service Medicare. All government and private experts agree that private plans are massively overpaid and receive, on average, 12 percent more than the cost of care in traditional Medicare.

These overpayments are not an accident. Instead, they're part of Congressional Republicans' efforts

to privatize all or parts of Medicare. Overpayments increase private plans' profits, encouraging insurance firms to sign up additional seniors. The more beneficiaries that enroll, the easier it would be for conservatives to turn Medicare into a voucher and eliminate the program's guaranteed benefit. This would result in higher costs, fewer benefits, and less health care for seniors and people with disabilities.

The Senate passed its own health care legislation. That bill extends the CHIP program for fewer kids than the CHAMP bill – and is funded by increasing the federal tobacco tax by 61 cents. Unfortunately, the Senate bill did not include CHAMP's essential Medicare improvements.

In the coming weeks, I will work with my colleagues in the Senate to reconcile our differences and pass a single bill that will improve health care for our children and seniors.

TURNING IDEAS INTO ACTION

Curbing Pharmaceutical Advertising – Every year, drug companies spend billions on inaccurate and incomplete ads, trying to dupe consumers into believing their newest drugs will fix everything from bad moods to bad hair lines. These ads lead people to demand expensive drugs that may not be medically necessary or appropriate for their condition – and may even be harmful to their health.

That's why I introduced the Fair and Balanced Prescription Drug Act (H.R. 2823). The bill would take away the ability of drug companies to claim tax deductions for ads that fail to present information about their products in a fair manner by devoting equal airtime and volume levels to risks and benefits in television and radio ads and equal space and type size to risks and benefits in print marketing.



Providing Workers with Paid Family and Medical Leave- What do Papua New Guinea, Liberia, Swaziland, Australia, and the United States have in common? They are the only five countries in the world that provide no paid leave for either new parents or for workers caring for a sick family member.

I'll soon introduce the Paid Family and Medical Leave Act, which will build on and improve a California law providing for six weeks of paid leave to bring the rest of America into the 21st Century. It will require

employers to provide employees with at least eight weeks of paid leave after a child's birth, if they get sick, or if they need to care for a sick relative. Parents should never have to choose between bonding with a newborn and paying their rent or mortgage.

SIX SIMPLE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO STOP GLOBAL WARMING

Government at every level can and must take action to reduce carbon emissions and avert the threat of global warming. In addition to the government's response, each of us can make significant changes at home to stop global warming. Here are some simple things you can do:

1 CHANGE A LIGHT: Replacing one regular light bulb with a compact fluorescent light bulb will save 150 pounds of carbon dioxide a year.

2 CHECK YOUR TIRES: Keeping your tires inflated properly can improve gas mileage by more than three percent. Every gallon of gasoline saved keeps 20 pounds of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere.

3 USE LESS HOT WATER: It takes a lot of energy to heat water. Use less hot water by installing a low flow showerhead and washing your clothes in cold or warm water.

4 ADJUST YOUR THERMOSTAT: Moving your thermostat just 2 degrees down in winter and 2 degrees up in summer could save about 2,000 pounds of carbon dioxide a year.

5 PLANT A TREE: A single tree will absorb one ton of carbon dioxide over its lifetime.

6 TURN OFF ELECTRONIC DEVICES: Simply turning off your television, DVD player, stereo, and computer when you're not using them will save thousands of pounds of carbon dioxide a year.

OUT OF IRAQ

I support the immediate withdrawal of all American troops. Not next year. Not next month. Today.

I oppose additional funding for the war because the situation in Iraq isn't getting better, it's getting worse. Since President Bush announced his intent to escalate the war and deploy an additional 20,000 American troops, 600 have been killed and more than 3,000 have been wounded.

In total, the war has taken the lives of more than 3,700 American servicemen and women and injured more than 27,000. Countless innocent Iraqis have been killed or maimed.

This loss of life is tragic and must stop.

Link to my recent statement on the floor of the House: http://www.house.gov/stark/news/110th/floorstatements/20070712_iraq.htm

SUPPORTING QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION

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funded the Act by well over \$50 billion, compromising its effectiveness.

The new Congress has already held a dozen hearings about how to improve NCLB by increasing state and local flexibility in meeting the bill's standards. We've also increased the Act's funding by more than \$2 billion. I will continue to demand that Congress devote the resources necessary to ensure that all students get the quality education they deserve.

After high school, every student deserves the opportunity to attend college. I voted for, and the House recently passed, the "College Cost Reduction Act," which would make college more affordable for many students. If enacted, this important legislation will provide the largest single investment in higher education since the Montgomery GI bill of 1944. It will increase the Pell Grant for all students by \$500, make more than 500,000 new students eligible for a Pell Grant, and cut the interest rate on student loans in half.

A strong education system is indicative of – and imperative for – a strong and vibrant country. I will continue to work to make sure that our public schools achieve excellence and our children have the chance to reach their fullest potential.

KEEP IN TOUCH

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PETE'S SEPTEMBER TOWN MEETINGS

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2007

ALAMEDA

9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.
Alameda City Hall
Council Chambers
2263 Santa Clara Avenue

SAN LEANDRO

10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
San Leandro Library
Dave Karp Senior Meeting Facility
300 Estudillo Avenue

FREMONT

12:00 NOON – 1:00 p.m.
Fremont City Hall
Council Chambers
3300 Capitol Avenue

PLEASANTON

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Pleasanton City Hall
Council Chambers
200 Old Bernal Avenue

**JOINT TOWN MEETING WITH
REP. JERRY MCNERNEY**



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