



CONGRESSMAN
Cliff Stearns
SIXTH DISTRICT OF FLORIDA



Washington, D.C.
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone (202) 225-5744
Fax (202) 225-3973



Ocala
115 S.E. 25th Avenue
Ocala, FL 34471
Phone (352) 351-8777



Gainesville
5700 S.W. 34th Street
Suite 425
Gainesville, FL 32608
Phone (352) 337-0003



Orange Park
1726 Kingsley Avenue
Suite 8
Orange Park, FL 32073
Phone (904) 269-3203

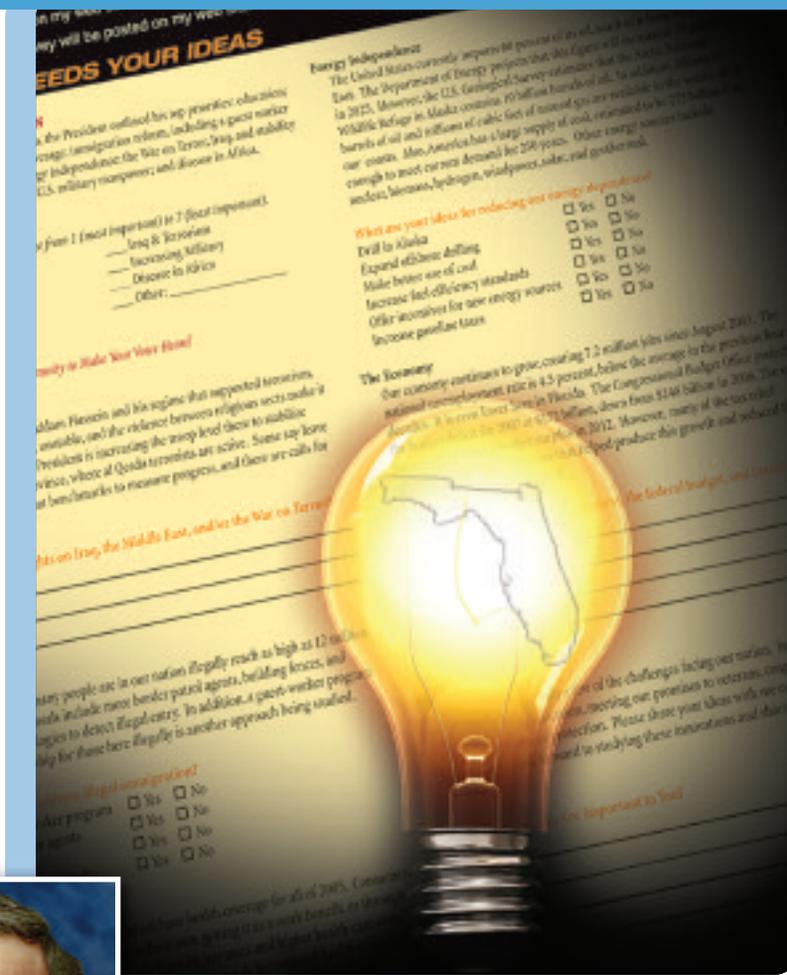


Visit us online at:
www.house.gov/stearns

To E-mail Congressman Stearns, go to:
www.house.gov/writerep

YOUR Good Ideas

Congressman Stearns Official Survey Results



CONGRESSMAN
Cliff Stearns

SIXTH DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

2007 SURVEY RESULTS



Dear Friend:

I believe in the power of ideas, and the American people are creative and adept at problem solving. This government is supposed to work for you, and your ideas can help shape the national agenda.

I sent out a survey asking my constituents for input on these issues: Iraq, Illegal Immigration, Health Insurance, Energy Independence, and the Economy. For your information, I have included a summary of the responses we received on those issues.

In addition, I invited survey recipients to offer their ideas for addressing the challenges and opportunities facing our nation. Once again, the residents of the Sixth Congressional District provided thoughtful insights into how to make our government work smarter and more efficiently. It is clear that Americans are a wellspring for practical and commonsense solutions.

I am pleased to note that I am already supporting legislation to implement several of the ideas submitted. In addition, I am working on potential legislation to implement others. Your input does matter.

I am pleased to offer this booklet outlining “Your Good Ideas” submitted by the people of Florida’s Sixth Congressional District. I do not agree with every idea listed and you may not either. I hope you will find them as insightful and thought provoking as I do.

Sincerely,

SERVING FLORIDA'S 6TH DISTRICT SINCE 1989
www.house.gov/stearns

Summary of Survey and Idea Forum

My staff conducted a careful sampling of the returned surveys based upon a distribution reflecting the population for the eight counties that are totally or partially in the Sixth Congressional District. Below is a table showing the responses to these three questions:

What are your priorities?

Please rate them in importance from 1 (most important) to 7 (least important).

ISSUE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Iraq	251 36%	78 11%	78 11%	64 9%	77 11%	39 6%	30 4%
Immigration	131 19%	130 19%	103 15%	89 13%	72 10%	66 10%	24 3%
Health	118 17%	107 15%	82 12%	90 13%	103 15%	89 13%	24 3%
Energy	93 13%	131 19%	159 23%	122 18%	73 11%	36 5%	14 2%
Education	89 13%	75 11%	91 13%	115 17%	115 17%	105 15%	21 3%
Military	40 6%	87 13%	73 11%	75 11%	88 13%	129 19%	16 2%
Africa	8 1%	11 1.5%	15 2%	22 3%	32 5%	70 10%	353 51%

How should we address illegal immigration?

SOLUTION	YES	NO
Guest worker program	334	244
More border agents	493	79
Build a fence	359	195
Deport illegal aliens	549	65

What are your ideas for reducing our energy dependence?

IDEA	YES	NO
Drill in Alaska	445	170
Drill offshore	451	152
Use coal	499	85
Raise fuel efficiency	547	58
Offer incentives	564	53
Raise gas tax	94	486

- Cut the number of federal workers by 10% per year for 5 years.
- Restart the military draft! Everyone should be required to serve at least two years in the military.
- Eliminate the color-coded homeland security warnings—they only show terrorists how well they are succeeding.

A BIG Thank You

To the more than 7,000 constituents who responded to my survey. I can't wait to get to work on some of your good ideas.

ADDITIONAL IDEAS

from *Take Back Your Time* by John deGraaf, editor



1. Allow individuals age 45–55 to take one sabbatical year with pay from his/her Social Security account in exchange for one year's delay of Social Security retirement pay.
2. Make community service mandatory for all high school graduates—either two years in the military, Peace Corps, AmeriCorps or other volunteer community service in their neighborhoods and hometowns.
3. Give people wishing to retire early the ability to do so with a step-by-step retirement plan. This would allow employees to find a balance between work and leisure to suit their needs as they draw closer to retirement.
 - **Phased retirement**—Offer incentives for employers to allow employees to phase into retirement, instead of an abrupt retirement (i.e., someone 64 would work four days a week for six months, then three days a week for the next six months).
 - **Flexible time arrangements**—Allow people to work only a couple of days a week as they move toward retirement.
 - **Job substitute**—Allow people to substitute in other jobs as they near retirement so they would be cross-sharing job experience.
 - **Temporary work**—Allow temporary work for people who are retired.
 - **Consulting arrangements**—Allow work on a consultant basis with former company.
4. Since it is so complicated to do taxes, Congress should expand the standard deduction so most people do not spend a lot of time in tax preparation itemizing and keeping reminders. This will eliminate hours of people keeping accounting records all year long.
5. Establish a program throughout the private sector that provides very low-cost health insurance with two features: (1) It would pay for everything in a rare year when catastrophe strikes and bills are really high; and (2) you pay nothing and have no intermediary for expenses unless you hit the catastrophic limit.
6. Since many parents help kids with homework, why not make the school day an hour longer and let them do homework at school with teachers helping so that families could have more free time during the week.

YOUR Good Ideas

Below is a compilation of some of the “Good Ideas” contained in the more than 7,000 surveys returned to our offices. Although there were literally thousands of ideas submitted, a large number were duplicative, vague, or too general to form specific legislation (e.g. “do more to take care of veterans”). Many also supported proposals already in existence. We had hundreds of responses supporting the FairTax Bill, which I too support. There were also many suggestions that we wouldn't support (e.g. “impeach President Bush and Vice President Cheney” or “get rid of everyone in Congress”).

This list represents those ideas that are both specific and representative of new or different approaches to solving some of our biggest concerns. Constituent ideas submitted were edited, and, in many cases, two or more similar ideas were combined together in forming this list.

IRAQ



- Get our military out or come up with a better plan, such as let each city establish a 5-mile radius point in which all vehicles are banned.
- It is a war—the enemy will not willfully follow our plans. Victory is the only answer. Change rules of engagement and stop fighting a politically correct war!
- Stabilize Baghdad, secure borders, and eliminate aid and terrorists as they enter. Equip and enable our military.
- Support our troops; win if we can; leave if we can't; take oil to compensate for our costs! Get it done or get out. The cost in U.S. lives and the draw on economy is too much to sustain indefinitely.
- It would be dangerous to leave all at once, but we must shift the weight to the Iraqis and bring our people home as rapidly as possible.
- Keep news media out of the war zone and let the troops handle the war.
- Pull back troops to a secure base in Kuwait on the border of Iraq—if possible, sooner rather than later.
- U.S. should not “go it” alone! Unless other nations share equally, we should bring our troops home!

- We need to get tougher with Syria and Iran and the enemy and win this war. We have 6-8 military bases in Iraq and need to maintain them for the future and not lose what we have accomplished.
- We must rely on our leaders for effective action. The terrible

conditions in Iraq call for a change in tactics to achieve success.

- We should have not invaded Iraq, but now that we are there we must stabilize as much as possible and then pull out (not like in Afghanistan where a vacuum was created that was filled by terrorist groups).

HEALTH CARE



- Require all employers to offer healthcare coverage to employees and receive a tax credit or deduction for it.
- Require individuals to purchase health insurance, like car insurance, and make it deductible from income tax.
- Establish a pilot program with a company like Wal-Mart for walk-in health clinics, or a walk-in HMO. This could be a joint venture with medical schools, companies, and the federal government.
- Establish a pilot program based upon the Canadian healthcare system in 2 states for 3 years.
- Provide vouchers or tax credits for individuals not covered by an employer's policy to purchase health insurance for themselves.
- Establish small town or rural health clinics where people can obtain basic healthcare services.
- Fund research in alternative medical treatments.
- Provide tax credits for catastrophic coverage health insurance.
- Let hospitals and health insurance companies compete and enforce anti-trust laws in both industries.
- Allow the importation of Rx drugs.
- Enact malpractice reforms to help doctors.
- Provide annual physical exams for a fixed amount for those with incomes under \$50,000.
- Provide group rates available for individuals who care to join a pool to purchase health insurance.
- Give employers who offer insurance to their employees a tax break; employers that do not, should pay higher taxes.
- Create a healthcare program where people will go for routine tests for preventative health. If they do not do this, they should be placed in a plan where out-of-pocket costs would be higher.
- Develop a national healthcare program based on Alachua County's "Choices" program, which targets affordable health insurance for working families who can't afford it on the job.

MISCELLANEOUS



- Establish a Federal lottery with proceeds devoted to debt reduction.
- Ban the President's use of signing statements.
- Increase FDIC insurance coverage to \$250,000.
- Require a mandatory 1 or 2 years of public service for all people between the ages 18-25.
- Sunset every government agency, except the Department of Defense, every five years. Require each agency to justify its continued existence.
- Lower the cost to send packages to military service members in Iraq.
- Let the people vote for Supreme Court and Federal Judges and limit them to 8 years in office.
- Construct a network of canals, aqueducts, and underground waterways to move potential flood waters away from flood-prone areas and to areas affected by drought. Utilize the interstate highway system as the foundation for water channels, with cisterns and lakes on BLM property as "holding ponds" until the water is needed. This would counter drought and flood damage and prevent the loss of billions of dollars to industry, homeowners, and farmers.
- Revert national programs, such as education, agricultural subsidies, and healthcare back to the states for oversight and implementation.
- Make FEMA a "stand alone" agency and not part of the Homeland Security Department.
- Rebuild our active-duty military so we can reduce our reliance on National Guard and Reserves.
- Set up a "no-holds-barred Hoover Commission" to recommend changes to promote efficiency in government, with well-informed professionals in every "facet," without interference from those who lobby for self interests.
- Open the National Forests to off-highway vehicles (OHV). Allow OHV user groups to work with the government on this. Let all the people use government tree farms for outdoor recreation.
- Our nation needs tort and liability reform to reduce frivolous lawsuits and to limit grossly excessive awards. Reforming our civil system will increase efficiency and reduce costs. America's civil justice system costs us \$246 billion.
- Eliminate all earmarks in the federal budget.
- Give the President line-item veto authority.
- Limit the duration of political campaigns, especially presidential campaigns.
- Require all federal agencies to use zero-based budgeting.

WELFARE



- Require welfare recipients to perform community service.
- Stop all welfare programs for uninsured. Make them work.
- Require welfare recipients to work at least 20 hours per week.

EXPORTING JOBS OVERSEAS



- As an incentive to keep jobs in the United States, establish tariffs or import fees on products made overseas by U.S. companies, but which are sold in America.
- Penalize American companies who move their headquarters off shore. Close tax loopholes used by these companies.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE



- No convict should be released until he has at least a GED, a trade, and a plan for staying out of trouble. Ninety percent of inmates are in prison because of alcohol or drug use. Send these people to AA for one year, five times a week as part of their probation. Jail by itself does not work very well for drunks or drug addicts.
- Establish laws that make drug- pushing in this country a capital offense.
- Require minor-offense criminals to serve in the military instead of supporting them with tax dollars.

CONGRESS



- There should be no pay raise for Congress until the budget deficit is eliminated.
- Salaries, pensions, and benefits for Congressmen and Senators should be determined and paid for by the state legislature of the state they represent.
- Limit Congressmen to 4 terms and Senators to 2 terms with selection by the states.
- Each Congressman's constituents should vote on congressional pay raises.

HEALTH CARE CONT.



- Require welfare recipients to go to clinics for healthcare rather than emergency rooms. Strengthen community clinics to take pressure off ERs.
- Mandate that a portion of the cigarette tax be used to provide or reduce the cost of medication for people who want to stop smoking.

SOCIAL SECURITY



- Eliminate the earnings ceiling on Social Security taxes.
- Privatize 50% of Social Security for people who had already paid 40 quarters into Social Security if they want to do it.
- Repeal the law that established taxes on Social Security.
- Allow people to take a 6% Social Security withholding and allow them to invest it for themselves.
- Create new Social Security accounts for workers, owned by workers, with 6–10 government- provided choices. Participants in the current system would pay a prorated share. The government would end its participation in the system after a few decades.

TAXES



- Enact the FairTax.
- Impose a federal tax on money sent outside of the U.S. to foreign countries.
- Tax interest earned by senior citizens at the lower of the capital gains rate or their federal income tax rate.
- Allow charitable contributions, up to a certain amount, to be deducted by taxpayers who don't itemize—thus encouraging giving.
- Use the gas tax to fund development of solar and alternative energy sources, possibly grants through DOE.
- Allow up to \$50,000, \$25,000, or even \$10,000 in tax-free interest on savings per year. This would be an incentive for savings instead of indebtedness.
- Provide a tax deduction of at least 30% for college tuition.
- Provide tax credits to people who convert their autos to alternative energy sources.

TAXES CONT.



- Provide tax-free government savings bonds.
- Impose a tax on every business that sends jobs out of this country for each job exported and an additional import tax for each item or product coming back from those outsourced facilities.
- Provide tax credits for childcare and health insurance so poor people can get off welfare and into jobs.
- Provide private school tax breaks for parents.
- Impose a federal tax on money funneled across U.S. borders to foreign countries by illegal aliens.
- Reduce taxes on small businesses with fewer than 20 employees.

IMMIGRATION



- Require two years of mandatory military or other public service for an illegal immigrant to earn U.S. citizenship.
- Use federal/state prison inmates to work on farms to replace illegal immigrants.
- Require all immigrants to take and pass English reading and writing tests before a green card is issued.
- Require employers to reduce the number of their illegal immigrant workers by 5% per month without facing penalties; employers would still be responsible for medical care of those employees. For each new illegal immigrant hired, the company and its executives would pay a steep fine.
- Create a Think Tank to study and propose ways that businesses, charities, and governments can establish programs that would employ Mexicans in Mexico to alleviate the desire for them to enter our country illegally.

VETERANS



- Allow the Veterans Administration to accept prescriptions directly from doctors. The VA could save millions of dollars and treat the returning veterans in a more timely manner.
- Prorate veterans' benefits to the amount of time served. If an individual serves for 2 years, their benefits should be less than the benefits for individuals who served for 10 years or more.
- Allow veterans to get medical care

VETERANS CONT.



- at any hospital or from any doctor and require that the VA reimburse the hospital or doctor.
- Allow seniors to serve in the military in support positions and provide them with incremental veterans benefits based on their amount of service.
- Create a new GI Bill to provide full college tuition to veterans.

ENERGY



- Build more nuclear energy plants. They are safe and save fossil fuels.
- Build garbage-burning incinerators to provide electricity.
- Cars with bigger engines should pay bigger registration fees. Either make gas-guzzling vehicles more fuel-efficient or make consumers pay more to own them.
- Reduce speed limits to decrease gas consumption and emissions.
- Use oil revenues from Iraq to help pay for the war or guarantee cheap oil exports to the U.S.
- Build small-scale nuclear plants, such as those the Navy uses to power aircraft carriers, around the country.
- Technology exists that transforms coal into a liquid energy source that can power trucks and automobiles. This will reduce our dependency on imported oil. The United States holds the world's largest coal reserves, enough to meet current use for 250 years.

EDUCATION



- Require more physical education, fitness training, and nutrition education in public schools.
- Abolish the Federal Department of Education; promote school choice and home schooling.
- Revoke No Child Left Behind. This has turned out to be the most ridiculous education plan ever passed.
- Create a vo-tech school to replace one high school in each school district (with different graduation requirements).
- Require mandatory drug testing and canine searches in schools.
- The No Child Left Behind program needs to be reevaluated.
- Create better programs for children in need without the stigma of special education. Create programs to increase self-esteem of adolescents.