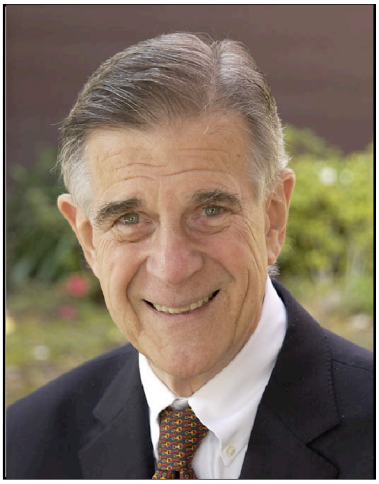
congressman PETE STARK

13th District
108th Congress

UPDATE



WASHINGTON, DC FEBRUARY 2003

REBUILDING A STRONG ECONOMY

Our economy is not in good shape. We've gone from a $5.6 trillion surplus in 2000 to deficits as far as the eye can see. We've leapt from a low unemployment rate of 3.9% in April 2000 to a 6% unemployment rate today. Over 10 million are unemployed and looking for jobs.

The President has proposed $674 billion in new tax cuts as his solution to jumpstart our economy. The two largest provisions of his proposal are accelerating the implementation of tax cuts from his 2001 tax cut package, and complete elimination of the individual tax on corporate dividends. These two provisions alone are heavily tilted toward wealthy taxpayers. Unfortunately, economists say that these wealthy taxpayers will not spend the money they receive from the tax relief, but instead will save or reinvest it. This will not help create jobs, address state and federal budget shortfalls, provide for our children's welfare or help us with the war on terrorism.

According to the Children's Defense Fund, the money lost by the President's dividend tax cut could alternatively be used to provide comprehensive health care coverage for all 9.2 million uninsured children and still expand Head Start to cover every preschool-aged child.

posal, do the math yourself. The Administration says that their proposal (which costs $59 billion in 2003) would create 190,000 new jobs next year. That means that the government will spend $311,000 for each new job! I can't imagine many of these newly created jobs would pay that salary. We'd be much better off cutting out the middleman and giving it straight to the struggling families who need it most and would actually spend it.

His proposal simply does not work and is not one I will support. Instead, I have joined with Democrats in the House to propose a one-year economic stimulus plan that will put tax relief money directly in the pockets of all working families and provide immediate financial help to states and localities. In contrast to the President's proposal, our package costs $100 billion. The plan includes targeted aid for Homeland Security, transportation, and Medicaid. It is also more evenly distributed across all income levels.

I'm all for revitalizing our economy. But, to do so we must pass legislation that achieves that goal. Our proposal is the real answer. I encourage you to review the chart below to see the differences for working families.

Compare the Plans

Here is breakdown of the share of overall savings that each income group would receive under the Administration tax plan and our economic proposal.

Stark Calls Draft A Tool For Peace

I've joined with several colleagues in the House to introduce the Universal National Service Act, a bill to reinstate a national draft. I support this bill because it makes the point that the decision to go to war has a real human cost – a cost that I believe elected officials all too often ignore.

I remain adamantly opposed to war with Iraq. The evidence simply does not exist to warrant sending our young people to sacrifice their lives in such an effort. Despite my opposition, war is on the horizon. The President appears intent on going to war no matter what the cost.

Reinstating a national draft may seem unnecessary to some. But, it would ensure that all Americans share in the cost and sacrifice of war.

Without a universal draft, this burden weighs disproportionally on the shoulders of poor and minority populations. Having a draft that included all men and women from ages 18 to 26 would force everyone in our nation to confront the question of whether we are truly ready to bear the costs of military intervention in the Middle East or elsewhere around the globe.

Equally important, making all young Americans eligible for military service would have a deterrent effect on Congress when it comes to authorizing war. It is my understanding that out of all 535 members of the House and Senate, only one – only one – has a child enlisted in the military. Who are we to know the pain of war when our families will not directly bear the brunt of military action? Members of Congress will likely think twice about voting for war if they knew their children or grandchildren might be sent to fight in the streets of Baghdad.

Leaving No Child Behind Costs Money

The quality of our children's education is the key to their

the "No Child Left Behind Act" in 2001. This was an important

For California, cuts in Federal

Protecting and Improving Medicare – A Stark Priority

Medications are an integral part of health care today. They are as important as treatment by a doctor or a hospital stay. Yet well into the 21st century, Medicare continues to lack a prescription drug benefit.

I am committed to adding a drug benefit to Medicare that would cover the drugs beneficiaries need at prices they can afford. In the last Congress, I co-authored legislation supported by the Democrats in the House that would provide all beneficiaries with a prescription drug benefit that has a $25 monthly premium, a $100 deductible, 20% copayments and a $2000 annual out-of-pocket spending limit. We will reintroduce our bill soon.

Unfortunately, the Administration and the Majority party in Congress continue to oppose our efforts to make a prescription drug benefit part of Medicare. Instead, they argue that a prescription drug benefit can only be added to the program if significant Medicare "reform" is also part of the package.

In my mind, reform means improving Medicare so that it better meets the needs of seniors and people with disabilities. However, the Administration and the Majority party in Congress use "reform" to describe their plan to lower government spending on Medicare, even if that means raising costs for beneficiaries! In fact, they wish to privatize the Medicare program – much like they want to privatize Social Security.

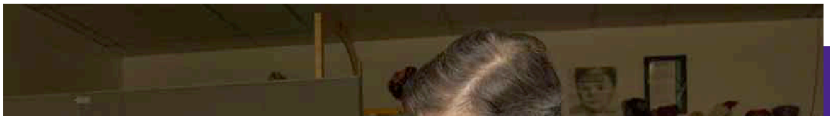
They want to move Medicare from a program in which every beneficiary is guaranteed a defined benefit package to a program in which the federal government pays a fixed price for seniors to go and find a private health plan if they can. What plan a senior would participate in would depend upon whether plans participate and on his or her ability to pay the premium the plan charges.

Medicare was created because the private health insurance industry refused to provide seniors with affordable coverage. The President's reform would return us to those dark days and undermine our promise of health and financial security for all.

I fear that the Administration and Republicans in Congress will hold prescription drug coverage hostage to these so-called "reforms." Their price for an insufficient Medicare drug benefit will be the end of Medicare as we know it. Instead, I'll work to protect Medicare and to modernize it in the way that seniors need and deserve.

No Child Behind, continued

means of budget cutting. Such



Stark Working to Protect Our Environment

As a strong advocate for the environment, I know we are facing a tough year. The President's appointees to key Federal posts overseeing environmental policy hail from interests and industries that have long fought responsible environmental stewardship. The result is no surprise. The Administration is continuing its effort to roll back long-standing protections that safeguard our environment.

In the past year, there has been substantial harm inflicted on the Clean Air and Clean Water Act that weakened sensible health and safety standards and created lax enforcement against corporate polluters. Now, they're pursuing initiatives to underme efforts to protect the forests, wilderness areas and pristine public lands that belong to all Americans.

The Administration is pursuing a score of new policies that would allow the energy industry to open up drilling and mining operations in and around wilderness areas and national parks. Of course, these efforts include seeking to open the pristine Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska to oil and gas exploration. They also want to expand the rights of snowmobilers at the expense of our national parks.

At the same time, the Administration is working to open the national forests to logging practices that threaten streams and vital habitat. They also continue to challenge landmark environmental laws, such as the "Roadless Rule law", which prohibits roads from being built in wilderness areas, thus protecting them from logging and other development.

My priority is to make sure that sensible environmental laws are enforced and that our forests and wilderness areas are protected. I have many allies in Congress, the 13th Congressional District, and around the country. We must continue to work together to ensure our environment is preserved for future generations.

PETE'S TOWN MEETINGS

Saturday February 22 2003

Let me hear your views.

FREMONT
9:00 - 10:00 am
Fremont Senior Center
40086 Paseo Padre Pkwy.

SAN LEANDRO
Noon - 1:00 pm
City Council Chambers
835 East 14th Street

HAYWARD
10:30 - 11:30 am
City Council Chambers
777 B Street

ALAMEDA
1:30 - 2:30 pm
City Council Chambers
2263 Santa Clara Ave.

Doors open 10 minutes before meetings start.