

Sen. Barbara Mikulski, *Maryland*
Sen. Barbara Boxer, *California*
Sen. Maria Cantwell, *Washington*
Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, *New York*
Sen. Dianne Feinstein, *California*



Sen. Mary Landrieu, *Louisiana*
Sen. Blanche Lincoln, *Arkansas*
Sen. Patty Murray, *Washington*
Sen. Debbie Stabenow, *Michigan*

June 21, 2006

The Honorable William H. Frist
United States Senate
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-4204

Dear Senator Frist,

We, the Democratic women of the Senate, are writing to challenge you to change direction, change the tone, and change the agenda to match the priorities of the American people.

There are approximately 50 days left in this legislative session—still plenty of time to change direction and focus instead on meeting the challenges that affect the American people in their daily lives.

To that end, we present you with our “Checklist for Change” – nine challenges that Congress can meet right now. We ask that these goals be considered during the remainder of this session of Congress:

SAFEGUARD AMERICA’S PENSIONS : Americans deserve to retire with dignity and financial security. We will continue to oppose any plan to privatize social security, because seniors deserve a guarantee rather than a gamble. Recent corporate corruption and mismanagement has shown us that we must also protect employee pension plans. The Republican Congress has stalled these efforts. For the good of all American workers, we challenge the Republican Congress to pass a clean pension reform bill.

KEEP GOOD JOBS IN AMERICA: We need a jobs agenda that fights for American workers and businesses. The flight of American jobs overseas must be reversed. Currency manipulation and the free flow of counterfeit goods from countries like China have put American workers at an unfair disadvantage for too long. We challenge the Republican Congress to enact tax policies that stop the outsourcing of American jobs, to level the international playing field by enforcing our trade agreements, and to raise the minimum wage.

MAKE COLLEGE AFFORDABLE FOR ALL: The best guarantee of a good job is a quality education. In America, 170,000 college-ready students don’t attend college each year because the cost is too high. Yet the Bush Administration has taken \$12 billion from student aid programs to pay for tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans. We challenge the

Republican Congress to increase the maximum Pell Grant, make the college tuition tax credit permanent, and cut student loan interest rates.

PROTECT AMERICA AND OUR MILITARY FAMILIES: It is our duty to care for the brave men and women who defend our nation at home and abroad. Yet the Bush Administration consistently shortchanges healthcare and other benefits for veterans, leaving many soldiers waiting a year or more for treatment. We challenge the Republican Congress to provide benefits funding for veterans and to hold hearings on mental health care and transition assistance for those coming back from war abroad.

PREPARE FOR FUTURE DISASTERS

Nearly five years after September 11th and ten months after Hurricane Katrina, the Federal Government is still woefully unprepared to deal with potential future disasters. We challenge the Republican Congress to restore disaster preparedness to cabinet-level status; to implement the recommendations of the September 11th Commission; to develop safe evacuation plans; and to reform the Stafford Act to better manage large catastrophes.

MAKE AMERICA ENERGY INDEPENDENT

America's lack of a coherent energy policy is weakening national security, hurting our pocketbooks, violating our common values and threatening our children's future. The Strategic Energy Fund bill will cut our dependence on foreign oil in half by 2025, invest in efficient energy alternatives and create good American jobs. We challenge the Republican Congress to pass the Strategic Energy Fund bill.

MAKE SMALL BUSINESS HEALTHCARE AFFORDABLE

More than 46 million Americans are uninsured. Small businesses create two out of every three new jobs in America and account for nearly half of America's overall employment, yet just 26% of businesses with 50 or fewer employees provide health insurance. The Small Employers Health Benefits Program will create affordable, private health insurance for small businesses and give parents the comfort of knowing that their children are protected. We challenge the Republican Congress to pass this crucial legislation.

INVEST IN LIFE SAVING SCIENCE


Stem cell research provides real hope for cures to many of the world's deadliest diseases. Against the wishes of the American people, the Bush Administration and the Republican Congress have blocked efforts to expand stem cell research so that scientists and doctors have every tool at their disposal to keep us healthy and safe. As a result, America trails the rest of the world in research. We challenge the Republican Congress to pass stem cell legislation this summer.


PROTECT OUR AIR, LAND AND WATER

The Bush Administration has been negligent in protecting Americans from environmental hazards. They have ignored the consensus of the best scientists in the world when it comes to the threat of global warming, and they have recklessly reduced clean ups of toxic waste at Superfund sites. We challenge the Republican Congress to pass a comprehensive science-based bill to reduce greenhouse gases and to restore funding for Superfund cleanup.

We hope that you will put these bedrock issues on the agenda, because the American people are counting on us to fight for them. We can and must do better.

Sincerely,



U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD)


U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA)

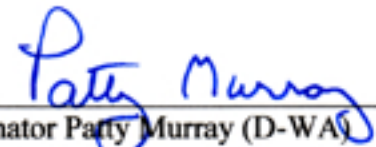

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Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY)


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