



Your Congressman Reports

Danny K. Davis

Representative in Congress

December 2004 – 7th Congressional District - Illinois

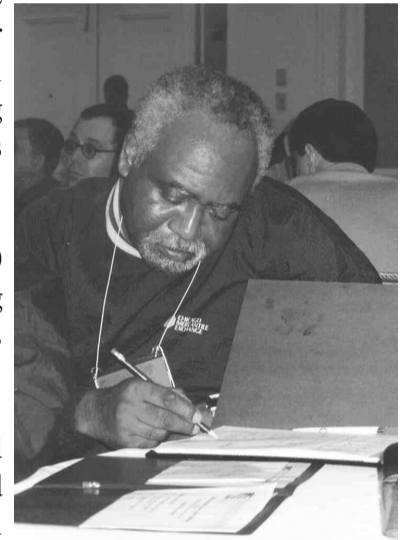
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We are at the close of the 108th Congress and end the year 2004, time to share with you some of the actions taken by me and my staff as we have worked to try and represent your interests, move the country forward and address some of the many cutting edge issues, needs and problems with confront our world today.

This has been a very challenging period locally, nationally and globally, and in spite of all our work during these past two years, five million more people lost their health insurance, four million more have been pushed into poverty, the national deficit and the budget deficit reached new highs, no transportation re-authorizing legislation was passed, no job creating legislation was passed and yet Congress was in session only 237 days of the past two years, the lowest since 1955.

Democracy continues to thrive in the 7th District where, of the more than 650,000 citizens, many continue to be actively involved in public policy decision making through voluntary associations, churches, schools, hospitals, not-for-profits, politics and other vehicles through which public policy decisions are made.

During the 108th Congress, I served on the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight and as Ranking Member of the sub-committee on Civil Service and Agency Organizations – as well as the Ranking Member of a Special Panel on Postal Reform and Oversight. I also served on the Small Business Committee and the Committee on Education and the Workforce. All of these Committees entertained important proposals, programs, ideas and legislative initiatives.



Congressman Davis prepares to speak at a townhall meeting.

Postal Reform

We were able to find relief for the Postal Service at a time when it was faced with projected short-falls which could have resulted in state closures, worker reductions (lay-offs) and reduced mail deliveries. Some pension overpayments were found and these actions were averted. We are not yet out of the woods and there is still need to reform this \$9 billion dollar quasi governmental agency. We are poised with HR 4343, the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2004, which I sponsored this Congress with Rep. John McHugh, (R-NY), Henry Waxman (D-CA) and Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA). This legislation is nearing passage and awaits further action during the 109th Congress.

Federal Employment

In the sub-committee on Civil Service and Agency Organization, I was able to point out serious disparities in the Senior Executive Level ranks of the Federal Government and have been able to work with Director Kay Cole James of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to develop a training program to recruit and develop minorities for these positions. The program is being implemented and applications are currently being taken.

My initiative also led the way for HR 5295, the "Federal Employees Dental and Vision Enhancement Act of 2004" which permits OPM to contract with qualified companies to offer dental and vision benefits to federal employees and retirees under the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program.

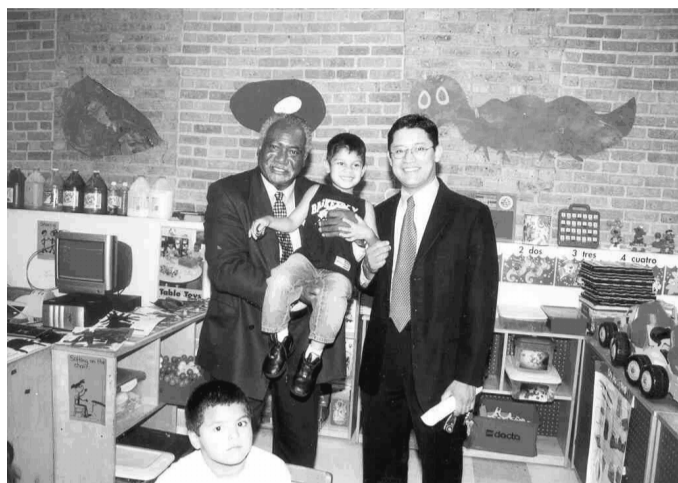
Small Business

Small Business faced a bleak future in spite of the role they play in our overall economy. There were repeated proposals to drastically reduce resources to assist further small business development. Strong displays of bipartisanship in both committee and on the floor were able to beat back most of these attempts and programs like the 7A loan program continue to live . . . for how long we can't say. At my initiative Small Business Committee Chairman Donald Manzullo (IL) visited the 7th Congressional District to conduct a Field Hearing on access to capital for small business. I've held several town hall meetings for small business persons; my staff gives technical assistance on a regular basis and we continue to be actively involved in small business policy making and small business development activity.

Education

During the 108th Congress education, and education issues, proved to be one of our most active areas of concentration. I met with all of the School Superintendents in the suburban part of the District around the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Legislation, held several town hall and education discussion group meetings, our Annual Scholarship Townhall, a College Fair Townhall and Military Academy Orientation. I nominated 10 candidates for U.S. Military Academies, visited elementary and secondary schools on a regular basis and participated with institutions of higher learning with consistency and regularity.

Headstart re-authorization generated great controversy and tremendous debate. I, along with other members, advocated fiercely for comprehensiveness and full-funding; unfortunately, we were not successful. However, I was able to have two



Congressman Davis meets with Erie Family Health Center Daycare along with EFHC Daycare director Ricardo Estrada to discuss Headstart.

amendments passed in committee which were included in the overall bill. One allowed for the development of special initiatives and programs to generate more male involvement in Headstart and the other strengthened the inclusion of culture as a part of the curriculum. The final Headstart legislation has many shortcomings which could have been overcome with additional funding and more creative thinking. This committee also handled the re-authorization of WERE and I was pleased to have an amendment passed which included ex-offenders in the hard to place category which provides additional help for them as they seek jobs and other avenues to successful re-entry.

The Congress also re-authorized IDEA - the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Funding for this legislation was much lower than what I felt was necessary; however, I was pleased that the committee saw fit to pass my amendment which dealt with the disproportionately high number of minority students, especially African American males, being placed in Special Education.

Specifically, the Davis amendment called for school districts to report disproportionate representation of population groups placed in Special Education and to develop plans and programs to change or rectify the situation. Following are excerpts from the Joint Conference Report which was agreed to by both the House and Senate.

“The Federal Government must be responsive to the growing needs of an increasingly diverse society.” “Greater efforts are needed to prevent the intensification of problems connected with mislabeling and high dropout rates among minority children with disabilities.” “More minority children continue to be served in special education than would be expected from the percentage of minority students in the general school population.” “African American children are identified as having mental retardation and emotional disturbances at rates greater than their White counterparts.” “Studies have found that schools with predominately White students and teachers have placed disproportionately high numbers of their minority students into special education.” “As the number of minority students in Special Education increases, the number of minority teachers and related services personnel produced in colleges and universities continued to decrease.”

“The Secretary shall monitor the states and shall require each state to monitor the local educational agencies located in the state (except the state exercise of general supervisory responsibility) using quantifiable indicators as are needed to adequately measure performance in the priority areas.” “In general – not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, each state shall have in place a performance plan that evaluates the state’s efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of this part and describe how the state will improve such implementation.”

Davis Suicide Prevention Bill Signed into Law by President

On October 21, 2004 President Bush signed into law the College Care and Counseling Act. The bill was sponsored by Representative Davis (IL) and Representative Tom Osborne (NE). Senators Jack Reed (RI), Mike DeWine (OH), Gordon Smith (OR), and Hillary Clinton (NY) introduced the Senate version. The bill brings national attention to the mental and behavioral health needs of students on college campuses.

The bill authorizes the creation of a new “research, training and technical assistance center” that will provide information, training and technical assistance to states, political subdivisions of a state, federally recognized Indian tribes, tribal organizations, institutions of higher education, public organizations or private not-for-profits, for a range of services and support related to youth suicide.

The bill identifies the youth population in need of services as those from ages 10 to 24. Entities eligible to apply for the \$3 million dollars authorized for the technical assistance center include public or non-profit private entities. The bill establishes a new Section 520E-2 on Mental and Behavioral Health Services on campus. This section authorizes competitive grants to enhance services for students with mental and behavioral health problems that can lead to school failure, such as depression, substance abuse and suicide attempts so that students will successfully complete their studies.

Davis Sickle Cell Treatment Bill Signed by President into Law

On October 22, President Bush signed into law tax legislation which also included H.R. 1736 the Sickle Cell Treatment Act which I introduced in the House of Representatives with Richard Burr (NC). Senator James Talent (MO) introduced this same bill in the Senate with Senator Charles Schumer (NY). This legislation will expand treatment services through Medicaid for citizens suffering from Sickle Cell Disease, an inherited blood disorder that is a major health problem in Illinois and the United States, especially for African Americans. More than 2.5 million Americans have the Sickle Cell trait. In Illinois, nearly 4,000 African Americans live with the Sickle Cell Disease every day.

This important legislation expands health care services to thousands of people suffering from this cruel and debilitating disease. Through this act \$45 million dollars is provided over a five year span through Medicaid and authorizes an additional \$50 million in grants over a five year period to qualified entities. More specifically, Federal matching funds for Sickle Cell Disease related services under Medicaid provides expanded treatment opportunities for those afflicted with Sickle Cell Disease and states receive a 50/50 match for non-Medicaid expenses related to Sickle Cell Disease treatment such as genetic counseling. Additionally, the bill creates 40 Sickle Cell Disease Treatment Centers across the country and establishes a national Sickle Cell Disease Research Headquarters through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Criminal Justice Issues Remain A High Priority for the 7th District and the Nation

During the 108th Congress I continued my work towards reforming our approach to criminal justice. With support from the White House, Representative Rob Portman (R-OH) and I introduced HR 4676, the Second Chance Re-Entry Act. This bill is a scaled down version of HR 2166, the Public Safety, Ex-Offender Self Sufficiency Act. I fully expect the Second Chance for Entry Bill to be passed in the 109th Congress.

We have continued to hold town hall meetings to highlight problems associated with prisoner re-entry and to promote awareness around the need for Criminal Justice Reform. Recognizing the correlation between drug use and Criminal Justice issues I continued to speak out on the House floor for drug treatment on demand. I shall continue to promote treatment rather than jail for individuals addicted to drugs and *my first town hall meeting in 2005 will be on this subject, January 11, 2005, 7:00 p.m. Salvation Army, 105 South Ashland, Chicago.*



Congressman Davis discusses bringing a pilot program to an Illinois Federal prison with celebrated movie actress Catherine Bell

7th Congressional District Community Health Centers Lead the Way

As an active advocate for Community Health Centers in the U. S. House of Representative and as an enthusiastic member of the House Congressional Community Health Center Caucus, I was very pleased to draw the attention of the Members of the House to the remarkable success in narrowing the longstanding health gap that has plagued African American, Hispanic and other minorities demonstrated by community, migrant and homeless health centers according to a report from George Washington University Medical Center's School of Public Health and Health Services. The report, "Reducing Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities - Estimating the Impact of High Health Center Penetration in Low Income Communities" documents the tremendous progress Health Centers have achieved in helping African Americans, Hispanics and other Minorities live longer that health centers are doing a remarkably effective job at providing the right kind of care regardless of anyone's race, income, insurance coverage, location or primary language. The study also pointed out that states with the highest levels of health center users showed the most dramatic reductions in minority health disparities. In the case of Black/White disparities, high penetration of health centers in the area accounted for a substantial narrowing of the gap in infant mortality, prenatal care and age adjusted death rates.

The 7th District of Illinois is fortunate to have one of the strongest networks of community health centers in the nation. This bodes well for the likelihood and possibility that further reductions can be made and that much of the infrastructure is in place to facilitate additional progress. Community Health Centers are not-for-profit corporations, receive base federal funding, must have patients and neighborhood residents as a part of their governing structure and are eligible for Medicare, Medicaid and other competitive Federal grants.

Veterans

Our office has worked consistently with veteran groups to improve services within our region. We now join with my colleagues in the House and Senator Durbin in calling for a full investigation of the treatment of veterans with disabilities in Illinois. I fought vigorously to retain Lakeside Hospital as an operating inpatient VA medical facility. That did not happen; however I am pleased to note that the land will be used by Northwestern Medical Center and the Chicago Rehabilitation Institute for medical purposes.

Low Income Energy Assistance

As winter sets in, energy assistance looms higher and higher as a concern. Unfortunately, the Omnibus Appropriations Bill woefully shortchanges need, especially in the Midwest and Northeast. There was no comprehensive energy program passed; therefore we can expect LIHEAP monies to run out long before the needs are met. As that begins to happen I will be pushing for a supplemental appropriation to help keep our people warm.

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is the *number one* health issue facing the African American Community. We account for 66% of all newly reported HIV infections and over 50% of all AIDS diagnoses. AIDS is the leading cause of death among African American women ages 25 to 34, and men ages 35 to 44. It is estimated that by the end of December 2004 more than 185,000 African American will have died from AIDS.

I have continued efforts to reduce the number of people becoming infected with the HIV virus through education. This past World AIDS Day I hosted a town hall meeting: TEST OUT World AIDS Day – Health Fair 2004. The event brought together a number of health providers in the district to not only test individuals for HIV, but there were also other important health screenings including stroke, diabetes, blood pressure, visual, and STDs. The event was well attended by over 300 hundred community residents from all backgrounds, both young and old alike. One hundred and thirty eight individuals were tested for the HIV virus . . . including myself.

Housing

The need for affordable housing continues to exist as a high priority for the 7th District. To that end, I have supported facilitating every measure to come before the House during the 108th session of Congress. Conversely, I have opposed every measure which would have cut public housing or make it more difficult to pursue development of affordable housing for low and moderate income individuals.



Congressman Davis discusses affordable housing with Chicago Housing Commissioner Jack Markowski, 24th Ward Alderman Michael Chandler, Illinois Housing Development Authority Executive Director Kelly King_Dibble and 7th District proud new homeowner Valencia Williams



Congressman Davis discusses Public Housing issues with Chicago Housing Authority Representatives, CAC Member Ms. Betty Houton (ABLA), CAC Treasurer Ms. Mary Baldwin (Rockwell), CAC Charman Ms. Mary Wiggins (Wash Park), Ms. Marion Dandy (ABLA)

U.S. House of Representatives
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