



Your Congressman Reports

Danny K. Davis

Representative in Congress

December 2005 – 7th Congressional District - Illinois

As we approach the end of 2005, it is once again time to share with you, my constituents, some of the legislative and programmatic activities, issues, priorities and concerns with which I have been involved during the latter half of the year.

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Congressman Davis, Ruby Lofton and volunteers prepare to load supplies on a truck bound for Katrina survivors.

7th District Responds to Katrina

Like residents of all areas throughout the country, 7th Congressional District government officials, clergy persons, community leaders, business persons, institutions, social service agencies, community organizations and Mr. and Mrs. Citizen all went into high gear and gave their hearts as well as their worldly possessions to help storm victims in Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana. Relief drop off centers were established throughout the District and truckload after truckload of clothing, food supplies, water and money contributions were sent to the affected areas.

As the Congressperson for this area, I am indeed proud of the outstanding and generous response displayed by our community.

Legislative Activities in Response to Katrina

On September 15, with Congressman Bobby Rush, I introduced the Hurricane Victims Emergency Shelter Act of 2005, a bill to require the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to make single family properties held by the Department pursuant to foreclosure under the FHA mortgage insurance program available for occupancy by families displaced by Hurricane Katrina. The bill was referred to the Committee on Financial Services.

On November 4, I introduced HR 4237, The Preservation of Local Government Act, a bill to ensure that local governments can function in the case of a declared emergency or major disaster. The bill was referred to twelve different committees of jurisdiction.

On November 2, as a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, under the leadership of Chairman Mel Watt of North Carolina, we introduced HR 4197, the Recovery, Reclamation, Restoration, Reconstruction and Reunion Act of 2005. This is the most comprehensive legislative response to Katrina that has been proposed in either the House or Senate. It provides for the recovery, reclamation, restoration and reconstruction of lives and communities and for the reunion of families devastated by Hurricane Katrina. It addresses the issues of poverty exposed by Hurricane Katrina. The bill was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means.

Davis Opposes Entitlement Program Cuts

Since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and budget reconciliation talks began, practically all that we have heard relative to budgets in Congress has been cut, cut and cut. As I observed in a speech on the House floor, “. . . if all that you do is cut, cut, cut and cut, all that you get is blood, blood, blood and more blood. The blood of the American people will be on the hands of those who held the knife.”

Much of the debate in the House during the past three months has been around the majority's proposal to cut mandatory programs by \$50 billion over the next five years. Just the idea of these draconian measures is enough to send chills up and down one's spine because we are talking about programs that provides basic assistance to vulnerable, low income families and individuals.

We are talking about programs that provides help to low income families with disabilities, make use of the Earned Income Tax Credits, the Supplemental Security Income Program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and individuals who are indeed elderly. Proposed cuts include \$11.9 billion to Medicaid. Just imagine what this will do to the more than twenty hospitals, the dozens of health centers and private physicians practices in our district. Imagine the large number children and poor people who will not be able to access adequate health care.



Congressman Davis welcomes constituents Cliff Kelly and Wallace Davis to his office to discuss budget priorities.

Student loans have been targeted for \$14.3 billion. Look at all of the students who will not be able to attend the more than twenty colleges, universities, medical schools, law schools and other professional and technical training institutes throughout our district and throughout the state. Child support faces cuts of \$4.9 billion. Imagine what will happen to the large number of children in our district being raised by single mothers and how difficult it will be for them to receive support payments. Foster care is threatened with \$577 million in cuts. Our district has one of the highest percentages of children in foster care in the nation. Any reduction of funds in this area will seriously imperil our ability to provide and care for these children.

Food stamps are scheduled for a cut of \$844 million. The 7th District of Illinois has more than 33,000 households receiving food stamp assistance, any diminution of these resources will make it more difficult to meet the increasing needs of individuals who are unemployed, laid off from their jobs and having difficulties with acquiring the basic necessities to sustain life.

I am strongly in favor of our government operating on sound fiscal policies, **in favor** of reducing the deficit to the extent prudent and possible, **in favor** of rebuilding the areas damaged by Katrina and Rita, but **I am not in favor** of continuing to throw money away on a war that we never should have started in the first place and **not in favor** of continuing to give huge tax cuts and breaks to the wealthiest 1% of the population.

I am in favor of budget reconciliation; but not on the backs of the poor, the needy and most vulnerable sections of our society. Therefore, I could do nothing less than oppose the "Deficit Reduction Act of 2005."

Ex-offender Re-entry



Congressman Davis, Congresswoman Tubbs-Jones, Congressman Cannon and Governor Ehrlich testify on Second Chance Act of 2005

With more than 650,000 individuals returning home from jails and prisons each year and with more than 40,000 of them in the state of Illinois some of my legislative work has been to try and help these individuals make a successful transitions back into productive, self-sufficient and normal life.

I hosted in cooperation with Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court Dorothy Brown and States Attorney Richard Devine an expungement summit at the Austin High School, 231 North Pine Street, Chicago where more than three thousand men and women were assisted by volunteer lawyers, law school students and members of the Illinois Prisoner Review Board.

On October 20, I held another one of these summits at the St. Paul Church of God in Christ at 4526 South Wabash, where approximately 2,000 individuals were assisted by volunteer lawyers from the Cook County Bar Association, the Cabrini Legal Clinic, law schools, private practice lawyers, the Clerk of the Circuit Court's Office and members of the Illinois Prisoner

Review Board.

These numbers indicate how serious the problem is and on November 3, 2005, I was pleased to testify with Representative Chris Cannon of Utah, Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones and Maryland Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. on my bill, the "Second Chance Act of 2005" before the sub-committee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security of the House Committee on Judiciary.

There is a growing national movement in corrections embracing offender re-entry and we are pleased that the 7th District of Illinois has been at the fore-front of this movement. Prognosis for passage of this legislation is good.

Education and Child Welfare Activity



Congressman Davis discusses child welfare issues with two of his constituents.

As a member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce and as Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus' Child Welfare Braintrust, I have been actively engaged and involved in issues related to these areas.

Increase the number of minority male teachers. On the House Floor, I offered an amendment directing the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop and implement an outreach program to train and recruit African American men to become Headstart teachers. This amendment passed the House and was included in the final bill by a vote of 401-14.

Increase participation of grandparents and relatives in Headstart. In Sub-Committee, I had an amendment accepted that recognized the expanding role of grandparents and other relatives as primary caregivers in children's lives and encourages grandparents and relatives to play active roles at the Headstart center, in the classroom and as volunteers.

To promote educational attainment. In Committee and from the House floor, I offered an amendment to provide economic incentives either in the form of scholarships or competitive salaries to increase the number of Headstart Teachers with degrees.

Recognize that mental health is critical to preschool learning. Within Committee, I worked closely with Committee staff to include language giving an agency the ability to provide mental health services in several areas within the bill.

Maintain discrimination free Headstart Centers. Unfortunately, the final Headstart Bill allows for discrimination in hiring Headstart personnel. This is the first time that Congress has acted specifically to repeal civil rights protections against discrimination.

Reinstate the power of parents in governing Headstart. It is also regrettable that the final Headstart Bill makes the Parent-led Policy Council secondary to the Governing Board.

Child Welfare Initiatives

According to the 2000 census more than six million children across the country are living in households headed by grandparents and other relatives. Many of these children have parents who have died, are in prison, or suffering from substance abuse, while some have been taken out of abusive homes.

Every case is different and unique in its own way; however, obtaining safe and affordable shelter is a serious concern for many relative caregivers, especially older adults who inherit children unexpectedly. Grandparents and other relatives raising children save taxpayers more than \$6.5 billion each year by keeping families together and keeping children out of foster care. These caregivers of our nation's children need our support to continue this invaluable work

In 2000, Illinois 7th District had the second highest percent of children in the nation living in grandparents headed households, 17.9% of all children. If one considers children being raised by other relatives in addition to grandparents the percent goes up to 22% of children, with 17.6% of children in Chicago living in grandparent or other relative households.

With these statistics in mind and upon the advice and recommendation of my child welfare advisory committee, I have introduced five bills.

- HR 3379 (7/21/2005) The "Stronger Families Act" would encourage states to improve their rates of placing children in permanent homes via the path that best meets the children's needs, be it reunification or adoption.
- HR 3380 (7/212/2005) The "Guardian Assistance Promotion and Kinship Support Act." Would provide support and assistance to guardianship and kinship care families - for example, by providing monthly financial payments and helping families access eligible services.
- HR 3471 (7/21/2005) "Strengthening the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program" would help children transition from foster care to self sufficiency by making states provide adolescents information on the full range of services for which they are eligible.
- HR 3470 (7/21/2005) The "Accountability of Foster Care Act would improve state performance information related to how well child protection and child welfare programs are working.
- HR 3628 (7/21/2005) The "Education Begins at Home Act" would create the first dedicated funding stream to support parents with young children through quality home visitation at the state and local levels.

Amendment to Welfare Reform legislation. During reauthorization of welfare reform, I offered an amendment to address an oversight in current law that adversely affect non-parent caregivers by applying rigid work provisions when the requirements are not relevant and am currently working with the majority leadership to try and work these provisions into the final welfare legislation.

I spearheaded a letter to the Department of Health and Human Services opposing their proposed regulation that would prohibit the government from reimbursing states for managing cases with children in unlicensed foster care homes.

Letter in support of funding for housing for grandparent caregivers. In 2003, an important law was passed that addressed some of the housing challenges to grandparents and other relative caregivers. The LEGACY bill (Living Equitably Grandparents Aiding Children and Youth) created housing specifically for kinship care providers and trained HUD personnel regarding the needs of these caregivers. Unfortunately, the programs were not funded. So I spearheaded an effort to request that the Appropriations Committee fund these important projects.

Housing Activities

Since the initiation of the With Ownership Wealth (WOW) program, I have been actively engaged in several processes to generate home ownership and affordable housing for low income residents. We have finished a program with the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) which resulted in 77 low income families being able to purchase homes through a \$15,000,000 mortgage fund with low interest rates and subsidies form the City of Chicago and IHDA which could total as much as \$70,000 per family.

I have also been actively involved in efforts to save the 2100 housing units in the North Lawndale Community which were HUD sponsored and fell upon hard times through its local managing partners. Plans are underway for several other housing and development organizations to obtain the properties and operate them to the benefit of low income residents. I have also

been actively involved with efforts to make the North Lawndale Community the recipient of a Fannie Mae initiative to help build affordable housing and other economic development activities in the North Lawndale area. These planning and development efforts are taking place with the City of Chicago, Steans Family Foundation, Alderman Michael D. Chandler and the Chicago Westside Branch NAACP.

The 7th Congressional District Fares Well in 2006 Transportation Bill

Many people feel that the purpose of government is to determine who gets what, how and when. If that is the case, then the 7th Congressional District of Illinois can be pleased with the way it was treated in the recently passed transportation bill. Included in this description are projects which I made direct requests for, as well as those which were requested by the Governor, our United States Senators, the City of Chicago and the County of Cook.



Davis requested projects funded were:

\$832,000	Chicago Children’s Museum – Establish a transportation exhibit at Navy Pier	Congressman Davis and suburban officials announce transportation grants. First row (left to right) David Polk — President, Village of Oak Park; Vanessa Moritz —Village Clerk, Village of Forest Park; Frank Paris —President, Village of River Forest; Michael Esposito —Mayor, Village of Berkeley; Paul Gattuso —Mayor, Village of Westchester; Angelo Luciano —Trustee, Village of Westchester; Frank Pasquale (behind Congressman Davis) —Mayor, Village of Bellwood; Brian Sims —Acting Village Manager, Village of Maywood; Michael Ciavattone —Trustee, Village of Bellwood.
\$1,600,000	Museum Campus – Construction of a traffic circle to reduce congestion	
\$800,000	Village of Maywood – upgrade roads	
\$800,000	Village of River Forest – replace bridge Harlem Avenue	
\$800,000	Village of Forest Park – upgrade roads	
\$800,000	Village of Berkeley – upgrade roads	
\$800,000	Village of Hillside – improve roads	
\$1,024,000	Village of Westchester – improve	
\$800,000	Village of Bellwood – St. Charles Road improvement	
\$800,000	Village of Oak Park – Oak Park cap	
\$800,000	CHA - Henry Horner Homes – Street construction	
\$480,000	CHA - Francis Cabrini/W Green Homes – Street construction	
\$440,000	CHA - Robert Taylor Homes – Street construction	
\$836,000	Pace Suburban bus – Purchase buses	
\$41,800	Village of Maywood – Purchase bus	
\$400,000	Resurfacing Congress Parkway	
\$480,000	Chicago River Walk Reconstruction	
\$480,000	Halsted bridge over North Branch of Chicago River	

Requested by others:

\$4,000,000	Village of Oak Park – Oak Park cap
\$480,000	Construction of 43 rd Street Bicycle Pedestrian bridge over Lake Shore Drive
\$1,000,000	Elmwood Park, Franklin Park, Northlake, Oak Park, River Forest, River Grove and Stone Park road improvements
\$750,000	Loyola University – Chicago vehicular pedestrian right of way
\$10,000,000	Engineering, pre-construction and construction of North-South Wacker Drive
\$1,250,000	CTA - Cermak Road bus/rapid transit improvements

After all is said and done, the 7th Congressional District is slated to receive \$64,034,600 from the transportation bill for its roads, bridges, sidewalks, buses and other transportation projects.

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