

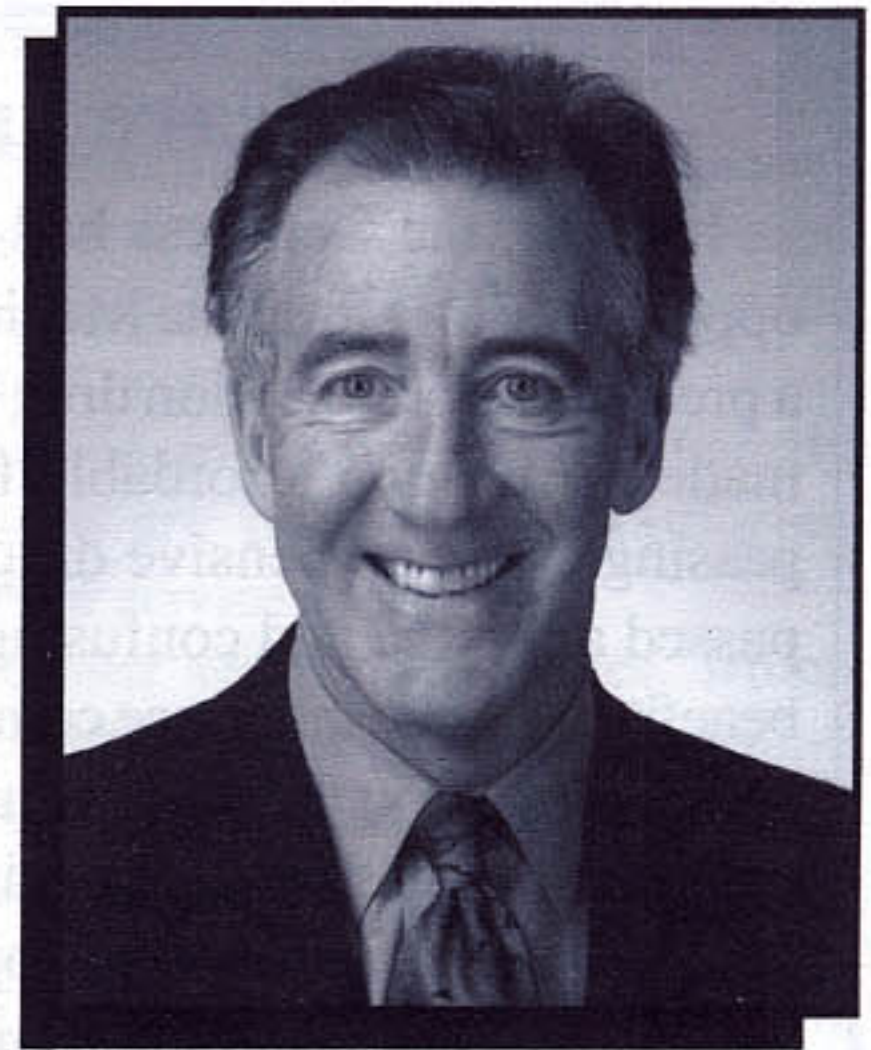
CONGRESSMAN RICHARD E. NEAL

Report from Washington, D.C.



To Worcester and Norfolk Counties

Winter 2006



Dear Friends:

From time to time, I like to communicate with you directly to update you on current events and issues that might be of interest to you.

It is the beginning of the Second Session of the 109th Congress and I anticipate a busy spring in Washington, D.C.

The primary issues immediately confronting this Congress will deal with the federal budget. The annual budget process began in early February with the introduction of the President's budget proposal. Congress has the power of the purse in our federal system and immediately upon reconvening for the year began conducting committee hearings in an effort to develop its fiscal year 2007 budget.

I, along with many people in our country, am deeply frustrated by the budget process in Washington these days. Budget constraints are tight and the need to reduce the growing federal deficit is great. Yet we are only now beginning to understand the true impact of and costs associated with the damage caused by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma. We are fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, with no immediate end in sight. And domestically, while the needs for quality health care, education, and retirement security continues to grow, the Congress continues to give unprecedented tax cuts to the wealthiest among us. Cumulatively, it just doesn't add up.

I continue to meet in Washington and throughout the district with people who are concerned about the fate of the important federal programs they rely upon in this budget-cutting climate. I enjoy hearing from them, and encourage you to contact one of my three offices if my office can ever be of specific assistance on an issue that is dear to you or a member of your family.



Congressman Neal last year secured more than \$1,300,000 in federal support for bike trails and pedestrian walkways, which will serve the communities of Southbridge, Sturbridge, Dudley and Webster. Pictured here are State Representative Mark Carron, Congressman Neal, Roderick Murphy Sr., a developer of the Southbridge Cannery project, and Jonathan Krach of the Vienna Restaurant in Southbridge, examining the current railroad tracks which will become part of the trail.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard E. Neal".

RICHARD E. NEAL
Member of Congress

Check out my website at www.house.gov/neal

Medicare and You

In 2003, the Congress had before it the historical opportunity to reform the Medicare program to include a predictable prescription drug benefit that would have made medication affordable for seniors. Instead of passing a comprehensive drug benefit, the Congress passed a limited and confusing drug plan that largely benefits drug and insurance companies.

I didn't support the Republican bill because I thought it fell short in providing seniors with a comprehensive drug benefit. Yet regardless of my opposition to the bill, the Medicare prescription drug plan (Medicare Part D) went into effect at the beginning of the year. You should know that my office can be of assistance to seniors in helping them navigate this complicated new system.

Seniors can enroll for the prescription drug benefit until May 15, 2006 without penalty. Many seniors have already been in touch with my office to express their confusion about this new plan, or to seek my assistance. I encourage you to call my office if you have questions about the new Medicare prescription drug plan.

In addition, there are several other numbers seniors can call to get accurate and helpful information on the new drug benefit and they are listed here.

*The Shine Program, the state health insurance counseling program for the elderly and disabled adults in MA, is administered by the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Consumers can call: 1-800-AGE-INFO (1 800 243-4636).

*Hampden County SHINE Program

Springfield Department of Elder Affairs
1600 East Columbus Avenue
Springfield, MA 01103
(413) 750-2893

*Worcester County SHINE Program

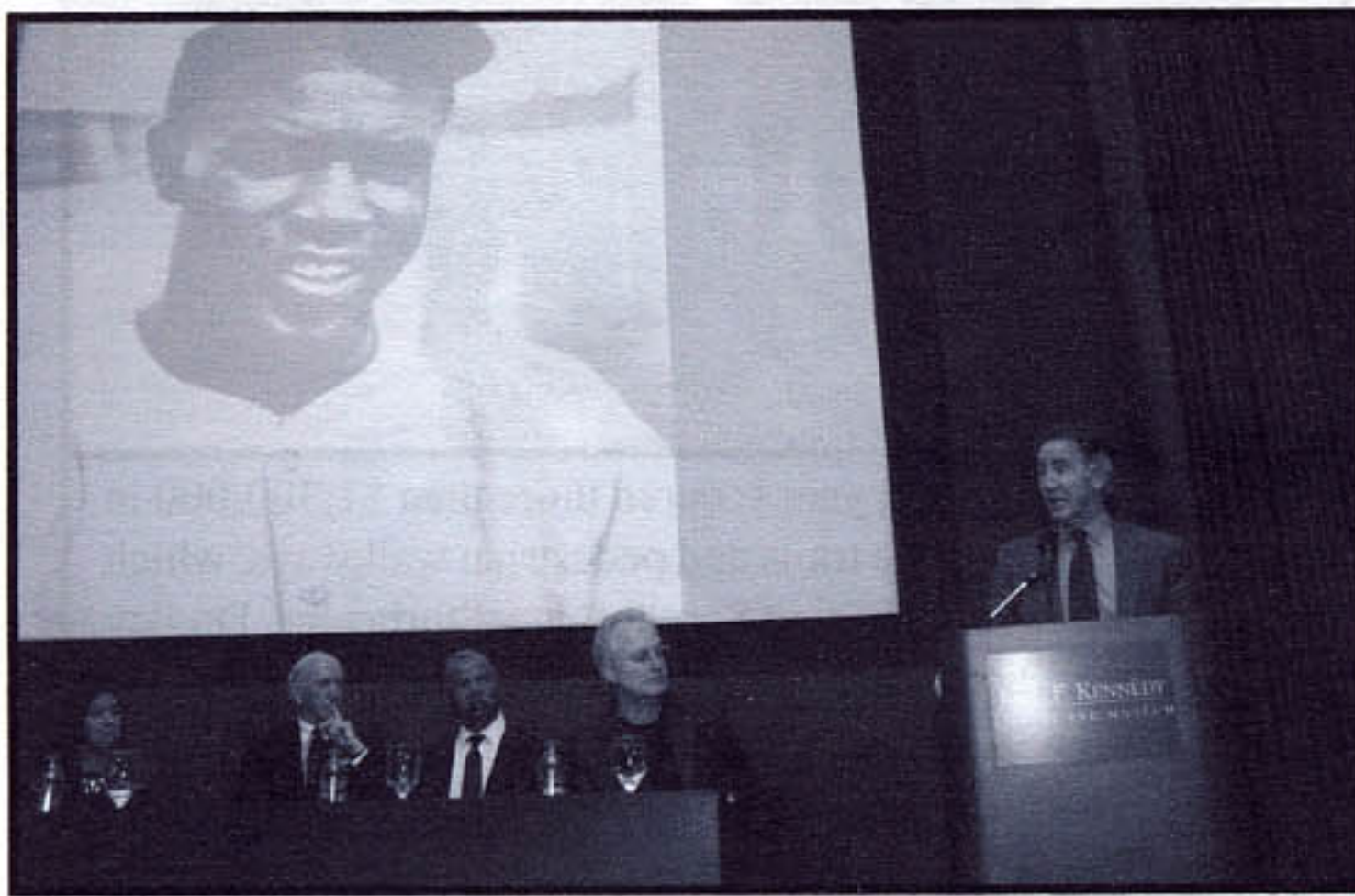
Central Massachusetts Association of
Councils on Aging
C/O The Milford Council on Aging
60 North Bow Street
Milford, MA 01757
(508) 422-9931

*Medicare

(800) MEDICARE (800 633-4227)
<http://www.medicare.gov/>

*Social Security (800) 772 1213

<http://www.ssa.gov/prescriptionhelp/>



Congressman Neal recently sponsored legislation in Congress to award baseball legend and civil rights hero Jackie Robinson with the Congressional Gold Medal, which he received posthumously last March. He is speaking here at the John F. Kennedy Library this year at a forum featuring the Boston Red Sox about that significant recognition of Jackie Robinson's legacy.

The Environment and ANWR

I am pleased to report that efforts in the past year to open Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to oil and gas drilling have failed. The latest attempt to open ANWR to drilling occurred in December when the House passed its 2006 Defense Appropriations bill including drilling provisions. Fortunately, the Senate did not follow suit and the final negotiated House-Senate legislation excluded ANWR drilling provisions.

A decision to drill in ANWR deserves to be debated and voted upon on its own merits and not done through budgetary tactics such as using appropriations bills. I have been a consistent opponent to opening ANWR to energy development and my constituents have overwhelmingly expressed their opposition as well. The benefits to opening ANWR to drilling are minimal and would be far outweighed by the environmental threat to wildlife species.

We need to establish public-private partnerships to harness America's ingenuity and innovativeness, which will promote greater use of renewable and efficient energy. Doing so will not only lessen our reliance on environmentally harmful fossil fuels but also create new economies benefiting both consumers and business.

April 30, 2006 - Academy Day

On April 30, 2006, I will be hosting Academy Day, an informational seminar in my district for high school students who are interested in learning more about the United States service academies and the nomination process.

This informational session is an event geared primarily for high school juniors who are interested in exploring opportunities within military or service academies.

Representatives from the four service academies, which include the United States Military Academy at West Point, United States Naval Academy, United States Air Force Academy, and the United States Merchant Marine Academy will be at the event.

In addition, representatives from the United States Coast Guard Academy, the Massachusetts Maritime Academy, Norwich University, and the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) will also brief attendees.

This seminar will take place on April 30, 2006 at Westover Air Reserve Base in Chicopee, Massachusetts



Congressman Neal enjoys hearing the views of young people from throughout the Second District. Here, he is taking questions from students at East Brookfield Elementary School.

at noon. Because of the strict security requirements on base, participants MUST register to attend the information session. Registration forms, and more details about this event, may be found on my website: www.house.gov/Neal, or by calling my Springfield district office.

Congressman Richard Neal's 2006 Academy Appointments Named

As of press time, the following young people from the Second Congressional District who were nominated by Congressman Neal received appointments from the following academies:

Matthew E. Cherry, Leicester, MA; United States Military Academy at West Point
Sean P. Fitzpatrick, Sutton, MA; United States Military Academy at West Point
Ashley Valanzola, Grafton, MA; United States Naval Academy at Annapolis

Congressional Arts Competition – Show Your Creativity in the Capitol!

This year marks the twenty-fifth year of the Congressional Arts Competition, a valued tradition in the Capitol that encourages creativity amongst young people. Artistic high school students from throughout the Second Congressional District are encouraged to enter the competition.

The winning entries from last year's successful competition currently hang in the Cannon Tunnel, which connects the House office buildings with the United States Capitol. This remarkable exhibit represents the combined efforts of the Members of Congress who conducted these contests and the talented students who participated in this exciting competition.

The specific guidelines about the types of artwork that qualify and competition rules are included on my website at www.house.gov/Neal. Only two-dimensional art, (not sculpture, models...) can be entered. **Artwork can be dropped off at district high schools, but MUST be received in either my Milford or Springfield district office prior to Friday, April 14th.** Contact either of my district offices to arrange for pickup of the art at your high school, or to ask more detailed questions.



Congressman Neal is photographed here with Northbridge town officials at the Rockdale Youth Center at the reopening of the center, which was closed after last October's severe floods.

Social Security and You

As a member of the Social Security Subcommittee of the Ways and Means Committee, I am on the front lines in the Congress in the Social Security debate.

Privatization of a portion of the Social Security program is once again part of President Bush's agenda. I reject privatizing any or all of Social Security because I believe that it is wrong for America and wrong for seniors. Social Security has dramatically altered for the better the quality of life for seniors in America, and should not be subjected to the uncertainties of the stock market.

Retaining the sound financial footing of our current Social Security system is my priority. Undoubtedly, the current system will need to be amended periodically to preserve its solvency, as it has been several times in the past. But we can accomplish that in a manner that will allow it to function through the retirement of the baby boomers and for many years to come.



Congressman Neal met Senator Stephen Brewer, Representative Anne Gobi, and Spencer Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, Peter Adams regarding the conversion of the former David Prouty High School into housing for senior citizens. The facility recently received a \$4 million federal grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Three Offices to Serve You

I can be of assistance to you in answering your Social Security, veterans and immigration concerns. If you have questions on these or any other issues regarding the federal government, please contact any of my three Congressional offices, which are listed below.

1550 Main Street, Suite 309
The Federal Building
Springfield, Massachusetts 01103
(413) 785-0325

4 Congress Street
Milford, MA 01757
(508) 634-8198

2266 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-5601

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House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Official Business

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MAP OF THE SECOND DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS

