

Representing the 11th Congressional District
Congressman
Major R. Owens

Crown Heights • Brownsville • Flatbush • East Flatbush • Park Slope • Cobble Hill • Kensington • Windsor Terrace • Carroll Gardens • Midwood • Ditmas Park • Prospect Heights • Brooklyn Heights

Dear Neighbor:

Social Security is a program that helps all Americans and now this benefit is under serious debate.

We currently face decisions regarding Social Security, which is the single largest source of income for retirees in the United States and keeps 12 million seniors out of poverty.

On the national level African Americans, for example, are 10% of the US labor market, but 17% of the disabled workforce. Social Security matters to families of those who are disabled.

While social security is the only source of income for 22% of the retired U.S. population, 70% of all elderly people of African descent rely on it. Social Security matters for our parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles.

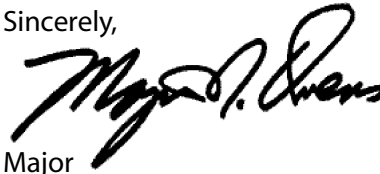
A number of cases that my office handles on social security relates to survivor benefits. The survivors are often women and children. This is because Black men have

the lowest life expectancy rates of all the major population groups. About 23% of all children receiving survivor benefits are of African descent.

Without the current Social Security funding levels, the rate of poverty among African American seniors would go from 24% to 64%. The basic fact is that the current Social Security system provides critical economic assistance for the families of African descent whose loved ones become disabled or die in the prime of their working lives.

One of the dangerous deals under consideration in Washington involves moving the age at which people reach full eligibility from 68 to 70 years of age. I look forward to hearing from you at this most critical juncture in our nation's history.

Sincerely,



Major



contact information

289 Utica Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11213

1414 Cortelyou Road
Brooklyn, NY 11226

30 Third Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11217

718-773-3100

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Washington, DC 20515

202-225-6231

www.house.gov/owens

Annual High School Congressional Art Contest

All interested high school artists in the 11th Congressional District may participate in "An Artistic Discovery", the Annual High School Congressional Art Contest by submitting their entries by 5:00 PM on Monday, May 16 to my office at 289 Utica Avenue (between Union and Eastern Parkway). The winner will be announced no later than May 20. This is a great opportunity to present talented young artists in the district. The winning art piece will be displayed in the Capitol Building in Washington D.C. for a year and the runner-up will be displayed in my office in Washington, D.C. for a year. All artwork must be original, appropriate to hang in our nation's Capitol, two-dimensional, no larger than 32 x 32 inches. For information and a complete set of guidelines contact my office at 718-773-3100.



Congressman Owens at a meeting with students of the 11th Congressional District discussing important issues that face our children in terms of the state of education in Brooklyn.

Emergency

Discussions on Social Security

In May, I will be holding a series of emergency meetings on the status of Social Security and the various reform proposals. If you have a chance, please stop by one of these meetings.

Brownsville

Thursday, May 5

6:30 PM

Brownsville Recreation Center
1555 Linden Blvd.

Flatbush

Monday, May 9

St. Francis of Assisi

6:30PM

319 Maple St.

Kensington

Monday, May 16

Office of Congressman Major Owens

6:30 PM

1414 Cortelyou Rd.



Congressman Owens at a meeting on public school education with Congressman John Lewis, Community Activist Sam Taitt and former Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer discussed education issues.

HANDLING DEPORTATION THE SMART WAY

Deportation is on the rise. My office receives calls daily from parents, children and spouses of immigrants facing deportation. Take the case of a United States Marine Corporal who after serving honorably in Iraq and being decorated for heroism found himself in deportation. My office stepped in and was able to get him released from detention and is continuing to work to get his original court martial vacated so he will not get picked up again. In a democracy everyone has rights so here are some suggestions if you have problems.

- **Don't say anything:** Do not answer ANY questions, not even your name, immigration status or country of origin. Ask to speak to an attorney.
- **Don't sign anything:** If an agent asks for your signature, ask for a copy of the papers but do NOT sign. Show the paper to your attorney.
- **Don't lie:** Say nothing or say, "**I need to speak with a lawyer first.**"
- **Ask to speak with your attorney:** You should request a letter from your attorney stating that s/he does not permit immigration agents to interview you. If they keep insisting that you answer the question, just state, "**I want to stop this interview now.**"

Helpful Organizations that can assist someone facing deportation:

Families for Freedom

2 Washington Street, 769 North
New York, NY 10004
212-898-4121

NYSDA Immigrant Defense Project

2 Washington Street, 766 North
New York, NY 10004
212-898-4132

Congressional Offices serve constituent needs as they relate to federal issues: immigration, passport, social security, military, veteran affairs, and any assistance dealing with other branches of the federal government. Given the population mix of the 11th Congressional District, 99% of casework in my office deals with immigration concerns. The word is out that the assistance that we provide brings benefits to many who have been waiting years for responses on becoming a U.S. citizen. In March 2005, we serviced 276 immigration cases. Read what your neighbors tell us:

"On behalf of my brother Joseph, we want to thank Mr. Owens for this open door policy towards his constituents. We thank you for all your help to reunite us with Edith and Edeus and their children. Thanks to your diligent work in contacting the US Consulate in Haiti, they are all here!" -- A. Pierre

"I would like to express my deep gratitude for the assistance and services provided to me by you and your staff in obtaining my green card." -- D. Watson

"I am writing this letter to express my sincere gratitude for your assistance in helping me obtain my citizenship document. This document was lost in a house fire seven years ago and I have been trying to replace it ever since. It took you and your staff just seven weeks to get the document. My sincere thanks to all." -- A. I. Jones

"Thank you very much for your input in me receiving my green card. I got it and am very grateful to your for intervening on my behalf." -- D. McMillan

Constituent Rescued from Kidnapping In Pakistan FBI, State Department & Pakistani Law Enforcement Acted in Good Faith

Most of the constituent work in my office is routine -- handling social security, military, Medicare, and immigration cases. In January of this year, our routine work turned to high drama when a constituent in Pakistan was kidnapped after ID-ing a suspect following a robbery in which his wife was tragically killed.

The constituent's family contacted my office and we in turn contacted the State Department who assigned an FBI agent to the case. Soon local Pakistani officials set up checkpoints around the city. Several suspects were arrested and one of them revealed the location of the kidnappers. The kidnappers were arrested and led the police to the shed where the constituent was finally freed after 8 days in captivity.

Visa Denial Reversed

There are countless reasons for denying a visa to a non-citizen. But when 18-year-old Hopestar, who had lost all her skin on her right arm following a tragic car accident was denied a visa for the operation that could not have been performed in Ghana, my office stepped in and the State Department issued Hopestar a humanitarian parole. She has successfully completed her surgery and is on her way to recovery.

EDUCATION ALERT: EMERGENCIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The court has ordered the New York State Legislature to give New York City schools an additional \$9.2 billion to improve school facilities and \$5.6 billion each year for operating aid. All constituents are urged to monitor the response of the legislature to the judge's order because with the Federal budget cuts NYC needs all the money it can get for education.

On the Federal side proposed cuts amount to almost \$1 billion from the NYC programs needed to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind. Other significant Federal education cuts in the 2006 budget include wiping out \$1.3 billion for all vocational education programs, \$522 million for all education technology programs, \$29 million for all civic education programs, \$225 million for the Even Start family literacy program, and \$437 million in state grants for safe and drug-free schools and communities. It is possible that the Congress will change these cuts prior to the final appropriation. In the meantime, let me know your views on education by calling my office at 718-773-3100 or E-mail me at Major.Owens@mail.house.gov.



Congressman Owens at his annual town meeting met with constituents honoring the life and achievements of Dr. Martin Luther King. Congressman Owens is pictured with Adele Trapp, who holds the record for tenure in the NYC Public School System and retired Librarian Lorrelle Henry.

Renovation Funds for One-Family Homes

The Erasmus Neighborhood Federation received a \$300,000 affordable housing grant from funds provided by DHRC'S HOME PROGRAM, which is administered by the New York State Housing Trust Fund Corporation for 20 owner-occupied units. The HOME PROGRAM uses Federal funds to expand the supply of decent, safe, and affordable housing by providing funds to acquire and rehabili-

tate homes. For 2005, \$33.5 million have been allocated for New York State. You can get up to \$20,000 to renovate your one-family home if you live in East Flatbush, Crown Heights, Brownsville and Ocean Hill.

For further information please contact Diane Joshua, Loan Coordinator at (718) 462-7700, ext. 14.

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Official Business

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Major Owens".

M.C.
Presorted Standard
W/S/ Carrier Route