

Message to Constituents

U.S. Congressman Elijah E. Cummings

Representing the 7th U.S. Congressional District of Maryland

February 9, 2005
<http://www.mail.house.gov/cummings>

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Dear Constituent:

It is both a privilege and an honor to represent you in the United States Congress. While serving you, I will continue my outreach efforts to inform you of legislative action. I welcome your advice. Government "by the people" is the cornerstone of my legislative philosophy.

To better serve you closer to home, I invite you to visit or contact one of my district offices, listed on the following pages. In Howard County, my staff and I make regular outreach visits at various community centers. We look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Elijah E. Cummings

Congressman Cummings Named Senior Whip

House Minority Whip Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Maryland), the second-highest ranking Democrat in the House, has named Congressman Cummings as Senior Whip. In this position, Congressman Cummings will play a key role in strategically uniting and impacting the votes of House Democratic Members on major legislative initiatives. The Whip mobilizes the party vote and coordinates strategy within the Democratic Caucus.

Minority Whip Hoyer said, "Congressman Cummings' knowledge of health care, education and transportation issues will be a tremendous asset to the Democratic Whip Team. I am also pleased to have another fellow Marylander join my team to help push the Democratic agenda forward for the benefit of our home state."

Congressman Cummings is one of six Democrats in the Maryland U.S. House delegation.

"I am humbled and honored to have been named as a Senior Whip and look forward to working with my good friend and distinguished colleague Congressman Steny Hoyer," Congressman Cummings said. "As key legislation often reaches the House floor without Minority input, it will be more important than ever for the House Democratic Caucus to join together in speaking up on behalf of our constituents."

During the 109th Congress, Congressman Cummings will help bring together Democratic Members as the House possibly considers votes on privatizing social security, major foreign policy issues, confronting the growing federal budget deficit, and reauthorizing the Higher Education Act, among other initiatives.

Congressman Cummings Discusses Health Care Disparities with Pres. Bush

Congressman Cummings, along with the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), met with President Bush during a historic meeting at the White House on January 26. Congressman Cummings chaired the CBC in the 108th Congress and was instrumental in securing this meeting.

"I am pleased with the outcome of our meeting with President Bush and I look forward to continuing the dialogue that was established today," Congressman Cummings said following the meeting. "At the meeting we outlined an aggressive agenda that speaks to the center of the lives of the American people."

Various Members of the 43-Member Caucus were asked to address a particular topic. As such, Congressman Cummings discussed health care disparities, which affect thousands of Baltimore City, Howard County and Baltimore County residents.

"I challenged the President to address the pressing need to eliminate healthcare disparities and close the gaps in health and healthcare delivery systems in the United States," Congressman Cummins said.

He also urged President Bush to support the *Health Care Equality and Accountability Act*, a comprehensive healthcare bill that Congressman Cummings introduced in 2003. The bill is a collaboration of the health care agenda of the CBC, Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus.

The bill would reduce health disparities and improve the quality of care for racial and ethnic minorities. More specifically, the bill would expand health insurance coverage, remove language and cultural barriers, improve workforce diversity, fund programs to reduce health disparities and improve data collection.

"I emphasized to President Bush that since this bill is not a bipartisan effort, we need his support to achieve a level of comprehensive success," Congressman Cummings said. "This legislation is a critical stepping-stone to addressing the health and healthcare needs of the underserved."

During the meeting, Congressman Cummings also discussed the devastation of HIV/AIDS within the African American community, and emphasized the importance of increasing federal funding to deal with this crisis.

The following week during his State of the Union address, President Bush adopted these very concerns by calling Congress to increase federal spending for domestic HIV/AIDS programs.

Congressman Cummings Encourages Young People to Apply for AmeriCorps

Congressman Cummings is encouraging interested constituents to apply for the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), a national service initiative that engages young adults ages 18 to 24 in full-time community service. *The deadline for applying for fall enrollment is March 15, 2005.*

Participants of the program spend 10 months traveling around the country to perform four to five community service projects such as tutoring children, preserving parks, or helping communities cope with natural disasters. For example, recently, the NCCC team helped several Maryland residents with relief and recovery efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Isabel that occurred in September 2003.

In return for their services, AmeriCorps provides housing, meals, limited health benefits, a small living stipend, and an education award of \$4,725.

"I applaud AmeriCorps participants for addressing critical needs in our communities, and I urge all interested young people to apply for this program," Congressman Cummings said.

For more information, please call (800) 731-0002 or visit www.americorps.org/nccc.

Rep. Cummings Calls for Increased Attention to Rail Security

Congressman Cummings has called for increased attention to rail security in the 109th Congress following the release of a National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Railroad Accident Brief on the CSX freight train derailment and fire that occurred in Baltimore in July 2001.

The NTSB determined that 11 of 60 cars from the eastbound CSX train derailed; four of which were tank cars. One tank car was punctured, resulting in the release of a flammable liquid, which subsequently ignited. Investigators were unable to determine the specific cause of the derailment, but the report highlights enhancements that are needed in several aspects of rail safety.

"Although no clear evidence was found that would point to a cause in the Baltimore CSX accident," Congressman Cummings said, "the investigators uncovered several deficiencies that need to be addressed in order to help prevent future accidents from occurring."

The NTSB report further confirms the findings of a May 2003 report that Congress Cummings released entitled, "Rail Safety and Security." Prepared by the General Accounting Office, the report details lapses on the nation's rail network that could pose security threats.

Based on both reports, Congressman Cummings will suggest that the House Subcommittee on Railroads (under the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee) on which he serves examine the following:

Tunnel Management: While there are federal requirements regarding the inspection of rail tracks, equipment, and bridges, there are no requirements governing the inventory and inspection of railroad tunnels and the information that exists is not easily accessible.

Tank Car Punctures: The tank car puncture in the Baltimore accident resulted in significant property damage. Other recent incidents—including a recent tragedy in South Carolina—involving the puncture of tank cars transporting toxic chemicals have resulted in fatalities.

Enhancing the Security of Rail Shipments of Toxic Inhalation Material: While there are multiple on-going efforts at the U.S. Department of Transportation and at the Department of Homeland Security to make the rail transportation of hazardous materials safer, special attention must be focused on managing the rail transportation of toxic inhalation materials through populated areas.

"Rail safety must remain a top priority as we continue to examine the security of our nation's transportation system," Congressman Cummings noted. "We must work to implement policies that will strengthen our national rail network and prevent accidents, injuries or fatalities in the future."

Congressman Cummings Facilitates Post Office Restoration

On Feb. 8th, Congressman Cummings visited the Druid Post Office at 1836 Pennsylvania Avenue in Baltimore to learn more about the facility's efforts to restore its building complex.

He met with Baltimore Postmaster Jacob Cheeks, Post Office Manager Elaine Mason, Customer Service Operations Manager Linda Byrd and District Manager W. C. Miner.

As a resident of the area served by this post office, Congressman Cummings recently witnessed severe repair needs at the facility. Subsequently, he sent the Post Office two letters urging immediate action.

"Because a post office serves as the central communication and business unit within a neighborhood, customers and employees must be presented with the best conditions in the world," Congressman Cummings said.

Following the Feb. 8th meeting, Congressman Cummings applauded the Post Office for taking major steps in making improvements to the complex's interior and exterior. The Post Office ensured Congressman Cummings that the renovations would be completed by April 30, 2005.

"Whether customers visit this post office on Pennsylvania Avenue or another location, they deserve to be provided with an efficient, effective and customer-oriented postal operation," Congressman Cummings said. "With that in mind, I fully expect the Druid Post Office to meet their deadline of April 30th."

Congressman Cummings Announces 2005 Nominees to U.S. Service Academies

On Saturday, January 29, Congressman Cummings officially announced his nominations for the United States Service Academies. The students from Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County were selected based on academic achievement, leadership potential, physical fitness, and participation in extracurricular and community activities.

Universally recognized as some of the nation's most elite colleges, the Service Academies consist of the U.S. Military Academy, U.S. Naval Academy, U.S. Air Force Academy, and U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. Students who are appointed will receive a free education valued at well over \$250,000.

This year, 33 nominations were made to the Academies through Congressman Cummings' district. A Military Service Academy Review Board formed by Congressman Cummings recommended these students for the nominations. The students who were selected will now compete for nationwide service for academy appointments.

The names and respective academies of the students are available online at www.house.gov/cummings.

At the Jan. 29 luncheon held in the students' honor at the University of Baltimore, Congressman Cummings told the group, "You are proving your capacity for greatness by making the ultimate sacrifice through service to your country. True leadership is born out of discipline, character, and determination. Because of the leadership you have demonstrated in your schools and in your communities you have become a part of the important process of creating hope for a better future."

Congressman Cummings makes nominations to the Service Academies annually. Nomination requests must be made in writing and forwarded to his office no later than November of the year preceding one's intended application. For additional information about the Academies or the nomination process, please visit the website listed above.

Congressman Cummings's District Offices

**1010 Park Avenue, Suite 105
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(410) 685-9199 and (410) 685-9399 fax

**754 Frederick Road
Catonsville, Maryland 21228**
(410) 719-8777 and (410) 455-0110 fax

Howard County Outreach Centers

First Monday of the Month:
Glenwood Library, 2350 Route 97
Cooksville, MD 21723
**Hours: 4:00PM - 6:00PM or by
appointment**

Second Monday of the Month:
Howard County Central Library
10375 Little Patuxent Pkwy.
Columbia, MD 21044
**Hours: 4:00PM - 6:00PM or by
appointment**

Second Wednesday of the Month:
Savage Library, 9525 Durness Lane
Laurel, MD 20723
**Hours: 4:00PM - 6:00PM or by
appointment**

Third Monday of the Month:
Florence Bain Senior Center
5470 Ruth Keeton Way
Columbia, MD 21044
**Hours: 9:00AM - 11 AM or by
appointment**

Fourth Monday of the Month:
Miller Branch Library, 9421 Frederick Road
Ellicott City, MD 21042
**Hours: 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM or by
appointment**