



Report to Queens

from Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney

SPRING 2010

<http://maloney.house.gov>

Winner of a "Gold Mouse" website award from the Congressional Management Foundation

Dear New Yorker,

I was proud to be part of the House majority passing Health Care Reform.

Many of the benefits of these reforms are explained elsewhere in the newsletter but I think it's worth taking a step back to understand what's been accomplished with passage of these health care reforms—something that has been obscured by the 24/7 cable environment. The simple truth is that after more than a half-century of trying, and over a year of Congressional debate, we have finally shifted the course of health care in our country in the right direction.

My goal throughout this process has been three-fold: expand coverage to the uninsured; streamline coverage and add protections for those who have insurance already; start to limit the costs of health care and improve the outcomes—without adding to the deficit.

With these reforms, we have accomplished all three. The process hasn't always been pretty, but it has been thorough: more than 100 hearings and "markups" across three different House Committees (let alone the work by the Senate). I've spent many hours of meetings reviewing every section of the final bill, and have met and talked with doctors, nurses, consumer advocates, insurance companies, and hospitals—and heard from thousands of constituents by mail, phone, fax and email.

While I vehemently and vocally opposed the restrictive abortion language in the final bill, the overall bill does so much for women and for American families that I had to vote in favor.

I and many others were concerned that these reforms be fully accounted and paid for—and we have done that. The independent, non-partisan Congressional Budget Office reviewed these reforms and determined that they will reduce the deficit by over \$100 billion over the next 10 years and by over \$1 trillion over the following decade.

These savings are significant and very much in the right direction for a health sector that regularly records double-digit cost increases each year. It will take vigilance and continued oversight to ensure these savings are realized, and I pledge to help Congress monitor costs and the impact on the deficit.

I was disappointed we weren't able to get a 'public option' as part of these reforms. But we're now heading toward a structure where tens of millions more Americans can obtain coverage regardless of whether they are old enough to qualify for Medicare, poor enough to qualify for Medicaid, wealthy enough to afford individual coverage, or fortunate enough to have a job with health benefits.

This is a sea change, and a cause for genuine celebration.

As always, please don't hesitate to contact my office if you have a question or concern.

Carolyn

HEALTH CARE REFORM PROVISIONS

Maloney initiatives included in new law

I'm proud that two health proposals I've championed were included in the final version of health care reforms; they will improve women and children's lives in both a short-term day-to-day way and also over the very long haul.

The first provision-- based on H.R. 3242, which I re-introduced last July-- will establish permanent Women's Health Offices in five federal agencies: the Department of Health and Human Services, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the Health Resources and Services Administration and the Food and Drug Administration. Giving Women's Health Offices statutory permanence will ensure that the needs and gaps in research, policy, programs, education and training in women's health will be properly-- and permanently-- addressed.

The second of my proposals included in Health Care Reforms is based upon my Breastfeeding Promotion Act (H.R. 2819), which Senator Jeff Merkley and I sponsored last year. It requires employers to provide mothers who are hourly workers with a private space and unpaid breaks during the workday for them to express milk up until a child's first birthday. The facts have been in on breastfeeding for a very long time-- significant health benefits for both mother and child-- but we've not done enough as a nation to help working mothers breastfeed. This provision will start to do that and help babies get on the proper health footing from the very start.

SMALL BUSINESSES & NONPROFITS CAN BENEFIT NOW.

Retroactive to January 1 of this year, small businesses are eligible for tax credits for the employer's portion of health insurance premiums for their employees.

The size of the credit depends on the business's average wages and number of full-time-equivalent employees (FTE's) and requires that at least half of the cost of health care coverage is paid by the employer. The full 35% credit applies to businesses with 10 or fewer FTE's and average wages below \$25,000 per year; businesses with 11 to 25 FTEs and an average wage of up to \$50,000 are eligible for partial credit. The 35% credit applies until the end of 2013; beginning 2014, the tax credit rate rises to 50%. Find out more by visiting www.whitehouse.gov/healthreform/small-business or talk to your company's tax advisor.

Small nonprofit organizations can start claiming a version of the small-business tax credit immediately, in each paycheck (unlike small for-profit businesses which must wait until year end). Nonprofits with up to 25 employees are treated as a small business and are eligible for a similar, but slightly lower tax credit-- 25% from years 2010 to 2013, and 35% beginning in 2014.

EARLY RETIREES' COVERAGE IMPROVED. Twenty years ago, in 1988, 66% of large firms provided health care coverage to their employees who retired before age 65 (when Medicare takes over). In 2008, just 31% did. This lack of coverage forces many retirees to pay exorbitant premiums or simply go without health insurance.

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How best to reach me:

Regular postal mail to the Washington office is subject to screening delays. If you'd like to reach me quickly, the best methods now are via the internet at www.maloney.house.gov or by fax at 202/225-4709.

Washington, D.C. :

2332 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515
202/225-7944

Manhattan:

1651 Third Ave., Suite 311
New York, NY 10128
212/860-0606

Queens:

28-11 Astoria Blvd.
Astoria, NY 11102
718/932-1804

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Report to New York from Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney

The new health care reforms include \$5 billion in financial assistance for employer health plans that offer coverage to early retirees. This program is temporary and will help bridge the gap until 2014 when health insurance exchanges make it easier for all Americans to access affordable health coverage. Between now and then, this program will provide insurance premium relief for employers, making it less costly to provide their retirees affordable medical coverage. Find out more at www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/fact-sheet-early-retiree-reinsurance-program

YOUNG ADULTS MAY NOW STAY ON PARENTS' POLICIES until their 26th birthday. While young adults have the highest rate of uninsuredness, one in six has a chronic illness like cancer, diabetes or asthma, and nearly half report problems paying medical bills. By staying on their parents' plans, these problems can start to be addressed. And many insurers nationwide are voluntarily implementing this portion of the health care reforms in advance of the September, 2010 implementation date for this provision. Find out more at www.hhs.gov/ociio/regulations/adult_child_fact_sheet.html

STOPPING FRAUD

■ Contractors' database takes effect

Government efficiency and effectiveness aren't just buzzwords in my office. Throughout my legislative career-- even before I served in Congress-- I've fought to save taxpayers dollars and make government work better.

One of those efforts bore fruit this year.

Officials implemented the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIS) in late April. The database, created by legislation I wrote, requires contractors to confirm any criminal, civil or administrative proceeding in which they were found at fault and update their profile on the service every six months throughout the duration of a contract.

This single database with all relevant information about Federal contractors in one location will be used by government purchasing managers and help prevent scams and stop criminals from obtaining federal contracts.

Up until now there's been little to stop an unscrupulous contractor from bouncing from one federal agency to another, scamming taxpayers at each one. This new repository places all contractor information in one place, and requires federal procurement officers to use the information in certifying a vendor. And it gives government watchdogs-- federal suspension and debarment officials-- the centralized information they need to crack down on fraudulent contractors.

THE MALONEY STIMULUS

■ Credit card reforms take near-full effect

On February 22, 2010, the bulk of my credit card reforms took effect. These landmark reforms were signed by President Obama last May.

Most important is a ban on retroactive interest rate hikes on past purchases; card issuers may now only raise rates going forward, on new purchases, and then only with 45 days' notice to the consumer, allowing a consumer time to accept or reject the rate hike and find a new card.

Other provisions taking effect include a ban on so-called double-cycle billing (where interest is charged on debt paid on time); a ban on early-morning payment deadlines; a requirement that the consumer opt-in to any over-limit fees; a requirement that any introductory promotional rate be offered for at least six months-- and that payments in excess of the minimum be applied to higher-rate debt first. In addition, card issuers who extend credit to customers under 21 years of age must obtain approval from a parent or guardian or proof that the applicant has independent means of repaying the card debt.

These provisions are a significant benefit for consumers--billions of dollars that have been kept in consumers' pockets under the new rules, rather than paid to card issuers. That's real money that consumers can use, especially as we slowly emerge from this recession. It's effectively a "mini-stimulus" program of its own!

This August, the final provisions of the law will be enacted: penalty fees will be "reasonable and proportional" to the omission or violation (as determined by the card-issuer regulator); rate hikes since January, 2009 will be reviewed by the issuer to judge whether a reduction is warranted; and new gift card regulations which will limit inactivity and service fees.

START-UP VISA ACT

■ Jump-starting job creation in America

The entrepreneurial spirit is ingrained in our country's history and success. That's why I've introduced the StartUp Visa Act, which will permit an immigrant entrepreneur to receive a two-year U.S. visa if he or she can show that a qualified U.S. investor is willing to invest a minimum of \$250,000 to the immigrant's startup venture.

If, after two years, the immigrant entrepreneur can show that at least five full-time jobs have been generated by their business in the United States, has attracted \$1 million in additional investment capital or achieved \$1 million in revenue, then he or she could apply for permanent legal resident status.

This legislation would help promote our global competitiveness and ensure a strong foundation for foreign-born, highly-skilled talent to help create American jobs and promote economic prosperity. I'm proud to be the House sponsor of this legislation introduced by John Kerry in the Senate earlier this year.

NYC DRINKING WATER PROTECTED

■ State DEP curbs natural gas drilling

The NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has issued new regulations that would require natural gas companies to conduct a separate environmental impact review for each natural-gas well it wants to drill in the Catskills watershed, which supplies drinking water to 8.2 million people in NYC.

These new regulations deal a blow to companies that use an environmentally harmful process known as hydraulic fracturing-- "fracking"-- whereby water mixed with chemicals is forced into the porous rock, forcing the natural gas out. The fracking process has led to a pattern of contamination of water wells throughout the country.

Environmentalists believe, as I do, that the waste water from the practice and the potential for the rock cracking and the drilling chemicals polluting our city's drinking water is too great a risk to take. I submitted testimony to that effect at hearings conducted by DEC in November. DEC's new regulations, while not perfect, will go a long way to making sure that New York's water remains among the purest and best in the world.

ELIMINATING THE MIDDLEMAN

■ Student loan reforms will hike education aid

Congress has changed the way student loans will be originated and administered. Beginning July 1, 2010, all new federal student loans will be originated directly from the government, instead of through a federally-guaranteed student loan program from private lenders.

Up until now, private lenders had received subsidies from the government and also a government guarantee-- making the risk to institutions which handled these loans nearly zero. By eliminating the middleman-- while still having private companies service them, using employees based in the U.S.-- an estimated \$61 billion will be saved, and the funds will go to increase Pell Grants that will be indexed to inflation; more aid to community colleges; and an improved income-based repayment plan.

In 2007-2008, about two-thirds of college students graduated with a median of \$20,000 in long-term student loan debt-- and if they then enter graduate-level programs, they often must borrow more. Find out more at <http://edlabor.house.gov/blog/2009/07/student-aid-and-fiscal-respons.shtml>

MATTHEW SHEPARD ACT

■ Maloney provision on hate crimes passed

Our society only counts what it cares about. That's why I introduced the Hate Crimes Statistics Improvement Act, which would require local law enforcement agencies and the FBI to report and compile statistics on the incidence of gender-based hate crimes nationwide. My bill was incorporated into S. 909, the Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Prevention Act, which was signed into law in October.

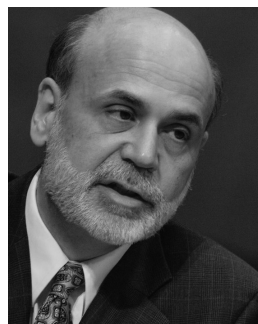
"...We'll be able to see, before any new contract is awarded, whether a company plays by the rules, how well they've performed in the past: Did they finish the job on time? Did the company provide good value? Did the company blow their budget? It's your money, so you deserve to know how it's spent and who these contracts are going to."

—President Obama on the new federal contractors' database

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

■ Monitoring the 'Great Recession'

As Chair of the Joint Economic Committee for the 111th Congress, I've made one word the center of our focus: jobs.



This year, the committee has conducted hearings which gathered insight from leading economists and business leaders on ways to create jobs and support continued economic growth. In mid-April, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke (left) testified that in his view, our economy is "building momentum" and--

referencing the health care reforms-- that anything done to help reduce the cost of health care would help the functioning of the overall economy.

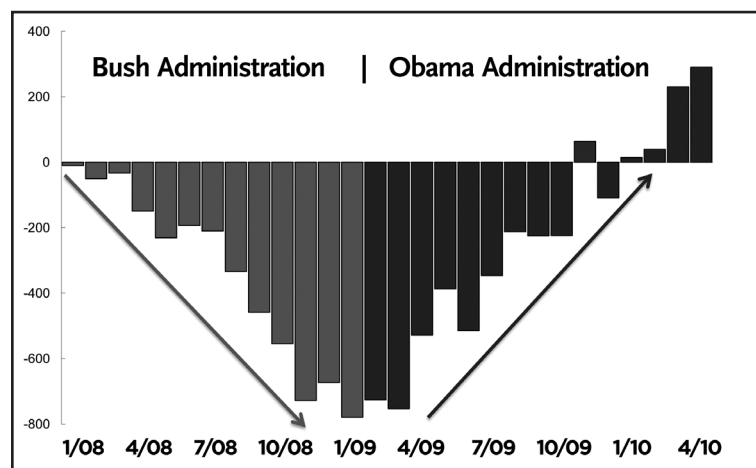
The committee has also published a research reports on unemployment in the African-American and Hispanic communities, the fate of working mothers in the Great Recession, and soon we will publish a report on the recession's effect on younger Americans.

Our most recent report concludes that the U.S. should increase its support of basic research so that the next generation of innovation can be identified, cultivated and harvested-- which will create new industries, spur job creation, and fuel economic growth. "The Pivotal Role of Government Investment in Basic Research" can be downloaded at <http://bit.ly/dOLyCn>

IMPROVING JOB MARKET. The Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics presents the monthly employment report to the JEC. At our May 7th hearing, we received some particularly good news: the economy added 290,000 jobs in

MONTHLY CHANGE IN NONFARM PAYROLL

Seasonally adjusted; January 08 – April 10



April-- the strongest monthly job creation since March, 2006. Employers have added jobs every month so far in 2010-- and these job gains have been spread across nearly every industry. We still have a long way to go before we recoup the 8.4 million jobs lost to the Great Recession, but we are trending in the right direction. As you can see from the chart above, job losses "peaked" in the Bush administration's last month in office, when the economy shed a staggering 779,000 jobs.

Since January 2009, job losses have turned into job gains. The clear "V" shape of this chart does not stand for victory yet, but it is a vivid reminder of how far the nation has come. It's not a coincidence. We in Congress took action--by passing the Worker, Homeownership & Business Assistance Act, which expanded the first-time homebuyer tax credit and enhanced small business tax relief; the HIRE Act, which provides tax incentives for businesses that hire out-of-work Americans; and the Disaster Relief and Summer Jobs Act of 2010, which the House of Representatives passed to support an additional 300,000 summer jobs for young workers. These are all giving employers the confidence to hire again.

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

■ Fighting deceptive Census mailers

As the former Ranking Member of the House subcommittee with jurisdiction over the last census in 2000, last fall I started to receive reports of mailings labelled "Official Document - Do Not Destroy" on the envelope and "Congressional Census registered to:" above the recipient's name and address.

These mailings were not official government census documents. Rather, they were fundraising appeals sent by non-government entities. For many-- especially those for whom English is a second language and those who've never

completed a census form before-- these mailings are truly confusing. The census is simply too important to our government to allow this kind of crass deception to be tolerated.

The damage is beyond mere confusion-- if, when the actual census questionnaire is received, it is ignored, that costs tax dollars, because every uncompleted census document triggers a visit from an official Census enumerator.

When the Postal Service would not stop these recent mailings, I immediately joined with the current Chair of the Census Subcommittee, Wm. Lacy Clay (MO), and the current Ranking Minority Member, Darryl Issa (CA), to introduce H.R. 4621 in February with bipartisan support and shepherded it through to unanimous passage in both the House and Senate and signing by President Obama on April 7-- record time for Congress to act!

FINANCIAL RE-REGULATION

■ Senate passes new financial sector rules

As I write, the Senate has passed new regulations for the financial sector, including establishing a Consumer Financial Product Bureau that would act as a watchdog over industry practices. The House passed its version of financial reforms last fall, and now a conference committee will be formed to resolve differences between the two bills.

Both houses of Congress have similar goals: make essential changes in our regulatory structure, ending so-called "too big to fail" institutions, ensuring that taxpayer funds are never put at risk again, protecting consumers from overly complex financial products, bringing hedge funds into the regulatory framework so that their risks can be properly monitored, and finally bringing transparency and accountability to the over-the-counter derivatives market.

Many have accused those of us who represent New York City in Washington of insufficiently defending our hometown industry from these regulations. But I believe that changes are needed-- especially because no one can argue that the financial crisis we have just lived through was *good* for Wall Street, or was the result of too *much* regulation.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

■ Stuy Town-style deals curbed in Maloney bill

One of the (many) shocking aspects of the sale of Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village was the involvement of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac-- government-sponsored enterprises (GSEs) created to expand and preserve affordable housing. They acquired senior debt in the misbegotten deal that led to hundreds of evictions, skyrocketing rents and (eventual) default by the investors.

Yet Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac earned "affordable housing goals" credits for the deal, even though it was predicated on substantial rent increases and thousands of units being converted to market rate. This violates the intent of housing goals credit which should be given when GSEs increase or preserve affordable housing stock.

That's why I've introduced legislation, H.R. 5361 to deny housing goals credit for investments where a project's debt is higher than its income or that will facilitate the accelerated turnover of affordable units to market rate. In a city that desperately needs affordable housing, we need to ensure that "affordable housing goals" credits don't go for overleveraged deals like the one that hit Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village.

At an event in Stuyvesant Town announcing introduction of my bill to curb Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and other government-sponsored enterprises from financing deals that result in reducing affordable housing stock: I'm surrounded by local officials and community members including (from left) Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, Councilman Dan Garodnick, and Stuy Town/PCV Tenants Association Vice President Susan Steinberg and President Al Doyle (in dark glasses)



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..... email address

at <http://maloney.house.gov>)

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If you'd like to keep up with events

What issues are most important?

Afghan/Iraq War

Economic Recovery

Education

Financial Services

Foreign Policy

Gov't Reform

Health Care

Social Security

Veterans

Women's Rights

9/11 Health

Washington, DC 20515
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 Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney
 Report to Queens from

PRESPORT-STD
 M.C.
 Carolyn B. Maloney

I Around the 14th District
 Report to Queens from Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney

■ First new NYC credit union in a decade opens in Queens

I was proud to work with Bishop Mitchell Taylor and his colleagues at the East River Development Alliance (ERDA) first to create a bank in the neighborhood a few years ago and now to have had a role in helping create the ERDA Federal Credit Union (FCU), which opened for business in April. I played matchmaker with ERDA and the staff at the United Nations FCU in Long Island City who provided invaluable advice and guidance.

Credit unions are nonprofit institutions, returning profits to members through lower fees and interest rates. The ERDA FCU happens to be the first new credit union chartered during the Obama Administration, and the first to open in New York City in a decade.

The realization of Bishop Taylor's bold vision is great news that the people of western Queens can take not only to the bank, but now to a credit union as well! These institutions will help the residents of our community build credit, wealth, and a better future.

■ Superfund cleanup for Newtown Creek?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has recommended that Newtown Creek be declared a Superfund site. The EPA is currently soliciting community input on whether Newtown Creek should be included in the Superfund Program; a decision is expected sometime this fall.

The shores of Newtown Creek have been home, since the 19th century, to industries that spewed a staggering array of pollutants into the creek. So putting it on the Superfund list makes sense-- it will allow the EPA to conduct testing to determine the best way to identify and clean up the pollutants in the creek.

AT MY TOWN HALL MEETING in March on jobs and the economy at the Cretan's Association of Omonia, I and my panelists-- including Assembly Member Cathy Nolan (third from left) offered practical solutions for businesses and Western Queens



MALONEY OBTAINS GRANT
■ Girl Scouts financial literacy program helped

I was delighted to help obtain funding for the Girl Scouts of the USA's Financial Literacy Program to create a comprehensive, effective and universal initiative to help girls better manage their finances. Shown above at the announcement are Denise Pesich, Vice President of the Girls Scouts of the USA; Pat Stensrud, Chair of the Girl Scouts of Greater New York; and area Girl Scout leaders and members from Troops 4192, 4566 and 4567 in western Queens.

■ LIRR Connector construction continues

Work is underway in Queens to connect LIRR tracks with the 63rd Street tunnel under the East River, connecting the LIRR for the first time with Grand Central Terminal. These new tracks will, when completed, bring LIRR Main and Port Washington lines into Grand Central, reducing commutes by up to half an hour. A new LIRR stop in Sunnyside will also be built. Together these developments-- receiving \$2.6 billion in federal funds and creating 22,000 jobs-- will improve quality of life and economic development throughout the region.

AFTER MALONEY INTERVENTION
■ Sikh soldiers allowed articles of faith

No American should have to choose between their religion and service to our nation. But that's precisely what two young Army officers, Captain Tejdeep Singh Rattan, a 14th District constituent, and Kamaljeet Singh Kalsi were asked when they were ordered to give up their Sikh articles of faith-- including their turbans and beards-- in order to serve on active duty in the Army. With my colleagues in the House, I successfully appealed to the Army to accommodate the requirements of the Captains' religion, making them the first Sikhs to serve on active duty in over 20 years while bearing their articles of faith.