

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM WASHINGTON, D.C., TO THE 31ST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CONGRESSMAN BECERRA HOSTS KOREAN AMERICAN LEADERS ROUNDTABLE

I had the opportunity to meet with local Korean American community leaders in Los Angeles on July 6 to discuss my participation in the U.S.-Republic of Korea Inter-Parliamentary exchange in Washington, D.C., that took place in mid-July. The roundtable provided an important opportunity to engage in a meaningful discussion with local leaders and obtain their input and ideas to ensure that the interests of Korean Americans – especially those living in Los Angeles – were properly represented during my meetings with the Korean National Assembly. Several of the topics covered during the meeting included the recent missile launches in North Korea, the visa waiver program, a possible U.S.-South Korean free trade agreement, and immigration.



One of my roles in Congress is to serve as Vice Chairman of the U.S.-Republic of Korea Interparliamentary Exchange. Our last meeting was held in Washington, D.C., this past July. In this photo, I am joined by other members of Congress in a roundtable discussion with Chairman Jay Kun Yoo and other Korean National Assembly members.

TEENS MAKING HOLLYWOOD BEAUTIFUL



At my December 2 "Coffee With Your Congressman" at Alexandria Elementary School, Sharyn Romano, Executive Director of the Hollywood Beautification Team, and I discuss the job training grant that I secured for at-risk youth in the Hollywood area.

Through funding I secured at the federal level, at-risk students from Hollywood, Marshall, and Belmont High Schools will soon have the opportunity to participate in a job training skills program directed by the Hollywood Beautification Team and the Los Angeles Police Department. Local neighborhoods will also benefit through teens participating in graffiti abatement and tree planting projects. Leadership from the Hollywood Beautification Team joined me at my December "Coffee with your Congressman" to highlight the program in our community. When over 50 percent of our city's homicides are gang-related, we must do more to steer our at-risk youth toward productive schooling and employment options and away from crime. Work hard and make us proud!

CONGRESSMAN XAVIER BECERRA A NEW DAY... A NEW DIRECTION



December 26, 2006

Dear Friends:

Normally at this time of year, this space is used for reflection – descriptions of "the good, the bad, and the ugly" from the past year's legislative activities in Congress. And in the past, I have made the argument that you deserve better than what you are getting: you deserve a Congress that actually works in a bipartisan fashion, lawmakers who spend your tax dollars

in a fiscally responsible way, and leaders who will ask the president serious questions and demand real answers on the state of the war in Iraq.

You deserve better. And you agree, as you and your fellow Americans throughout the country have opened the door to new leadership in Congress starting in 2007. With that new leadership will come a new mission, new goals and new ideas.

The people's House should not be an auction house, with legislation sold to the highest bidder and "bridges to nowhere" erected with taxpayers' money. For that reason, the first order of business in the new Congress under incoming Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) will be ethics reform. This will be followed by legislative proposals that will look to raise the minimum wage, lower interest rates on college loans, end tax giveaways to large oil companies, repeal the law prohibiting Medicare from negotiating lower prescription drug prices, promote stem cell research, implement the bipartisan 9/11 Commission's homeland security proposals and, perhaps most importantly, restore fiscal discipline to the federal budget by re-establishing "pay-go" rules, which prohibit any new spending that is not paid for.

I go into more detail about this New Direction agenda inside. I also give you a snapshot of other bills I plan to sponsor in the new Congress. I encourage you to visit my Web site (<http://Becerra.House.gov>) and let me know what you think.

It's a new day ... there's a new direction. Join me on this adventure.

Sincerely,

XAVIER BECERRA
Member of Congress

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OR ONLINE AT
[HTTP://BECERRA.HOUSE.GOV](http://BECERRA.HOUSE.GOV)**

Si desea esta información en español, por favor llame al (213) 483-1425.

CONGRESSMAN XAVIER BECERRA
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515



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CONGRESSMAN BECERRA'S ANNUAL SURVEY ON GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Help me best represent you. Please take a moment to fill out the attached survey and mail it back to my office. You can also go to <http://Becerra.House.gov> and take it online. Many thanks for your time and consideration (especially to you frequent responders)!

1. Of the following issues, which are most important to you? (rank 1-6; 1 = highest importance)

- Real security at home & overseas
- Better American jobs – better pay
- College access for all
- Energy independence – lower gas prices
- Affordable health care – life-saving science
- Retirement security
- Other: _____

2. When it comes to jobs in America and our economy, what should be addressed foremost? (check no more than 2)

- Raise the federal minimum wage
 - Extend President Bush's tax cuts
 - End tax giveaways that reward companies for moving American jobs overseas
 - Address the burgeoning federal budget deficit
 - Offer tax incentives to companies that create new manufacturing jobs in America
3. In terms of health care priorities, what should be addressed foremost? (check no more than 2)

- Repeal law that prohibits Medicare from negotiating lower drug prices for seniors
 - Expand tax deductions for health care expenses
 - Promote stem cell research
 - Implement a national universal health care policy
 - Allow prescription drug importation from other countries in order to lower prices for all consumers
4. I am most concerned about ... (rank 1-4; 1 = highest concern)
- Covering daily living expenses
 - Paying for health care costs
 - Saving for retirement
 - Saving for college

5. What statement best reflects your view of the economy based on your personal family circumstances? (check 1)

- My personal financial situation is comfortable and I feel secure with our national economy.
- My personal financial situation is comfortable, but I do worry about job losses and a slow economy.
- I am unhappy with my personal financial situation and the slow economy adds to my worries and my inability to advance my pay status.
- I am unhappy with my personal financial situation but optimistic because our national economy is strong.

A NEW DIRECTION FOR AMERICA

A POLICY AGENDA FOR ALL AMERICANS



REAL SECURITY – AT HOME & ABROAD

To properly protect the American people, Congress will immediately implement the recommendations of the independent bipartisan 9/11 Commission so that we can secure our ports, airports, borders, mass transit systems, chemical and nuclear power plants and our food and water supplies from terrorist attacks.

Subsequent, though still immediate, action will include the following:

- Guarantee that our troops have the protective gear, equipment and training they need.
- Enact a GI Bill of Rights for the 21st Century that guarantees our troops and veterans receive the pay, health care and mental health services that they have earned.

BETTER AMERICAN JOBS, BETTER PAY

Six million Americans make the minimum wage, \$5.15 an hour – that’s \$10,712 a year working 40 hours a week without one single vacation day. Consider that the average monthly rent for a one bedroom apartment in Los Angeles is \$1,465 (\$17,580/year). Hardworking Americans deserve better pay. We intend to give those Americans the raise they need and have earned.



ENCOURAGE ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

It’s time we end the rhetoric and take action to protect our environment and our pocketbook. Rather than being energy dependent on the Middle East, we should be dependent on the Midwest. Under the New Direction agenda, Congress will increase production of alternative fuels from America’s heartland, including bio fuels, solar, wind, geothermal, clean coal and fuel cells; and we will promote hybrid and flex fuel vehicle technology and manufacturing.



AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE, LIFE-SAVING SCIENCE

It’s time to truly explore the potential of stem cells and remove unnecessary government barriers to research. We will immediately pass legislation permitting this needed research so that scientists may do their job. We will also look to improve the Medicare Prescription Drug program by allowing Medicare to use the collective bargaining power of its beneficiaries to lower the cost of your prescription drugs. Believe it or not, current law prohibits Medicare from negotiating for the best price.



FISCAL DISCIPLINE

Today, it seems, the government is addicted to the credit card, creating massive amounts of debt, which you and I and our children will be forced to pay in coming years. It’s time we traded in the government credit card for a simple debit card that only allows us to spend money that is actually in the Federal Treasury.

In the new Congress, all legislative proposals and policies will be subjected to “Pay As You Go” budgeting, which will ensure that new spending or tax cuts do not add to the federal deficit as we move toward a balanced budget.

COLLEGE ACCESS FOR ALL

For years now, Congress – with the president’s approval – has allowed student loan interest rates to increase, and has frozen Pell Grants, which help low- and moderate-income students. Meanwhile, the cost of a college education has soared to nearly-unattainable levels. The new Congress will look to change all this by first slashing interest rates on college loans in half to 3.4 percent for students and 4.25 percent for parents. Doing this will save the average student borrower \$5,600!

Subsequent action will include the following:

- Allow a 100 percent tax credit up to \$3,000 per year for tuition – this would mean a \$12,000 tax deduction for families over the course of a child’s four year college education
- Increase the maximum Pell Grant to \$5,100 – this would help an estimated 250,000 college-qualified high school graduates who otherwise couldn’t afford a college education.



REAL CONGRESSIONAL ETHICS REFORM

The Democratic ethics package, which will be debated and passed immediately, will break the link between lobbyists and legislation, where well-connected special interests write legislation.

The American people want greater integrity in Washington, and Democrats pledge to make this the most honest, ethical and open Congress in history.

WORK HORSES VS. SHOW HORSES: BILLS WORTH ENACTING

Some legislative proposals receive national attention (stem cell research, immigration reform, oil drilling in the Arctic), yet many noteworthy bills escape the notice of the public and media. Below are some of the bills that I am working to pass which may not capture headlines, but will improve the lives of Americans and the character of our country.

1. **Microstamp Access to Ballistics Information for Law Enforcement Act**

In many crimes involving guns, police do not recover the weapon used in the shooting, but they find cartridge casings. Without further evidence, law enforcement authorities have no way to trace the weapon or the perpetrator. That’s where microstamping technology comes in. Today, it is possible to etch identifying information on strategic internal surfaces of a gun so that when it is fired, the markings are transferred onto each bullet casing. A single recovered bullet casing with a microstamp can lead police directly to the gun that fired it. Microstamping technology can be employed at a very low cost per gun. My bill would require that all semiautomatic pistols sold after January 1, 2009, include microstamped identifiers.

2. **The Low-Income Taxpayer Protection Act**

The tax code is complicated and confusing and there are unscrupulous people willing to exploit unwitting taxpayers. My bill would require paid income tax preparers to register their business with the IRS; upgrade electronic filing and tele-filing services and enhance direct depositing of refund checks; and support low- or no-fee successful qualified tax preparation clinics for modest-income taxpayers.

3. **The Librarian Education and Development Act**

Public libraries and schools across this nation are experiencing a dire shortage of librarians (30 percent have only one librarian on staff). It has become increasingly difficult to recruit and retain librarians. To encourage individuals to pursue careers as librarians, my bill provides up to \$5,000 in college loan forgiveness for librarians who work in low income communities.

4. **The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent Act**

Little known fact: During World War II, approximately 2,300 men, women, and children of Japanese ancestry were forcibly deported from 13 Latin American countries to the U.S. and placed in an internment camp in Crystal City, Texas, and faced similar injustices suffered by Japanese Americans. Our government orchestrated and financed the forced transfer of Japanese Latin Americans to use them as hostages in exchange for Americans held by Japan. This bill would establish a commission to study this dark period in our nation’s history and recommend appropriate action.

5. **The Commission to Study the Potential Creation of a National Museum of the American Latino Community Act**

This bill would create a 23 member commission charged with exploring and reporting back to Congress on the possibility of building a national museum in Washington, D.C., focused on the contributions in art, history and culture by Americans of Latino descent.

6. **An Act to Promote Brownfields Clean Up**

They dot the landscape of urban America. They are plots of land that cannot be developed because they are contaminated and require extensive environmental remediation. They’re known as “brownfields.” More often, they are described as eye-sores which depress neighboring property values. My bill would allow companies that take on the task of cleaning up contaminated sites to deduct a portion of the clean-up costs from their taxes. The choice is clear: let brownfield sites remain empty and contaminated or, through an economic incentive, return the properties to productive residential, commercial or recreational use.



At a congressional hearing this past year, I testified on why I believe my museum commission legislation should be signed into law.

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