



# Report to Queens

from Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney

WINTER 2008

<http://maloney.house.gov>

Dear Neighbor,

With the new year and second session of the 110th Congress underway, our nation's economy is suffering a difficult downturn. Unemployment is on the rise, the sub-prime mortgage crisis is forcing people from their homes, and high energy prices, falling home prices, and stagnant wages are squeezing American families.

I'm pleased to report that Congress recently passed a bipartisan economic stimulus bill that will provide millions of Americans with much-needed relief and help jump-start our ailing economy. The stimulus plan will help reinvigorate our economy in several ways:

- By putting tax rebates into the hands of more than 130 million American families.
- By expanding financing opportunities for Americans in danger of losing their homes because of the subprime mortgage crisis.
- By providing small businesses with tax cuts to help spur investment and create jobs (it's estimated that this will help create 500,000 jobs).

In a rare display of bipartisanship, Congress and the White House worked together to quickly pass this important bill; as a result, taxpayers will start receiving their rebates by early summer.

I hope this newsletter is informative about progress on other issues facing the nation, and the 14th Congressional District.

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

Sincerely,



Rep. Maloney speaks with a constituent about Medicare Part D at a previous Town Hall Meeting.

## Join me for a Queens Town Hall meeting!

Join me for a town hall meeting on economic development in western Queens with NYC Deputy Mayor for Planning Robert Lieber, Queens Borough President Helen Marshall, and Penny Lee of the City's Dept. of City Planning. We'll talk about the redevelopment of Queens Plaza, the Long Island City Links Program, and other initiatives to help western Queens improve its standing. I hope you can join us!

When: **Wednesday, March 19, 2008 6-8 PM**

Where: **Federation of Hellenic Societies  
Stathakion Center, 22-51 29th St., Astoria  
(Between 23rd Avenue & Ditmars Blvd.)**

**How best to reach me:**

Regular postal mail to my 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](http://www.maloney.house.gov) or by fax at 202/225-4709.

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**Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney**

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M.C.  
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**I** Report to Queens from Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney

# What passed...

*With the change to a Democratic majority, Congress was finally able to completely enact the 9/11 Commission reforms into law (reforms based in part on legislation I wrote); increase the minimum wage and military pay; enact the most sweeping ethics reforms since Watergate; and restore fiscally responsible pay-as-you-go budgeting principles that helped usher in the budget surpluses of the 1990's. On other legislative fronts...*

## **\$ CAP LIFTED, % RATES CUT**

### ■ Student loan forgiveness now possible

In 2007, Congress passed into law the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 (H.R. 2669), which is the single largest increase in college aid since the GI bill—at no additional cost to taxpayers. Nationally, over 6.8 million students who take out need-based student loans—and 378,000 New York-based students—will be helped by the new law.

The law has three notable provisions. It increases the ceiling on Pell Grants by about 33%—from \$4,050 to \$5,400 per year. It also cuts the interest rate on loan payments under Federal Family Education Loan and Direct Loan programs by half over the next five years, saving the typical student about \$4,500 over the life of the loan.

The new law also gives upfront tuition assistance to students who commit to teaching in high-need public schools for a period of four years.

What may be the most significant change is the provision for student loan forgiveness for graduates who've taken out federal Direct Loans who choose careers in public service. If you don't have Direct Loans now, starting July 1, 2008, students under other loan programs will be allowed to consolidate their debt under the federal Direct Loan program.

The U.S. Department of Education will issue rules shortly as to which specific job titles will be eligible, but it's expected to include positions in government, law enforcement, public health, child care, social work and public-interest legal services. Find out more at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/DirectLoan/index.html>

## **NEW TOOLS FOR PROSECUTORS**

### ■ Fighting the tragedy of human trafficking

In December, the House overwhelmingly passed the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (H.R. 3887) which would dramatically strengthen the ability of our law enforcement to fight human trafficking. The bill gives prosecutors additional tools to hold the traffickers accountable and authorizes critical funding to combat trafficking and help victims.

Last June, at a forum held on Capitol Hill, Reps. Maloney and Deborah Pryce along with U.N. Goodwill Ambassador and noted actress Julia Ormond participated in a panel discussion about human trafficking.



## **NEW MATH**

### ■ The hidden costs of the War in Iraq

As Vice Chair of the Joint Economic Committee (JEC), I released a study with Sen. Chuck Schumer which concluded that the full economic costs of the Iraq war are far more than what's actually been reported by the Administration. When the "hidden costs" of the war are added, the war's tab will rise by more than \$1 trillion to \$3.5 trillion over the next decade. (To read the full report, go to <http://maloney.house.gov/>)

Talking about *trillions* of dollars brings President Bush's opposition to programs like S-CHIP, the State Children's Health Insurance Program, into clearer focus: interest payments on the war debt *this year alone* would fund the current children's health care program for over *four* years.

I, and the majority leadership in the House and Senate, remain committed to ending the war in Iraq and bringing our troops home. In November, the House passed legislation—with my "yes" vote—that would have provided critical funding for our troops while requiring their redeployment from Iraq within 30 days of the bill's enactment. But after passage in the House, the bill was blocked by the minority in the Senate (where 60 votes are needed to override a filibuster).

## **WORKING FOR ENERGY INDEPENDENCE**

### ■ Reducing dependence on foreign oil

Last year, Congress passed and the President signed into law the Energy Independence and Security Act (H.R. 6), the most sweeping energy legislation in three decades. This landmark statute reduces our dependence on foreign oil by raising the mileage standards auto companies must meet for the first time in 32 years, by specifying new energy efficiency standards for other industries, and increasing support for US-grown biofuels. Find out more at <http://maloney.house.gov/>.

## **MALONEY AMENDMENT PASSES**

### ■ Mortgage reform to stem subprime crisis

The House passed the Mortgage Reform and Anti-Predatory Lending Act (H.R. 3648) to help limit the subprime mortgage crisis as adjustable-rate mortgages are reset this year. I cosponsored this important bill and successfully amended it to prevent borrowers from being hit with unfair mortgage prepayment penalties.

My amendment requires that borrowers have the option of choosing a loan without a prepayment penalty when they are also offered a loan *with* a prepayment penalty. It would prohibit any prepayment penalty from lasting longer than three years and limits the penalty to three percent of the loan amount during the first year of the loan, two percent during the second, and one percent during the third year. This bill now awaits Senate passage. For more information on the Mortgage Reform and Anti-Predatory Lending Act, please visit <http://maloney.house.gov/>.

# What's next...

## RUDE SURPRISES

### ■ Credit card reforms

As Chair of the House Financial Institutions and Consumer Credit Subcommittee of the House Financial Services Committee, I've been working to implement common sense consumer protections for credit card holders. Last year, the Subcommittee conducted formal hearings and informal meetings to determine how Congress, federal regulators, and credit card companies can work together to better protect card holders.

In February, I introduced the Credit Cardholders' Bill of Rights (H.R. 5244) which would give cardholders the right to say no to rate increases and prohibit unilateral interest rate hikes on existing balances. My bill would also eliminate arbitrary rate increases under "any time any reason" clauses and prevent issuers from raising rates on existing balances for good customers based on a decline in their credit score.

## ACCOUNTABILITY FOR BANKS

### ■ Consumer hotline act

If consumers have a complaint or question about their bank and want to speak with their bank's regulator, they must figure out which of the five federal or multiple state regulators they should contact first. Navigating this complicated maze no doubt prevents many customers from ever speaking to the right person.

That's why I've introduced the Financial Consumer Hotline Act of 2007 (H.R. 4332), which would establish a single toll-free telephone number that consumers can call if they have a problem with their bank and want to speak to the bank's federal regulator. One number will help put consumers in quicker contact with the right person who can help them.

## SEVEN YEARS LATER

### ■ Federal funding for sick 9/11 workers

In 2008, I'll continue working to build momentum for the bipartisan James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act (H.R. 3543). This bill—which I introduced with N.Y. Reps. Jerrold Nadler and Vito Fossella—would ensure that all workers exposed to Ground Zero toxins receive the medical care they need and the compensation for their loss that they deserve.

Unbelievably, in its FY09 budget, the Administration requested only \$25 million to fund efforts to get treatment and medical monitoring to all those exposed and specifically proposed not expanding care to residents and school children.

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE

### ■ Family-friendly work policies

Research shows that balanced work-family policies are a win-win. They help create stable families, a productive workplace, and positive economic outcomes. That's why I've introduced the Working Families' Flexibility Act (H.R. 4301). Sen. Ted Kennedy has introduced an identical bill in the Senate. The bill would give working Americans the right to request flexible work options in order to balance the demands of their jobs and home life. It would also allow employers and employees to engage in constructive dialogue over modifying where and when employees work so they can find the best solutions to the work-life challenges they face.



## JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

### ■ Focus on the economy

Economic issues will undoubtedly be at the forefront of our domestic agenda this year, with unemployment rising and economic growth slowing. As Vice Chair of the Joint Economic Committee—made up of members from both the House and Senate—I will have the opportunity to hold hearings that focus on the Bureau of Labor Statistics' monthly report on job creation, unemployment, and wage growth. The Committee will also hold a series of hearings examining the economic outlook from three important vantage points—the Administration, the Federal Reserve, and leading academic and think tank economists.

Following up on a JEC report that I commissioned, the committee will focus its attention on the large economic costs associated with the war in Iraq even beyond the massive federal budget costs. Additionally, we'll examine ways in which the green sector of our economy is growing in terms of jobs, output, and investment.

I will also work to explore the economic benefits to firms that modernize their workplaces by providing a broader set of policies—including paid sick days, paid family and medical leave, and flexible work schedules—that help families.

## IGNORING THE NATION'S PRIORITIES

### ■ A dismal budget

The Administration's proposed budget is bad for the country and bad for New York. Three examples:

- The budget cuts Medicare and Medicaid by \$195 billion over five years, endangering care for New York's 2.8 million Medicare and 4.1 million Medicaid beneficiaries.

- The budget cuts federal housing programs: the public housing capital fund would be cut by \$415 million from 2008, which means New York would lose \$79.8 million in needed funding to keep its public housing available for families who have lost their homes to foreclosure.

- The budget cuts funding for the Environmental Protection Agency, including a 7.5% cut to funding promised to New York under the Clean Air Act which would combat air pollution and hazards resulting from climate change.

In the weeks ahead, Democrats will put forward a fiscally responsible budget that will invest in America—reinvigorating the economy, making healthcare available and affordable, and protecting our nation's water and air.

*Rep. Maloney, Vice Chair of the Joint Economic Committee, attends a hearing on the state of the economy with Senators Chuck Schumer (left) and Ted Kennedy (right).*

**I** Report to Queens from Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney

# Around the district...

## A LONG SLOG

### ■ Queens Plaza road rebuilding stalls

More than a year ago, I joined with city and local public officials to announce that we had obtained all of the funding needed to complete the Queens Plaza Roadway Rebuilding Project, a \$22 million beautification project that will replace traffic snarls, frightening crossing areas and a forbidding landscape with green spaces and improved traffic conditions.

The City promised that construction on the project would begin in late 2007. Time passed with no progress and alarming reports began to surface that the project might be delayed without an agreement by the local business improvement district to pay ongoing maintenance costs. These costs would require the two-year-old group to significantly increase fees for local business owners and discourage businesses from locating in a fairly new commercial district.

On December 19, 2007, I joined local public officials in sending a letter to Mayor Michael Bloomberg regarding the lack of progress on the project. We cited our concerns with problematic coordination, lack of information about construction start dates and the unprecedented demand by the City that local businesses shoulder much of the maintenance costs.

## FIGHTING FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

### ■ New senior housing in Astoria to rise

I'm proud to have joined with affordable housing group HANAC and other Queens community organizations to announce a \$400,000 affordable housing grant from the Federal Home Loan Bank and Astoria Federal Savings, to help fund the construction of a 183-unit senior housing development in Astoria, Queens. When completed in the fall of 2008, the George A. Douris Tower will rise 15 stories high, utilize the latest in "green" technologies and include a senior center, barrier-free housing, and on-site social services staff.

Federal funding for affordable housing comes in different forms – Federal Home Loan Bank grants, Section 202 funds for senior housing, tax credits and so forth. Since being elected to Congress, I've been pleased to work with a number of different groups that have used great ingenuity in securing available funding to build new housing in my district in Queens.

For example, HANAC also built the 100-unit Archbishop Iakovos Senior Residence and has plans

to build another 94-unit senior facility using Section 202 funding. Similarly, Variety Boys and Girls built a 98-unit senior housing facility with a \$480,000 grant from the Federal Home Loan Bank and tax credits through the Federal Low Income Housing Credit Program that leveraged \$11.4 million in private investment. New York Foundation for Senior Citizens built an 80-unit senior housing development at Queens West with \$13.9 million in Section 202 funding and federal rent subsidies.

Additionally, since preserving affordable housing is as important as building new units, I have worked with tenants, owners and the Department of Housing and Urban Development to encourage the renewal of existing Section 8 contracts and with the New York City Housing Authority to support improvements in public housing developments.

## LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

### ■ Helping the U.S. Hellenic Community

As a founder and co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues, I'm honored to represent one of the largest Greek populations outside of Greece. During the first session of the 110th Congress, the Caucus was active on many issues:

■ I've introduced legislation (H.R. 2526) to include Greece in the U.S. Visa Waiver Program. The Visa Waiver Program permits nationals from countries such as Australia, France, Japan, and the U.K. who are traveling to the U.S. for tourism or business to stay for 90 days or less without obtaining a visa. In September, the State Department formally nominated Greece for entry into the Visa Waiver Program, an important step in moving this process forward.

■ H. Res. 407, which expresses the strong support of the House of Representatives for the positive actions by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus aimed at opening additional crossing points along the cease-fire line, thereby contributing to efforts for the reunification of the island.

■ H. Res. 373, which urges Turkey to respect the rights and religious freedoms of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

■ H. Res. 356, which expresses the sense of the House of Representatives that the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) should stop the utilization of materials that violate provisions of the United Nations-brokered Interim Agreement between the FYROM and Greece regarding "hostile activities or propaganda" and should work with the United Nations and Greece to achieve longstanding United States and United Nations policy goals of finding a mutually-acceptable official name for the FYROM.

■ H. Res. 148, which recognizes and appreciates the historical significance and the heroic human endeavor and sacrifice of the people of Crete during World War II and commend the PanCretan Association of America.

## READING IS FUNDAMENTAL

### ■ Queens West library

Local public officials and community leaders have been meeting with New York State Empire State Development to discuss building a library at Queens West. Long promised, the library was part of the original plan for Queens West. Under Governor Spitzer's leadership, Empire State Development appears to be committed to making the library a reality. I strongly support plans to move forward—and was proud to have obtained \$72,750 in federal funding for the library's planning.

*Rep. Maloney participates in the announcement of a \$400,000 affordable housing grant from the Federal Home Loan Bank to HANAC to help fund construction of the George T. Douris Tower. Maloney was joined by Alfred A. DelliBovi, President of the FHLB of NY; HANAC's Chairman, Evangeline P. Douris, and Executive Director, John P. Kaiteris; James Griffin, Regional Manager of Astoria Federal Savings; and local Queens residents.*

