

CONGRESSMAN PETE STARK

JANUARY 2005 REPORT

Dear Neighbor:

I'm honored to serve as your representative in Washington, DC. As the 109th Congress convenes this month, I'm more committed than ever to standing up for our priorities.

We face challenging times and a divisive political environment in the days ahead, but the job to be done is clear.

The war in Iraq continues to claim American and Iraqi lives without a strategy to win the peace. I'll work in Congress to bring our troops home.

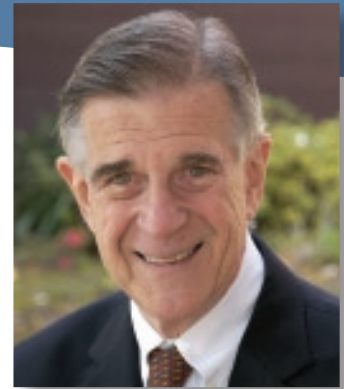
New appointments to the Supreme Court threaten to undermine a woman's right to reproductive choice. Basic civil liberties and individual privacy continue to be threatened by the Bush Administration. I'll continue to stand up for the rights of all women and the freedoms of all Americans.

I'll do all I can to build an economy that creates opportunity, rewards work and improves prosperity for all, not just the wealthy few. I'm dedicated to improving public schools and giving every child a first rate education.

We need a health care system where all Americans have access to quality medical care. Establishing health care as a right is a constitutional amendment I support! And I'll stand up for our environment that is clean and protected against those who seek to undo landmark laws that safeguard our pristine lands, air and water.

I look forward to updating you throughout the year on my legislative efforts on these and other important priorities. I invite you to visit my website at www.house.gov/stark.

Sincerely,



TOWN MEETING

JANUARY 22, 2005

9:30 – 10:30 A.M. CHABOT COLLEGE – HAYWARD

25555 Hesperian Boulevard, Building 1200, Room 1232

Enter off Depot Road to Parking Lot F (reserved parking for Town Meeting)

LEAVING NO CHILDREN BEHIND IN EDUCATION

Our children deserve a first rate education. That begins with providing our hard working teachers with the tools and support they need to improve student achievement. It requires better teacher training, reduced class sizes and public schools that are safe and well equipped technologically. I'm committed to working for all these goals as your representative in Congress.

My strong commitment to education is why I voted for the landmark No Child Left Behind Act. It created standards to hold schools accountable for student achievement while promising the funding to get the job done. So far, however, the No Child Left Behind Act has been long on promises and woefully short on funding to make those promises real.

In December, Congress passed an Omnibus Appropriations bill that included funding for the Department of Education. I opposed this legislation because of numerous



shortcomings, but chief among its faults was that it cut federal funding for public schools in 2005 by \$390 million and provided the US Department of Education with its smallest budget increase in nearly a decade. Funding at those levels doesn't make education the national priority it needs to be.

In the new Congress, I will support legislation to fully fund the priorities of the No Child Left Behind law and will work to protect underfinanced

schools that are failing to meet the law's standards from being unduly penalized. I will also work for more flexibility in the law to allow California to move ahead with its own innovative achievement standards. I won't stop until all our children have access to the education they deserve and the tools they need for a lifetime of success.

Social Security is the most successful social program ever created in our country. Today, 50 million Americans (one out of every four households) rely on Social Security for income in retirement, or when a breadwinner has died or become severely disabled.

In the coming Congress, I expect that the President plans to pursue a plan to privatize Social Security. His plan would take money out of Social Security's guaranteed benefit and turn it over to the economic uncertainty of Wall Street.

The Administration's plan would gamble Americans' retirement security, explode the national debt, and at the end of the day, would actually reduce guaranteed benefits. Rather than take my word for it, here are the facts:

Social Security is not in crisis. It is financially solvent until at least 2052. That doesn't mean we don't need to address future financial needs of the program, but it does mean there is no need for a risky plan.

No 401(k) plan in the world can guarantee that you'll get back what you paid into it. The President's proposed retirement accounts can't either and would risk your earnings on the fluctuations of the stock market. One only has to think of Enron to see that gamble.

The Administration's plan would increase the deficit by \$2 trillion over the next 10 years and result in budget deficits for each of the next 60 years.

Finally, privatization will reduce guaranteed benefits. Congressional Budget Office analysis

shows that guaranteed benefits would be reduced by up to 46 percent for future retirees. In addition, the Social Security Actuaries found that privatization wouldn't leave enough funding to guarantee current levels of disability and survivor benefits.

Social Security works and will continue to work. I will oppose Republican efforts to place every worker's retirement security at the mercy of the topsy turvy stock market. Maintaining a secure Social Security with guaranteed benefits is a promise we must keep.



MAINTAINING SECURITY IN SOCIAL SECURITY



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PROTECTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

All Americans suffer the consequences when our leaders choose politics over science and rigid ideology over reason. I will continue fighting for sensible policies supported by the vast majority of Americans.

I support legislation that would provide funding for comprehensive sex education in our schools including—not limited to—abstinence. Young women should be empowered to make responsible decisions about their health. Study after study has shown that abstinence-only education does not work and risks the health of children. It doesn't prepare them to make informed decisions. A government report recently found that federal abstinence-only education programs—

for which President Bush has doubled funding—routinely make outrageously false claims. They claim that condoms fail to prevent HIV transmission 31 percent of the time, when the number is actually less than three percent.

The fear of arming women with information has also led the Administration to withhold \$136 million from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which provides family planning in the poorest countries in the world. UNFPA helps women undergo childbirth safely and avoid sexually transmitted diseases. The loss of our \$136 million contribution over the last four years could lead to eight million unwanted pregnancies, three million abortions, 18,000 maternal

deaths, and 300,000 infant and child deaths. I have consistently voted to fully fund international family planning programs and to override the Administration's severe limitations on use of such funds.

Here at home, the right of reproductive choice is threatened by the Administration and its judicial nominees. I have always voted to protect a woman's right to choose. Like most Americans, I don't believe government should interfere in a woman's deeply personal decisions about her reproductive health. These decisions should be left to the woman, her family, and her physician.

PROTECTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS