

# Your Congressman Reports

December 2001 – 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District

## Danny K. Davis

Representative in Congress

The year 2001 has been the most eventful year that this country has experienced in a long, long time. All of us know that after the terrorist attacks on September 11, and the recurring distribution of anthrax, our lives will never again be the same. However, in spite of these tragedies, serious unemployment and a sluggish economy, my work, both here in the district, and in Washington, continues to be meaningful, productive, rewarding, exciting and effective. Therefore, I take this opportunity to share with you some of the work we have done, some of the challenges we still face and some of the hope we have.



Congressman Davis meets with Dr. Fengshi Yang and her students Vita Wu, Sarah Gao, Angela Wang, and Justine Lin to discuss their concerns about the terrorist attacks and the response of the Congress.

Terrorism, and its impact on our lives, continues to command much attention as we struggle with corporate bailouts, searching for Osama bin Laden, the war in Afghanistan, fighting terrorism, tracking biological terror, trying to find ways to stimulate our economy and maintain world stability. Many constituents have shared their thoughts and concerns about the events of September 11 and the anthrax demon with me. Those thoughtful comments have been most helpful to me.

This year I met with more than 300 advocates, constituent groups, representatives of agencies, institutions, municipalities and organizations to discuss legislation and appropriations. My case workers have met with hundreds of individuals to address their individual needs, concerns and problems. We have continued our very active public participation program with townhall meetings, forums and focus group activity being held in every sector of the district

### Legislative Initiatives

This has been a very active legislative year. I introduced the following bills:

H. Con. Res. 147, a resolution, on fathers day, supporting the efforts and activities of individuals, organizations, institutions and other entities bolstering fatherhood. (Part of our work promoting responsible fatherhood.)

H. Con. Res. 169, a resolution directing the Architect of the Capitol to enter into a contract for the design and construction of a monument to commemorate the contributions of minority women to women's suffrage and to the participation of women in public life.

H. Con Res. 179, a resolution to establish a National Health Center week, designed to raise awareness and promote health services provided by community, migrant, public housing and homeless health centers.

H. Con Res 257, a resolution honoring the men and women of the U. S. Postal Service for doing an outstanding job of collecting, sorting and delivering the mail during this time of national emergency.

H. Con Res 274, a resolution congratulating *Jet* magazine on its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and honoring Mr. John H. Johnson, for his outstanding contributions to journalism.

H. R. 1228, a bill to provide protection of voting rights, establishing a uniform standard for the right of ex-offenders to vote.

H. R. 3134, a bill to make technical corrections in the definition of hard cider for the purpose of excise tax on alcohol.

H. Con. Res. 163, a bill recognizing the significance of Juneteenth Independence Day and expressing the sense of Congress that history be regarded as a means of understanding the past and addressing challenges of the future.

H. R. 2379, a bill to ensure that health benefits for federal employees cover screening for glaucoma.

In addition I am a co-sponsor of a large number of items including:

H. Amendment 256, a amendment to the Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill to increase funding for Public and Indian Housing and revitalization of severely distressed Public Housing (also known as HOPE VI.)

Treasury, Postal and Independent agencies appropriations bill to require an annual study on the conduct of strip searches by the U. S. Customs Service that includes data on the ethnicity, gender, nationality and race of the individuals subject to such searches.

I was a key support source for the Miller-Miller amendment to the Agriculture Bill which sought to reduce the sugar subsidy bringing much needed relief to the confectionary industry (candy makers, bakers, food processors, ice cream makers and other large users of sugar) which is losing thousands of jobs in Illinois due to artificially high sugar prices.

### **Redistricting**

**E**ven though Illinois gained population over the last ten years, it did not grow as fast as some other states. Therefore, Illinois lost a Congressional District as a result of the 2000 census. As a result the size of each Congressional District will increase from 571,000 to 653,000 persons. The district will continue to be "majority-minority" community protected by the Supreme Court interpretation of the "one person-one vote principle." Except for expansion into the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 43<sup>rd</sup> wards along the north and south lake front areas and the loss of some precincts in Forest Park, the 7<sup>th</sup> District has remained practically the same.

### **Bringing Resources to the District**

**O**ne of the major responsibilities of my office is to bring resources back to our district. This happens in several ways. 1) Legislation which directly benefits individuals, businesses, agencies, institutions and municipalities. 2) Competitive grants from government agencies. 3) Direct appropriations from Congress in budget bills.

Many agencies and institutions, as well as governmental entities, have long been familiar with, and firmly entrenched, in the grant-making and appropriations process. I am pleased to note that some of our smaller agencies and organizations, such as Westside Holistic Family Services, are beginning to break through with some federal grants. For many of the grants awarded to the District, I wrote letters of support, made phone calls, and advocated on behalf of the grantees.

Some of the larger federal grants awarded to organizations which provide services to the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District are: The Department of Health and Human Services awarded the Ounce of Prevention fund \$8,412,942.00, the Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County \$11,483,553.00, the University of Chicago \$2,674,622.00, and the Children's Home and Aid Society of Illinois \$1,148,817.00. The Department of Justice awarded Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority \$24,169,596.00. The Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded the Chicago Housing Authority (HOPE VI) \$35,000,000.00 and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency \$10,557,363.00.



Congressman Danny K. Davis meets with Gale Lindo, President of Westside Holistic Family Services and Michael Holmes, Vice President of Westside Holistic Family Services to discuss the results of the appropriations process.

## **District Program Activity**

I have continued my active program of interaction with constituents. In addition to casework and townhall meeting activity, I have thirty-five active policy advisory groups with meet with me or my staff on a regular basis. From these groups have come legislative ideas and legislation which has been passed such as BusinessLINC.

Issues facing ex-offenders continue to be a major issue in our district and in many places through-out the nation. My ex-offender task force is doing exceptional work on researching and reporting back to me on problems of record expungement and efforts to successfully re-integrate individuals with prison records back into normal life.

In our district the overall rate of home ownership is 38%, however, among African Americans it is only 28%. My housing task force has done some outstanding research on the reasons for this great discrepancy and has reported back to me on the issues which are holding back home ownership. There are a number of bills and appropriations before the Congress which have the potential to address the underlying problems creating barriers to home ownership. These issues are even more critical today as we are experiencing the effects of the current economic crisis. I am actively supporting several bills which will bring federal reform and regulation were appropriate and federal resources where necessary to help rectify inequities in the process of home ownership.

All of our other work groups have great activities underway. Unfortunately there is not sufficient space in this issue to discuss them.

## **Priority Items and the Agenda for 2002**

As we prepare to return to Congress for continuation of the 107<sup>th</sup> Legislative session, I go back with confidence that we will find further direction and solutions for some of the international crisis situations which command world attention.

Hopefully we can help stabilize and construct plans for peace in the Middle East – a peace which provides a homeland with security, dignity, respect and protection to all of the countries and those seeking nationhood and self-determination. I shall continue to work for peace and stability in Afghanistan, and look forward to establishment of a democratic (elected by the people) for of government in that country.

I shall continue to support the development of Africa, South and Central America and Asia and will continue my active participation in the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans, Congressional Steel Caucus, Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, Congressional Black Caucus, Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues, Congressional Progressive Caucus and Congressional Postal Caucus of the Congress and will maintain my support of oppressed and struggling nations throughout the world.

## **Democracy in America**

At the heart of our great strength as a nation is our democratic system rooted in our Constitution. The struggle for the protection and perfection of our democratic system is the central story of United States history but it hasn't been an easy one. From attempts to undermine our constitution in the 1700s with the alien and sedition acts to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II we have had a difficult time walking the line between security and democracy.

The current war on terrorism is providing as severe a challenge to preserving that delicate balance as we have ever faced. A series of actions by the Congress and the President have come into direct conflict with some of our most cherished notions of our Constitutional system: personal privacy, attorney client confidentiality, due process, indefinite detention and right to trial by jury. Limiting our fundamental freedoms does nothing to protect our security -- it does much to undermine our way of life.

I am deeply concerned and alarmed by these incursions into our basic rights. As Reverend Andrew Greeley wrote recently, "There are . . . certain inalienable rights with which the Creator has endowed us, rights that are inherent in human nature. The Constitution does not create these rights. It merely confirms and validates them." These rights are not ours to give away. As Congress continues to examine and debate this issue I will continue to vigorously defend our hard won liberties.

## The Postal Crisis

The continuing attacks by the anthrax demon has put our Postal System in a situation of tremendous needs. Before it becomes too crippled for reconstruction something must be done, and done quickly. Even before September 11 and the subsequent anthrax plague, we know that the Postal Service was in trouble. Last year the Service lost \$1.65 billion. This year's losses were projected (pre-terrorism) to be \$1.35 billion.

Eight hundred thousand people work for the postal service, more than 5000 of them in the 7<sup>th</sup> District. The Postmaster has said they will cut 75,000 jobs by 2006 and there is a freeze on capital spending. September 11 and anthrax have already cost the Postal Service \$63 million. Congress must come to the rescue. I am urging that we come with help for the Postal Service immediately and that we move with Postal Reform before they reach the crisis level. Their debt ceiling is \$15 billion and I understand that they are currently around \$11 billion. There is no time to waste.

## Aviation Security and Economic Stimulus

The Congress has passed the Aviation Security Act which puts airport and air transit security under control of the Federal Government. I trust that confidence in air transportation will increase and we will see our airports teeming with passengers, flights filled and the industry thriving. However, until that happens, our economy, and the world economy, face serious challenges. We have experienced 13 consecutive months of industrial decline, the worst since the 1930s. Unemployment is rising rapidly and millions are facing hardship. We need an economic stimulus to jump start our economy.

While some talk about tax cuts which will primarily benefit the wealthiest 1% of taxpayers, and doing nothing for the bottom 75%, let me suggest that any serious economic stimulus package must consider, and be focused on, the needs of the poor and the most vulnerable among us. We must provide protection for those at greatest risk of economic hardship - low wage, entry level and part time workers, women, minorities, the underprivileged, small businesses, marginal communities and those who have lost their jobs.

Specifically, what does this mean? I believe it means raising the minimum wage to a liveable wage; extending unemployment and medical benefits; providing direct loans and grants to small businesses affected by the September 11 terrorist attacks; reauthorizing a TANF program which not only takes people off welfare, but takes people out of poverty; implementing a payroll tax holiday; making interest payments deductible again on a temporary basis; and maintaining essential programs and services to that these benefits can help to keep a circular flow of money to keep the economy moving.

All of these thoughts, ideas, legislation and programs are open for public debate. Please join me at my townhall meetings, work with my advisory groups, call my office at 773/533-7520 or call in to my public service show on Hotline 21, cable access 4:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Fridays or Sunday evenings from 10:00 p.m. to midnight on WVON AM 773/591-5990.

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