



Report to New York from Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney

Summer, 2007

www.maloney.house.gov

Dear New Yorker,

In the first eight months of the new Congress, we've passed legislation that is moving our nation in a new direction.

The very first bill passed by the House implemented all the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, something I've been fighting for since the commission's final report in 2004. That bill was officially signed into law in August.

We passed legislation that will expand health care access to 11 million low-income children, and an energy bill that invests in energy independence and aims to reduce global warming.

The new Congress has also reinstated pay-as-you-go budget rules to help reduce the out-of-control spending of prior Congresses and make deficit reduction a priority again. The first budget passed by the new Congress invests in the American people—expanding access to childcare, cutting interest rates on student loans, and giving more preschoolers access to Head Start services.

At the beginning of the new Congress, I was elected Chair of the Subcommittee on Financial Institutions and Consumer Credit, part of the larger Financial Services Committee. I'm proud to get the gavel for the subcommittee that has jurisdiction over issues that are so important to New York City and the more than 22,000 banks, thrifts, and credit unions nationwide.

I am also now the Vice-Chair of the Joint Economic Committee (JEC), which is made up of both House and Senate members to review economic conditions and analyze economic policy. This year, the JEC is examining women's contributions to the economy because while our workforce has changed dramatically over the last 30 years, workplaces largely have not kept pace with the changing needs of workers.

In the months ahead, I look forward to updating you on more of the issues that matter. As always, please don't hesitate to contact my office if you have a question or concern.

Sincerely

Carolyn B. Maloney

■ Ending the war

Since the President announced an Iraq "surge" strategy in Iraq six months ago, we've lost another 600 American troops and spent an additional \$60 billion in U.S. taxpayer dollars.

As part of the surge funding, Congress required the White House to release an interim report on Iraq, and by the Administration's own admission, the Iraqi government has failed to meet nearly every benchmark for political and economic success the President himself outlined back in January.

Despite the mounting evidence, the President continues to push his strategy and threatens to veto any legislation that includes a timeline for troop withdrawal.

In July, the House passed the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act (H.R. 2956). I supported this bill, which would require a responsible redeployment of U.S. troops beginning within 120 days of enactment and ending by April 1, 2008. It would also require the President to publicly justify the post-redeployment missions for the U.S. military in Iraq and the minimum number of troops necessary to carry out those missions.

Those of us who support ending this misbegotten war must work even harder over the next weeks to help build a veto-proof majority for a timed, careful, but definite withdrawal from Iraq. Our next opportunity for a vote will likely come as Iraq war funding reauthorization votes occur early in September.

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1 Report to
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REAL FAMILY VALUES

■ **Making things easier for families**

The U.S. is failing many of its working families. American parents work longer hours and get less time off than parents in other countries. Balanced work-family policies are a win-win. They help create stable families, a productive workforce, and positive economic outcomes. These were the conclusions of a nonpartisan Government Accountability Office (GAO) study commissioned for a Joint Economic Committee (JEC) hearing earlier this month. I'm holding a series of JEC hearings to examine the need for family-friendly work policies, such as paid family leave time, increased access to quality child care, and flexible work schedules.

BREASTFEEDING. In May,

I introduced H.R. 2236, the "Breastfeeding Promotion Act." The bill would amend the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 to protect breastfeeding mothers from being discriminated against or fired from their jobs because they express milk during the workday.



Newsweek,
June 11, 2007

CHILDCARE. With more than half of all mothers with children under the age of one in the workforce today, Congress should be doing

everything it can to help create quality and affordable childcare options for working parents. This year I've helped pass "Kiddie Mac" legislation in the House to provide incentives to create more home-based childcare centers, and introduced "The Prepare All Kids Act" with U.S. Senator Bob Casey to provide high-quality pre-K education to help all children prepare for school.



▶ On May 10, I was joined by over 125 nursing mothers at a Capitol Hill press conference to announce the introduction of H.R. 2236, "The Breastfeeding Promotion Act."

BIRTH CONTROL. 98% of American women use birth control at some point in their lives. Yet reports of pharmacists denying women their birth control—both prescription and over the

counter—have been well documented in at least 19 states. Women who were denied were young and old, married and single, with children and without. That's why I've introduced HR 2596, the "Access to Birth Control Act," which would ensure that women receive timely access to contraception.



Washington Post,
July 13, 2006

Under the bill, a pharmacy must guarantee timely, on-site access to birth control—including emergency contraception—if the product is in stock. The bill protects an individual's access to legal birth control and keeps pharmacists out of private matters.

FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

■ **Vetting foreign investments**

Last year's Dubai ports fiasco shocked many Americans. If you'll recall, the U.S. government failed to raise a red flag when the operations of six major U.S. ports were sold to a company controlled by the government of Dubai. It was as blatant a call for reform as there could be.

Despite widespread support for reform during the last session of Congress, the House and Senate could not agree, and the issue lapsed. This year, under the change of leadership, I reintroduced a bill that will ensure our nation's security while avoiding a freeze on safe foreign investment. In July, Congress finally approved—and the President signed into law—this legislation to reform the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS).

REVITALIZING DOWNTOWN

■ **Extending federal risk insurance**

Among the many pressing issues confronting Congress this year, few are as important to New York's economy as renewing federal support for terrorism risk insurance. We learned how vital terrorism insurance is to New York's economic development after 9/11. Unfortunately, the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act (TRIA) expires at the end of 2007, and many providers will stop writing terrorism insurance policies if the bill is not extended.

At my request and as the first step in the legislative process, a House Financial Services Subcommittee held a March field hearing on TRIA in New York City. The hearing gave Members of Congress the opportunity to hear from New York officials and see firsthand the rebuilding of lower Manhattan in order to help understand the need for a long-term TRIA extension.

We helped pass a 15 year TRIA extension bill out of the Financial Services Committee last month and will continue working to make sure a long-term TRIA extension is signed into law.

FINANCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

■ **Strengthening federal credit card protections**

As Chair of the Financial Institutions Subcommittee, I've held a number of hearings to determine how federal regulators and the credit card industry can work together to help protect consumers from hidden fees and impossible-to-understand disclosure terms.

I worked with the Committee's Chair, Barney Frank, to convene a credit card roundtable this summer that brought the credit card industry together with consumer advocates to work on developing a set of best practices—a credit card "Gold Standard." Cards with the Gold Standard might have easy-to-understand terms, a hotline to resolve complaints, no fees for paying online, no use of universal default, and only forward-looking rate hikes.

Congress has also been monitoring the subprime mortgage mess, which has caused an alarming spike in home foreclosures. Federal

regulators testified at hearings in March and May, and recently issued some common sense guidelines that cautioned lenders against making loans to customers who cannot make their payments.

AROUND THE WORLD

■ Protecting women's rights

The women of Afghanistan endured extreme hardship under the rule of the Taliban, and are still struggling to regain an influential role in Afghan society. We have a responsibility to help them achieve a better future. The House took a step toward this goal by passing my “Afghan Women Empowerment Act” (H.R. 947) as part of a comprehensive Afghanistan assistance bill. The act will authorize critical funding for medical care, education, vocational training, legal assistance, and civil participation programs in Afghanistan that benefit women and girls. In previous years, I have also helped secure millions in funding for programs that help Afghan women and girls, and support the efforts of Afghan women-led NGOs.

This fall, I also plan to reintroduce the “International Women’s Freedom Act” (IWFA). The IWFA is modeled after the successful International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. It would create a Commission on International Women’s Human Rights to monitor and report annually on the status of women’s rights around the world. It would also create a State Dept. office to create a list of countries of particular concern for violating women’s basic rights.

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION LOANS:

■ Finally covering co-ops!

New York-area veterans were at a disadvantage when it came to home loans because co-ops—which are more common and affordable in our area than houses or condos—weren’t covered by VA’s home loan program. Last year, I inserted language into the Veterans’ Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006 to fix this, and am now working with the VA to implement the new law.

INVESTMENTS IN TRANSPORTATION:

■ 2nd Ave. Subway breaks ground; East Side Access Advances

In April, after the culmination of over a decade of work, the Second Avenue Subway broke ground. And not a moment too soon: a June report shows that during morning rush the 4, 5 and 6 trains are over 100% of capacity on each train, and there is no room on express tracks to add trains safely.

When supporters of the new route started working on this project, no one thought it was realistic. We heard every excuse in the book: too big, too expensive, too many higher priorities.

Over the last ten years, I’ve met with the Federal Transit Administration, the Governor, the Mayor and dozens of other leaders to seek their support; held town halls, news conferences, and

rallies—all to secure the necessary federal funding. In retrospect, three turning points made the project possible:

■ First, we obtained a firm commitment from the State (thanks to the efforts of another East Side leader, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver) for the “full-build” project and \$1.05 billion in capital funding.

■ Second, we got support from the federal government—the Federal Transit Administration rated the subway as one of the best projects in the country, making it eligible for federal funds. This year the project will get more than \$200 million in federal support, with more to be sent when a full funding agreement is signed.

■ Finally, the electorate voted its approval, approving the issuance of \$450 million in transit bonds.

On the day the Second Avenue Subway opens, it will have 191,000 riders, more than any other new mass transit project in the nation. It will reduce the overcrowded Lexington Avenue line’s ridership by 13%.

Other transit projects are advancing, too. East Side Access—which will bring Long Island Railroad trains into Grand Central and create a new stop in Sunnyside Queens—reached another milestone in early June when the first pieces of a Tunnel Boring Machine were lowered into the mouth of the 63rd St. Tunnel in Queens.

THE FIGHT CONTINUES

■ Fighting for 9/11 health benefits

The entire New York congressional delegation has been fighting to do right by those sickened by Ground Zero toxins, and we’ve had some recent successes.

For starters, the Administration heeded our call to appoint a leader to head the 9/11 health crisis response by naming Dr. John Howard as the first 9/11 Health Coordinator.

The Centers for Disease Control has distributed \$75 million for 9/11 health programs since Dr. Howard’s appointment. This funding included the very first federal dollars spent for medical treatment of 9/11 responders—funding that the N.Y. delegation saved after the Administration proposed taking it back. This year, we also succeeded in including \$50 million in an emergency spending bill to continue 9/11 health programs through the end of this fiscal year. And, by the end of the year, we expect to secure at least an additional \$50 million for the effort.

I won’t stop working until everyone who was exposed to Ground Zero toxins is eligible for medical monitoring and receives the health care treatment they deserve.



▲ Speaker Sheldon Silver and I break through the wall in the Second Avenue Subway tunnel (MTA Chair Peter Kalikow is in background) at the ground-breaking this Spring.

In July, Speaker Nancy Pelosi and I met with New York labor leaders, including the AFL-CIO President Dennis Hughes, to discuss the illnesses that police, firefighters, and other first responders are facing as a result of their work at Ground Zero.



Report to New York from Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney

Earlier this year, I congratulated students from P.S. 234 in Astoria, Queens for their outstanding service work for our troops. The students began a letter-writing campaign to the troops and discovered that many of our men and women serving in Iraq and Afghanistan lack basic supplies like flashlights, batteries, warm socks, and hygiene products. What began as a small program has now grown into a major operation: the students are currently sending about 50 boxes of supplies a week to Iraq.



■ Largest college aid plan in decades passed

Last year, under its old leadership, Congress raised interest rates on federal student loans to their highest point in 16 years, from 5.3% to 6.8%—costing the average college graduate \$2,500 more in interest payments.

In July, the House reversed that hike and went even further, overwhelmingly approving the largest increase in financial aid for college students since the 1944 G.I. Bill— *at zero cost to taxpayers!* Over the next five years, the College Cost Reduction Act of 2007 (H.R. 2669) would:

- Increase financial aid by about \$18 billion;
- Cut interest rates on federal student loans from 6.8% to 3.4%—saving the average New York college student \$4,570 in interest payments;
- Increase the maximum Pell Grant award to \$5,200, from the current \$4,050, providing an additional \$1.1 billion in Pell Grants to more than 420,000 New Yorkers;
- Cap student loan repayments at 15% of a borrower's yearly discretionary income; and
- Pay for it by reducing \$19 billion in excessive subsidies to the college loan industry.

■ Affordable senior housing opens in L.I.C.

Seniors got good news this year when the 80-unit River View Gardens opened at Queens West in Long Island City. The \$15 million development includes \$13.9 million in federal funding, plus federal rent subsidies, on land provided by the State of New York. It is now fully occupied. The N.Y. Foundation for Senior Citizens project

nearly lost its Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding because bureaucratic hurdles delayed construction. I spoke with the Secretary of HUD and worked with HUD staff to help save the project.

■ Passing the ERA, finally?

Despite the enormous strides American women have made in the past few decades, women are still underrepresented in government and business, earn less than men, and are nearly twice as poor in old age. That's why I've reintroduced H.J. Res. 40, the "Women's Equality Amendment" (WEA) to the U.S. Constitution to help correct the inequality that still exists between women and men in our society. You may recognize the bill under its former name, the Equal Rights Amendment, and its identical language:

"Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

Having this language in the Constitution would make it harder to justify any discrimination based on sex, provide a clearer federal judicial standard for deciding cases of sex discrimination, and establish a standard of equality and non-discrimination for potential offenders.

■ Helping the Hellenic community

In May, I introduced legislation (H.R. 2526) to include Greece in the Visa Waiver Program. The Visa Waiver Program permits nationals from certain countries who are traveling to the United States for tourism or business to stay for ninety days or less without obtaining a visa. Greece is the only one of the original fifteen European Union nations not to belong to the Visa Waiver Program, despite the fact it has met the current entry criteria.

■ Never forgetting the Holocaust

I've reintroduced the "Simon Wiesenthal Holocaust Education Assistance Act" (H.R. 1092) to help educational organizations bolster their Holocaust education programs, many of which suffer from a lack of resources. The bill is named for the honored Holocaust survivor who spent his life's work devoted to seeking justice for the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis.

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Carolyn

Name: _____

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What issues are most important to you?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9/11 Recovery | <input type="checkbox"/> War in Iraq |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Veterans |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Federal Deficit | <input type="checkbox"/> Women's Rights |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Policy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Due to space considerations, not all interest areas can be listed. Return to:
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