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**Congressional
Update**

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Dear Friend,

I hope the new year has gotten off to a happy and healthy start for you. This newsletter is intended to update you on the actions of Congress during the past several months. An important part of this newsletter is a **constituent survey**. Please take the time to complete and return this survey. Your feedback is greatly welcomed and appreciated.

Like all Americans, I will never forget the terrorist attacks of **September 11**. During the initial moments of these heinous attacks and ever since, America has sought to respond to this evil and to meet this unprecedented challenge for our country. All Americans should take great pride in the manner in which our citizens have responded to the attacks. From the passengers on Flight 93, to the emergency responders at the scenes of the attacks, to those who gave blood or donated funds to aid the victims and their families, our citizens have exhibited tremendous courage, compassion, and patriotism.

We should be especially grateful for and proud of the courageous and successful manner in which our military personnel have sought to rid the world of this terrible evil. It is important to remember, however, that the war on terrorism is long from over. We need to continue to keep our men and women in uniform, along with their families, in our thoughts and prayers as they seek to ensure that justice is served.

Our Nation's response to the September 11 attacks has further heightened the honor and privilege I feel in being given the opportunity to represent you and all residents of the 19th District in Congress. Best wishes!

Sincerely,

Todd Russell Platts

PA Guardsmen Helping to Keep the Peace in Kosovo

While our brave men and women in uniform fighting the war on terrorism are daily in the news and deserving of our deepest gratitude, it is important for us to also remember and give thanks to the countless other military personnel who are responding to the call to duty on other fronts. Locally, the members of **Battery F, 109th Field Artillery of the PA National Guard** based in York exemplify this patriotic willingness to serve that has long blessed our Nation. Forty-two soldiers from Battery F were mobilized in October for a seven-month peacekeeping mission in **Kosovo**.

These guardsmen are operating sophisticated "firefinder" portable radar systems in Kosovo to track and identify sources of weapons being fired that threaten **NATO peacekeepers**. The NATO units enforce the U.N.-sponsored peace agreement in Kosovo, facilitate humanitarian relief, and promote the safe and secure environment needed to ensure long-term peace.



Troop Send-off - Prior to Battery F's departure for Kosovo, hundreds of family members, friends, and Guard commanders gathered in York to wish the guardsmen well on their peacekeeping mission. I was honored to participate in this ceremony and to convey my sincere gratitude to the soldiers, including Pvt. 1st Class James Stafford pictured above, and to the soldiers' families for their sacrifices on behalf of our Nation.

Help America Vote Act of 2001

With the right to vote being one of every American citizen's most precious rights, it is imperative that the integrity of the voting process be secure. With the passage on December 12 of the "**Help America Vote Act of 2001**" (H.R. 3295) by a vote of 362 – 63, the House of Representatives addressed problems in the electoral process while fully respecting the role of state and local governments in this process. H.R. 3295 helps to strengthen the American voting process by:

1. Providing states \$2.65 million to replace punch card voting machines and make other election improvements;
2. Requiring states to set up statewide voter registration systems and protect the voting rights of disabled citizens;
3. Establishing a national election commission to serve as an information clearinghouse for election officials; and
4. Ensuring the right to vote for military personnel and overseas voters.

I am a cosponsor of H.R. 3295, which is now before the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration. For more information about this legislation, please visit the **Committee on House Administration** website at www.house.gov/cha.

“No Child Left Behind Act” Signed Into Law

On January 8, 2002, President George Bush signed legislation into law that is one of the most significant overhauls of federal education programs since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed in 1965. “The No Child Left Behind Act” (H.R. 1) passed the Senate and House by margins of 87-10 and 381-41, respectively. H.R. 1 significantly boosts federal investment in education while holding schools and states accountable for academic performance. The President made education reform his number one domestic policy priority when he took office.



Promoting Quality Education - As a member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, I was proud to work with President Bush and Committee Chairman John Boehner in the development and passage of this historic legislation.

H.R. 1 requires states to implement annual reading and math assessment tests for grades 3 – 8. \$400 million in funding is authorized by H.R. 1 to help states cover the cost of designing and administering these tests. To ensure state and local control of education programs, H.R. 1 prohibits federally sponsored national testing and federally controlled curriculum.

The state assessments are intended to provide parents with information on how well their child’s school is performing. Students at consistently low-performing schools can switch to better public schools or receive funding to hire tutors and attend after-school classes. Schools that fail to make adequate progress for four consecutive years could face reorganization by state officials. Home schools and private schools not using federal funds are exempt from H.R. 1’s test requirements.

Other provisions of H.R. 1 include:

- The creation of a “Reading First” program that would provide assistance to States and schools in establishing quality reading programs for all children in kindergarten through grade three, and an “Early Reading First” competitive grant program that will enhance reading readiness for children ages three

to five. H.R. 1 increases federal funding for reading programs from \$300 million in 2001 to \$900 million in 2002.

- A provision granting all states and local school districts flexibility to shift up to 50% of specific federal dollars to education programs that more effectively address their individual needs and priorities.

- The creation of pilot programs granting 150 school districts and seven States additional flexibility. Participating school districts would receive a waiver from federal education rules in exchange for signing an “accountability contract” with the Secretary of Education, in which the districts agree to improve student achievement.

- The consolidation of federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act programs from 55 to 45. For example, the Bilingual and Immigrant Education Programs will be consolidated into a single federal program with a new and important focus: helping limited English proficient students learn English.

- A focus on school safety. H.R. 1 enhances the ability of teachers, principals, and other school professionals to undertake reasonable actions to maintain classroom order and discipline without fearing frivolous lawsuits.

- A requirement by which federal funds would be denied to any local school district that prevents or otherwise denies participation in constitutionally protected school prayer.

For more details about H.R. 1, visit the [Education and the Workforce Committee](http://edworkforce.house.gov) website at <http://edworkforce.house.gov>.



Eagle Scouts – Since taking office last year, I have been privileged to present Certificates of Special Congressional Recognition to 68 Boy Scouts on the occasions of their achieving the rank of Eagle. Justin LeRoy, Josh Potts, and Jason Cunningham are Boy Scout Troop 140’s most recent Eagle rank recipients. The right of youth organizations such as the Boy Scouts to access school premises and facilities was protected in the President’s “No Child Left Behind” education plan.

Platts Opposes Congressional Pay Increase, Sponsors Legislation to Prohibit Automatic Raises

As of January 2002, Congressional salaries increased \$4,900. Believing that it is wrongful for Congressional salaries to automatically increase mid-term, I am one of seven cosponsors of H.R. 2996 seeking to permanently prohibit such automatic pay increases. I also voted to deny this year’s increase from taking effect. Unfortunately,

H.R. 2996 has yet to be considered and the majority of House and Senate members voted not to forego this year’s increase.

While the House personnel office is statutorily required to increase the salaries of all Members of Congress, individual members are free to allocate or spend the

raise as they choose. I will be donating the net increase in my monthly paychecks throughout 2002 to charitable organizations and causes in the 19th District. I will always treat the salary as it stands at the start of a new Congressional term as my salary for the entire term even if a mid-term salary increase is given.

Responding to the September 11 Terrorist Attacks

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, President Bush and the Congress have worked to help our Nation respond to and recover from these evil attacks. Congress has passed or is working on legislation that: condemns the attacks, provides financial resources to our communities and citizens directly attacked, guards against future attacks, and provides law enforcement and military personnel the tools necessary to ensure that justice prevails. Several terrorism-related bills and resolutions are highlighted below. For more details about these items, visit the House website at www.house.gov.

Resolution Condemning the Attack – Enacted into Law

S.J. Res. 22 condemns the terrorist attacks and declares that the U.S. is entitled to respond under international law. The resolution also commends the heroic actions of rescue workers and extends condolences to the victims and their families.

Resolution Authorizing the Use of Force – Enacted into Law

The “Authorization for Use of Military Force” Resolution (S.J.Res. 23) authorizes the President to use force against any person or group of people who participated in the attacks or who harbored the terrorists responsible for the attacks.

\$40 Billion Emergency Appropriations – Enacted into Law

H.R. 2888 appropriates \$40 billion for recovery efforts, anti-terrorism initiatives, and related national security needs.

Public Safety Officer Death/Disability Benefits – Enacted into Law

H.R. 2882 expedites payment of benefits to public safety officers killed or catastrophically injured in the terrorist attacks.

Anti-Terrorism Legislation – Enacted into Law

The USA Patriot Act (H.R. 3162) gives law enforcement additional tools to guard against future attacks. H.R. 3162 enhances electronic surveillance procedures, expands the Foreign Student VISA Monitoring Program, triples INS and Customs personnel along the Canadian border, and provides \$100 million to improve border-monitoring technology.

Career Awareness Day Delivers

On Tuesday, December 18, I spent my most recent Congressional Career Awareness Day with York County resident Lenny Guldner on his United Parcel Service (UPS) delivery route in Mechanicsburg. Such days provide great insights into the variety of challenges 19th District residents encounter on the job and are an important means of keeping me well grounded in the values of Central PA. This Career Awareness Day also included a quick overview of UPS’ terminal in Harrisburg and the opportunity to speak briefly with UPS drivers and management personnel. Joining Lenny on the road also gave me a different perspective of our transportation system which is quite valuable to me as a member of the Transportation Committee.



Coalition Against Terrorism – Three weeks after the September 11 attacks, I joined 10 House colleagues in meeting former Afghanistan King Mohammad Zahir Shah and numerous anti-Taliban regional military leaders at the King’s residence in Rome, Italy. Discussions focused on how America could work with anti-Taliban forces in bringing Osama bin Laden’s terrorist network to justice and ending the Taliban Government’s oppressive reign in Afghanistan.

Transportation Security Legislation – Enacted into Law

The “Aviation and Transportation Security Act” (S. 1447) improves the security of our Nation’s commercial transportation systems. An in-depth review of the aviation security aspects of S. 1447 is found in a separate article below.

Bioterrorism Prevention Legislation – Pending House/Senate Conference Committee Action

The “Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Response Act” (H.R. 3448) improves our ability to respond quickly and effectively to bioterrorist threats or other public health emergencies. H.R. 3448 covers everything from enhancing controls on deadly biological agents to protecting our food, drug and drinking water supplies.



Day on the Job – A common occurrence on my Career Awareness Day was the expression of fine praise for UPS driver Lenny Guldner’s friendly and efficient service by customers such as Jack Ritter of Ritter’s True Value Hardware Store.

Aviation Security Federalized

After the September 11 terrorist attacks, two premises became crystal clear. First, the airlines’ procedures for ensuring the safety of the traveling public were clearly flawed. Second, the federal government must assume responsibility for aviation security to best protect our citizens. With the passage of S. 1447, the “Aviation and Transportation Security Act”, Congress sought to address both premises. I supported S. 1447, which President Bush signed into law on November 19.

S. 1447 federalizes airline security under a new Transportation Security Administration (TSA) within the Department of Transporta-

tion (DOT). The TSA will hire, train and deploy security personnel. Five airports will implement a pilot program involving private contractors. After 2 years, all airports can opt to have the federal government contract with private firms for security services if the Secretary of Transportation determines that this option provides equal or greater security.

S. 1447 requires stricter screening standards at all commercial airports. Screeners must be U.S. citizens and 100% of checked baggage must be screened. S. 1447 also mandates federal background checks on all individuals with access to secure airport areas. S. 1447

requires the TSA to train, supervise, and deploy federal air marshals on selected passenger flights, to strengthen cockpit doors, and to conduct background checks for individuals seeking flying lessons on large aircraft or flight simulators for such aircraft.

Importantly, S. 1447 avoids lengthy bureaucratic delays by authorizing expedited rule-making procedures. Without such authority, DOT rulemakings take 3.8 yearson average. For more details about S. 1447, please visit the [Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure](http://www.house.gov/transportation) website at www.house.gov/transportation.

Congress Acts to Fulfill America's Promises to Our Veterans

Throughout our Nation's history, millions of our citizens have responded to the call to arms. These patriotic men and women have fought to preserve and protect our Nation and the principles upon which it stands, including the ideals of liberty and justice for all. In recognition of the many sacrifices by these dedicated servicemen and women, as well as their families, it is imperative that America fulfill its promises to every veteran and their families. I was proud to support the below legislation to ensure that our veterans receive the benefits they have earned and so rightly deserve.

Veterans legislation passed by Congress in 2001 and signed into law by President Bush:

■ *The Veteran's Survivor Benefits Improvements Act (H.R. 801)* adds \$100 million in new health care benefits for surviving spouses of veterans who die of a service-connected disability. Expands the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance program to include spouses and children of service members.

■ *The Veteran's Education and Expansion Act of 2001 (H.R. 1291)* authorizes more than \$3.1 billion over five years to expand and increase educational, housing, burial and disability benefits. H.R. 1291:

- Increases burial and funeral expense benefits and adds conditions to be covered by health benefits;
- Increases the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) college education benefit amount by 46% over two years;
- Restores lost MGIB benefits for reservists and National Guard members called to active duty; and
- Increases automobile, adaptive equipment, and adapted housing grants for severely disabled veterans.

■ *The World War II Memorial Bill (H.R. 1696)* expedites the construction of a memorial in the Nation's capital to honor and recognize our World War II veterans.

■ *The Veteran's Compensation Rate Amendments (H.R. 2540)* boosts payments for disabled veterans by \$2.5 billion over the next five years. For 100% disabled veterans, the average COLA increase will be \$738 per year.

■ *The Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act (H.R. 2716)* authorizes \$1 billion for aid to homeless veterans and programs to prevent veterans from becoming homeless. H.R. 2716 authorizations include:

- \$285 million for the Homeless Grant and Per Diem Program;
- \$250 million for the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program;
- \$10 million for medical care for homeless veterans with special needs; and
- 2000 additional low-income housing vouchers for homeless veterans.

■ *The Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Programs Enhancement Act (H.R. 3447)* increases health programs for veterans by \$1.4 billion. In addition to various other changes, H.R. 3447:

- Lowers out-of-pocket hospitalization expenses for lower income veterans by 80%;
- Requires the VA to establish chiropractic care programs nationwide;
- Authorizes service dog programs for paralyzed and other severely disabled veterans.

Veterans legislation passed by the House in 2001, but still pending in the Senate:

■ *The Veterans Hospital Emergency Repair Act (H.R. 811)* authorizes \$550 million over two years to repair and renovate dilapidated VA health care and research facilities. Allows grants of up to \$30 million per facility.

■ *Reforming Burial Rules at Arlington National Cemetery (H.R. 3423)* removes the age requirement for retired reserve members and allows all guardsman and reservists who die in the line of duty to be buried at Arlington.

I also cosponsored **House Resolution 298** that expresses the sense of the House of Representatives that **Veterans Day** should continue to be observed on November 11 and remain separate from other federal holidays and the general election day. H.Res. 298 unanimously passed the House on December 5. For more information about this resolution or the above bills, please visit the **Veterans' Affairs Committee** website at <http://veterans.house.gov>.



Anniversary Recognition – I was pleased to present the members of Mt. Joy Lutheran Church in Adams County a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition on the occasion of the church's 150th anniversary. Rev. Charles Marshall and Bishop H. Gerard Knoche of the Delaware-Maryland Synod participated with 150th Anniversary Committee members Bonnie Lambert Brown (Chairperson), Margaret Sentz, Rob Wingert, Susan Benner, J. Richard Felix, Kathryn Weikert, Missi Lawver, and Mark Snell in the service recognizing the anniversary. (Photo courtesy of the Gettysburg Times)



Issues Forum – Congressman George Gekas and I participated with State Representative Jerry Nailor and various other state and local officials at a Congressional Forum hosted by the Harrisburg Regional Chamber and its members. The discussion focused on factors impacting job creation and retention in general and federal legislation seeking to stimulate the economy in specific.

Constituent Survey

As your representative in Congress, it is imperative for me to remain well informed of your views and concerns regarding legislative proposals. The survey below is one means of maintaining a close rapport with you. Your taking the time to complete and return the survey is greatly appreciated. **Please note that there are two response areas for each question so that two persons per household may respond.** Thank you for your assistance!

1. Should the U.S. Constitution be amended to ban the desecration of the American flag?

Yes ____ No ____

2. Should younger workers be given the option to invest a percentage of their Social Security payroll taxes in private, personal retirement accounts so long as benefits for current retirees and those near retirement are not affected?

Yes ____ No ____

3. Should federal funding be provided for medical research involving existing embryonic stem cell lines?

Yes ____ No ____

4. Should federal funding be provided for medical research involving new embryonic stem cell lines?

Yes ____ No ____

5. Should the cloning of human embryos be prohibited?

Yes ____ No ____

6. Should partial-birth abortions be prohibited?

Yes ____ No ____

7. Should the U.S. Constitution be amended to prohibit abortions except for cases involving rape, incest, or where the life of the mother is at risk?

Yes ____ No ____

8. Should the U.S. Constitution be amended to prohibit all abortions?

Yes ____ No ____

9. Should Congress appropriate funding for the military to develop and deploy a defense system to protect against a ballistic missile attack?

Yes ____ No ____

10. Should parents be provided taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers to send their children to private schools of their choice?

Yes ____ No ____

11. Is decreasing our Nation's dependence on foreign oil and gas an important national security interest?

Yes ____ No ____

12. Should the U.S. Senate act favorably on President Bush's National Energy Policy legislation as enacted by the House of Representatives last August?

Yes ____ No ____

13. Do you believe that oil and natural gas exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge can be done in an environmentally sensitive manner?

Yes ____ No ____

14. Do you believe political campaign contributions from special interest groups inappropriately influence the passage or defeat of legislation being considered by Congress?

Yes ____ No ____

15. Should national political parties be prohibited from receiving unregulated soft money contributions?

Yes ____ No ____

16. Should union dues and corporate funds be prohibited from financing radio/television ads that clearly identify a candidate for federal office within 60 days of the general election or 30 days of the primary?

Yes ____ No ____

17. Should acts of violence motivated by the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or disability of the victim ("hate crimes") constitute a separate crime under federal law?

Yes ____ No ____

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(RETURN ADDRESS: **Please Print**)

Congressman Todd R. Platts
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Trade Promotion Authority is Good for the Nation

From 1974 to 1994, Congress authorized the President to negotiate international trade agreements under rules that brought such agreements before Congress for approval or disapproval, without amendments. President Bush's five immediate predecessors, Democrats and Republicans alike, possessed "fast-track" or "trade promotion" authority, allowing them to best promote our Nation's trade interests.

Opening markets is good for American workers and American consumers. Tariffs and other trade restrictions are hidden taxes that destroy jobs and inflate prices. Approximately \$1 billion of our local economy and close to 20,000 jobs in the 19th District are dependent to some degree on exports. Of the 19th District's actively exporting companies, 61% are small businesses with 100 or fewer employees. As the world's largest agricultural exporter, international trade is especially critical for American farmers. One out of every three acres of crops planted in the U.S. is exported.

With the passage of the [Bipartisan Trade Promotion Act of 2001](#), H.R. 3005, on December 6, the House of Representatives agreed to again provide [Trade Promotion Authority \(TPA\)](#) to the President. I voted in favor of H.R. 3005.

The importance of TPA can perhaps be best illustrated by an analogy familiar to workers in our own community. In order for a labor union to maintain a strong hand in contract negotiations, union members provide their leaders broad authority to flesh-out a proposed agreement with

company management. When an agreement is reached, it is submitted to the union members for a straight up-or-down vote. If this were not the case, if instead each union member was entitled to amend the agreement, union leaders would have difficulty in reaching an agreement with management in the first place. The potential for members insisting on unlimited changes prior to accepting the proposed agreement would dissuade company management from taking the union leaders' offers seriously. Negotiations would be prolonged, frequently ineffectual, and result in lost opportunities for both union members and management. [Trade Promotion Authority](#) provides the President with the same sort of leverage in international trade negotiations that union leaders have in labor contract negotiations.

H.R. 3005 is not itself a trade agreement, but sets objectives for negotiations ranging from increasing opportunities for American exporters to ensuring the protection of labor rights and environmental standards in Third World countries. Importantly, Congress must be consulted on an ongoing basis as the President negotiates. The President's TPA authority can be revoked if Congress believes the President has failed to adequately listen to their concerns.

[Trade Promotion Authority](#) will deal President Bush a strong hand at the bargaining table for the next round of international trade negotiations. H.R. 3005 is now before the Senate for consideration. For more details about H.R. 3005, please visit the House website at www.house.gov.

House Votes to Give Workers Access to Quality Investment Advice

Most American workers receive no professional guidance regarding their retirement accounts and many can't afford to pay for such assistance. Current law prohibits employers from providing employees with access to professional investment advice. Under H.R. 2269, the [Retirement Security Advice Act](#), employers would be allowed to provide such access. As a cosponsor of H.R. 2269, I voted in favor of this legislation when it passed the House in November.

H.R. 2269 Offers Important Protections

- Investment advisors must act solely in the interest of the worker. For example, an advisor may not advise someone to invest in a mutual fund just because the advisor receives a bigger commission for that investment.
- Investment advisors must inform participants of any financial interest the advisor may have, the nature of the advisor's affiliation, if any, with the available investment options, and any limits that may be placed on the advisor's ability to provide advice. These types of disclosure rules, along with fiduciary duties, have worked well in regulating advisors under federal securities laws for more than 60 years.
- Only fiduciary advisers — qualified entities that are already regulated under other federal and state laws (i.e. registered investment advisers, registered broker dealers, and banks) — may offer investment advice.
- Employers are not responsible for the individual advice given by professional advisers to individual workers. Employers are, however, responsible for the prudent selection and periodic review of investment advisors.

- Existing securities and state insurance law protections continue to apply as well.

While offering employees access to investment advice is voluntary, employers who offer such access must follow the rules set forth in H.R. 2269, which is now before the Senate Finance Committee. For more information about H.R. 2269, please visit the [Committee on Education and the Workforce](#) website at <http://edworkforce.house.gov>.

Prescription Drug Benefits

Ever-increasing prescription drug costs continue to result in financial hardship for countless Americans. Various legislative proposals are currently before congress seeking to rein in these costs and to add a prescription drug benefit to Medicare. I fully support these efforts.

While Congress considers these legislative proposals, it is important to know my office can help you to

connect with certain pharmaceutical companies that offer assistance to people who are having trouble paying for necessary prescription medications.

While the assistance programs offered by these companies are not a comprehensive solution to the prescription drug issue, they do offer an option for assistance while our discussions in Congress continue.