



CARTER COURIER

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LETTER FROM THE CONGRESSMAN

Dear Friends,

I greatly enjoyed the opportunity to spend last week at home in the 31st District during the President's Day recess. I was fortunate to attend numerous events across the district, including a special opportunity to participate in a conference call between ninth grade students and U.S. soldiers serving in Iraq.

This week in Congress we will be debating H.R. 5351, the Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation Tax Act. Unfortunately this bill seeks to increase \$16 billion worth of taxes on the oil and natural gas industries while creating a huge, and unaccountable, bond system for projects that will do nothing to increase our sources of energy. I have consistently advocated for a policy that increases domestic energy production – not increases taxes.

As always, I thank all of you in the 31st District for the opportunity to serve you in Congress and I look forward to advancing the conservative principles that make Central Texas so great.

Until next week,



FISA EXPIRATION: WHAT IT MEANS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

Last week, leaders in the House chose not to bring the bipartisan extension of the Protect America Act, which had passed the Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support, to the floor for a vote. As a result, the Protect America Act expired, and with it, our ability to intercept terrorist communications which use 21st Century technology.

For six months, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has refused to permanently fix loopholes in the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) originally passed in 1978. Communicating in 1978 was very different than communicating today. There was no Internet, email or cell phones. Dealing with a 21st century al-Qaeda with 1970's tools has begun to slow down the process of collecting communication information from terrorists.

The Senate recently passed the Protect America Act, which updated the current FISA bill and also included immunity provisions to protect communication companies from politically-motivated lawsuits when they cooperate with the government to identify terrorists abroad. The Democratic Leadership postponed the vote on this updated bill in attempt to eliminate these critical provisions.

CONTENTS

FISA Expiration
1-2

*Congressional Army
Medal Recipient*
2

Funds for Fort Hood
2

Outreach Calendar
2-3

*Funding for Harris
Methodist Erath*
3

Updated Tax Info
3



Keeping America safe from terrorist attacks is not, and never should be, a partisan issue. Twenty-one members of the Democratic Blue Dog Coalition sent a letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi asking her to schedule the Senate bill for a vote, but the leadership refused to bring the bill to the floor because they knew that it would pass with the majority vote of both Democrats and Republicans. Instead, the Majority Leadership was content to begin the ten day district work period without up dating the bill, leaving a large security loophole.

Delaying the vote has drastically weakened the ability of America's intelligence community to access vital foreign intelligence information, including the location, intentions, and capabilities of terrorists. The Attorneys General and Director of National Intelligence have been stripped of their power to authorize new certifications against foreign intelligence targets. This means that we may not have the necessary tools to continue tracking terrorists.

There is nothing more important than the safety of our children and grandchildren, and I am alarmed that Congress would allow such a critical tool in keeping them safe to expire. Al-Qa-eda and those that want to kill us have not stopped seeking the next opportunity to attack our country, and there is no doubt that they are watching the current acts of the House with great interest. I will continue to fight to give our intelligence community the tools they need to keep our country safe, and I hope that the Democratic Leadership will stand up and fight with me.

SSG RICHARD "DERIK" STRELSKY PRESENTED WITH CONGRESSIONAL ARMY MEDAL

On February 18th, I proudly presented SSG Richard "Derik" Strelsky with the Congressional Army Medal at Rockdale City Hall in Rockdale, Texas.

According to the Department of the Army, on September 2, 1998, "SSG Strelsky entered the burning apartment of a woman wheelchair bound by cerebral palsy and a four-year-old child. SSG Strelsky rescued both of the occupants. After being assured that both were all right, he then fought the fire with a garden hose until the fire department arrived. SSG Strelsky suffered 1st degree burns and some singed hair during this act of great heroism. The direct result of this soldier's selfless actions was to save two unsuspecting and helpless people. Indirectly, the result fills us all with pride and honor to serve with a true hero. It is only fitting that we honor the man with this prestigious award. There is no one more deserving."

FUNDING FOR FORT HOOD REVEGETATION

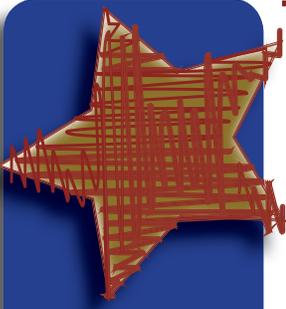
I recently was proud to announce that \$357,000 has been included in the 2008 Omnibus spending bill for Range Revegetation at Fort Hood. This is a joint project between the Texas Water Resources Institute and Fort Hood to revegetate 30,000 acres where heavy artillery traffic has disturbed soils and left the land largely without vegetation. This plan also gives Fort Hood the ability to utilize more of its land for training purposes as well as removing substantial amounts of composted dairy manure from the North Bosque River watershed.

I remain committed to ensuring that our service men and women have the training facilities they need to best prepare them for combat. I applaud the partners in this project and I am pleased to have once again secured funding for practices that will improve Fort Hood's training facilities while being good stewards of the environment.

The 2008 Omnibus spending bill passed the House and the Senate in 2007 and was signed into law by the President late last year.

FEBRUARY OUTREACH SCHEDULE

In order to better serve the citizens of the 31st District, the caseworkers from my office will be traveling to towns throughout the district and setting up local office hours. During these hours folks can ask questions about services that are available through my office or seek help with problems dealing with federal agencies.



CORYELL COUNTY

Thursday, February 28, 2008
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Gatesville Chamber of Commerce
Cotton Belt Depot
2307 Hwy. 36 South
Gatesville, TX

HAMILTON COUNTY

Thursday, February 28, 2008
2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Hamilton County Courthouse
(on the square in Hamilton)
Hamilton, TX

ERATH COUNTY

Stephenville
Friday, February 29, 2008
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
Stephenville City Hall
298 W. Washington
Stephenville, Texas

Dublin

Friday, February 29, 2008
2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Dublin Chamber of Commerce
110 South Patrick
Dublin, TX

**FUNDS FOR HARRIS METHODIST ERATH
COUNTY HOSPITAL**

I was proud to recently announce that \$136,000 was included in the 2008 Omnibus spending bill for Harris Methodist Erath Hospital.

I am proud to represent Harris Methodist Hospital and congratulate them on receiving these funds. The recent renovations in the radiology department have set in motion new patient care opportunities. These federal funds will be used to further enhance those opportunities within the department with emphasis especially on technological advancements and patient flow.

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**MANY HOMEOWNERS CAN CLAIM RELIEF
ON REVISED IRS FORM 982**

According to the IRS, folks whose mortgage debt was partly or entirely forgiven during 2007 may be able to claim special tax relief by filling out revised Form 982, Reduction of Tax Attributes Due to Discharge of Indebtedness. Under the Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Act of 2007, taxpayers may exclude debt forgiven on their principal residence if the balance of their loan was less than \$2 million, or \$1 million for a married person filing a separate return.

The late enactment of this law means that reporting procedures for this law change were not incorporated into tax-preparation software or IRS forms. If you use tax software, check with your provider for updates that include the revised Form 982. More information is in news release IR-2008-17.
