



# THE BECERRA BULLETIN

News and Views from Washington to Los Angeles



September 30, 2008, WASHINGTON, D.C. – In a continued effort to bring news and relevant information about our federal government back to his home district in Los Angeles, Representative Xavier Becerra (CA-31), Assistant to the Speaker of the House and the only congressional member from Southern California who sits on the Ways and Means Committee, brings you "The Becerra Bulletin," an e-newsletter filled with facts and information meant to stimulate thought and discussion about American economic policy and a host of other issues.

## BY THE NUMBERS

### CENSUS DATA SHOW STEADY RISE IN POVERTY UNDER BUSH ADMINISTRATION

Much attention has been paid in recent weeks to the plight of large financial firms and Wall Street investors. In the midst of this economic crisis we must not lose sight of the ongoing struggles of ordinary working families who see their home values falling, their wages stagnating and the cost of gas, groceries and consumer goods skyrocketing. New data released by the Census Bureau on August 26 show that the number of impoverished families rose dramatically last year, well before the Wall Street crisis hit the headlines. These numbers on poverty in America show the true economic crisis facing our country:

	<u>2001</u>	<u>2007</u>
<b>American Families in Poverty</b> .....	<b>32,900,000</b> .....	<b>37,300,000 (+4,400,000)</b>
<b>Poverty Rate for Children</b> .....	<b>16.7%</b> .....	<b>18% (+1.3%)</b>
<b>Uninsured Americans</b> .....	<b>39,800,000</b> .....	<b>45,700,000 (+5,900,000)</b>

## SHORT TAKES — WASHINGTON, D.C.

### BECERRA-AUTHORED LIBRARIAN ACT SIGNED INTO LAW WITH HIGHER ED ACT

On August 14 President Bush signed the Higher Education Opportunity Act into law. The legislation included language authored by Rep. Becerra in the form of the Librarian Incentive to Boost Recruitment and Retention in Areas of Need (LIBRARIAN) Act (H.R. 1877). This bill, first introduced by Rep. Becerra in 2003, rewards librarians who work in underserved communities with student loan forgiveness. It authorizes the cancellation of up to \$10,000 in student loans for librarians serving in communities of need for five years, encouraging college students to pursue a career in library service. "The loan forgiveness for librarians provided for in this legislation will help revitalize our nation's public schools and libraries," Rep. Becerra said. "It creates a significant incentive for today's students to become tomorrow's educators in places where they are needed most."

### REP. BECERRA VOTES FOR EXPANDED ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

On September 23 the House of Representatives passed the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (H.R. 6983) by a vote of 376 to 47. Rep. Becerra voted for the bill. H.R. 6983 is designed to end discrimination against patients seeking treatment for mental illnesses. Specifically, the bill prohibits insurers and group health plans from imposing treatment or financial limitations when they offer mental health benefits that are more restrictive from those applied to medical and surgical services. "It is time that we fully recognize that mental illness and chemical addiction are health conditions that need treatment like any other bodily disease," Rep. Becerra said. "Millions of young people, including our brave returning soldiers, struggle with depression, alcoholism and suicidal thoughts on a daily basis – robbing them and society at large of their full potential. By making sure that insurance companies provide access to treatment for these debilitating conditions we will give families across the country greater peace of mind that their struggling son, daughter, mother, or father can get the treatment they need." Before entering elected office Rep. Becerra began his legal career in 1984 working in a legal services office representing the mentally ill.

## SHORT TAKES — LOS ANGELES

### BECERRA, GARCETTI DEDICATE IMPROVEMENTS TO SANTA MONICA AND WESTERN INTERSECTION

Rep. Becerra and L.A. City Council President Eric Garcetti joined with community members from the Santa Monica-Western neighborhood September 4 to dedicate street improvements that will make it safer for pedestrians and less congested for drivers at the intersection of Santa Monica Boulevard and Western Avenue. The approximately \$300,000 total cost of the project was covered by a grant from the Federal Highway Administration secured by Rep. Becerra, working in close partnership with Council President Garcetti. Improvements include new signalized left-turn arrows, extended left-turn pocket lanes, and decorative crosswalks designed to call drivers' attention to pedestrians. The crosswalk pattern was selected with input from the Santa Monica Western Residents Group. "The multitude of pedestrians and motorists who pass through this intersection every day on their way to home, school, or work should feel safe and protected by up-to-date traffic controls," Rep. Becerra said. "These improvements, made possible by federal dollars, greatly enhance the safety and efficiency of this busy intersection."

**Representative Xavier Becerra, 31st Congressional District, California**

**Assistant to the Speaker of the House of Representatives**

Committee on Ways and Means

Subcommittee on Oversight, Subcommittee on Health & Subcommittee on Social Security

Committee on Budget



DISTRICT OFFICE: 1910 Sunset Blvd., #810, Los Angeles, CA 90026, 213.483.1425  
CAPITOL OFFICE: 1119 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515, 202.225.6235

[becerra.house.gov](http://becerra.house.gov)

