



Congressman Xavier Becerra

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REPRESENTING CALIFORNIA'S 31ST DISTRICT
AND SERVING AS ASSISTANT TO THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

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▶▶ ARE YOU CONNECTED TO YOUR CONGRESSMAN?

In February my Web site, <http://Becerra.House.Gov>, was recognized by the Congressional Management Foundation as the **BEST** in the House of Representatives, **RANKING #1 OUT OF 435!** Log on to <http://Becerra.House.Gov> to find out why!

SIGN-UP

Stay connected by signing on to my email list. You will receive the monthly "Becerra Bulletin" e-newsletter, along with notices of upcoming town halls, events and media appearances.



MEDIA CENTER

Explore the many ways you can stay up-to-date on what I'm doing in Congress by visiting the Media Center. Watch video of floor statements, media appearances, hearings, and town hall meetings – or listen to them by subscribing to "Becerra Podcasts" on iTunes. Read the latest press releases, newsletters and news clips, or search the archives to find the information you are looking for. It's all here!

Want more news? Click here to visit the **Media Center**

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Dozens of videos (like this one where I'm asking questions about foreign debt at a recent Budget Committee hearing) are ready for you to watch on my Web site.

CASEWORK

One of my most important duties as your representative in Congress is to assist you when dealing with federal agencies. My casework staff is ready to help you cut through the "red tape" and secure the services and benefits for which your tax dollars pay. Follow the basic steps on the Casework page to find out if I can help you.



BLOG

The BECERRA BLOG

We are in the midst of an explosion of progressive change on the Internet with the emergence of the blogosphere and other forms of online media. I believe it is important that you have an open line of communication to me. That is why I launched "The Becerra Blog," which allows you to stay up-to-date on my legislative efforts and votes, while giving you a chance to voice your opinions on the issues of the day. Please visit, subscribe, and use the comments section to let me know what's on your mind.



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2007: A STRONG BEGINNING ... 2008: A YEAR FOR MORE PROGRESS

Dear Friends:

What a difference a year makes. After a long period of deficit spending, misplaced priorities, and a failed Iraq policy, we have witnessed a year of steady progress toward a new direction for America.

Over the course of the year, the Democratic-led 110th Congress has passed a host of bipartisan measures to reign in spending, restore accountability in government, and make a number of long overdue investments in the security and future of America.

On day one we confronted the fiscal spending crisis by reinstating "pay-as-you-go" budget rules that now prohibit new deficit spending. On day two we passed the toughest ethics rules in history, breaking the link between lobbyists and legislation. We went on to raise the minimum wage for the first time in a decade, implement the 9/11 Commission's recommendations, and enacted the largest investment in student aid since the G.I. Bill of 1944.

That's remarkable progress. Unfortunately, President Bush – who vetoed nothing in his first five and a half years in office – is thwarting our efforts to take on some of the toughest challenges facing America, from the economy, to health care, to the war in Iraq.

In September and December, the president vetoed congress' effort to provide health insurance to 10 million children of working families. When presented with the opportunity to overturn the veto, a majority of Republicans sided with the president.

Speaker Pelosi and I have made it a priority to put an end to the war in Iraq – a war I vigorously opposed from the start. In March we sent President Bush comprehensive legislation to redeploy our troops out of Iraq, take care of our veterans and rebuild our military. Sadly, the president vetoed this legislation and still will not negotiate with congress on an exit strategy – something the American people demand and American troops deserve.

In 2008 congress will relentlessly seek to end the war in Iraq, address the generational challenge of climate change, and work to strengthen our economy. I am proud of the progress we have made this year, but our work has only just begun.

Sincerely,

XAVIER BECERRA
Member of Congress

Si desea esta información en español, por favor llame al (213) 483-1425.

<http://Becerra.House.gov>

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CONGRESSMAN XAVIER BECERRA
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515



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CAPITOL IMPROVEMENTS IN AND AROUND WASHINGTON, D.C.



HEALTH CARE: COVERING 10 MILLION CHILDREN OF WORKING FAMILIES

In the United States, the richest and most powerful country in the world, there are 15 million children who live without health insurance. We are the only industrialized country in the world that does not provide access to healthcare for all of its children. Twice this fall, congress approved and sent to the president legislation that would provide health insurance to 10 million children. Sadly, the president vetoed both bills. The Republicans who oppose the bill say it costs too much to cover 10 million children. I say it all depends on your priorities. Covering 10 million children for one year will cost us the same as what President Bush spends in 37 days on the war in Iraq. In fact, the administration cannot account for \$9 billion in Iraqi reconstruction dollars – this is more money than the cost to fund the children's health insurance program for a full year. We want to do right by the children of the working families of this country because assuring that our children have health insurance is not a story, it is a priority.

IT'S ABOUT PRIORITIES: THE IRAQ WAR IS EXACTING TOO HIGH A COST ON ALL OF US

In mid-November, the Joint Economic Committee released a report that detailed the long term costs of the war in Iraq should it continue to "stay the course." When one looks beyond just budgetary appropriations and instead considers the interest accrued on borrowing these funds, long term veteran's health care and a host of other issues, the total cost of the war could exceed \$3.5 trillion by 2017. At the time this newsletter went to print, 3,888 American soldiers have died in Iraq and 28,692 have been wounded. The families of those fallen soldiers have paid too high a price and have sacrificed enough. Democrats in congress are committed to bringing our troops home responsibly, honorably, safely and soon. We are committed to repairing the readiness of our military. And we are committed to refocusing our efforts to fight terrorism around the world. But we are also focused on Americans' domestic needs and priorities. On Tuesday, November 13, 2007, President Bush vetoed the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill (H.R. 3043) that passed in both chambers of congress with bipartisan support. This piece of legislation is the largest single domestic investment the government makes to fund programs that directly affect tax-paying Americans, and is a main policy priority for Democrats in congress. The president called the bill "excessive." I wholeheartedly disagree. Below is a chart of just some of the programs contained within the Labor-HHS appropriations bill and the critical investments we wanted to make in them. I invite you to compare these investments with the corresponding war cost and determine for yourself how you would define "excessive."

KEY PRIORITIES THE PRESIDENT VETOED

-  \$30 billion – **National Institutes of Health: Life Saving Medical Research** (3 Months In Iraq)
-  \$14.8 billion – **Title I: Education for the Disadvantaged** (45 Days In Iraq)
-  \$11.3 billion – **IDEA State Grants: Special Education** (34 Days In Iraq)
-  \$7.0 billion – **Head Start: Early Childhood Education** (21 Days In Iraq)
-  \$3.4 billion – **Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services for Veterans** (10 Days In Iraq)
-  \$2.4 billion – **LIHEAP: Heating Assistance for Low Income Families** (1 Week In Iraq)
-  \$2.2 billion – **Community Health Centers** (6 Days In Iraq)
-  \$1.5 billion – **Job Training & Career Placement Dislocated Workers** (4 Days In Iraq)
-  \$1.2 billion – **Career & Vocational Education** (3 Days In Iraq)
-  \$1.1 billion – **21st Century Learning Centers: After School Programs** (3 Days In Iraq)
-  \$228 million – **Veterans' Employment Programs** (16 Hours In Iraq)
-  \$23.6 million – **Homeless Veterans Services** (1 Hour In Iraq)
-  \$9.5 million – **Programs for Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injuries** (41 Minutes In Iraq)

I have posted the Joint Economic Committee's report, "War At Any Price?" and other resources pertaining to the Iraq war on my Web site at <http://Becerra.House.gov>.

EMPOWERING THE MIDDLE CLASS WITH THE COLLEGE COST REDUCTION ACT

Over the past decade, the cost of sending your children to college has skyrocketed. Since 2001 the average annual cost of attending a four year college jumped by over \$3,000, more than 30 percent. On July 11 I joined a strong bipartisan majority in the House of Representatives in taking a major step toward making college more affordable by voting for the College Cost Reduction Act of 2007. This historic piece of legislation, signed into law September 27 by the president, provides the largest boost in financial aid for college students since the GI Bill of 1944. This law increases the purchasing power and availability of Pell Grant scholarships, cuts student interest rates in half, and provides additional assistance to students who commit to teaching in high poverty communities and other public servants working in underserved areas. Included in the law is language I authored to reward librarians who work in underserved communities with student loan forgiveness of up to \$5,000. In total the law invests over \$15 billion in our nation's student aid program. And thanks to the House's "Pay-Go" rule, this vital investment in our nation's future comes at no new cost to taxpayers.



On November 1 I joined my colleagues in front of the Capitol for an event highlighting the legislative successes achieved this year in the House of Representatives.

THE DISTRICT DIGEST DISPATCHES FROM THE 31ST



Over 150 constituents came out to speak directly with me about the issues they want to see addressed at this September "Coffee With Your Congressman" town hall meeting at the Glassell Park Community and Senior Center.

CASEWORK Corner

My casework staff has over 30 years combined experience in helping you secure the services and benefits for which your tax dollars pay. Since January of this year, we have helped more than 440 constituents resolve issues with federal agencies such as the Social Security Administration (SSA), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), among others.

To learn more about the Casework process in my office, please visit the "CONSTITUENT SERVICES" section of my Web site.

"COFFEE WITH YOUR CONGRESSMAN" MEETINGS HELD THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT

For the past 15 years, I have made it a priority to visit every neighborhood in the 31st District to seek out your thoughts and views on the issues of the day. Over 750 of your neighbors came out to at least one of the eight "Coffee With Your Congressman" town hall meetings held this year throughout the district, from Eagle Rock to South Los Angeles. This is a great turnout! It says a lot about the civic sensibility of the good people of the 31st District. The most important part of the meetings is always the question and answer session. I heard loud and clear your concerns about the ongoing war in Iraq, the well-being of our brave troops and veterans, and the current state of our economy, as well as the need to reform our immigration and health care systems. These lively conversations help me stay informed and aware of the issues important to you. I now post video and audio segments of each "Coffee" on my Web site under "Becerra Broadcasts" and "Becerra Podcasts," so that anyone can listen in to the conversation and hear what was said. Visit <http://Becerra.House.Gov> to view and listen to previous meetings, and sign-up for email updates to make sure you hear about the next meeting. Thank you to all who participated this year, and I look forward to seeing you at the next "Coffee With Your Congressman" in 2008!



"STEP"ing Into Jefferson High School

On November 20 I visited a remarkable group of students at Jefferson High School who are participating in the Secondary Transition Education Program ("STEP"), which works to build self confidence among students and promote a greater sense of community at the school. The students participated in a mock congressional debate and vote during the visit. Ron Rubine (far left), a teacher at Jefferson, administers the STEP program.



Accolades for Arroyo Vista

On August 23, in commemoration of National Community Health Center Week, I visited the Arroyo Vista Family Health Center in Lincoln Heights to tour its new facility and commend the excellent work of the dedicated staff. Arroyo Vista provides an invaluable service to the people of northeast Los Angeles, offering comprehensive health care to the uninsured, underinsured and most vulnerable members of the community.

Visit my Web site <http://Becerra.House.Gov> and click "Sign Me Up!" to receive regular emails.

