



July 20, 2005

Dear Friends:

With war looming two and a half years ago, I wrote to you in a newsletter saying that to fix our problems at home while dealing with our challenges abroad, the president, the Congress and indeed all Americans must share in any sacrifice we might undertake.

Since then, we have witnessed plenty of sacrifice but little sharing. Nearly 1,800 Americans have lost their lives and 13,000 more have been scarred or disabled in a dubious war with no end in sight. We have spent over \$275 billion thus far on what we were told would be a \$50 billion war. Here at home, we face fiscal disarray: record budget deficits; underfunded veterans programs; stinging cuts to education, healthcare and environmental safeguards; the future of Social Security compromised by risky partial privatization plans; and again President Bush proposes more tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans.

We can't undo the past, but we should understand the consequences of our actions on our future. Just what we have spent on the war to date would be enough to pay our nation's 3.4 million teachers an annual salary of \$80,800 ... or could fully fund the Department of Homeland Security for the next nine years ... or could fund the Los Angeles Police Department at current levels for the next 275 years.

We desperately need a coherent strategy in Iraq and at home. The haphazard fashion in which this war was planned has left our brave men and women in uniform working honorably, tirelessly in the Iraqi desert, yet working without any tangible sense of when they can return home to their families. On matters of real national security, politics should stop at the water's edge. But the policies of the Bush Administration have teetered on the edge of reason. That is why I became a founding member of the Out of Iraq Caucus in the House of Representatives. Our mission is to pressure the administration to establish a coherent strategy on Iraq that leads to the stabilization of Iraq, robust participation by the international community and the return of American troops.

Winning the peace, the president has learned, is harder than winning the war. It takes time. But the day when our troops – who have sacrificed most – can come home cannot come fast enough.

Sincerely,

XAVIER BECERRA
Member of Congress

P.S. Whether you are young or old, if you are concerned about Social Security, I urge you to attend and participate in my August 2 Congressional Forum: "The Future of Social Security" (Details are on the back of this newsletter).

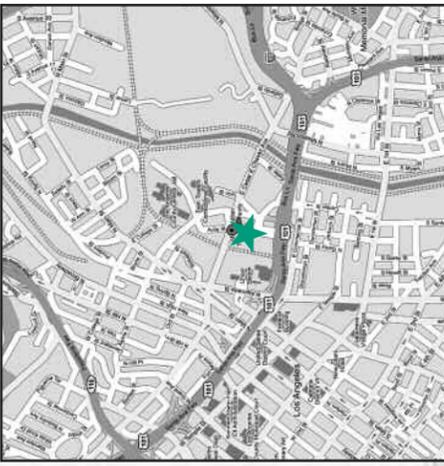
Si desea esta información en español, por favor llame al (213) 483-1425.

CONGRESSIONAL FORUM: THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL SECURITY

AN INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE HOSTED BY REPRESENTATIVES XAVIER BECERRA (CA-31) AND LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD (CA-34)

TUESDAY, AUGUST 2, 2005
Doors Open at 10:30 a.m.

1 Gateway Plaza (at Caesar Chavez Ave. and Vignes St., behind Union Station), Los Angeles, CA 90012
(Park in the subterranean parking structure)



Rep. Becerra, a member of the Subcommittee on Social Security, and Rep. Roybal-Allard will host and moderate an intergenerational dialogue where seniors, 20- and 30-somethings, experts, advocates and members of Congress come together to discuss the future of Social Security. *Where do you stand on the president's idea of partial privatization? What is being done with the billions of dollars that workers contribute to the Social Security Trust Fund? Where will Congress take Social Security?*

You are invited to attend and share your views.

If you have further questions, or require special accommodations at the Forum, please call Congressman Becerra's office at (213) 483-1425.

CONGRESSMAN XAVIER BECERRA
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515



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**Sign up for email updates including
"The Becerra Bulletin" at:
Becerra.House.gov**

This mailing was prepared, published and mailed at taxpayer expense.

Printed on recycled paper with soybean ink.

"There are few votes as solemn and challenging to each of us and our democracy as a vote to declare war against another people. Can I look at my maker, my family and [you] good people ... and say: this is the cause for which I will cast my vote to sacrifice American lives? Is this truly the time to ask for the ultimate sacrifice from our men and women in uniform? . . . I cast a 'no' vote."



CONGRESSMAN XAVIER BECERRA

On the Floor of the United States House of Representatives, October 10, 2002, just prior to voting "No" on H.J.Res. 114, "To Authorize the Use of United States Armed Forces Against Iraq." The measure passed 296 to 133.

"I'm going to be judicious as to how to use the military. It needs to be in our vital interest, the mission needs to be clear, and the exit strategy obvious."
 – George W. Bush, October 12, 2000

"[B]illion[s] [of] dollars in bombs, death and destruction does not sound like the wisest prescription for engendering Iraqi goodwill." – Congressman Becerra, October 10, 2002

WHAT HAS BEEN SAID

WHAT HAS HAPPENED

"Military action was now seen as inevitable. Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD [Weapons of Mass Destruction]. But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy ... There was little discussion in Washington of the aftermath after military action."

– Sir Richard Dearlove, British Intelligence "MI6" director, following an official high level meeting between British and American officials, and written in the now famous "Downing Street Memo," July 23, 2002

"The Office of Management and Budget has come up with a number that's something under \$50 billion for the cost. How much of that would be the U.S. burden, and how much would be other countries, is an open question."

– Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld responding to a question on how much money the Department of Defense would need to spend in Iraq, January 19, 2003

"It is not knowable how long that conflict will last, it could last, you know, six days, six weeks, I doubt six months."

– Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, February 7, 2003

"My fellow Americans, major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed."

– The president from the deck of the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln in front of a banner reading "Mission Accomplished," May 1, 2003

"I think we may well have some kind of presence there over a period of time. The level of activity that we see today from a military standpoint, I think, will clearly decline. I think they're in the last throes, if you will, of the insurgency."

– Vice President Dick Cheney, May 31, 2005

"We're not going to win against the insurgency. The Iraqi people are going to win against the insurgency. That insurgency could go on for any number of years. Insurgencies tend to go on five, six, eight, 10, 12 years."

– Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, June 26, 2005

"I presented the president a list of about 15 things that could go terribly wrong before the war started."

REPORTER: "Was a robust insurgency on your list that you gave the president?"

"I don't remember whether that was on there."

– Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on NBC's "Meet the Press," June 26, 2005

2002

2003

2004

2005

October 10, 2002
Congress passes Joint Resolution 114 authorizing the president to use force against Iraq. Congressman Becerra votes against this resolution.

March 19, 2003
U.S. begins war in Iraq.

April 16, 2003
The president signs a bill allocating \$80 billion to pay for costs associated with the war in Iraq.

May 1, 2003
At the end of major combat operations, a total of 140 soldiers have lost their lives.

September 7, 2003
The president announces that another \$87 billion is needed to pay for additional military and reconstruction costs in Iraq.

December 13, 2003
Saddam Hussein is captured by American troops.

June 28, 2004
Sovereignty is transferred to the Interim Iraqi Government.

July 22, 2004
Congress appropriates an additional \$25 billion for war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

December 1, 2004
U.S. troops total about 150,000, the highest level since the invasion in March 2003.

January 12, 2005
The White House confirms that the search in Iraq for weapons of mass destruction has ended, with no evidence of their existence.

May 5, 2005
Congress appropriates \$82 billion for wartime operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The president signs it into law.

PRESENT DAY

WHERE WE ARE:

1,756	Total U.S. military deaths since the war began (as of July 12, 2005).
13,190	Total U.S. troops wounded in action.
12,000	Iraqi civilians killed (March 20, 2003-June 2, 2005).
16,000	Estimated number of insurgents as of May 2005.
70	Average daily attacks by insurgents as of May 2005 (In June 2004, it was 45).
135,000	Number of U.S. troops in Iraq as of June 2005.
23,250	Number of non-U.S. coalition forces in Iraq as of June 2005.
\$275,000,000,000	Total amount of tax dollars spent on war efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.
WHERE ARE WE GOING?	

DATELINE LOS ANGELES . . .

'CULTURES' CAPTURES TOP PRIZE AT CONGRESSIONAL ART COMPETITION

Rep. Becerra hosted his annual student art competition Saturday, May 15 at the Southwest Museum in Mt. Washington. This year's competition, themed "Cultural Celebration," received a record 159 submissions from students throughout the 31st Congressional District.

The winning entry, "Cultures," was mastered by Maria Soto, a ninth grader from John Marshall High School enrolled in the arts program at the East Los Angeles Skills Center. Second place went to Jasmin Quon, a 10th grader from Ribet Academy, and third place was awarded to Jennifer Wong, a 12th grader from Franklin High School.

The following day, the three winners participated in pregame events on the field of Dodger Stadium where they were recognized for their outstanding achievement. Maria Soto also joined Rep. Becerra in Washington, D.C. on June 14 to attend the national congressional art competition. Her work will be exhibited in the nation's Capitol for the next year.



Congressman Becerra congratulates Maria Soto for taking first place honors at the congressman's 2005 31st District art competition.

On July 6, Rep. Becerra threw out the first pitch at the Wrigley Little League baseball game between the Yankees and the White Sox at the Gilbert-Lindsay Recreation Center in South Los Angeles. Rep. Becerra secured a \$60,000 federal grant through the Department of Justice, which will be used to dramatically expand the size of the little league program to include more players. At right, umpire James Lee looks on as Rep. Becerra signs the first-pitch ball.



SOCIAL SECURITY 101

Over the past few months, Rep. Becerra has traversed the 31st Congressional District and beyond to hold town hall meetings on Social Security – the most successful program ever enacted by the U.S. – and discuss various congressional initiatives to change it. His travels have taken him from Los Angeles to West Hollywood to Santa Barbara, CA and Albuquerque, NM. He will be hosting a major congressional forum on Social Security in Los Angeles on August 2 (details are on the back of this newsletter).

DATELINE WASHINGTON, D.C. . . .

DR-CAFTA COMES TO FOREFRONT OF CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE

Congressman Becerra, the only Southern Californian on the House Ways and Means Committee, testified on the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) before the International Relations Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere on April 13.

He expressed grave concerns with the agreement, citing sub-par labor, health and environmental provisions. "In the heated competition for new markets and expanded economic opportunity, America loses if trade becomes a race to the bottom," Congressman Becerra said.

THE SMITHSONIAN'S NEWEST BOARD MEMBER

Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert and Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi recently appointed Rep. Becerra to serve on the Smithsonian Institution's Board of Regents.

The board is charged by Congress with the oversight of the Smithsonian Institution's 16 museums and a budget of over \$906 million. Over 24 million people visited the museums in 2004.