Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi

Washington Update

June 2004

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Dear Friend,

It is with great hope and concern that I send you this Washington update. My hope stems from knowing that our nation is recognizing the need for mending America. Americans want an end to the polarization that divides us by how we differ rather than uniting us around our shared values. Building community must be part of building a better future.

My concern comes from the aimlessness with which the Bush Administration has dealt with the war in Iraq. When I voted against the war, I said that the intelligence did not support the threat claimed by the Administration. Before we invaded Iraq, we were told our troops would be met with rose petals; instead they were greeted with rocket-propelled grenades. We were told Iraq was a country that could finance its own reconstruction and soon. One year later, the cost of the war and reconstruction is more than $200 billion.

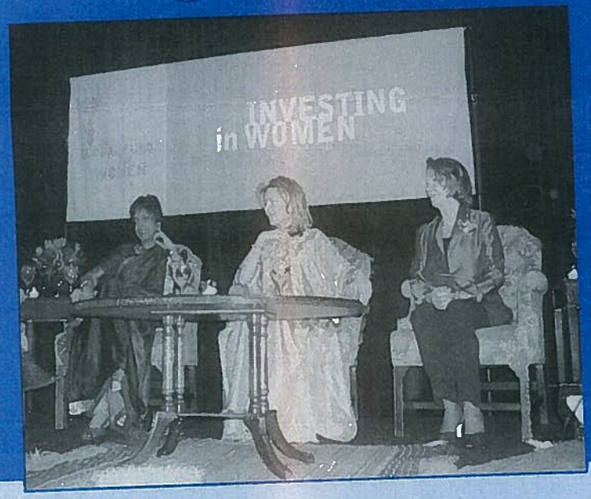
The most serious toll is in U.S. lives, now over 800, with thousands wounded. The cost in lives, the cost to the U.S. taxpayers and the cost to our reputation must be accounted for. The incompetence requires a change in course.

At the same time, the Administration is driving us deeper into debt with its reckless economic policies. I am fighting every day in Congress to change these policies in order to create jobs and economic growth, to increase access to health care, to improve education for our children, to safeguard our environment, and to keep our nation secure while at the same time protecting the Constitution and our civil liberties.

It is a privilege to serve San Francisco in Congress. I look forward to hearing from you about these and other issues of concern in our community and our country.

Nancy

Working for Global Women's Rights



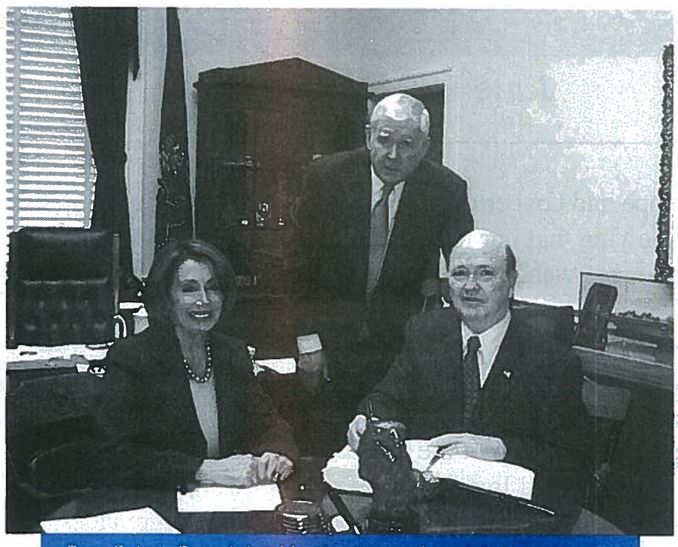
In San Francisco, I joined Navi Pillay, Judge of the Criminal Court in the Hague; Queen Noor of Jordan; Mary Robinson, former UN Commissioner for Human Rights; and others to announce the Global Fund for Women's "Investing in Women" Campaign. The Global Fund for Women is the world's largest grantmaking foundation that focuses exclusively on women's international human rights.

In Washington, I hosted Women for Women International President and Founder Zainab Salbi to discuss with Members of Congress ways to help Iraqi women achieve political representation.

Navi Pillay, Queen Noor, and Rep. Pelosi participate in the Global Fund for Women panel discussion.

City and Navy Reach Agreement on Shipyard

This Spring, after years of negotiation, the City of San Francisco and the Navy signed the conveyance agreement to transfer the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard to the City. The San Francisco Redevelopment Agency unanimously approved the agreement.



Rep. Pelosi, Rep. John Murtha (center) and Assistant Secretary of the Navy H.T. Johnson at the signing of the agreement to transfer Hunters Point Naval Shipyard to the City of San Francisco. Mayor Newsom participated by phone.

Mayor Gavin Newsom traveled to Washington, D.C., and we met with the Navy to work toward a safe and clean transfer of the shipyard to the City.

Congressman John Murtha (D-PA), the ranking member of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, offered critical assistance in the final negotiation between the City and the Navy, brokering agreement on the few remaining details of the transfer.

The transfer of this land to the City signals a strong step in the direction of economic revitalization and opportunity, a safe environment, and a renewed sense of community. In concert with the residents of Bayview Hunters Point, we are on the road to turn this former shipyard site into a place of promise.

Early Treatment for HIV Act

Although effective drug treatments have improved both the health and quality of life for thousands of HIV-positive individuals, many uninsured and underinsured Americans still do not have access to these life-saving medications. HIV-positive individuals generally do not meet Medicaid requirements until they are disabled by full-blown AIDS.

Forcing people to wait for health care until their immune systems are compromised by AIDS is morally indefensible. That is why I was proud to reintroduce HR 3859, the Early Treatment for HIV Act, earlier this year. This bill would allow low-income individuals living with HIV to qualify for Medicaid coverage earlier in the course of their disease.

New infections, combined with a decline in AIDS deaths, mean that more people than ever are living with HIV and AIDS. While we must intensify our prevention efforts, including education about behavioral risk and research for a vaccine, we must also respond to the growing demand for HIV care.

The Early Treatment for HIV Act is modeled after the successful Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment and Prevention Act of 2000, which allows states to provide early access to Medicaid to women with breast and cervical cancer. Even in these difficult fiscal times, 49 states have implemented this initiative. A recent analysis prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers shows that passage of the Early Treatment for HIV Act will both improve the health of people with HIV and save taxpayer dollars.

Early treatment for HIV infection saves lives and reduces health care costs as progression from HIV to full-blown AIDS is prevented or delayed. We have a moral responsibility to eliminate barriers to early drug therapy immediately.

SAFE Act

As we protect and defend the American people against terrorism, we must always protect and defend the Constitution. We cannot, and we must not, allow our civil liberties contained in the Constitution to become a casualty in the war on terrorism.

When Congress voted for the Patriot Act, supporters argued that the Patriot Act was necessary to combat terrorism. Now that we have had time to assess how the Patriot Act is being used, I am concerned that Attorney General John Ashcroft may have misused the Patriot Act for investigations that have little to do with terrorism. We must correct the act to prevent abuses of our civil liberties.

In particular, we need to look at measures to restore the federal judiciary's role to ensure that the Attorney General's far-reaching powers are not abused. The SAFE Act, which I am proud to cosponsor, would modify the Patriot Act by requiring court approval for the FBI to obtain records and wiretaps. The SAFE Act would also make clear that the exercise of political protest is protected. We can and we must keep the American people safe without threatening our civil liberties.

Next Generation Summit

In April, more than 250 students and young community leaders from across the country came to Washington to meet with Members of Congress at the first ever "Next Generation Democratic Summit." It was my privilege to host this summit with Senate Leader Tom Daschle. The summit was co-chaired by Senator Hillary Clinton and the "30 Something Working Group" of House Democrats who are in their thirties.

At the summit, young people offered their opinions and ideas directly to Members of Congress and discussed strategies for increasing young Americans' involvement in their communities and in public service.

The morning included breakout sessions on jobs and the economy, civil rights, globalization, education, the environment, and national service. In the afternoon at the 21st Century Town Hall, summit participants developed strategies to motivate the younger generation to become more civically active. The town hall was moderated by MTV News correspondent Gideon Yago and featured WWE Wrestlers Chris Nowitski and Victoria.

The Summit is part of a strong effort by my office to reach out to young Americans.

For more information on issues important to young people in San Francisco, please visit my new youth opportunities web page at www.house.gov/pelosi.

Rep. Pelosi met with San Francisco's delegates to the Next Generation Summit: Allison O'Brien, Owen Stephens, Ogai Haider, Le Conte Dill, and Dhaya Lakshminarayanan.

Medicare Prescription Drug Cards

On April 15, I joined seniors at the Mendelsohn House senior housing facility South of Market to view and discuss a video prepared by the nonprofit organization Families USA. Narrated by Walter Cronkite, the video explains the many changes to Medicare as a result of the new Republican prescription drug law. The next day, I spoke on this topic to members of the National Council on the Aging and the American Society on Aging at their joint national conference in San Francisco.

We all want a prescription drug benefit that is affordable, defined, and guaranteed under Medicare. Unfortunately, this new law is a step backward, and begins to unravel Medicare.

Medicare beneficiaries are receiving advertisements, mailings, and promotions for participation in a new Medicare-approved prescription drug discount card program. Card sponsors began enrolling people in May 2004. You can join at anytime after that. This transitional system will only be in effect until December 2005.

These cards are being promoted as offering significant price discounts on prescription drugs. However, the law does not require any specific level of savings, and it is uncertain how much financial help the card will actually provide. If you already have a discount card offered in the private marketplace, your savings will likely not be much different. Also, once you have chosen a card, you cannot change your mind for one year. The drug companies who offer these cards, however, can change the drugs that they cover and the discounts they provide every week.

Unfortunately, the Medicare drug discount card will not provide significant relief for most Medicare beneficiaries. It may provide some assistance for lower-income beneficiaries, but finding a card to meet your needs may be difficult. I urge you to use the resources below when choosing a card.

For more information on drug card options contact
1-800-MEDICARE or www.medicare.gov.

Fighting for Veterans and for Peace

Rep. Pelosi receives the "Unsung Hero" Award for her work in Congress from CA Department Commander James W. Hackney, and American Legion National Commander James Breiden.

It was my great honor this year to receive the "Unsung Hero" award from the American Legion. House Democrats have worked closely with the American Legion, which has 2.7 million members across the country, on issues such as veterans' health care and benefits.

We have fought to end the unfair Disabled Veterans' Tax, which prevents veterans from receiving their full retirement and disability benefits. Because of our efforts, the Republican Congress began to address the issue, but still has not ended the tax fully. This year, we are focused on ending the Survivor Benefit Penalty, which penalizes hundreds of thousands of spouses of deceased military retirees and veterans. On the battlefield, the military pledges to leave no soldier behind. As a nation, let it be our pledge that when they return home, we leave no veteran behind.

As we work to keep our commitment to those who have served our country in uniform, we must work to prevent future conflicts. I am also proud to have received an "A+" rating from California Peace Action in its annual report card on the voting records of Members of Congress. The grade is based on votes on nuclear nonproliferation, weapons sales to human rights-abusing governments, and international cooperation.

By undoing the ABM Treaty and considering the use of "usable" battlefield nuclear weapons, the Bush Administration has turned back the clock on three decades of arms control. The United States must not create new nuclear weapons and ignite new arms races. Further, we must improve international cooperation, listen to our allies and partners around the world, and support U.S. participation in the United Nations.

By honoring our nation's promises to our veterans and by promoting a responsible foreign policy based in human rights and international cooperation, we can show our greatness as a nation as well as our strength.

Nancy Pelosi

WWII Memorial

On May 29, I was proud to participate in the dedication ceremony of the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. and to host a meeting on Capitol Hill for World War II Veterans from across the country. The memorial honors the 16 million Americans who served in the armed forces of the United States during World War II, the more than 400,000 who died, and the millions who supported the war effort on the homefront.

The memorial is a monument to the spirit, sacrifice and commitment of the American people to the common defense of the nation and the broader causes of peace and freedom from tyranny throughout the world. It will inspire future generations of Americans and deepen their appreciation of what the "Greatest Generation" accomplished in securing freedom and democracy.

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