



The 47th Flyer

News for California's 47th Congressional District
from Congressman Alan Lowenthal



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February 9, 2015

What Drives My Efforts On Capitol Hill

Talking to my constituents, working with them on issues, and hearing how things impact them, has shaped the ways in which I deal with issues.

I come from the Tip O'Neill school of politics—"All politics is local."

The reality is that, in Congress, you are not going to deal with a great number of issues on the House floor that deal solely with your own local district. In general, Members of Congress are dealing with broader national and international issues.

It is something all members of Congress must deal with -- balancing the interests of our constituents, and at the same time, the interests of the nation as a whole.

To some degree, I think the way many Members of Congress form their views of broader issues—at least I know it is true for me—is through the realities of our constituents.

For example, the reason I am introducing legislation like my [freight bill](#) to help rebuild our infrastructure is because of what I have heard from people in the 47th District—their realities in dealing with the impacts of freight.

My concerns about the intersection of industry and environment originally came from walking my district over 20 years ago and having people ask me, "What is this black soot on my window sills; am I breathing that; and, what does it mean for me?"

My decision to join the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, was because people from the 47th District's Vietnamese American and Cambodian American communities expressed to me their concerns about the tremendous violations of human rights going on in those countries. As a Member of Congress, and now especially as a member of the Foreign Affairs committee, it was critical to my constituents that I be a champion of human rights.

Just like all the examples, the issue of human rights is a much larger national and international issue that came to me from the community.

Ultimately, the buck stops with me – I am the one that pushes that red button that says 'no' on a bill, or that green button that says 'yes' on a bill.

But, I want you to know, that I am here to listen, and I am here to be your voice.

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Should the United States normalize trade, travel, and diplomatic relations with Cuba?

Yes - This is a direct way to support human rights improvements in Cuba

Maybe - But it should be a careful, well-thought process over time

No - Any normalization will only empower the repressive Cuban government

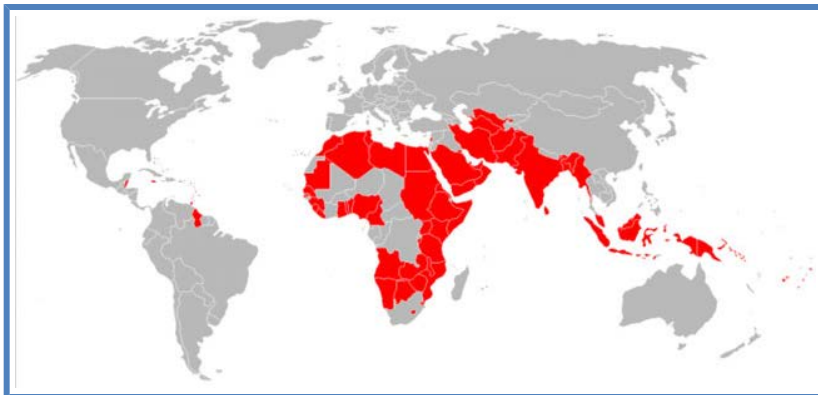
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On The Hill

A Human Rights Success

Last week, I joined with Senator Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.) in introducing the [International Human Rights Defense Act](#), which sought to make preventing and responding to discrimination and violence against the LGBT community a U.S. foreign policy priority and devise a global strategy to achieve those goals.

I am pleased to announce that this week, the U.S. State Department confirmed that it will appoint a Special Envoy position in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor to coordinate the effort outlined in the bill.



Nations where homosexuality is illegal (does not include Russia or Iraq, where laws discriminate)

As I pointed out in the last issue of the 47th Flyer, more than 80 nations around the world have laws that criminalize homosexuality, prohibit public support for the LGBT community, or promote homophobia. In seven countries, including Nigeria--home to 175 million people--homosexuality is punishable by death.

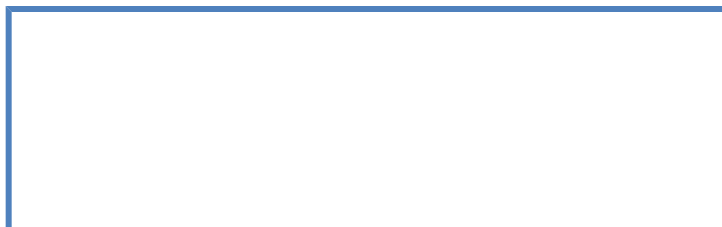
America is a beacon of freedom and equality to the rest of the world. We must lead by example. The appointment of a LGBT Special Envoy is another step to making sure that our fundamental American ideals of equality, equity, and diversity are properly reflected in our foreign policy. As a nation, we can, and should, take a leading role in defending the rights of all human beings across the globe to live, love, and prosper.

Freedom Writers' Erin Gruwell Visit

It was wonderful to visit with University of California Irvine and Cal State Long Beach alumna, Erin Gruwell, who stopped by my office this week.

Many of you may remember her as Ms. G, who as a teacher during the early 1990s at Long Beach's Wilson High, used journal writing as a tool to help students learn about and deal with intolerance and misunderstanding.

Erin proudly labeled her students 'Freedom Writers,' and featured her students and their writings in her 1999 non-fiction book, "The Freedom Writers Diary." The book would later become the basis for the Hillary Swank movie "Freedom Writers," released in 2007.





The Continuing Effort To Defend Our Environment

I am incredibly honored to be asked to serve as a Vice-Chair on the [Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition](#) (SEEC) during the 114th Congress.

The Coalition serves as a focused, active, and effective advocate for clean energy innovation and job creation, environmental protection, and policies that will address global climate change.

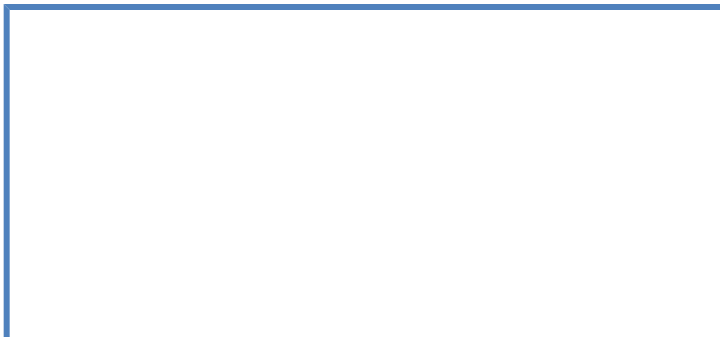
SEEC was founded in January 2009, at the start of the 111th Congress, by co-chairs Rep. Jay Inslee (D-WA) and Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY), with thirty-five charter members. Over its five-year existence, the Coalition has grown to fifty-seven members, and established itself as a key green voice in the Congress.

I also look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on the Natural Resources Committee to support legislation that protects and preserves our environment for our children and our grandchildren, as well as working as chairman of the Congressional Safe Climate Caucus to keep the issue of addressing climate change at the forefront in Congress.

In The 47th District

Young Women's Empowerment Conference 2015

If your child, or someone you know is a 9th to 12th grade student from the 47th District, I hope they can join me, California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) President Dr. Jane Close Conoley, and students from across the 47th District on Saturday, February 21, for the [2015 Young Women's Empowerment Conference](#).





The daylong event is for 9th-12th grade students who reside in California's 47th Congressional District and will be held in the CSULB in the University Student Union building.

The theme of this year's event is "Linking Learning to Life," and will feature workshops and panel discussions for young women about education, careers, and personal growth.

The goal of the event is to provide an opportunity for young women to learn more about the options open to them and encourage thinking about creating their pathway to success.

Representatives from numerous nonprofit organizations and colleges and universities have been invited to host information tables.

I encourage any young woman who would like to learn more about the opportunities and choices open to her to attend the Conference. You can find more detail about the event by [clicking here](#).

Congress U

Bills In Committee

Laws begin as ideas. First, a House Member authors a bill and then introduces it. Last week in Congress U, we looked at the introduction process. Once introduced, a bill is referred to the House committee or committees that have jurisdiction over the area affected by the measure.

There are three types of Committees: standing, joint, and select. For our purposes, we are concerned with the standing committees, which are permanent legislative panels made up of from 6 to 50 House members. There are 21 standing committees in the House, each having a certain area of responsibility, such as Armed Services, Energy and Commerce, Natural Resources, or Foreign Affairs.

Once the bill is sent to a standing committee, the committee members hold hearings and review, research, and revise the bill before voting on whether or not to recommend that the bill be considered by the full House. When a committee revises and votes on a bill, that is called a " mark up "

For example, the bill I introduced last week, H.R. 590, the International Human Rights Defense Act of 2015, was referred to the House Foreign Affairs Committee (which I sit on by the way).

Many times, a bill is also referred to one or more of a committee's subcommittees. While in subcommittee, the bill is closely examined and expert opinions are gathered before it is sent back to the full committee for possible approval.

When the committee has approved a bill, it is sent—or reported—out of that committee, and, if it was only referred to that committee, to the full House for possible floor consideration. Once reported, a bill is ready to be debated by the U.S. House of Representatives.

Next week, we'll look at what happens to a bill on the House floor.

Last Week's Poll

Should only state legislatures be allowed to draw Congressional district lines?

12.1% Yes - The Constitution confers the power exclusively to the legislatures, if Congress does not weigh in

11.6% Maybe - But there should be independent oversight

76.3% No - Politicians should not draw their own lines

Thank you,



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