



# The 47th Flyer

News for California's 47<sup>th</sup> Congressional District  
from Congressman Alan Lowenthal



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March 27, 2015

## The Voice Of The People

One hundred and three years ago this week, the Boston Gazette coined the term "gerrymander" to describe oddly-shaped electoral districts to help incumbent politicians win reelection. The term was originally written Gerry-mander, with a hard 'g' sound, as in "get". It was named after American politician and fifth Vice-President of the United States, Elbridge Thomas Gerry. As governor of Massachusetts in 1812, Gerry signed into law legislation adopting new state electoral districts. These districts had been purposely designed by the state's Republican-controlled legislature to enhance their party's control over state and national offices.

Appearing with the new term in the Boston Gazette, and helping spread and sustain its popularity, was this political cartoon, which depicts a state senate district in Essex County as a strange animal with claws, wings and a dragon-type head, satirizing the district's odd shape.



Sadly, gerrymandering remains all too prevalent today and practiced by all political parties.

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**The Affordable Care Act (ACA) turned five years old this week. It has helped reduce the number of uninsured Americans to the lowest level in 40 years. How has the ACA impacted you?**

- Very positively
- Very little impact
- Very negatively
- No impact whatsoever

[If you have a problem, click here to open survey in a new window](#)

Some states have taken steps to return control of drawing districts to the people, including California. I'm proud of the fact that while I was in the California legislature, I was a vocal champion for independent redistricting, an effort that ultimately led to citizens voting to create the non-partisan California Citizens Redistricting Commission.

In Washington, D.C., I have made election reform and independent redistricting throughout the nation one of my top priorities. One of the first bills I introduced as a Congressman was the Let The People Draw The Lines Act of 2013, that would have taken California's independent redistricting example, with some tweaks, nationwide.

I will remain an advocate and champion of the citizens of each state to have a voice in the politics of their states. Government exists to serve the people—not the other way around.

## On The Hill

### Affordable Care Act At Five

Affordable health care is a right, not a privilege.

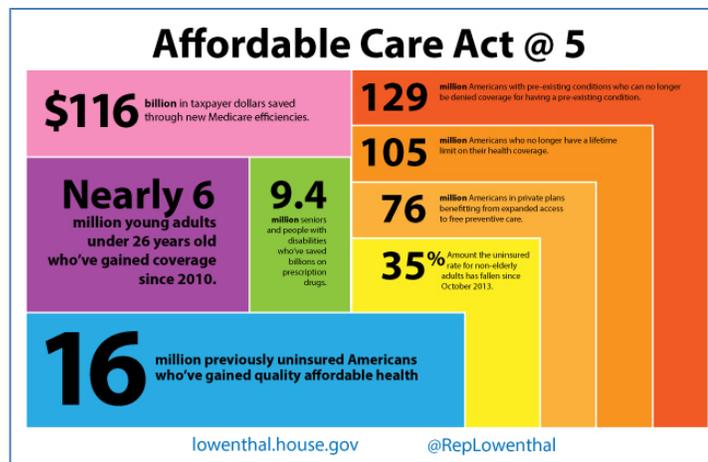
On March 23, 2010, President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act into law.

Five years later, more than 16 million Americans are now covered thanks to this historic law which has improved the lives of millions of Americans in California and across our nation.

In California, 1,412,200 consumers selected or were automatically re-enrolled in quality, affordable health insurance coverage through our state's health insurance exchange, Covered California, as of Feb. 22.

In addition, as of January 2015, 3,013,138 Californians have gained Medicaid or Children's Health Insurance Program coverage since the beginning of Covered California's first open enrollment period.

Click on the image below to find out more details about the ACA at five.



### Funding STEM Education That Works

One of the most amazing programs I have had the pleasure to support in Congress has been the STARBASE program. Run through the Defense Department (DoD), STARBASE is an education program for fifth graders that provides 25 hours of engaging science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) instruction. In fact, a highly successful STARBASE program operates in our district at the Joint Forces Training Base in Los Alamitos.

The technology-rich military environment allows students to experience first-hand “real-world” application of STEM skills. Evidence-based evaluations of STARBASE participants’ show significant improvement in the students’ understanding, interest, and ability in math and science which has led to increased enthusiasm in pursuing further STEM education. In addition, a rigorous study on students who completed STARBASE programs indicated long-term impacts on the students’ high school graduation, college enrollment, and interest in STEM areas.

In 2014, 59 STARBASE programs nationwide provided STEM educational opportunities for 47,512 students from 893 schools in 298 school districts.

And yet, despite these successes, every year in the federal budget, funding for STARBASE programs is either threatened with reduction or elimination. For the past two years I have successfully worked to secure funding for the program.

This year, I have written a letter to House Appropriations leadership with 35 of my colleagues making the same request that funding for the program be restored to \$30 million in the FY 2016 Defense Appropriations Bill.

The lack of STEM educated youth in America has been identified as a future National Security issue by DoD leadership. Programs like STARBASE are critically needed to address this issue and I will continue to advocate for them.

### **Fighting For Fracking Accountability**

On March 20, the U.S. Department of Interior unveiled new rules governing hydraulic fracturing (fracking) of oil and natural gas resources overseen by Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The rules come after four years of study and more than 1.5 million public comments.

The rules, an extension and update of the existing 30-year-old BLM rules, concern fracking on federal lands--which account for 11 percent of the nation's natural gas production and five percent of its oil production.

This week, in my role as ranking member of the House Natural Resources Committee’s Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, I spoke out in support of the new BLM rules, which notably increase transparency and public disclosure requirements for fracking operators on federal lands; limit the use of waste pits – even lined ones – on at well drilling pads sites except under limited exceptions; and, require companies to submit proof of each well’s integrity before fracking is allowed. While I believe these regulations do not go far enough to protect us, they are an important first step.

I know that much of the industry, and many of the states, and many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle would prefer that BLM just had no rules whatsoever regulating oil and gas activities. They would like us to just Leave it all up to the states.

But that's not responsible. That’s not what we are here to do. We are here to weigh the public interest on America’s public lands. That’s the public interest, and that’s all Americans, not only the interest of one industry, no matter how generous their campaign donations may be.

I hope we never lose sight of the fact that public lands are not private lands. They are special: they are owned by all American people, and are deserving of a higher standard of care.

## **In The 47th District**

### **Honoring The Honored**

This week was National Medal of Honor Day. In conjunction, the city of Garden Grove on Tuesday rededicated the Garden Grove Tibor Rubin Library. At the library, officials also unveiled a tribute to Tibor 'Ted' Rubin, a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient from the 47th District. For those of you who don't know about Mr. Rubin, let me take a minute to tell his story.

Mr. Rubin was born in Hungary in 1929. He survived fourteen months in a German concentration camp in Austria during World War II and was liberated by the U.S. Army.

Inspired by the American soldiers who rescued him, he enlisted in the U.S. Army, eventually being deployed as a member of the 1st Cavalry Division during the Korean War. During his service, he faced anti-Semitic discrimination from his sergeant who sent Mr. Rubin on the most dangerous assignments in South Korea's Pusan Perimeter, where he fought valiantly in several notable engagements.

He was eventually captured by the North Koreans on one of these missions. During his captivity he continued to inspire others, providing moral support and improvised medical techniques to save his fellow soldiers.



For his gallantry in close contact with the enemy and his unyielding courage and bravery while a prisoner of war Mr. Rubin was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Last August, I joined Mr. Rubin at a ceremony in Garden Grove to celebrate the first United States Postal Service stamp honoring the extraordinary courage of the 145 Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine service members who received the Medal of Honor for action during the Korean War.

I take great pride in representing such an amazing American and having this wonderful library facility dedicated in his name in the 47th District.

### **The Fight For Equality**

It is an exciting time to be in Washington, D.C., when so much has happened in support of LGBT equality in our country. We have a president that has done more to advance LGBT equality than any other president—in reality more than all other presidents combined.

We've seen amazing advancements for LGBT Americans with marriage equality coming to a majority of states and the District of Columbia, the president signing an executive order protecting LGBT Americans from discrimination in federal employment, the defeat of California's Prop 8 and the striking down of key parts of DOMA.

I have spent the better part of my adult life advocating for equity and equality for all Americans. It is something I have done, and will continue to do, because it is what I believe is right--for me as an individual and for us as a nation.

That being said, I was tremendously honored to be presented with this year's Political Icon award by the LGBTQ Center of Long Beach at its 2nd Annual Black and White Ball last weekend.



*(Photo courtesy of seanalicephotography.com)*

Recognition for what I do by such an amazing organization that does such incredible work in our community really means a great deal to me.

I was also so pleased to see this year's Community Icon Award go to former Signal Hill Mayor Ellen Ward for all of her tremendous advocacy on behalf of the LGBTQ and HIV positive communities in the Long Beach area.

## Congress U

### Joint Sessions And Meetings

In the past several weeks, the leaders of Israel and Afghanistan have each addressed a special gathering of Congress where members of both the House and the Senate were in attendance.

The House and Senate typically work separately, but on occasion both groups chambers join together. They can do this in several ways, the most common being

joint meetings or joint sessions.

A joint meeting of Congress takes place when the House and Senate agree to recess and meet with each other collectively. The typical purpose of a joint meeting is for Congress to hear an address from an important figure—generally the visiting leader of a foreign country.

The heads of 48 countries have addressed joint meetings of Congress a total of over a hundred times. The current President of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, and former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, hold the record for most appearances, with each speaking to joint meetings three times. On two occasions, joint meetings were addressed by leaders from two nations at the same time: in 1978 by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, and in 1994, by King Hussein of Jordan and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

A joint session of Congress takes place when after the House and Senate adopt a concurrent resolution providing for the joint session. Joint sessions typically are reserved to hear an address from the President or to count presidential electoral votes as specified by the U.S. Constitution (Article I, section 1, 12th Amendment). In fact, the first joint session of Congress was to count electoral votes on April 6, 1789 at Federal Hall in New York City during the 1st Congress.

The Speaker of the House usually presides over both joint sessions and joint meetings; however, Constitution requires that the Vice President (serving as President of the Senate) presides over a joint session where the electoral votes are counted.

### Last Week's Poll

**New data from NASA shows that California now has only about one year of water supply left in its reservoirs and the state's strategic backup supply, groundwater, is rapidly disappearing. What should California do?**

- 6.9%** Increase water storage
- 6.5%** Increase conservation and water-use efficiency
- 0.5%** Penalize abusers
- 16.7%** Invest in technologies like desalination
- 69.4%** All of the above

Thank you,



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