



The 47th Flyer

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



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July 16, 2013

Summer has finally descended upon Washington, D.C. with all of its notorious humidity. Now, many of us from Southern California laugh when people comment about our "dry heat." After all, no matter how you look at it, a 100+ degree day is still hot.



What I am finding out, like many West Coasters, is that not all hot weather is created equal. In Southern California, a bottle of water and a cool spot in the shade is often enough to take the edge off all but the hottest of days. In Washington, D.C., though, there is no escaping a 90+ degree day with 90+ percent humidity. Everywhere you go the humidity follows. And this is only July.

Needless to say, I am looking forward to being back in the "dry heat" of the 47th District during our upcoming August work period.

Alan Lowenthal

New Legislation

Beyond directly voting in support of new legislation, there are many ways for members of Congress to participate in the creation of new legislation, beyond just voting either in committee or on the floor. Members of Congress can, of course, write original legislation; they can become original co-sponsors of new legislation written by another member; they can sign on simply as a co-sponsor before the legislation reaches the floor; they can sign a letter, usually with other Members, supporting the legislation; and/or, they can advocate for legislation through their various committees and caucuses. Here are a few pieces of legislation that I have recently become involved with in one of these ways.

To see the most current listing of my co-sponsorships, [click here](#).

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Congress has less than four weeks before the August recess. What should be the top priority?

Fix Student Loan Interest Rates
Pass Comprehensive Immigration Reform
Stop Sequestration

Pass strong Climate Change legislation
Other

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Last week, I signed on as an original co-sponsor of Support for Community-Based Gang Intervention Act. This bill would allow the [Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention](#) to provide funding for organizations that utilize the community-based gang intervention model (CBGI)—an evidence-based program that utilizes a holistic and integrated approach to gang prevention. This would allow non-profits, community organizations, and faith-based organizations who use the CBGI model to qualify for grants to help mitigate youth violence.

I am proud to say that I also co-sponsored three environmental protection bills recently:

- The Berryessa Snow Mountain National Conservation Area Act which establishes the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Conservation Area within Napa, Lake, Mendocino, Solano, and Yolo Counties in California.



- The Wildlife Refuge System Conservation Semipostal Stamp Act of 2013 authorizes the issuance of a Wildlife Refuge System stamp and would require all proceeds of the stamp be used to address the operations and maintenance backlog of the Refuge System that is managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service.
- America's Red Rock Wilderness Act which designates numerous areas in Utah as components of the National Wilderness Preservation System.



I also co-sponsored the Equality Discharge Review Act, which ensures that members of the armed forces who served honorably, but were discharged and given punitive discharge classification solely because of their sexual orientation, will have their records corrected to reflect their honorable service.

Also, in June, I became an original co-sponsor of a bill put forth by the Chairman and Ranking Member of the [House Foreign Relations Committee](#) (of which I'm a member). The bill, the Embassy Security and Enhancement Act of 2013, introduced by Chairman Ed. Royce and Ranking Member Eliot Engel, is a bipartisan bill aimed at enhancing security for facilities and personnel at United States diplomatic and consular posts abroad.

Student Loan Interest Rates

Two weeks ago, the House failed to take action on federal student loan

interest rates, allowing the interest rates to double overnight. Last week, the House again took no action to retroactively reverse these increases and the clock keeps ticking toward the new school year when students that need them will have to accept the higher-rate loans.

There are signs that some measure to address these higher rates will be brought to the House floor before the August recess, however, no details of such a measure are currently available.

The proposal I support locks in the existing 3.4% interest rate for the near term, while affording the Administration time to come up with a longer-term solution.

I believe there is no reason that the student loan rate formula cannot be set at such a level that it does not act as a hindrance to students wishing to go to college, or to their parents trying to pay for it. If we do not make it affordable, we risk losing our competitive edge in the world markets. Higher education should not require that we mortgage the future of our young people.



The United States Congress, both the House of Representatives and the Senate, can be confusing places. Over our nation's history, each institution has developed its own facilities, legislative processes, and lingo to describe it all. I thought we should have a regular feature in the 47th Flyer that answers some everyday questions about these people, places, and things. Here is the first installment.

Where do Congress members meet to vote?

You may occasionally find me referring to the House "floor" when talking about legislation. The "floor," or chamber, is the large meeting area inside the [United States Capitol](#) where members of the House assemble to conduct debate and vote. In fact, legislation can only be passed on the floor.

Members are said to be "on the floor" when they assemble, and "to have the floor" when they speak. In the opposite wing of the Capitol, the U.S. Senate has its own chambers.

Where do Congress members sit while in the House chambers?

Both chambers are shaped like an amphitheater, with the Member's pew-like seats fanned out in a half-circle. On the House floor, members do not have assigned seats, though they do in the Senate.

Facing the dais, Democrats traditionally sit to the left of the center aisle, and Republicans to the right. Two lecterns are stationed in the open area between the dais and the members' seats, an area known as the "well." Each party also has two tables on its side of the center aisle of the House.

Who are the people always sitting and standing at the front of the House floor?

In the front center of the chambers is a three-tiered dais, or raised platform. At the two lowest levels of the dais sit the various clerks and other permanent House floor staff. At the top tier sits the House Speaker, or

presiding officer (also called the Speaker Pro Tem if the Speaker is not attending).

If you have a question you would like answered in "Congress U," let me know through my [Facebook](#) page, on [Twitter](#) or at [my official website](#).

Last Week's Survey Results

Most Republicans in Congress want to dramatically expand offshore oil drilling along the Pacific coast of the continental United States. Under what conditions do you think offshore drilling should be expanded along the California coast?

23.4% - Allow all drilling

6.38% - Only allow limited expansion

8.51% - Only allow limited expansion with greater government oversight

61.7% - Offshore drilling should not be expanded

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