



The 47th Flyer

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



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July 27, 2013

The August work period in the district is one week closer and the heat finally broke in Washington, with the end of the week turning into what some people were calling beautiful weather.

The heat finally broke in Washington this week and what a week it was. As a member of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, I got to sit down with President Obama and talk about issues important to so many of my constituents. After the full meeting, I spoke with the President about human rights in Vietnam. Not bad for a Tuesday.

As author Charles Beitz points out in his book *The Idea of Human Rights*, "if the public discourse of peacetime global society can be said to have a common moral language, it is that of human rights."

This is the language we have to speak in today's global world. While we must always fight to prevent the erosion of our own rights and freedoms, we have a duty and responsibility to speak the language of human rights wherever it needs to be heard.

Alan Lowenthal

A Blow To the Voting Rights Act

As you know, the U.S. Supreme Court last month ruled that Section 4, a key protection of the Voting Rights Act of 1963 (VRA), was unconstitutional. The ruling on Section 4 is a sizable step backwards in our collective national journey toward social justice and civil rights. I wholeheartedly believe in the empowerment and protection of all voters and will actively work to ensure that Congress takes swift action to reconstitute the important protections that the VRA has provided.

I am a proud cosponsor of Congressman John Lewis's Voter Empowerment Act because voting is one of the most fundamental rights in our constitutional democracy. No citizen should ever fear that their right to vote is threatened or encroached upon, and we must continue working to ensure every American's right to vote.

During my time in the California legislature, I was also proud to support legislation that allowed voters to both register online (SB 397) and register up to and on Election Day (AB 1436). These measures have already brought over a million new voters into our state's democratic process.

Tying Human Rights Improvements To Vietnam Trading Privileges

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Worse than expected
Paycheck to paycheck
Just 'okay'
Better than expected
Never been better

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Yesterday, President Barack Obama met with Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang on a number of outstanding issues between our two countries. Early in the week, I was fortunate enough to have a discussion with President Obama where I asked him to include human rights abuses in Vietnam among the topics he would bring up.

President Obama assured me that human rights violations in Vietnam are a priority for his administration and would be discussed during his meeting with President Sang.

The bottom line is simple: human rights violations in Vietnam must end. The government of Vietnam must respect the freedoms guaranteed in its own constitution.

We must remain vigilant and continue to remind the Vietnamese government, just as President Obama said he would, that human rights violations in Vietnam will not go unnoticed.

We are watching. The world is watching.

As the United States strengthens our social and economic ties to Asia and the Pacific Rim, we look forward to a friendly and supportive bilateral relationship with Vietnam. However, we must also take this opportunity to insist that Vietnam improves its record on protecting human rights. Trade and economic growth should not come at the price of democracy and freedom. Rather, we have a responsibility to ensure that liberty and prosperity grow stronger in unison.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of the Vietnam Human Rights Act, and was happy to see this bill unanimously reported out of the House Foreign Affairs Committee last month. Through legislation like the Vietnam Human Rights Act, we must continue to remind President Sang and the government of Vietnam that all people are entitled to their basic human rights, and that we in the United States Congress will continue fighting to make sure these rights are not infringed upon.

Senate Passes Immigration Reform

As the grandson of immigrants, I empathize with those who are stuck in a system that does not function properly – often denying hardworking people a clearly defined, legal path to citizenship while at times separating families for years at a time. I believe in humane reform that respects the dignity of immigrant communities and recognizes their contributions to our economy and society, while simultaneously securing our borders and protecting our national security. Immigration reform must include our fundamental American values of honesty, fair play, and compassion.

I was heartened to learn that S.744, the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act, recently passed in the Senate. This is a significant step towards comprehensive reform which, if passed, would integrate more than 11 million people into our society, keep families together, and secure our border.

I remain optimistic that a similar bill will be passed in the House of Representatives, rather than the piecemeal approach suggested by some of my colleagues. I am making every effort to work with my colleagues to ensure that comprehensive immigration reform is addressed and enacted.

Most of the daily legislative work done by Congress members is done in committees.

Standing committees are permanent legislative panels that consider bills and issues and recommend measures for consideration by the full House.

They also have oversight responsibility to monitor agencies, programs, and activities within their jurisdictions, and in some cases in areas that cut across committee jurisdictions. Due to their permanent nature, these committees exist beyond the adjournment of each two-year session of Congress.

The House currently has 19 standing committees and three permanent select committees. Select committees are appointed to perform a special function that is beyond the authority or capacity of a standing committee. While these usually end when their task is complete, they can be renewed. The permanent select committees have existed for so long they are treated almost like regular standing committees.

Most committees divide their work into smaller work groups called subcommittees. These subcommittees deal with even more specific topics than the committee as a whole.

While there are rare waived exceptions, House rules restrict each member from serving on more than a maximum of two committees and four subcommittees at any given time. In my case, I am a proud member of both the Foreign Affairs Committee and also the Natural Resources Committee.

Here are my committee and subcommittee assignments. You can click on the titles below to go to each committee's website and find out a bit more about what responsibilities and oversight each one has.

[Foreign Affairs Committee](#)

[Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade](#)

[Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia and Emerging Threats](#)

[Natural Resources Committee](#)

[Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs](#)

[Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources](#)

[Last Week's Survey](#)

The Constitution calls for redrawing Congressional districts every ten years. Who should be in charge of redistricting?

0.0% Congress

0.0% State Senate

0.0% State Assembly

11.1% Full State Legislature

85.2% Independent Citizens panel

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