



The 47th Flyer

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



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August 2, 2013

We recently lost an environmental champion and a neighborhood and community advocate. I want to tell you a little about Lillian Kawasaki.

Lillian was a dedicated public servant; a respected community leader; a beloved wife and sister; and, she was a dear, dear friend of mine.

Sadly, on July 18, Lillian passed away. Her services will be held Aug. 3, at 10 a.m. at Forest Lawn in Long Beach.

Lillian was a generous soul. Her smile and spirit were infectious. Her generosity of self, always done with such grace and enthusiasm, engendered tremendous respect and love from all who knew her.

Her work for the past two decades on environmental efforts, first with the Port of Los Angeles, then with the Department of Water and Power, and most recently as a member of the Water Replenishment District, not only brought her recognition throughout California and the nation as an intelligent, thoughtful expert on water issues, but also highlighted her overriding concern and care for her community.

She will be missed.

Alan Lowenthal

My New Website

I was proud to unveil a [newly revamped website](#) for my office on July 26. While the template-based website that my office was provided with when I took office was serving its function, I wanted our website to do so much more. Over the last several months the stock website was rebuilt from the ground up with a clear focus on providing the best service to my constituents.

The site features comprehensive listings and links to help constituents solve common federal government and agency issues, as well as allowing constituents to find out about, and even get help from my office in dealing with the federal government.

In addition, you can find information about all of my votes, all the legislation I am sponsoring and cosponsoring, and find out more about the committees I serve on and caucuses I belong to. You can also find out how my office can help if you are visiting Washington, all the ways you can contact my staff and offices, links and activities for kids, and much, much more.

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A Bill To Take Politics Out Of Redistricting

I was very proud to introduce my first bill this week. While there is a great temptation for freshman members to quickly get that first piece of legislation under your belt, what this usually means is a quick, non-controversial bill--such as renaming a post office or dedicating a historic site.

I wanted my first bill to be about something that I believe in. I wanted it to be something that I know will make government better. And, I wanted it to be something that will rebuild the people's trust in government.

My first bill is called the "Let The People Draw The Lines Act of 2013." It seeks to take politics out of how Congressional district lines are drawn following each census. It sets national minimum guidelines for redistricting that require each state to put in place independent citizen panels to draw the new districts.

Currently, districts are too often the result of political whims, created in the backrooms of state capitols and resulting in gerrymandering--where districts are drawn in ridiculous shapes and cover vast areas to obtain a desired combination of voters to ensure a certain party's candidates have the electoral advantage.

I worked very hard on this issue while in the California state legislature and I am proud that my work led to a citizens' initiative that gave California independent redistricting. My "Let The People Draw The Lines Act" will give citizens in every state the same ability California now has to choose their Congressional district lined without the influence and gamesmanship of politics.

Student Loan Interest Rate Solution Reached

America's greatest resource is its students, and in the U.S., we have the best and the brightest. Education is what enables the children of today to dream, and the citizens of tomorrow to accomplish more than they ever dreamed.

Unfortunately, barriers to higher education still exist. Students remain burdened by college loans, a weight which will only increase as Federal Direct Stafford loan rates double. I fought alongside my colleagues to keep student loan rates low as a cosponsor of H.R.1595, the Student Loan Relief Act, which would extend the 3.4% interest rate on Stafford loans for another two years. The bill fell short of reaching the House floor for a vote by a mere 22 signatures. We cannot expect students to achieve their true potential in the world to come if we force them to bear the burdens of past mistakes.

Fortunately, the House of Representatives was able to pass a bipartisan solution to prevent student loan rates from increasing drastically. While this measure did not go as far as I had hoped, I believe that we reached the best compromise possible for our students. President Obama is expected to sign the bill into law, keeping Stafford loan rates low for the time being.

As your representative, I will continue to work tirelessly to make education more accessible and affordable for all. I recognize that interest rates are only a small part of the larger problem of the ever-increasing cost of higher education and the growing loans and debt that have accompanied it. That

is why I have also cosponsored H.R.1330, the Student Loan Fairness Act, which would help ensure that college loans are affordable for all students.



One of the bills that made its way to the House floor this week was the transportation appropriations bill for 2014, officially called the "Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2014". While the bill wound up being pulled, it does raise the question many people ask me: "What exactly is an appropriations bill?"

Simply put, an appropriations bill gives the government the authority to spend money. The government cannot spend any funds without an appropriations approval.

However, prior to this and as part of a two-step process, there also has to be an authorization bill that approves the allocation of the same funds.

So, in the case of the transportation appropriations bill, before it could even come up for a vote, there had to be a transportation authorization bill.

Interestingly, to keep a separation of powers, Congress members that sit on appropriations committees--the bodies that draft appropriations bills--cannot sit on authorization committees.

And, even more in the vein of power separation, appropriations bills, by tradition, must originate in the House.

Last Week's Survey

Last week, I asked in the weekly survey how each of you felt you were doing personally in the current U.S. economy. Sadly, the responses match what constituents have told me personally, but also what researchers and polling firms have found for some time.

In last week's survey nearly 77 percent of you said that you were doing "just 'okay'" or worse. Just over 58 percent of you said you were living 'paycheck to paycheck' or worse. These numbers sound very much like what I hear from constituents on a regular basis.

There are many reasons why so many Americans are in a precarious financial situation. American wages stagnated from the early 1970s through 2000 and median household income actually declined over the last decade from more than \$53,000 in 2000 to under \$49,500 in 2010 (all in 2010 dollars).

Compounding the problem, as lower- and middle-class pay has dropped, the cost of living has grown immensely. In the past 40 years, college tuition has more than doubled, the price of a home has nearly doubled, health care costs have gone up more than 50 percent, and the price of gas went up nearly 20 percent in adjusted dollars.

This one-two punch of stagnant wages and a higher cost of living have made it very difficult for Americans to get ahead. A recent poll found that three out of four Americans were living paycheck to paycheck and only 30 percent of Americans had a minimum of three months' salary in savings.

I am ready to work with any of my colleagues on a comprehensive jobs bill.
I am ready to work with any of my colleagues on a bill to reinvest in
America's infrastructure that will get America moving and get more
Americans working.

How are you personally doing in the current U.S. economy?

- 21%** Worse than expected
- 37%** Paycheck to paycheck
- 18%** Just 'okay'
- 18%** Better than expected
- 7%** Never been better

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