



The 47th Flyer

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



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August 9, 2013

Congress is officially out of session for five weeks during the August District Work Period, but don't take that to mean our work stops.

For this first week, because of my service on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, I have been on a Congressional policy trip to Israel where I am meeting with many representatives of the Israeli government and military, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Shimon Peres.

Once back in the 47th District, I already have a heavily booked schedule of meetings and events with constituents until Congress returns to session in September. In addition to meeting with constituents at my Long Beach district office, I'm looking forward to touring some important locations while in the district, such as the Long Beach Veterans Administration Medical Center, Los Alamitos Hospital, the Naval Weapons Base, the Long Beach Children's Clinic, and the Los Angeles/Long Beach Coast Guard station just to name a few.

I'm also looking forward to holding or participating in several roundtables during the recess. I am co-sponsoring a Covered California (the state Affordable Care Act, or ACA, implementation body) roundtable with district business leaders as well as a second Covered California event to help inform the public about the ACA. I am also participating in a roundtable focusing on comprehensive immigration reform.

Peace talks resume/Israel trip

The opening of new Israeli-Palestinian talks last Monday marks a small but important step toward the long-held U.S. policy goal of peace in the Middle East.

For the first week of the August recess, I am on a Congressional policy trip to Israel to learn more about Israeli security issues, the Israeli-Palestinian situation, and U.S.-Israeli relations.

I have been meeting with many representatives of the Israeli government and military, including individual meetings with President Shimon Peres, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon, Finance Minister Yair Lapid, and numerous members of the Knesset. I was able to tour an Israeli immigration center, visit with everyday Israelis, see an Iron Dome missile defense battery, and visit various border security facilities.

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Peace talks between Israel and Palestine have resumed. Do you feel these talks will lead to peace?

- Very hopeful
- Guardedly optimistic
- Not expecting much
- Don't care one way or the other

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One of the things I was struck by is what a huge amount of labor, money and material go into the defense and security of Israel—all necessary and all understandable. But it can only make one think of where—both in Israel and in her neighbors, those resources could be spent if a sustainable peace were reached in the Middle East.

Tracking Fracking

Hydraulic fracturing (also known as “fracking”) is the high-pressure injection of a mix of fluids and small sand grains called “proppants” into an underground oil or gas reservoir.

This high-pressure mixture fractures the rock making up the reservoir. When the fluids are removed, the proppants keep open the cracks left by the fracturing, allowing oil or natural gas to flow back to the well.

Hydraulic fracturing was first used in 1947 and with the recent advent of advanced horizontal drilling technology has become a regular practice to tap previously unrecoverable reserves, or to stimulate increased production from existing oil or gas wells in the United States.

Fracking, though, has received a great deal of criticism over safety and environmental concerns. I have personally raised these concerns during oversight and legislative hearings before the House Natural Resource Committee, including authoring an amendment to ensure public disclosure and transparency of fracking chemicals.

An additional concern is the current difficulty to prove conclusively if chemicals in water supplies are a direct result of nearby fracking operations.

This is why I have written a letter to Interior Secretary Sally Jewel, and signed by 21 of my colleagues, asking her to determine how the Bureau of Land Management can incorporate--through the rulemaking process--the technology of unique identification tracers into the fracking process.

These inert chemical tracers have been used successfully for decades in the environmental consulting sector to map where and how water flows underground. These tracers are cheap, harmless, stable, able to travel long distances, and potentially uniquely identifiable in trace quantities.

They can answer the question being asked by many who live in a fracking area, "where do hydraulic fracking fluids travel? And “are they ending up in my drinking water?"

I believe that this technology can offer indisputable data about the fracking process, while at the same time offering citizens some sense of security knowing that whatever is put into the ground can be traced back to its point of origin.

Helping Homeless Veterans

The number of homeless veterans in America is staggering. It is estimated that 13 percent of the U.S. adult homeless population are veterans. Over 60,000 veterans are homeless on any given night and approximately twice this amount experience homelessness over the course of a year. It is absolutely disgraceful that our soldiers are fighting in battle one day and have to come home to live in alleys and cardboard boxes the next.

This is why I recently signed on as a cosponsor of H.R. 2797, the Homeless Veterans Assistance Fund Act of 2013. This legislation would

provide additional necessary resources to help end the cycle of homelessness experienced by our nation's veterans.

This legislation would assist homeless veterans through the creation of a Homeless Veterans Assistance Fund and the creation of a "check-off box" on the annual federal tax return form that would allow taxpayers to make a voluntary contribution in the amount of their choice to this fund.

Funds within the Homeless Veterans Assistance Fund would be available to the Veterans Administration, in consultation with the Departments of Labor and Housing and Urban Development, solely to provide services to homeless veterans, including developing and implementing new and innovative strategies to end veteran homelessness.

To ensure transparency and accountability in how these taxpayer dollars are spent, this legislation would require the President's annual budget submission to Congress to include proposed uses of funds from the Homeless Veterans Assistance Fund and requires Congress to be notified 60 days in advance of any expenditure of such funds.

Our service members are the front line of our nation's defense. They have served honorably and sacrificed so much and they deserve the best care and support we can afford them.



Congressional Recess: Vacation or Work

For many people, say the word recess and they think of those short breaks at school that weren't lunch. In the Congress, recess has several meanings.

A recess is when there is a break in the House or Senate's business, like when a committee takes a break, but returns a short time later. This type of recess could last just a few minutes.

Another meaning refers to a break concluding the end of the day's business. Unlike an adjournment, a recess at the end of the day does not interrupt unfinished business. The Senate often recesses at the end of each day, while the House adjourns.

Each month the House takes a one week recess to allow members to return to their districts and meet with constituents. This is often called a district work period, as most members continue working in their districts during these breaks.

The final type of recess is the August recess, or the August District Work Period.

For many years, foreign diplomats stationed in Washington received hardship pay for enduring the city's oppressive summer heat. Members of Congress received no such bonus. Consequently, unless the demands of war or other national emergencies kept them in session, for most of the 19th and 20th centuries Congress tried to take a break before high temperatures and humidity overwhelmed the Capitol.

Even with the introduction of cooling systems in the Capitol starting in the late-1920s, the summer months of July and August remained the least productive of the Congressional year.

Although it has been a tradition since the summer of 1791, August recess actually became a legal mandate with the passage of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970. It remains the only statutory recess on the House and Senate calendars.

I look forward to being back in the district during the month of August for meetings with constituents, events related to timely policy debates, and to be with my family, friends, and the residents of the 47th Congressional District.

Last week's survey

What is the best way to communicate to you about what I am doing in Washington?*

- 91.1%** Email newsletter
- 4.4 %** Website
- 4.5 %** Facebook
- 0.0 %** Twitter
- 15.6%** Townhall/public meetings

**Since more than one answer per respondent was accepted, percentages total more than 100%*

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