

Making Our Communities Safer

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001 and the 2002 sniper attacks, issues of safety and security have become even more important to people in our community. While we strive to protect our country against future terrorist attacks, we cannot lose sight of the need for traditional crime-fighting efforts. A comprehensive approach to crime must combine tough criminal penalties for violent offenders with other measures like community policing, more after-school opportunities for our youth and common-sense gun control measures.

Last year our area was hit hard by the random violence of the snipers who killed 10 people using a semi-

automatic Bushmaster rifle. While we cannot end all crime or expunge evil from every human heart, we should do

everything we can to prevent senseless killings. The manufacturers of the Bushmaster rifle have exploited a loophole in the 1994 federal assault weapons ban to keep that weapon on the market. I have co-sponsored legislation to close that loophole and strengthen the 1994 ban. The House leadership, however, has opposed any strengthening of that law and has, in fact, threatened to allow even the existing ban to expire next year. We must not let that happen.

Safe neighborhoods and a clean environment make for dynamic communities with a high quality of life for families and businesses.



On the anniversary of the sniper attacks, Chris joins Senator Mikulski and Sonia Wills, Conrad Johnson's mother, to urge renewal of the assault weapons ban.

Protecting the Environment

We are only as healthy as the air we breathe, the water we drink and the communities in which we live. Upon coming to Congress, I became Vice Chairman of the House Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Caucus. Democrats, Republicans and Independents should all be concerned about the ongoing assault on landmark environmental laws that were

originally adopted with bipartisan support. We must resist current efforts to undermine the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act and the National Environmental Protection Act – and respond with a positive vision for a sustainable energy future.

Toward these ends, I have been working with a coalition of environmental and taxpayer groups to expose the multi-billion dollar giveaway to the fossil fuel industry tucked inside the energy bill. I have also co-sponsored legislation to protect our waterways, preserve our national forests, and expand the use of renewable fuels in order to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and cut the emissions of greenhouse gasses that cause global warming. Efforts to move positive environmental legislation forward can and must continue.

Chris tours the Anacostia River as part of an effort to launch a coordinated regional action plan for restoring the river and the Chesapeake Bay watershed.



Reaching Out to Meet Your Needs

My Door is Open to You

My office is committed to providing the best service and representation possible for the residents of Maryland's 8th Congressional District. We serve as local liaisons between federal agencies and constituents, to help solve problems and obtain information. I also want to stay in touch with you on matters before Congress. Please come to the upcoming town hall meeting to discuss issues that are on your mind.

A Town Hall Meeting With Congressman Chris Van Hollen

**Tuesday, December 9, 2003
7:30 – 9:00 p.m.**

Rachel Carson Elementary School
100 Tschiffely Square Road
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20878



During a tour of the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences, Chris listens to students share their experiences in preparation to become military medical professionals.

Washington, D.C. Office

1419 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-5341
(202) 225-0375 FAX

Rockville Office

51 Monroe Street, Suite 507
Rockville, MD 20850
(301) 424-3501
(303) 424-5992 FAX

Mt. Rainier Office

3409 Rhode Island Avenue
Mt. Rainier, MD 20712
(301) 927-5223
(301) 927-6122 FAX

www.house.gov/vanhollen

Congressman Chris Van Hollen

1419 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515
Official Business



M.C.
ECRWSS
PRSRT STD

Postal Customer
8th Congressional District
Maryland

This mailing was prepared, published and mailed at taxpayer expense.

CONGRESSMAN CHRIS VAN HOLLEN



Report to the 8th District

Dear Friend:

As the first year of the 108th Congress draws to a close, this is a fitting time to update you on some of the work I have been doing during these challenging times at home and abroad.

Our young men and women continue to serve bravely and admirably in Iraq. I have met with a number of wounded soldiers at the Bethesda Naval Hospital, and I join with all Americans in offering condolences to the families and friends of those who have been injured or killed.

The difficult job in Iraq is far from finished. While I challenged the President's approach to Iraq prior to the war, I do believe that the United States has a responsibility to protect our troops, to provide stability on the ground and to help rebuild Iraq. We also have an obligation to the American people to pay for our efforts in an honest and straightforward manner. The true costs of the war have been disguised by putting them on our national credit card and running up huge deficits. Every penny of the billions we are spending in Iraq is borrowed money.

The president is asking the American people to invest billions of dollars in Iraq at a time when we are failing to meet our own commitments here at home in the areas of education, health care, transportation infrastructure and other national priorities. We as a nation have enormous resources. We can meet both our domestic priorities and our international responsibilities, but we must be prepared to pay for them. While the Bush Administration has asked our troops and their families to make the ultimate sacrifice, it has given the wealthiest one percent of Americans huge tax cuts. We should not be waging war and peace by credit card in order to shield a few from paying their fair share. We should be reaching out to the international community to share the responsibilities and burdens of the many challenges we face around the world.

We cannot be secure overseas if we are not strong and prosperous at home. Millions of hard-working Americans are struggling in a very difficult economy. They deserve at least as much attention from our government as do our commitments abroad.

It is a great privilege to represent you in the U.S. Congress and, as always, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Chris Van Hollen

Improving Education for Every Child

in Every Classroom

As a member of the House Education and Workforce Committee, I am working hard to ensure that all of our children receive a world-class education – from preschool through college. That is why the very first piece of legislation I introduced – the Keep Our PACT (Promise to America’s Children and Teachers) Act – requires full funding for the No Child Left Behind initiative and for special education programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This bill would match resources with the rhetoric. Even as we make needed improvements in how these laws are implemented, we must provide our local schools with the funds that were promised.

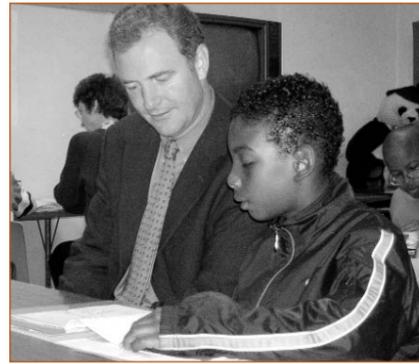
The Bush Administration’s efforts to weaken the landmark Head Start program for low-income preschoolers must be opposed. I offered and supported measures to strengthen Head Start by insisting on improved teacher training

and ensuring that all eligible children have access to the program. Rising tuition rates at colleges in Maryland and

across the nation threaten the ability of many qualified students to continue their studies. We must open the doors of higher education to all students, regardless of their income, who are willing to work hard and have the drive to go to college. When the Higher Education Reauthorization

Act comes up next year, I will continue to press for a student-centered approach to college affordability that emphasizes more grant aid, fewer fees and lower cost student loans.

Chris talks to preschoolers in Germantown about the importance of reading.



During a tour of Mount Rainier Elementary School, Chris talks to a student about the need for quality education.

In September, Van Hollen received the 2003 “Outstanding New Member of the Year” award from the Committee for Education Funding, the nation’s oldest and largest education coalition, in recognition of “demonstrated commitment to our nation’s students and for consistent advocacy for education as an investment in the future.”

Getting Things Done for the 8th District

It has been a busy year. In addition to many legislative activities, I have been actively working with people throughout the community—visiting schools, touring local businesses and federal agencies, holding citizen forums and getting a firsthand look at issues facing our district. Here are a few highlights of these activities.

Treating Federal Workers Fairly

The Bush Administration’s aggressive plan to turn hundreds of thousands of public sector jobs over to for-profit private contractors threatens to drain important knowledge and experience from our federal workforce. Federal employees are willing to compete for these jobs, but the competition should not be rigged against them. Unfortunately, in May, the Bush Administration unveiled new procedures that would do just that. An amendment I offered to stop the implementation of these unfair rules passed the House by a vote of 220-198 with bipartisan support. This amendment was a huge victory for federal employees and taxpayers, all of whom benefit when the competition is open and fair. Even if the full amendment is not ultimately adopted, the vote has taken the steam out of a privatization agenda that has not been well thought out or implemented.

Federal workers won another victory when the Committee on Government Reform accepted my amendment to block the Office of Personnel Management from charging employees a fee simply to take advantage of the Flexible Spending Accounts program, which is already in widespread use in the private sector, to pay for certain child care and health care expenses out of pre-tax dollars. This amendment collectively saved federal employees millions of dollars.

Getting Veterans the Respect They Deserve

Our veterans fought for this country; now we must fight for them.

Unfortunately a number of our local veterans had long been long denied the military medals they had earned. I have had the privilege of working with those veterans to ensure they receive the long overdue recognition they deserve for their courage and valor in serving our country. I have also introduced legislation to provide military retirees with the health care benefits they were promised at the time they were recruited.



Chris awards a Bronze Star to Herbert Frankel, a World War II veteran who waited more than 50 years for appropriate recognition

Protecting Local Jobs

In April, I was pleased to lead a successful effort in the House to defeat an attempt to terminate federal government contracts with an American company based in Gaithersburg, whose parent company is French. The threat to hundreds of area jobs began when certain lawmakers attempted to exploit anti-French sentiment over the Iraq war. The termination of these contracts would have harmed American workers more than anyone else. In the end, the federal government honored its contracts, and the jobs were protected.

Securing Local Investments

Working with state and local officials, we have brought important funding to our community for transportation projects, education programs and public safety efforts. In July I had the privilege of presenting a \$1.3 million Head Start grant to the



Chris speaks with a family about Head Start at the Lourie Center in Rockville.

Making Health Care Accessible & Affordable

The health care system in our country is facing huge challenges. Over 44 million Americans have no health insurance. I have sponsored numerous bills to begin to meet that challenge, but we have seen no leadership from the Administration on this important front.

One important issue that has dominated Congress’ health care agenda is the effort to add a long overdue prescription drug benefit to the Medicare program. I co-sponsored legislation that would provide seniors with a prescription drug benefit that is comprehensive, affordable and simple. Unfortunately, the misguided bill passed by the House Republican leadership disregards the first principle of medicine: Do no harm. Rather than strengthening Medicare with a comprehensive benefit, the House Republican plan will begin to privatize the entire Medicare program.

It also undermines many retirees who already have prescription drug coverage and it fails to restrain skyrocketing drug costs.

Finally, as we work to strengthen Medicare and cover the nation’s

uninsured, we must insist on parity for mental health services in both the Medicare program and the private insurance market. I am pleased to be a cosponsor of legislation to provide that parity.

Helping the Disabled

This fall I visited the Bethesda Naval Hospital, which has developed an innovative and successful program hiring disabled individuals from our local community to work in its kitchen and cafeteria. Many of these individuals have worked there for more than twenty years. They are hard-working, reliable and beloved by the naval officers and staff. The Administration had selected these positions to be bid out to private contractors, leaving these disabled employees on the verge of losing their jobs. I wrote to the President about this injustice and am pleased that as a result of our timely intervention, these disabled individuals have been able to keep their jobs and the sense of dignity that comes with them.

Encouraging Important Research

Our community is home to many federal agencies and biotech companies engaged in groundbreaking research to find treatments and cures for diseases that affect millions of Americans and others around the world. I have been working directly with these federal agencies and biotech companies to find ways to speed life-saving drugs to market and to ensure that appropriate vaccines and therapies are available in the event of bioterrorism.



Scientists Paullin Limbach and Xiaoming Jang at the Maryland Technology Development Center's incubator tell Chris about their research on an anti-cancer drug.