Winter 2011

How can my office help you?

Housing Issues
Get help with mortgage modification programs and other housing issues.

Medicare & Social Security
We can help with lost or delayed checks, completing applications, survivor benefits and Supplemental Security Income.

Immigration/Passports
Get information on becoming a US citizen. or receive help in expediting a passport request.

Small Business Assistance
Find out about SBA loans, grants and other services for small businesses.

Veterans & Military Families
Call my office for help with the GI Bill, VA claims and medical coverage, and issues faced by military families.

Academy Nominations
Apply for a congressional nomination to the Army, Navy, Merchant Marine or Air Force Academies.

Internship Opportunities
Opportunities abound for students to work in my Washington or San Mateo office.

Capitol Tours
If you're planning a trip to Washington, let my office arrange a tour of the U.S. Capitol and assist with tours of the White House and other attractions.

Contact Jackie

www.speier.house.gov
or call
(202) 225-3531
(650) 342-0300

I want to offer you best wishes for the new year and to share my thoughts with you on the challenges we face in 2011. This newsletter serves as a yearend report to you and a roadmap of events and projects that I will be undertaking on your behalf this year. Above all, I want to expand opportunities for you to communicate directly with me or my staff. But, please, don't wait for a town hall to contact me regarding an issue of importance to you. Call my office in San Mateo at 650-342-0300 or visit my website to send me an email. I want to hear from you!

My priorities for 2011 involve issues that affect your daily life. At the top: jobs. We need a tax strategy that promotes business growth and consumer confidence. I believe in deficit reduction and that calls for targeting any tax cuts to the middle class and an immediate reduction of forces in Afghanistan. We need to improve services for our veterans and protect our Social Security system. Global warming demands that steps be taken now to prevent environmental disaster later. Consumer safety needs to be ramped up, starting with the safer delivery of natural gas, improved crash responses of vehicles, and protection against everyday products containing poisons such as cadmium in children's toys.

Congress and the President rewrote the rules on health insurance, credit cards and financial investments in order to create a safety net for middle class security. Over the past decade of deregulation, we've had too many getting rich playing financial games at the expense of the rest of us. Now it's time to enforce these new laws to ensure that public benefits are full and immediate.

We all realize that projected government spending over this coming decade must be reduced. I was the only member of Congress to create a public process of review of earmarks by a panel of local citizens. This year, I won't be requesting earmarks and I hope that my colleagues will also embrace restraint. I will be targeting government waste, especially Medicare fraud and military cash cows. I will also be examining the rapid growth of addictive prescription pain medications that turn people into lifelong patients. If you have information about a wasteful program, I want to hear from you.

Finally, I invite you to talk to me about the issues of the day at a special telephone town hall, Wednesday, February 16, 2011 at 7 p.m.. You can participate from your home. Sign up by visiting my website, or call 650-342-0300 to find out how to register. I hope to hear from you—there is much to do this year!

All the best,

Jackie

2010 in Review

SAN BRUNO

Any recap of 2010 in the 12th Congressional District must unfortunately begin with the tragedy of the September 9th PG&E pipeline explosion in San Bruno. The loss of lives and homes has been well documented. Less known is that some survivors suffered burns over most of their bodies and are still fighting for their lives at the time that this newsletter went to print. Our office continues to work with affected families and I am committed to seeing that each and every survivor is treated fairly and made as whole as possible during the process of reclaiming their lives.

The explosion triggered a federal investigation while bringing thousands of people together in the spirit of helping those who survived the blast. I have introduced legislation to protect survivors from taxation on PG&E payments received in support of living expenses. I have been in close contact with state and federal regulators to ensure that investigations and enforcement efforts are thorough. I have introduced a comprehensive bill to elevate the safety standards applied to the delivery of natural gas, including a provision that would alert people who live near a transmission line.

It is my opinion that in the end there will be many hard lessons learned from the San Bruno tragedy. I am very concerned that oversight of PG&E was lax and that the loss of life could have been prevented. I anticipate that I and my office will been deeply involved in the aftermath of the San Bruno tragedy throughout 2011.

My website contains a great deal of information about the pipeline disaster and assistance that can be provided by my office. We have held four town halls for residents of San Bruno and will continue to keep them updated on pipeline events throughout the year.

CONSUMER PROTECTION OVERSIGHT

Last May I provided the Consumer Product Safety Commission with evidence that promotional drinking glasses distributed by McDonald's contained high levels of cadmium. The glasses were recalled and removed voluntarily by the fast-food chain.

JOB HUNTERS BOOT CAMP

I sponsored three job-hunter boot camps that provided over 1,600 people with advice and training on finding employment. Dozens of area employers participated. More camps are planned in 2011.

WALL STREET REFORM

Congress created strong protections against future financial debacles, including these provisions that I insisted be part of the package: 1) Conflict of interest rules barring credit rating agencies from doing "consulting" work for companies whose debt they rate; 2) Rules against high rates of debt by banks doing risky trading; and, 3) Creation of a consumer financial protection bureau to defend the rights of consumers in credit transactions.

AUTO SAFETY OVERSIGHT

At the start of the year I participated in hearings where I told the President of Toyota that his company couldn't blame consumers for the defects in Toyotas, and I insisted that the company explain delays in releasing information about sudden acceleration problems in many of the company's cars. I introduced legislation requiring that every new car have a "black box" that federal safety inspectors can access after an accident.

TOWN HALLS

Finally, I held 16 town halls—either in person or via the telephone—where constituents had a chance to share with me their thoughts and concerns about the new healthcare law, the economy and other significant issues, including the San Bruno pipeline explosion. Keeping in touch with my constituents is my number one priority.

The first Job Hunters Boot Camp drew 1,000 job seekers who took advantage of the resource tables.

January

I introduced legislation to ban the use of cadmium in children's jewelry.

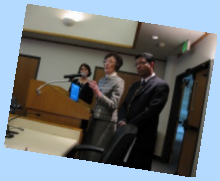
Associated Press

U.S. News and World Report

My trip to Afghanistan confirmed my belief that we need to end our military involvement there.

February

My Citizen Oversight Panel was founded to review requests for federal funding.



My constituents welcomed me home after passage of the historic health care reform.

March

On my Recovery Bus Tour I highlighted projects in the district that were funded by stimulus money.

Now It's Your Turn!

Please take a moment to tell me what you think.
You can also complete this survey on my website.

1. Do you think that government should do more to solve problems, is trying to do too many things that would be better left to businesses and individuals or is doing just about the right number of things?

Government should do more ☐ Government should do less ☐ Is doing about the right number of things ☐

2. What would you like me to focus on most in 2011? (please rank 1-7, 1 being most important)

- ☐ Enhancing consumers financial and internet privacy
- ☐ Fighting corruption and inefficiency in government
- ☐ Making tough decision to address the growing deficit
- ☐ Bringing jobs back to the U.S.
- ☐ Protecting consumers from dangerous products
- ☐ Reducing our military forces in Afghanistan
- ☐ Other _____

3. How many people do you know who are unemployed (including yourself if you are unemployed?

0-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-20 ☐ More ☐

How many do you know who have been out of work for 99+ weeks? _____

4. Would you like the ability to "opt out" of having your activities tracked on the internet if it meant that you might have to pay for some content that is currently free?

Yes ☐ No ☐

5. In 2008, the voters of California approved $9 billion to build a high speed rail system. The system now is estimated to cost in excess of $40 billion. Critics argue that the system should be redesigned to better fit into Peninsula communities, while advocates believe that the system is essential to California's future economic growth and environment. What do you believe?

- ☐ The project should continue toward completion of the link between San Francisco and Los Angeles;
- ☐ The project should be halted;
- ☐ The project should continue, but with much better controls over its finances and with better evidence developed about possible ridership;
- ☐ The project should be halted and redesigned to better accommodate the needs of individual cities along the right of way.

Your Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____

E-mail Address: _____

I introduced the San Francisco Bay Improvement Act.

April

I visited eight Senior Centers in the district this year, including Millbrae.

Demi Char won the Congressional Art Competition for her oil painting "In Our Hands."

May

On Memorial Day, I spoke to veterans at a celebration in San Francisco's Presidio National Park.

I triggered the McDonald's recall of 12 million Shrek glasses containing cadmium.

June

After the BP oil rig explosion, I pushed for tighter rules on oil drilling to prevent another disaster.

ANU News

Return address:

_____

_____

_____

Please place stamp here

Congresswoman Jackie Speier
400 S. El Camino Real, suite 750
San Mateo, CA 94402

Please fold at the line and return the survey to my office.

Out of work for six months or more? Are you a "mature" displaced worker with more than twenty years of experience? Join us at the next

JOB HUNTERS BOOT CAMP

Friday, April 8, 2011
10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
College of San Mateo

Please call my office to register (650) 342-0300 or e-mail speier.events@mail.house.gov with your name, address, phone number and how you heard about the event.

Prepared and printed at taxpayers expense.

Craigslist dropped its adult services section after mounting pressure from anti-child-prostitution advocates, including myself.

July

I committed to Filipino Vets to help them receive full benefits from the VA.

Over 100 local small business owners attended a lending seminar.

August

We celebrated the 90th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, women's right to vote.

PG&E's natural gas pipelines explosion in San Bruno was a devastating disaster

September

that led me to introduce the Pipeline Safety and Community Empowerment Act.

Congresswoman Speier to Introduce Key Bills in January 2011

Preventing Natural Gas Pipeline Explosions
The *Pipeline Safety and Community Empowerment Act* requires pipeline operators to install remote or automatic shut-off valves on existing pipelines in high risk and high density areas, high seismic risk areas, and in all new construction or replaced pipelines. The bill also mandates that utilities use the most effective inspection techniques, disclose the location of natural gas transmission lines to homeowners, and provide critical information to local officials and emergency responders. Firefighters were unaware of the source of the fire for 30 minutes after the pipe ruptured. The *San Bruno Victim Compensation Fairness Act* stipulates that PG&E payments to survivors of the San Bruno explosion will not be treated as taxable income by the IRS.

Protecting Homeowners
The *Protecting Homeowners Credit History Act* would prevent banks and mortgage servicers from reporting on-time modified loan payments as delinquent by prohibiting a credit reporting bureau from including such adverse information in a person's credit report. It simply is not fair for a homeowner to be further penalized when they are fulfilling their obligations under a valid modification agreement.

Controlling Medicare costs
Each year, Medicare spends $14 billion on CT, MRI and PET scans, many of which are unnecessary and even worse, unhealthy because of unnecessary radiation exposure. The *Integrity in Medical Imaging Act* prohibits physicians from referring patients to their own in-office machines.

Living up to our obligations to our veterans
The Congresswoman will author legislation to ensure that all veterans are automatically enrolled in the VA healthcare program as part of their service exit-physical, and that all veterans will receive full and confidential mental health screening and referral for treatment if needed. A second bill will provide benefits parity to Filipino veterans who served with the U.S. military in World War II but who have been denied the benefits they were promised.

Helping Small Businesses
The *Small Business Relief Act* will allow small business owners to borrow funds for their businesses from their SEP IRA retirement accounts without penalty. They would be required to pay back the withdrawal within two years.

Consumer Safety
Children's developmental health is threatened by exposure to products containing the toxic metal cadmium. The *Toxic Metals Protection Act* sets a surface area limit on four toxic heavy metals for products intended for children's use: antimony, barium, cadmium, and chromium.

The *Case Act*, also known as the "black box" bill, will expand the use of Electronic Data Recorder technology to all new cars, and establishes new guidelines for the types of information collected by these data recorders. In so doing, this bill will enable regulators and others to identity problematic trends and spot manufacture defects quickly and, consequently, improve the safety of the motoring public.

Another bill will establish stronger financial privacy protections nationwide for users of the internet by providing consumers with the ability to opt-out of online tracking.

Protecting San Francisco Bay
The *San Francisco Bay Improvement Act* will increase funding for protecting the ecosystem. Investing in Bay wetlands restoration today is crucial to leaving a better environment for future generations.

Flood insurance changes
The law needs to be changed so that homeowners are not required to buy more flood insurance than the size of the mortgage outstanding on their home and to offer homeowners a time payment plan for insurance premiums.

The most popular workshop at my three Job Hunters Boot Camps this year was the one-on-one resume review.

October

Federal, State and PG&E representatives were at hand to answer questions about the pipeline explosion at a San Bruno Town Hall.

A Pentagon report stated that allowing openly gay troops will not hurt the military. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was finally repealed this year.

Servicemembers United

November

The Giants and all of San Francisco celebrated winning the World Series.

Over 600 Seniors attended the 23rd Seniors on the Move Conference. We had a Farmers market for the first time .

December

Congressman Mike Thompson and I held a salmon summit to address the decline of California salmon runs.

Don't Wait for Help When You Need It

A review of recently solved constituent complaints

Federal agencies sometimes make errors in denying claims or requests presented by constituents. The following cases were resolved by my office during the past few months. The unfortunate point here is that some constituents waited longer than necessary before contacting me for help.

· After a death in the family, a constituent was unable to receive thousands of dollars in retroactive Social Security benefits. My office contacted Social Security to speed up the claim which eventually resulted in the release of $63,000 to the constituent.

· The IRS told a constituent it was going to garnish her wages for taxes owed for 2006. The constituent had filed an amended 1040X. My office contacted the IRS which located the missing file and issued a $23,000 tax refund to the constituent.

· A grandmother was concerned about the cost of college for her grandchildren. Her son was underemployed and in need of a loan for his business. My staff provided information to the grandmother about Pell grants and other financial aid in addition to information about micro-lenders who help with business loans.

· My office worked for more than one year with the Department of Education to have them reverse a decision denying a student's request for loan forgiveness due to a medical disability.

· A constituent petitioned her daughter to immigrate to the United States from China. The visa was approved, but never issued. After unsuccessfully attempting to contact the embassy for nearly 18 months, she contacted my office and the U.S. Embassy issued her visa. She recently reunited with her mother and the rest of her family in the United States—being the last family member to emigrate.

· An elderly Daly City widower with diminished capacity owed just $14,000 on his mortgage for his home valued at over $300,000. His granddaughter, who had power of attorney, found notices of default and contacted the bank to bring her grandfather current on the payments. But the bank refused and sent a notice of trustee sale. My staff was able to contact the servicer and the owner of the loan and the sale was halted and a repayment plan established.

Would you like a 2011 calendar?

Call **(650) 342-0300**
and we will send you one.

Telephone Town Hall

Wednesday, February 16, 2011
7—8 p.m.

To register, visit my website at www.speier.house.gov or call my office at (650) 342-0300

Contact Jackie

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Follow Jackie

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OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Jackie Speier

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Year-End Report to Constituents

Postal Patron
12th Congressional District
California

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