Congressman

Henry A. Waxman

KEEPING IN TOUCH

March 1994

Dear Friend:

As Chairman of the House Health and the Environment Subcommittee, I am deeply involved in some of the most complicated and important issues facing Congress.

It is important for you to know my views and for me to hear yours on these issues. Whether it's reforming our health care system or regulating pesticides, please share your perspective with me.

During the past year I held six community forums in the 29th District and was delighted that so many of you took the time to participate and discuss your thoughts with me. I hope you will have a moment to review this newsletter. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Henry A. Waxman

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EARTHQUAKE UPDATE: PICKING UP THE PIECES

The Los Angeles/Northridge Earthquake was the costliest natural disaster in our nation's history. We will be working on repairs from the earthquake's damage for months, if not years. Quick bipartisan action in Congress is bringing relief to many in our community. President Clinton, his cabinet, and the California delegation have worked together to enact:

Public Law 103-211, Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Assistance, which provides nearly $8 billion for disaster relief, including:

- $4.7 billion for the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) assistance.
- $1.35 billion for highway reconstruction.
- $1.1 billion for Small Business Administration (SBA) disaster loans.
- $325 million for housing programs.
- $250 million for community development block grants.
- $245 million for schools and education programs.

Public Law 103-220, which allows California to use federal highway funds for seismic retrofitting of bridges.

EARTHQUAKE HOTLINE NUMBERS

Disaster Aid Teleregistration 800-462-9029
TDD 800-462-7585

Disaster Information Helpline 800-525-0321
TDD 800-660-8005

Senior Earthquake Hotline 800-204-6444

Consumer Protection 800-952-5225

Fraud Prevention Task Force 800-897-6677

Home/Business/Personal Loans
Small Business Administration 800-488-5323

Tax Assistance
Internal Revenue Service 800-829-1040
IRS TDD 800-829-4059

Rep. Waxman, Rep. Dixon, Rep. Harman, Rep. Lewis and a bipartisan coalition of the California delegation succeeded in bringing $8 billion in federal earthquake aid to our area.

KEY HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

AIDS...THE FIGHT GOES ON

I can't describe my sadness over AIDS. Since 1982, I have chaired more than twenty-five congressional hearings on the disease and have fought in every way I know to make our government deal with this epidemic. I am proud of some of the successes, like the Ryan White Care Act, which I authored. But so much more needs to be done.

In 1993, I sponsored legislation (H.R. 4), which President Clinton signed into law, that establishes the Office of AIDS Research. This office will coordinate all AIDS research activities. I am also strongly supporting Representative Pelosi's bill, H.R. 1538, which would promote activities for the prevention of additional cases of infection with the AIDS virus. It is a strong first step in beginning the process for community-based and targeted AIDS education.

We have a long way to go in beating AIDS, and I will continue to hold hearings, sponsor legislation, and bring the need for action to the public's attention.

TAKING ACTION ON KILLER TOBACCO

1994 marks the 30th Anniversary of the Surgeon General's determination that cigarettes are a cause of human lung cancer. We now know even more about tobacco's dangers than we did in 1964, but the tobacco industry continues to exert tremendous influence in Washington.

Since the Surgeon General first identified smoking as a cause of lung cancer, the tobacco lobby and its campaign funding have paralyzed Congress from taking the kind of tough, no nonsense action necessary to stop the epidemic of tobacco use among our youth. Each week thousands of teenagers and preteens begin a life-threatening and often lifelong addiction to tobacco.

This year, however, we may finally pass effective legislation. I have introduced:

H.R. 3434, which would eliminate involuntary exposure to tobacco smoke in all nonresidential buildings.

H.R. 3614, which would require explicit warnings on cigarette packages and prohibit tobacco companies from distributing free tobacco samples or advertising in sports stadiums, motion pictures, or within 2,000 feet of schools.

I am also investigating recent reports that tobacco companies are deliberately manipulating the level of nicotine in cigarettes during the production process to assure addiction.

It's time to put a public health brand on the Marlboro horse and Old Joe Camel. Passage of H.R. 3614, combined with a stiff increase in the tobacco excise tax and a prohibition on smoking in public buildings, will go far to reduce the toll that tobacco exacts upon our country.

Surgeon General Jocelyn Elders and her predecessors for the past 25 years called H.R. 3434 one of the most important public health measures Congress could pass this year.

HEALTH CA
COVERAGE FOR

Rep. Waxman meets with President Clinton and Vice President Gore. The new administration is committed to progressive health and environmental policies.

President Harry Truman tried to enact national health legislation more than forty years ago. President Jimmy Carter tried again in the 1970's, but was blocked by the same groups that derailed President Truman's proposal. Now President and Mrs. Clinton have accepted the challenge of fixing our health care crisis and giving every American affordable health care.

We all know health care costs are spiralling, putting health care coverage out of reach of millions of Americans. Today, more than five million Californians have no health care coverage. One thing is certain: if we continue to do nothing, the situation will worsen. Health care costs will continue to increase at rates faster than the growth in wages, which means that more Americans and their employers will be priced out of the health insurance market altogether.

EXPOSING HIDDEN HOME HAZARDS: LEAD AND RADON

Lead and radon, two of the most dangerous environmental threats to our health, exist right in our own homes.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, lead poisoning is "the most common and societally devastating environmental disease of young children." Congress has passed legislation I introduced in 1992 to protect our children from lead poisoning. Beginning in 1995, families will for the first time be warned of hidden lead hazards and be advised on how to avoid them before they buy or rent a home. In addition, the law requires greater federal screening, a new program that regulates contractors working with lead hazards, and a grant program to protect impoverished children from lead poisoning.

I am now working to tackle radon, the second leading cause of lung cancer. The Radon Awareness and Disclosure Act (H.R. 2448) would ensure that homebuyers are fully informed of the risks of radon and that they may inspect for radon before signing a real estate contract. Prospects for passage are good.

ISSUES IN THE 103RD CONGRESS

E REFORM... VERY AMERICAN

We need to enact comprehensive reform this year. The reform must ensure that every American has health insurance, that costs are brought under control, that we have the right to choose our own physicians, and that the quality of care remains high. We must be particularly careful to make sure reform is a positive step forward for our senior citizens. Providing prescription drug coverage for seniors, which the President's plan does, is important, as is addressing the problem of long-term care.

For the past several years, I have sponsored the Long Term Care Family Security Act, which would give Americans the chance to get the care they need in the setting they choose. My legislation would establish a federal program that covers both home care and nursing facility services. It would require some form of copayment by those who can afford it and would provide public payment for those who cannot. It would protect consumers who wish to purchase private long-term care insurance.

"Reform must include universal coverage, cost control, choice of doctors, and quality care."

A number of the provisions in my bill have been included in President Clinton's health care reform proposal. I will be working hard to ensure that long-term care reform remains a part of general health care reform.

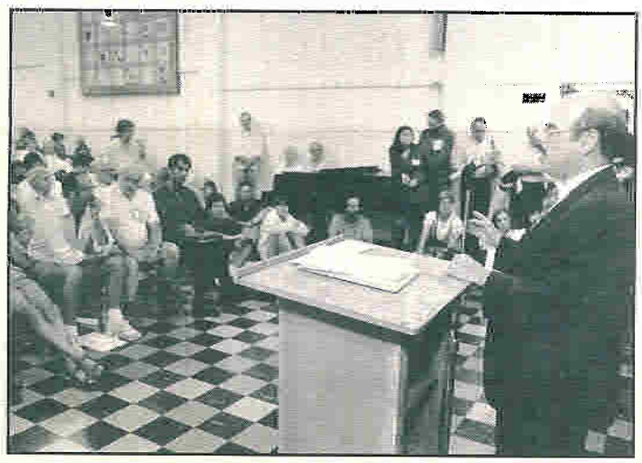
This is the biggest and most difficult issue of 1994. As Chairman of the House Health and Environment Subcommittee, I have a special responsibility to ensure President Clinton's effort does not fail. I have cosponsored the President's bill as well as H.R. 1200, the single payor bill, and I will do all I can to see that we seize this historic opportunity.

KEEPING OUR AIR AND DRINKING WATER CLEAN

Assuring that our drinking water is safe and our air is healthy to breathe is one of government's most fundamental responsibilities. Meeting these challenges, however, is very difficult.

In 1986, Congress passed legislation I sponsored that established a system for keeping contaminants out of drinking water and ensuring the public was notified if standards were violated. Now that law is under attack by water companies seeking to relax its requirements. I strongly oppose this effort and will continue to work to renew the Safe Drinking Water Act without weakening the law's public health protections.

The landmark Clean Air Act of 1990 took ten years to enact into law, and I count it as one of my proudest achievements in Congress. But passing the law was only the first step; now specific measures must be implemented and actual controls installed. I'm concerned that the South Coast Air Quality Management District and the State of California are trying to circumvent some of the Act's most important provisions. The Health and the Environment Subcommittee is monitoring local efforts and we will continue oversight to assure that our community has clean air to breathe.



Rep. Waxman listens to constituents' concerns during a Town Hall Meeting.

FINALLY... FUNDING FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH

Women's health has long been ignored by the nation's biomedical research community, including our own federally-supported National Institutes of Health (NIH). For years, women have been explicitly excluded from important research of heart disease, cancer, and other deadly and disabling conditions. They have been severely shortchanged by the dearth of research of diseases and conditions that specifically afflict women such as breast cancer, ovarian and cervical cancer, and osteoporosis.

"A strong focus on women's health is overdue and will save lives."

In 1993, Congress changed all that by enacting legislation I introduced to redirect our biomedical research efforts. First and foremost, this new law requires the inclusion of women in clinical trial research supported through NIH. Second, it establishes an Office of Research on Women's Health at NIH to give additional emphasis to health research. Finally, it includes major new funding for research on diseases and conditions that primarily affect women, new centers for research on contraception and infertility, a program on obstetrics and gynecology at NIH, and research on diseases and conditions relating to aging that disproportionately affect women.

This legislation included an amendment I sponsored mandating a study of the link between breast cancer and environmental risk factors such as pesticides and air and water pollution. The scope of this important project is unprecedented, and its results will be critical to our understanding of the causes of breast cancer.

My only regret about these improvements in women's health research is that they were too long in coming. Now we must continue to move forward. You can count on me to continue to work to establish women's health research as a permanent part of our nation's biomedical research portfolio.

Issues in the 103rd Congress

Stopping the Risk to Our Children from Pesticides

Every year, more than one billion pounds of pesticides are used in our country, either directly on food, or indirectly, as through contaminated groundwater.

The National Academy of Sciences has reported that pesticides pose a unique risk for children because they eat large amounts of a relatively small number of foods, particularly fruits and juices, that can receive high doses of pesticides. In addition, their developing nervous systems are especially vulnerable to these pesticides and other toxic substances. Studies also show evidence of a link between certain pesticides and breast cancer.

"No pesticide should be used on food unless it is proven to be safe."

The pesticides laws on the books are obsolete and have been inadequately enforced by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). I have introduced legislation, H.R. 4091, which would rewrite the laws in a way that would truly protect the public health. Under my legislation, no pesticides could be used on food if they could not be shown to be safe to the public.

No Restrictions on Access to Vitamins and Dietary Supplements

As the result of a skillful and expensive scare campaign waged last year, many people have become concerned that their access to vitamins or dietary supplements may be restricted.

Let me set the record straight. No legislation or regulation has been proposed that would restrict consumer access in any way. I would oppose such a proposal if it were ever suggested in Congress or at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). So long as a product is safe, individuals, not the government, must have the right to choose which vitamins, dietary supplements, minerals, or herbs they want to purchase.

It's Never Too Early to Start...

Six-year-old Robert Funches adds his voice to the call for restrictions on smoking in public places. Like thousands of children, Robert suffers from asthma attacks when he is exposed to second-hand smoke.

Congressman
Henry A. Waxman

INSIDE

KEY HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT ISSUES IN THE 103RD CONGRESS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Official Business

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