



BROOKLYN'S IN THE HOUSE

NEWS FROM CONGRESSWOMAN YVETTE D. CLARKE

11th CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

Representing: Brownsville, Ocean Hill, Crown Heights, Greater Flatbush, East Flatbush, Kensington, Park Slope, Carroll Gardens, Gowanus, Prospect Heights, Prospect Gardens, Grand Army Plaza, Windsor Terrace, Flatbush and Midwood

February 26th, 2010

Census 2010: Rep. Clarke Encourages Citizens to Be Counted

The first decade of the new millennium has come to a close and census season 2010 will soon kick into full gear. Every ten years, the U.S. Census counts every person living in the United States, as determined by the Constitution. As we all know, democracy is not a spectator sport. That is why I am encouraging all of my constituents to fill out the 2010 Census form.

Beginning in March, Census forms will be delivered to your place of residence. National Census Day is Thursday April 1st, 2010. You should aim to return your completed forms by the April 1st deadline. The Census Bureau will process completed forms in April and analyze the received data by the end of the year.

It is important that every single household complete and return the form. Less than 35% of my constituency participated in the 2000 Census, and is our community must improve our Census questionnaire response rate in order to secure our fair share of critical public resources. The 2010 Census will be used to help allocate federal funds to communities all across the U.S. for things like hospitals, schools, job training centers, senior centers, emergency services, public works projects, and many other necessary services. The data provided is invaluable, but as they say at the Census, "we can't move forward until you mail it in."

Rep. Clarke Advocates for Minority Owned Businesses

On Tuesday, February 23, 2010, I participated in the "Pathways out of Poverty to Opportunity" event hosted by Rep. Danny Davis and the Congressional Black Caucus on Capitol Hill. At the event, I discussed the importance of strong minority owned and operated businesses to our local economy. Those businesses hire more minority workers, and thus serve as a catalyst for prosperity in communities of color.

That is why I am working to ensure access to capital for minority and women owned small businesses. Access to capital is vital to small business development and job creation in Brooklyn. When banks are encouraged to lend to these businesses, they are able to spend more and incur more investment, which in turn produces jobs. Increasing the number of minority owned businesses in our district will produce lasting benefits for our community.



Rep. Clarke speaks at the "Pathways out of Poverty to Opportunity" event on Capitol Hill



Dear Neighbor,

I am proud to announce that my office will participate in the first annual "Girls Rock the House" civics competition. Girls Rock the House (GRTH) is a national initiative for 8th grade girls in political districts represented by women in the House of Representatives. Local GRTH groups are formed in collaboration with middle schools and other community organizations.

Participating girls will have the opportunity to:

- Better understand the political process and the role of women in politics;
- Learn how to make their voice heard on community issues; and
- Better understand how to run for office and learn about other career opportunities in politics.

In the 111th Congress, 75 out of 435 Representatives are women, just 17%. For the bright and engaging young women in my district, the sky is truly the limit. This program needs volunteers willing to step up and guide eighth grade girls. If you are interested in participating, reach out to Veronica Aveis in my District Office at 718-287-1142. Please join me in encouraging our future leaders in the pursuit of scholarship, leadership, and civic responsibility.

Sincerely,

Yvette D. Clarke

Rep. Clarke Votes to Restore Competition in the Health Insurance Marketplace

On Wednesday February 24, 2010, I voted to ensure that American consumers get both a real choice and a fair deal when purchasing health insurance. H.R. 4626, "The Health Insurance Industry Fair Competition Act" will remove the anti-trust exemption for health insurance companies, requiring them to compete fairly and adhere to the same anti-trust laws as other companies. The bill was passed out of the House of Representatives with a vote of 406 to 19.

For 65 years, the health insurance industry has been legally exempt from anti-trust laws, and the federal government was banned from even investigating evidence of possible collusion. In the last 14 years alone, there have been 400 mergers among health insurers and now 94% of all insurance markets are "highly concentrated" – meaning consumers have little or no choice between insurance providers.

Health insurers that were previously exempt from anti-trust laws will now bear legal responsibility for price fixing, dividing up territories among themselves and sabotaging their competitors in order to gain a monopoly in the marketplace. Such practices have been outlawed in other industries for nearly a century. By creating competition, this bill ensures that constituents have more choice and lower premium costs.

Last Day for Special Tax Option for Haiti Donations Approaching

Taxpayers wishing to claim their Haiti relief donations on their 2009 tax returns must make those donations by the end of this month, according to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Individuals and corporations have until midnight on Sunday, Feb. 28, to make cash contributions to charities providing earthquake relief in Haiti. These contributions can be claimed on either a 2009 or 2010 return, but not both. Contributions made after Feb. 28 but before the end of the year can only be claimed on a 2010 return.

Although this deadline is fast approaching, the dawn for Haiti is not. The generosity you have displayed to this point has been inspirational, and I urge you to continue donating. Your contributions have saved lives and helped to reunite families, but we should not forget what Haiti was like before January 12, 2010. Even before the quake, most people in Haiti lived on less than \$2 a day and the nation was growing continuously poorer. Our massive relief effort will focus on propelling Haiti into a new era; this is our top priority. Again, I urge you to continue donating to this necessary cause. For more information on IRS donating deadlines, visit <http://www.irs.gov>.

Rep. Clarke Visits the UJA Federation-Met Council-Masbia Community Kitchen



Rep. Clarke serves meals at the Masbia Kitchen in Flatbush.

On Wednesday, February 17th, 2010, I visited the Masbia Soup Kitchen of Flatbush, where I served meals to those in need. Since opening last November, the kitchen has helped feed over 100 hungry New Yorkers. Tough economic conditions have hit New York hard and thanks to those at Masbia, struggling constituents will have one less meal to worry about. While I am optimistic about early economic indicators pointing to a recovery, many New Yorkers are still without jobs. This is why job creation legislation remains my top priority. The House has already passed the *Jobs for Main Street Act* to launch more job-creating projects, help small business hire workers, increase emergency aid for families struggling without a steady paycheck, and put Americans back to work.

Just one year after the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* was signed into law, over 40,000 jobs were created in New York by the stimulus. Unfortunately, the legislation approved by the U.S. Senate on Thursday was very disappointing to say the least. The Senate chose to pursue a 'go slow', piecemeal approach that will do little to address our nation's need for employment, particularly among the chronically unemployed. I will be working with my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus to ensure that the interests of minorities and the poor are adequately addressed in the final version of the the jobs package.

Legislative Spotlight

Due to the economic downturn, many of our nation's urban communities are experiencing a substantial growth in crime. In some urban areas, crime rates are twice the rate of crime in sub-urban and rural communities. The high unemployment rate among youth is contributing to higher levels of gang activity, and youth victimization.

This phenomenon requires national attention. That is why I joined my colleague Representative Ed Towns in cosponsoring HR 227. This measure is a congressional resolution recognizing the second week of February as National Urban Crimes Awareness Week. On Thursday of this week, the House passed this resolution, to bring awareness to the unique issues surrounding crimes in urban areas, and commending the work of community organizations.

The resolution is endorsed by the National Association for Victim Assistance (NOVA), National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault (SCESA), National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children, National Crime Victims Law Institute, and other key victims' rights organizations.

With this resolution, Congress expresses support for the goals and ideals of National Urban Crimes Awareness Week. The resolution also encourages national and community organizations, businesses, colleges and universities, and the media to promote awareness of violent urban crimes and to come up with strategies to decrease the incidence of such crimes.