



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

December 04, 2009

Rep. Clarke Visits the Explore Charter School



Congresswoman Clarke visits with students at Explore Charter School

On Tuesday November 24th, I had an opportunity to visit the Explore Charter School in Flatbush, Brooklyn. I was excited to interact with the faculty and witness the students listening attentively. I received a warm welcome from the administration and teachers, while touring the learning facility. I believe that education opens the door to endless opportunities. It encouraged me to see these students so eager to engage in the educational process. Many of them asked some very important questions about their government,

my dual responsibilities in Washington and Brooklyn, and the activities of President Barack Obama. After this experience, I am confident in the ability of our nation's next generation of leaders to handle the many issues and problems they will encounter. As a Member of the House Education and Labor Committee, education will continue to be my top legislative priority. I wish them well in their studies for the 2009-2010 academic year.

Rep. Clarke Supports Legislation that Provides Tax Relief to Thousands of American Families and Small Businesses

This week, the House passed H.R. 4154, the Permanent Estate Tax Relief Act, which I voted for and fully support. H.R. 4154 maintains the current estate tax exemption for inheritances of less than \$3.5 million per individual (\$7 million for married couples). It provides certainty for American families and small businesses by permanently extending the current estate tax exemption. Small businesses are one of our greatest engines of job creation and economic growth.

This bill gives these essential small firms the certainty, stability, and peace of mind to plan for the future during a time of enormous economic challenges. Without this legislation, the estate tax would be fully repealed for 2010, before returning to the higher pre-2001 levels in 2011. The passage of this bill ensures that 99.8% of Americans do not pay a penny of the so-called 'death tax' while ensuring that the wealthiest individuals pay their fair share.



Dear Neighbor:

I invite you to attend an informational forum on the 2010 United States Census. I will be hosting the forum on Tuesday, December 8th at Mount Zion Church (203 East 37th street, Brooklyn NY 11203) from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

As the Representative of the 11th Congressional District, where less than 35% of our citizens participated in the 2000 Census, it is important that our community improves its Census questionnaire response rate. This forum will focus on the importance of the Census, including an explanation of how the Census affects Federal funding of essential programs in our community.

The informational forum will comprise of key officials in the community, including:

- Representatives from the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President
- Representatives from the Office of the Governor
- Representatives from many different posts at the Census, including key note speaker, Allison Cenac, Assistant Census Manager

If you have any questions, please contact my office at 718.287.1142.

Sincerely,
Yvette D. Clarke

FDIC Study Finds Minority Households Lack Sufficient Access to Financial Services

This week, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) released the results of a study undertaken to collect data on the number of under-banked and unbanked households in the United States. Under-banked households have access to few financial services, such as bank accounts, and unbanked households have no access to these services what so ever. The FDIC found that roughly 25% of American households (30 million households and 60 million adults) are under-banked and unbanked.

The data of this study is very troubling. Under-banked and unbanked households often must resort to alternative financial services providers in order to access credit, often at a steeper price. This historic study demonstrates the pressing need for responsible financial institutions in our most underserved areas.

According to the report, 54% of Black households and 43.3% of Hispanic households are either under-banked or unbanked. The study also found that these citizens most often turn to financial products provided by less regulated entities such as payday lenders, non-bank check cashers, and pawn shops. As the only Congressional Black Caucus Member on the Small Business Committee, I am very concerned that minority households are disproportionately under-banked and unbanked.

To reverse these rates, I believe that the expansion of the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) program should be on the table in order to begin addressing this serious economic challenge in our neighborhoods. We must also work closely with large banking institutions, smaller community banks, and credit unions to increase their presence in communities like mine in central Brooklyn. There is an urgent need and high demand for their services.

Beware of Misleading Information About Your Medicare Benefits

It has come to my attention that an organization called the “Coalition for Medicare Choices” has reached out to seniors in our district regarding Medicare cuts under H.R. 3962, the Affordable Health Care for America Act. I want to present the facts of this issue in order to clear up any confusion that this may have caused.

The per person cost for Medicare Advantage (MA) is 14% more than the per person cost for the traditional fee-for- service Medicare program. Therefore, MA is currently being overpaid by 14%. This bill restores equity between Medicare Advantage and the traditional fee-for-service Medicare program. This legislation phases out these overpayments over three years starting in 2011. This will allow MA plans to be paid on a level playing field with traditional fee-for-service Medicare.

Many MA plans will continue to offer their services under the new payment program. However some MA plans may choose to end their plans. If this occurs, people will still be able to choose other MA plans in their area or have access to the traditional fee-for-service Medicare plan.

Also, two important features of this bill is the elimination of the PART D donut hole and the negotiation of lower drug prices for people on Medicare. Please go to my website, www.clarke.house.gov, for more information on this legislation.

Legislative Spotlight

Since President Obama entered office, his Administration has implemented a strategy of common-sense diplomacy that engages our friends as well as those with whom relations have been cold through the years, particularly the Iranian government.

While I fully respect and support the people of Iran, I am gravely concerned with the Iranian government’s refusal to engage with the United Nations regarding Iran’s nuclear enrichment programs. After closely monitoring the situation and allowing the Obama Administration to pursue diplomatic avenues, it is clear that Congress needs to take further steps to aid our Administration in addressing the situation.

After careful deliberation, on November 30, 2009, I became a co-sponsor of H.R. 2194, the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act Iran imports 40% of its refined petroleum. H.R. 2194 would empower the President to impose sanctions on any person or corporation who invested in Iran’s petroleum refining capacity at \$20 million or more.

On October 3rd, the Administration and the IAEA began negotiations with Iran and came to a tentative agreement that would ship Iranian uranium to Russia and then France who would treat the material and return it to Iran in the form of fuel rods for civilian nuclear power. Iran, however, backed away from the deal and on November 27th. Soon after, IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei declared that negotiations with Iran regarding their nuclear program were at a dead end.

While I will continue to encourage the Administration to use diplomatic leverage to engage Iran, it is clear that Iran is not willing to negotiate. As this legislation makes it to the floor, please know that I will be closely monitoring the developments of Iran’s nuclear program. I will also keep you updated.