

Spring 2002



Report to the People

From Congressman

Bob Menendez

13th Congressional District ♦ New Jersey

Dear Friend:

Our community--indeed our nation--has rallied its support around the war on terrorism. In Washington, Democrats and Republicans have come together to ensure that we have the resources needed to keep our country safe. As many of you know, shortly after the September 11th attacks, I was appointed Chairman of the Democratic Caucus Task Force on Homeland Security. Working with the Task Force, I authored and introduced two pieces of legislation last year to address the challenges ahead -- the Bioterrorism Protection Act (BioPAct) and the United States Security Act (USA Act) -- and I am pleased that the President incorporated many of our proposals into his Budget.

That said, while we continue to stand united, as a country and as a Congress, against our common enemies, there are still differences -- important differences -- over the way the two parties are approaching the upcoming Federal Budget.

Democrats argue that, in addition to providing full funding for the war on terrorism, we also need to make sure workers and their families hurt by the recession here at home can stay afloat during these rough times. Many workers need extended unemployment and health care benefits now. I am fighting for that every day.

Republicans, however, keep pushing for further tax cuts for the wealthiest individuals -- which would take away the money we need in order to provide benefits for working families in trouble. I support tax relief for working families, but cannot in good conscience support further tax breaks for large corporations and the top one-percent of wage-earners at a time when so many in our community are struggling just to pay their rent or mortgage.

We're in this together, and the people's government should ensure that no family sinks under the financial pressures created by circumstances beyond their control.

That's why I will keep fighting to bring our Federal Budget's priorities in line with America's priorities, New Jersey's priorities, and the 13th District's priorities.

Sincerely,

CONGRESSMAN MENENDEZ

Fights to Restore Highway Funding

In 1998, I supported the Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA 21) that created the formula by which New Jersey receives its highway funding. The goal of TEA 21 was to establish a floor for funding that would ensure that states get back as much money as they pay into the highway construction fund. To date, the highway trust fund exceeds \$20 billion. This is money that will not go to the states for improvements to our highways, but instead sits in the federal Treasury untouched.

Each year the highway funding levels authorized by TEA21 are adjusted according to receipts collected and projected. This process is known as the revenue aligned budget authority

adjustment. This adjustment is made to ensure that all incoming receipts are applied to transportation infrastructure spending.

"This unprecedented cut in federal highway spending will put the brakes on highway improvement projects and comes at a time when we should be creating jobs, not eliminating them."

TEA 21 estimated that \$649,130,039 would be returned to New Jersey for highway

funding in Fiscal Year 2003. However, the President's Budget only requested \$541,582,536 – a difference of \$107,547,503. That is a reduction of 28% for New Jersey's highway funding.

This unprecedented cut in federal highway spending will put the brakes on highway improvement projects and will come at a time when we should be creating jobs, not eliminating them. That is why I joined a bi-partisan group in Congress to introduce the Highway Funding Restoration Act, which would increase the authorized level of funding for Fiscal Year 2003 to at least the TEA 21 authorized level of \$27.746 billion – an increase of about \$4.4 billion above the President's Budget.

February 14, 2002

The Alliance for Retired Americans recognized Bob Menendez for his voting record on behalf of retired Americans. The scorecard tracked votes on issues ranging from prescription drugs, to Medicare and Social Security payments, to housing and energy prices, as well as retirement security. Menendez received a 100% rating on the scorecard, which included a proposal he offered to protect voter access for older Americans -- ensuring that voters have opportunities to correct ballot errors, have increased access to provisional voting, and have better polling place access for the disabled.



Congress Considers Port Security Measures

In order to assure that our ports are secure, Congress must adequately fund the U.S. Coast Guard, give the Coast Guard the flexibility to address security in our changing society, and coordinate the sharing of information among all the various public and private entities that do business along our seaport. The Coast Guard is charged with protecting the ports, the flow of commerce, and the marine transportation system from terrorism; ensuring that it can rapidly deploy and resupply our military assets; and coordinating efforts and intelligence with federal, state, and local agencies.

In addition to the USA Act, which I introduced, Congress is considering several measures to improve security at our nation's ports. These measures include the President's Fiscal Year 2003 Budget, as well as several bills to tighten security at our nation's seaports. The President's Budget includes \$249 million in funding for port vulnerability assessments, additional response boats, the Coast Guard's Maritime Domain Awareness program, inspection of cargo containers, and increased manpower.

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, of which I am the senior New Jersey member, held the first of many hearings on port security legislation last month. These hearings are aimed at ensuring that the security measures the U.S. Coast Guard implemented after Septem-

February 11, 2002

Bob Menendez, Chairman of the Democratic Caucus Task Force on Homeland Security, joined public health officials, local hospital officials, as well as representatives from medical groups and private practice physicians to discuss New Jersey's security and emergency response needs and challenges following the September 11th attacks. The forum was part of a series of homeland security meetings Menendez has hosted with community leaders and local organizations.



ber 11th are adequate to protect this important economic engine. Congress will examine:

- ▲ the Coast Guard's notification requirement for ships entering U.S. ports;
- ▲ the safety and security of U.S. ports;
- ▲ the credentials and background checks for port personnel;
- ▲ cargo documentation and safety;
- ▲ establishment of area contingency plans to address potential terrorist attacks in seaports;
- ▲ overseas enforcement and intervention; and
- ▲ security training and awareness.

Congressman Bob Menendez

District Offices

911 Bergen Avenue,
Jersey City, N.J. 07306
(201) 222-2828

263 Hobart Street
Perth Amboy, N.J. 08861
(732) 324-6212

654 Avenue C
Bayonne, N.J. 07002
(201) 823-2900

3109 Bergenline Ave. 2nd Floor
Union City, N.J. 07087
(201) 558-0800

Washington Office

2238 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-7919

President's Budget Breaks Promise to Protect Medicare & Social Security

On February 4, 2002, the President submitted to Congress his budget request for federal programs in the coming year. The President's Budget is not binding, but it does lay out his priorities for distributing federal funds.

This year, for the first time in 5 years, President Bush has proposed a budget that takes our nation back into deficit spending. There is no question that we must provide the resources needed for our local communities and our men and women in uniform to fight the war against terrorism both at home and abroad, but that alone does not account for the long-term debt our country is now facing.

In just one year, we have gone from a \$5 trillion surplus to spending all of the Medicare Trust Fund and \$1.5 trillion of the Social Security Trust Fund over the next 10 years.

This after a year of repeated promises to protect Social Security and Medicare Trust Fund surpluses in a "lock-box". Not only have those promises been broken, but the President's Budget leaves no room for strengthening these programs in order to prepare for the retirement of the Baby Boomers or provide a meaningful Medicare prescription drug benefit for our seniors.

Further, the President's Budget leaves no room to fund national priorities, such as school modernization, reduced class size, job training assistance, health care for the uninsured, or energy assistance for low-income families. In New Jersey, alone, the President's budget would cut \$95 million from the 38 largest federal grant programs. These cuts will impact New Jersey's job

training programs, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), federal highway funding, and other programs vital to our communities.

As the Chairman of the Democratic Caucus' Task Force on Homeland Security, I am one of the biggest proponents of directing all resources necessary to winning the war on terrorism. At the same time, however, that does not mean that we neglect our other national priorities and abandon the road to fiscal discipline. We must develop a budget that meets all of these needs.



**Visit Congressman
Menendez
on the Internet:**

Web site: Menendez.house.gov

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Official Business



Robert Menendez
MC
ECRWSS
PRSRT STD

Postal Customer

13th Congressional District
New Jersey

Report to the People **Spring 2002**

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