

Last week the American people sent a clear message to politicians in Washington, DC. They demanded an honest and effective government that represents their values and vision. They want a change in the tone of political dialogue and more bipartisan cooperation to solve the serious problems our country faces. The war in Iraq has dragged on with no end in sight, getting worse by the day. The number of American soldiers returning home wounded continues to grow, as does the number whose lives have been lost. **The situation in Iraq continues to decline and the status quo is unacceptable.**

Residents of our District have told me how disappointed they are with our progress in Iraq, and following those conversations, I cosponsored a

[resolution](#)

asking the President to

find a more competent Secretary of Defense

I hope that the President's decision last week to replace Donald Rumsfeld is the first step toward an increased level of bipartisan cooperation in Washington. The next Secretary of Defense will have many difficult decisions to make as our government works to implement new policies abroad and at home to make our country safe and respected as an international leader. We need a new direction at home as well as abroad. We must work to address the widening gap between the wealthiest among us and the middle class. It is nearly impossible for someone to make ends meet on the federal minimum wage of \$5.15/hour, a level which hasn't been adjusted in nearly a decade. **A minimum wage earner working full-time all year will earn just \$10,700**, well below the poverty line.

While so many Americans are being left behind, tax giveaways to large corporations and the ultra-rich have led to record federal budget deficits. We must not force our children to bear this future financial burden - **we need a renewed dedication to fiscal discipline and fair tax policies**. I am pleased that the newly elected House Speaker, Nancy Pelosi, has promised to pass an increase in the minimum wage during the first 100 hours of the 110th Congress. Enabling America to reach its full potential requires our government to advocate on behalf of all Americans. Health costs are breaking the budget of too many families. Insurance costs must be made more affordable for everyone. The broken and overly complicated Medicare drug plan must be allowed to negotiate with drug companies for lower prices. Similarly, we need to come together to devise solutions to strengthen the solvency of a bedrock of our society, the Social Security program. We must create a national environment which encourages the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit that has led to our economic success in Silicon Valley. College degrees have become a necessity in our high tech economy, and federal student loan programs must be adequately funded to ensure that ! all students have the chance to succeed. To remain competitive in the 21st century, [our educational system must be reformed](#)

and strengthened as we work to ensure the continued vitality of our economy and bring about solutions to ensure

[energy independence](#)

. The challenges we face are daunting, but American ingenuity and determination has overcome greater problems in the past. The elections and campaigning are over. Now our country must come together to find answers to these pressing issues. Our people are our greatest strength, and I encourage you to comment on this email or offer your suggestions and ideas by clicking [here](#)

. I look forward to the opportunity to continue serving our community as your Representative in Congress.