



The 47th Flyer

News for California's 47th Congressional District
from Congressman Alan Lowenthal



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May 18, 2015

Vietnam, 40 Years Later

April 30 marked 40 years since the Fall of Saigon. Recently, I traveled to Vietnam and Hong Kong as part of a five-day Congressional delegation to meet with human rights and pro-democracy activists, as well as business, trade, and government leaders.

While in Saigon I visited the Bien Hoa National Military Cemetery, to honor those buried there and view the condition of the cemetery, which I found in need of a great deal of work.

Built by the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) more than five decades ago, the Bien Hoa National Military Cemetery outside of Saigon is the final resting place of over 16,000 South Vietnamese soldiers. The care and upkeep at Bien Hoa has been neglected and now the cemetery lies in disrepair.



Last year, I wrote to Secretary of State John Kerry and Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel to urge that the State and Defense departments push the issue of the cemetery's restoration and upkeep with Vietnamese government leaders during bilateral talks.

It was also a tremendous honor to meet with the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do, Supreme Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, a currently outlawed religious body in Vietnam. The Patriarch has been jailed numerous times by the government for leading peaceful non-violent advocacy efforts calling for religious freedom, democracy, and human rights.

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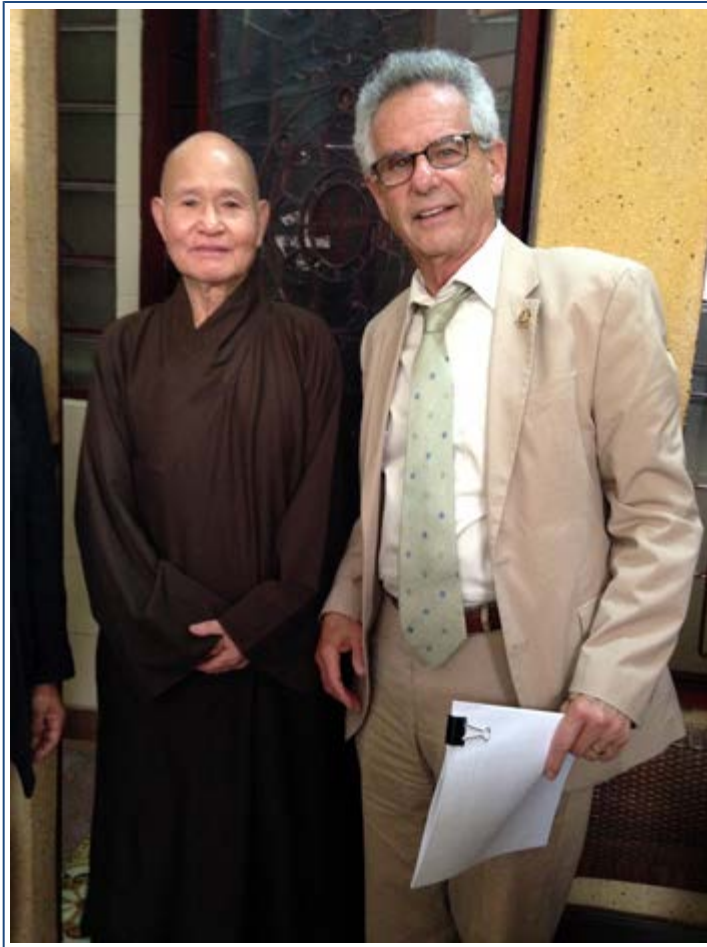
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Do you support the President's Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal?

Yes, I believe the deal will be beneficial for the United States and raise labor, human rights, and environmental standards around the world.

Yes, I believe the deal will help the middle class and working families by breaking down trade barriers overseas and increasing jobs in the United States.
No, I think the deal will cost us American jobs and only result in more



Most Venerable Thich Quang Do is currently under house arrest at the Thanh Minh Monastery in Saigon. During the meeting, the Patriarch talked with me about the oppression the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam has faced under the current Vietnamese regime and the Patriarch's vocal support of religious freedom, human rights, and democracy for Vietnam.

I also had the pleasure of meet with the courageous activist Nguyen Tien Trung, who before being released in April of 2014, had been unfairly jailed on charges of disseminating "propaganda against the socialist state" and "organizing to attempt to overthrow the people's government."



In 2013, I adopted Trung as a prisoner of conscience through the Tom Lantos

offshoring as
businesses use
cheap labor in poor
countries.
I don't know enough
about the trade
deal at this time.

[If you have a problem, click here
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Human Rights Commission's "Defending Freedoms Project." Trung spoke with me about bringing attention to freedom of the press, human rights, and democracy in Vietnam.

After Saigon, the delegation traveled to Hanoi to meet with government officials and human rights activists to discuss human rights and trade issues. The delegation concluded with a trip to Hong Kong where I met with public and private sector leaders, including Hong Kong's Chief Executive C.Y. Leung, lawmakers from both sides of the reform debate, as well as pro-democracy activists. I remain concerned that China will limit universal suffrage and greater democracy in Hong Kong.

On The Hill

Transportation Funding In Danger

From city halls to the halls of Congress, there is near universal agreement that our national infrastructure—once the envy of the world—is eroding around us.

Sadly, it is eroding from simple political inattention and inaction.

The end of this month is the last chance for Congress to act to enact a short-term reauthorization of the funding component of the Highway Trust Fund. If that is not accomplished, more than 6,000 projects tied to more than 660,000 jobs throughout the nation will be threatened.

We must stop short-term fixes for long-term infrastructure needs.

We must develop a sustainable funding solution to repair, restore, and upgrade our infrastructure.

Do we solve this -- here and now -- with a responsible long-term funding solution, or do we wait for more bridges to collapse, trains to derail, or roads to fall into gridlock?

Congress must come together to solve this problem.

The safety of every American, the efficiency of every business, and the momentum of the national economy are at risk.

Activist Attacked In Vietnam

I, like those in the Vietnamese American community, have been outraged by the images of a bloodied and beaten Nguyen Chi Tuyen, whose only crime was standing up for human rights and the freedom of expression.

Mr. Tuyen, a long time environmental and human rights activist in Vietnam was attacked last weekend by what some witnesses have described as plainclothes security officers.

I met personally with the Vietnamese Ambassador to the United States Pham Quang Vinh earlier this week to express my overwhelming concern about the attack and the continuing string of human rights violations in Vietnam against activists. I presented the Ambassador with a letter addressed to the President and Prime Minister of Vietnam calling for an official government denouncement and investigation of this horrible and senseless act of violence against Mr. Tuyen.

I also reiterated in the letter, and directly to the Ambassador, my conviction that if the Vietnamese government wishes greater economic ties with the United States, it must take concrete action to improve its abysmal human rights record.

A copy of the letter was also being sent to the U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Ted

Osius and the State Department has informed Congressman Lowenthal that Ambassador Osius plans on visiting the activist Nguyen Chi Tuyen to learn more about the incident.

Click here to read the [full text of the letter](#).

A New, But Not Good, Environmental Record

A new global record was set this month. And this was not a good record.

The atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide surpassed 400 parts per million for the first time in at least 800,000 years.

This is a serious and potent reminder that we have not yet acted on climate change.

The last time atmospheric CO₂ concentrations were this high, the world was a much hotter place:

There were forests in the arctic,

And sea levels were meters higher than today.

Our planet is telling us that climate change is happening. Congress owes it to our constituents, and the rest of the world, to put aside partisan differences and begin to work on solutions to this global problem.

Vietnam Human Rights Act

I recently joined as an original cosponsor of [H.R. 2140, the Vietnam Human Rights Act](#), to promote freedom, human rights, and the rule of law as the relationship between the United States and Vietnam continued to evolve.

if they seek a closer relationship with the United States, the government of Vietnam must take additional, significant, and sustained steps to advance human rights protections, specifically internationally-recognized norms of civil and political rights, through legal reforms, the release of prisoners of conscience, the establishment of independent labor unions, and guarantees to the freedom of religion and expression, including Internet freedom.

In The 47th District

Congressional Art Competition Winners

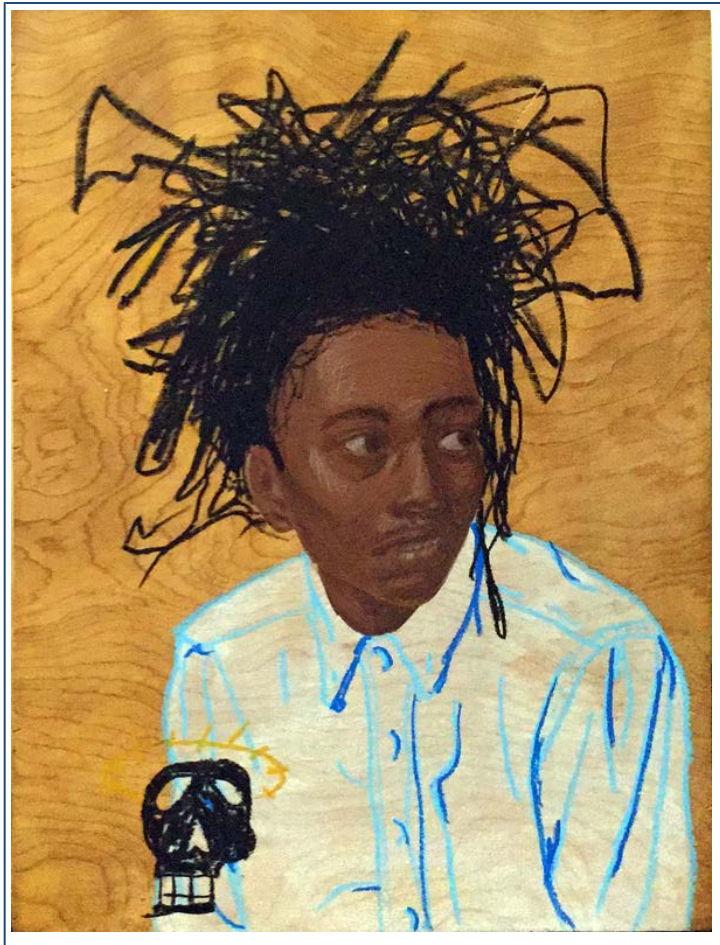
Earlier this month, I was pleased to host the 47th District's 2015 Congressional Art Competition. More than 120 students, family and teachers attended the annual arts event at the Long Beach Museum of Art.

Each spring, the [Congressional Institute](#) sponsors a nationwide high school visual art competition to recognize and encourage artistic talent in the nation and in each congressional district. Since the Artistic Discovery competition began in 1982, more than 650,000 high school students have participated.

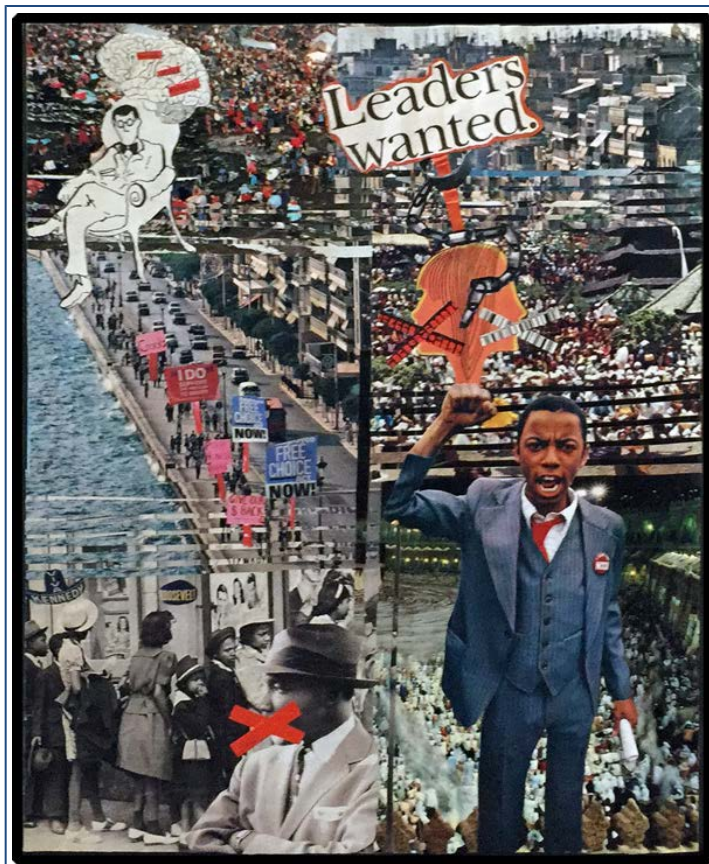
Students submit entries to their representative's office, and panels of district artists select the winning entries. Winners are recognized both in their district and at an annual awards ceremony in Washington, DC. The first place winner is displayed for one year at the U.S. Capitol. The second place winner will hang in my Washington, D.C. office for a year, and the third place winner will hang in my District office.

This year's theme for the 47th Congressional District arts competition was "Through the Eyes of an Artist" and the talented winners and their artwork are:

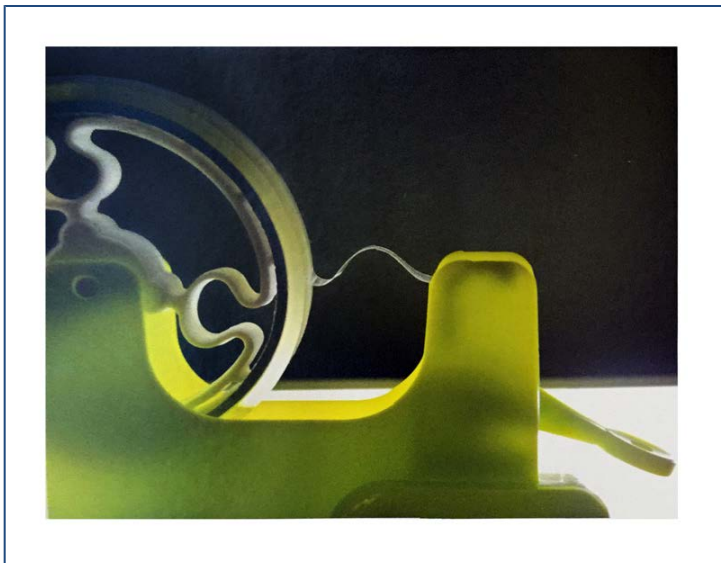
1st – Quincy Irving (Wilson High School)



2nd – Camille Romero (Millikan High School)



3rd – Michael Kim (Los Alamitos High School)



Congratulations to the winners and to the 60 talented student artists who participated in the competition!

Service Academy Night Coming In June

I would like to invite students, parents, counselors, and school officials from the 47th District to attend a Service Academy Night on Friday, June 5, 2015 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

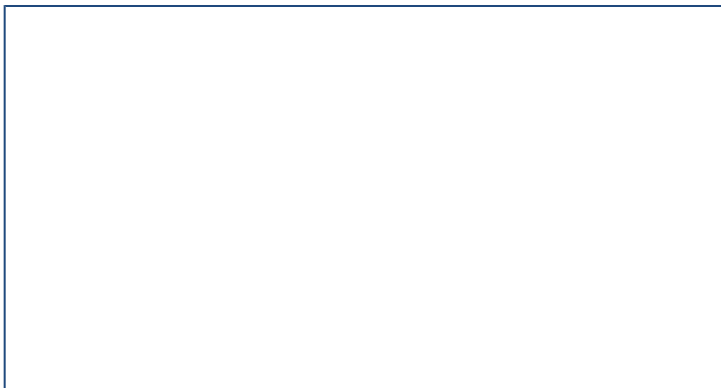
The June 5 event will be held in the Small Theater at Cypress High School, located at 9801 Valley View Street in Cypress. Representatives from the Military, Naval, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Merchant Marine service academies.

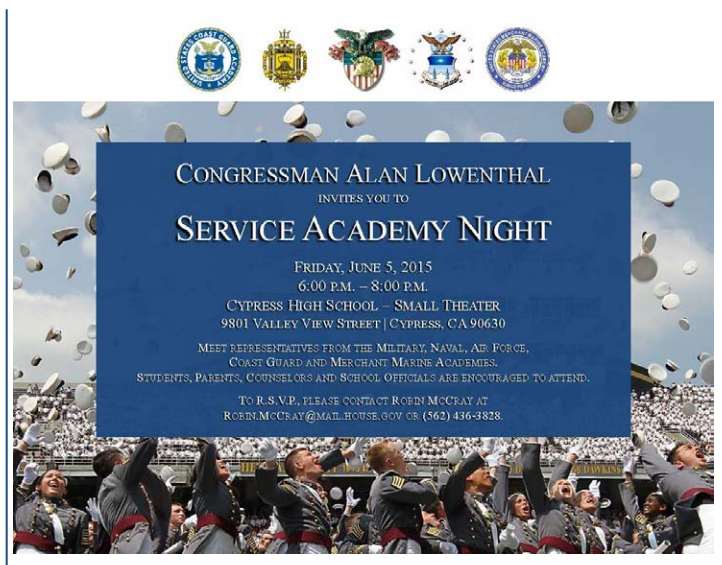
Each academy offers young men and women a free college education at a highly-ranked, nationally-recognized academic program while preparing them for an officer's commission in the armed forces. The academies are: the Air Force Academy, the Merchant Marine Academy, the Military Academy at West Point, and the Naval Academy. The fifth service academy, the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, does not require a Congressional nomination.

To learn more, visit my webpage about Service Academies and the nomination process by [clicking here](#).

To R.S.V.P., please contact Robin McCray at robin.mccray@mail.house.gov or (562) 436-3828.

[Click here](#) or the image below for a full size version of the event flyer.





Congress U

Reconciling Bills and Conference Committees

We all know that for bills to become law, they must be approved by both the House and the Senate before being sent to the President for approval.

In the case of some bills, the process begins in either the House or the Senate, and once passed in one chamber, moves on to the other. In other cases, separate versions of an individual bill are introduced in both the House and Senate at the same time.

In almost all cases where a version of the same bill is passed in both the House and the Senate, the language between the two versions will not match 100 percent. This could be due to several reasons in each chamber, including changes made at the committee level or amendments added on the floor.

The law says that the House and Senate must approve the same version of a bill before sending it to the President.

So, the two different versions of the same bill that have passed each chamber must be reconciled. This can happen in two ways.

One, called "Amendments between the Houses," involves passing the bill back and forth between the two chambers, with each voting on slightly modified versions, until both have agreed to identical language. However, this can take a great deal of time.

The other method is by using what is called a "Conference Committee."

To deal with the different versions of a bill, both the House and Senate appoint Members to sit on a temporary Conference Committee. These Members work to reconcile the two versions into a single bill that they feel confident both chambers will approve.

This consolidated version of the bill, while certainly not a report, is called by tradition a "Conference Report." This version of the bill goes back to both chambers to be voted on. If both chambers approve this version, it goes on to the President.

Last Week's Poll

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is visiting the United States this week. Which of the following events is the most important event in relations, negative or positive, between the United States and Japan over the past 75 years?

11.5% - 2011 earthquake & tsunami in Japan

35.2% - World War II

46.1% - US-Japan military alliance since end of World War II

3.6% - US-Japan "trade wars" of the 1980s and early 1990s

2.5% - Other

Thank you,



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