



The 47th Flyer

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



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The Voice of the Voters Threatened

In 2010, Californians passed Proposition 20, which sought to prevent gerrymandering by state politicians and task an independent commission to draw our state's Congressional district boundaries.

These lines are redrawn every ten years, after the state receives the results of the U.S. Census.

By nearly all accounts, Prop 20 was successful in eliminating Congressional districts drawn by partisan motivations.

Today, the will of the people as expressed in Prop 20, and many other California voter-passed propositions impacting how, when, and where federal elections are held in the state, is threatened by a case before the U.S. Supreme Court.

The *Arizona State Legislature v. Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission* case involves a proposition passed by Arizona voters in 2000 which, much like California, set up an independent redistricting commission to take redrawing of congressional districts out of the hands of the Arizona legislature.

In 2012, after the independent commission carried out its duty for the second time following the 2010 Census, the Arizona state legislature sued, arguing that the U.S. Constitution's Elections Clause explicitly and exclusively provides the power of setting election laws to the individual state legislatures, unless Congress weighs in.

The threat to California is that if the Supreme Court finds that the Constitution's Elections Clause prohibits ballot propositions from impacting redistricting, all voter-initiated election reform laws may be invalidated. That would mean, among other things, the end of our own independent redistricting commission and putting the map-drawing back into the hands of self-interested politicians.

This is why I filed an [amicus brief with the Supreme Court](#) on January 23 supporting the right of citizens to determine how federal elections are conducted in their individual states and defending the Constitutional authority of the federal government to make or alter regulations related to the "time, place, and manner" of congressional elections.

An amicus brief, or friend of the court brief, is filed by someone not a party to a case but who offers relevant information about the case to assist a court in making its decision.

I led the effort with my colleagues—including invaluable help from across the aisle from Rep. Dana Rohrabacher—to bring this amicus brief to the Supreme Court

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Should only state legislatures be allowed to draw Congressional district lines?

Yes - The Constitution confers the power exclusively to the legislatures, if

Congress does not weigh in

Maybe - But there should be independent oversight

No - Politicians should not draw their own lines

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because the implications of the Court's decision will affect not only the citizens of California, but every person in this nation.

The brief was signed by 10 other Congressional Democrats and nine Congressional Republicans representing districts across the nation from California to New York and from Washington to Florida.

The Supreme Court is set to hear arguments on the case early in March, with a decision coming a few months later this year.

On The Hill

Fighting Discrimination and Protecting Human Rights

On Tuesday, Rep. Chris Smith of New Jersey chaired a House hearing on human rights in Nigeria where he said that he "does not construe homosexual rights as human rights." I cannot disagree more strongly.

LGBT rights are human rights.

LGBT Nigerians face harsh prison terms and, in 12 of 36 Nigeria states, death for participating in a same-sex marriage or relationship. More than 80 nations around the world also have laws that criminalize homosexuality, prohibit public support for the LGBT community, or promote homophobia. In seven countries, including Nigeria, homosexuality is punishable by death.

So, in partnership with Massachusetts Senator Edward Markey, who introduced the International Human Rights Defense Act in the Senate this morning, I have introduced the bill in the House.

This Act calls on President Obama to appoint a Special Envoy that would serve within the US State Department as a principal advisor to the Secretary of State on LGBT issues and help coordinate policy responses to these discriminatory laws around the globe.

We must do what we can as a nation to enforce the precept that all human beings, regardless of where they live, are entitled to a basic set of human rights which include the right to love who they choose without fear of punishment or death.



You can view the whole press release (with a linked explanation sheet) on my website by [clicking here](#).

Defending the Environment

I was honored this week to be named as the ranking minority Member of the House Natural Resources Committee's Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources (EMR), which oversees American energy production and mining on Indian and federal lands – both onshore and offshore.

As the lead Democrat on the EMR subcommittee, I will help focus our efforts on renewable energy development, climate change, and the safe and responsible development of resources on our public lands.

It has never been more critical to ensure that if public lands are developed, they are developed in a safe and equitable manner; that U.S. taxpayers are properly compensated for their use; and, that steps are taken to ensure they can be enjoyed by Americans today and in the future.

In addition to sitting on the full House Natural Resources Committee (HNRC) and the EMR subcommittee, I also sit on two other HNRC subcommittees: The Subcommittee on Water, Power, and Oceans, which is responsible for matters concerning America's water resources, generation of electric power from federal water projects, interstate water issues, and ocean-related issues; and, The Subcommittee on Federal Lands which is responsible for all matters related to the National Park System, National Forests, the National Wilderness System, public lands, and national monuments.

In The 47th District

Creating Jobs While Going Green

The Port of Long Beach is one of the most powerful economic engines in our region. Together with the neighboring Port of Los Angeles, the two ports are the busiest container port complex in the Western Hemisphere, supporting tens of thousands of local jobs, hundreds of thousands of regional jobs, and millions of jobs nationally.

Keeping the ports competitive involves a great deal of investment in the port infrastructure.

Recently, I had the opportunity to tour the Port of Long Beach's massive Middle Harbor project that will combine two old container terminals into one of the world's most technologically advanced and greenest facilities.



When fully complete in 2020, the nine-year, \$1.31 billion project will double the cargo-handling capacity of the two previous terminals and support more than 10,000 new jobs — all while dramatically reducing the amount of emissions generated by terminal activities.

The northern half of the project is getting very near completion and is set to open early this year. I was able to see the new facility, tour the massive ship-unloading gantry cranes up close, and view some of the new green technologies that the terminal will use.



Congress U

Introducing A Bill

Once a legislator finishes crafting a piece of legislation, the next step on its long path to possibly becoming a law is for it to be introduced.

A House Member can introduce legislation at any time while the House is in session.

The first step is what is called "dropping" the legislation, which is accomplished by literally dropping a printed signed copy of the legislation in the "hopper" at the side of the House Clerk's desk on the Rostrum at the front of the House floor.



Once the Clerk receives the bill, it is then chronologically assigned a legislative number, such as H.R. 590, which is the number of the bill I introduced this week.

Once it has a number, the bill is entered in the House Journal and printed in the Congressional Record.

The bill can now move forward to the committee process, which we will discuss next week in Congress U. So stay tuned!

Last Week's Poll

Should students who work hard and maintain at least a 2.5 GPA be able to attend community college tuition-free for two years?

50.8% Yes - An educated population is better for everyone

12.7% Maybe - But those that can afford it should still pay

36.5% No - The Constitution says nothing about free government provided education

Thank you,



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

Washington, D.C. Office
515 Cannon
House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: 202-225-7924
Hours: M-F 9-5:30pm

Long Beach District Office
100 W. Broadway
Long Beach, CA 90802
West Tower Suite 600
Phone: (562) 436-3828
Fax: (562) 437-6434

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