

— CONGRESSMAN —  
**CHRIS VAN HOLLEN**  
— Maryland's 8<sup>th</sup> District —

Dear Progressive Neighbors,

I have very much enjoyed your input on critical issues facing our community and country. I believe we share a common perspective on these issues.

Over the last two years the new Congress has made progress on some important matters, including landmark lobbying and ethics reform, long overdue increases in automobile fuel efficiency standards, strengthening the Head Start early education program, increasing college Pell grants and cutting federal student loan rates, expanding tax incentives for clean energy technologies by cutting subsidies for the oil and gas industry, raising the minimum wage, and historic increase in funds to fight global diseases like HIV/AIDS.

Despite these advances, I am as frustrated as anyone with the fact that we have not been able to make more progress on many other issues. However, so long as Bush was able to wield a veto pen and Senate Republicans were able to block key initiatives, the ability to pass certain measures was obviously limited. With that in mind, I want to address some of the issues we have discussed in the past and some recent developments.

**The War in Iraq:** I was an early and consistently outspoken opponent of the Iraq war. Like Barack Obama, I have voted against giving the President a blank check. The one time our bill to require that funds be used only for the safe redeployment of combat forces reached the President's desk, Bush vetoed it (the other measures that passed the House were blocked in the Senate). If re-elected, I look forward to working with Barack Obama to bring our troops home.

**Health Care:** I will continue to fight for universal health care and support a single payer approach. There are many models to draw upon. There is no way we could have enacted comprehensive health care reform with Bush in the White House. After all, he twice vetoed our plan to expand the children's health care program (CHIPs) to ten million kids. We are working to expand our majorities in the House and Senate to gain greater support for an overhaul of our health care system.

**FISA:** I opposed and voted against the FISA bill that passed the Congress. I thought it let the Bush Administration and the big telecom companies off the hook and did not provide adequate protection of civil liberties.

**The Economic Rescue/Bailout Bill:** I strongly opposed Bush's request for a 700 billion dollar blank check. At the same time, I did not think doing nothing was a viable or responsible option. Barack Obama and the Democrats set forth four principles we wanted incorporated in the bill: limits on CEO compensation (especially golden parachutes); protections for taxpayers (an equity stake) so taxpayers could benefit from eventual recovery; greater homeowner protections against mortgage defaults and foreclosures; and greater transparency and accountability. These provisions were incorporated into the bill passed by the Congress. We also wanted to provide more options than just the TARP approach and therefore gave authority to provide direct capital injections into banks in

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exchange for equity (which they originally resisted, but are doing now) and made available funds to be used to help struggling homeowners renegotiate mortgages and avoid foreclosure (which the FDIC is now beginning to do). There were many other provisions I would have liked in the bill such as bankruptcy protection for first mortgages, extension of unemployment compensation (which the House passed separately) and an economic recovery plan (the House did pass a 60 billion dollar plan that Bush said he would veto). It was an imperfect bill, but the costs of inaction would have been huge in terms of pushing us even deeper into recession and millions of Americans losing their jobs (already 759,000 jobs have been lost between January and September). In the Maryland delegation, only conservative Republican Roscoe Bartlett opposed the final plan.

Energy Policy: I have been at the forefront of the effort to move our nation toward clean energy. There have been outrageous distortions of my record and positions on energy policy by some of my opponents in this election. The misrepresentations about my position on energy and environmental issues are particularly galling because not only do I have a clean, green voting record on these issues, but I have been a leader in this arena. I am proud to have been named an “Environmental Champion” by the League of Conservation Voters, and am pleased to have been endorsed once again by both the League and the Sierra Club.

Let me be clear about particular false statements that have been made. In each case, an opponent has argued that my support for legislation that would have accomplished less than 100% of a goal means that I am opposed to the goal. That’s absurd on its face. I will always support legislation to accomplish 100% of a goal. But I also understand that when it is politically impossible to achieve 100% of a goal it is usually important to make progress toward a goal rather than accomplish nothing.

An opponent says that I do not support Al Gore’s call to generate 100% of our electricity from renewable energy within ten years. *Totally false.*

I was one of the original co-sponsors, along with Representatives Mark and Tom Udall, of an amendment to require a national Renewable Electricity Standard. Our amendment mandated that 15% of electricity be generated from clean sources by 2020 and was supported by every environmental group. We passed it in the House on a close vote, but it failed in the Senate due primarily to Republican opposition and a veto threat from George Bush. To argue that because we offered an amendment for 15% (rather than 100%), we were against a 100% standard is ridiculous to anyone who follows this debate. I support 100% in ten years, but we need to start somewhere and get something in law.

An opponent says I am against a government program for gas-free electric cars. *Totally false.*

I support a mandate to spur the production of more electric cars. I also strongly supported, along with Representative Ed Markey, the long overdue legislation to increase fuel efficiency standards by 40%. Passage of that legislation was a significant accomplishment of the new Congress. Do I want even more stringent standards? Yes, and I have proposed and supported stricter standards. But it is bizarre to be criticized for supporting legislation endorsed by every environmental group that significantly boosted fuel economy standards for the first time in years because it didn’t contain a mandate (which I support) for electric cars.

An opponent says that I oppose a direct federal investment to create green jobs. *Totally false.*

Together with Representative Inslee, I am a sponsor of legislation to launch an “Apollo” Green Energy initiative that calls for large new federal investments in green energy research, development, and jobs. There is no doubt that government investment and policies must help spur the green economy of the future. I also support a “cap and trade” system to dramatically reduce carbon emissions and help stop

global warming. There is absolutely no contradiction between support for an ambitious cap and trade system and large public investments in the green economy.

An opponent suggests that I prefer subsidies for corn based ethanol over non-food based forms of biofuels. *That is not true.* While I have voted for bills that included ethanol subsidies as a means of reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, I have successfully fought to redirect sizeable amounts of those subsidies into non-food based bio-fuels, like cellulose. I also successfully worked with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) to require environmental safeguards including “cradle to grave” assessments of the impact of corn based ethanol and giving the EPA (rather than the USDA) oversight in this area.

With respect to off-shore drilling, I opposed lifting the embargo. The lifting of the embargo allows parties to apply for leases to drill anywhere beyond three-miles. Recognizing that a majority of the Congress would vote for the total repeal of the moratorium, we put together a compromise proposal supported by environmental groups like the League of Conservation Voters. That bill passed the House (it was opposed by Republicans), but stopped in the Senate by Senate Republicans.

I am very proud of my record on clean energy and environmental issues. I am an original sponsor of virtually every major piece of legislation to address global climate change. I am also very pleased that my bill, the “Chesapeake’s Healthy and Environmentally Sound Stewardship of Energy and Agriculture Act (CHESSEA)” became the rallying point for our success this year in obtaining a record multi-year federal investment in Chesapeake Bay clean up efforts. I was grateful that the *Washington Post* and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation acknowledged my leadership in securing that victory for the Bay.

It has been a privilege to represent you and our community in Congress. I ask for your continued support. Please share this letter with other members of Progressive Neighbors.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen