



Friday 18 September 2020

Weekly Report From Your Congresswoman

Dear friends,

As I prepared to send this newsletter to you, our nation was hit with devastating news: Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg lost her battle with cancer today and passed away at the age of 87. The passing of Justice Ginsburg is a staggering loss for America. She dedicated her legal career to women’s rights, successfully arguing before the Supreme Court that discrimination against women was unconstitutional. Although she wrote many landmark opinions for the court, she will be remembered for her powerful dissents which stood up for the rights of the marginalized when her colleagues failed to do so. Our country has lost a brilliant jurist and a powerful voice for equal rights under the law.

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I returned to Washington, D.C. this week to vote on a number of important bills taken up by the full House. Speaker Pelosi announced that the House will remain in session until a bipartisan agreement is reached on a critically needed relief package to help our country respond to the coronavirus. The U.S. is on the verge of eclipsing 200,000 total deaths due to COVID-19, with nearly 40,000 new cases, on average, reported each day across the country over the last week, and with high unemployment numbers continuing to persist. State and local governments are dealing with unprecedented budget shortfalls and are struggling to deliver essential services to their communities while school districts, students, parents, and teachers are facing unprecedented challenges to ensure students don’t fall behind in their education. Congress cannot leave behind the tens of millions of Americans who need our help now.

Every day is filled with so many challenges. I view them as opportunities to be seized. When I witness firsthand the fortitude and courage of my constituents who have lost their homes, and entire communities coming together to help each other, this is my source of inspiration to carry on with the work to uplift people and make their lives whole again.

Important Voting Information for Wildfire Victims

Governor Newsom signed an executive order in May requiring mail-in ballots to be mailed to all registered voters beginning on October 5th to make voting safer during the pandemic. Unlike regular mail, however, mail-in ballots cannot be automatically forwarded by the U.S. Postal Service. If you are unable to return to your home because of evacuation orders due to the fires, or because your home was completely destroyed or damaged by the fires, there are several ways for you to cast your ballot in the upcoming November elections.

San Mateo County Residents

Visit the [official website](#) of San Mateo County's Chief Elections Office to make arrangements to have your ballot mailed to you at a temporary address. You can also find a list of voting centers in San Mateo County to cast your ballot in person by clicking [HERE](#).

Santa Cruz County Residents

Visit the [official website](#) of the Santa Cruz County Elections Department at votescount.us. You can:

- Make arrangements to have your ballot mailed to a temporary address, post office box, or your place of employment.
- Register to receive your ballot by E-mail.
- Find more information about voting in person or other resources, including Santa Cruz County's new mobile voting trailer which will be visiting communities impacted by wildfires in the coming weeks.

Santa Cruz County Recovery Resource Center Reduced Hours

Over the past several weeks constituents in our congressional district who have been affected by the fires have been able to visit the Santa Cruz Recovery Resource Center, located at the Kaiser Permanente Arena in downtown Santa Cruz, for assistance from federal, state, and local agencies. All my staff and the staff from Rep. Jackie Speier's office have been working at the Recovery Resource Center and have helped hundreds of residents in person. I am lastingly grateful for Rep. Speier's help which has doubled our team to assist everyone who seeks it.

Beginning Sunday, September 20th the Recovery Resource Center will operate under reduced

hours. The Center will be open Monday through Saturday, from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. each day. It will be closed on Sunday, September 20th and Sunday, September 27th. These are the hours the Center will be open. However, the Center will close permanently after September 30th.

Constituents can access the Virtual Recovery Resource Center 24 hours a day, seven days a week [HERE](#). My office continues to staff the Recovery Resource Center to assist fire victims and I want to make sure residents of our congressional district know about the new hours as well as the way to access information online.

Rebuilding Information for Wildfire Victims in Santa Cruz County

I continue to work with federal, state, and county governments to streamline and expedite the rebuilding process. Constituents in Santa Cruz County should know that there will be an expedited permitting process for those seeking to rebuild their homes or to live in a temporary structure on their property. More information from the Santa Cruz County Planning Department can be found [HERE](#).

Update on My Legislation to Address Wildfire Smoke



The Bay Area and many areas across the western U.S. have been blanketed with toxic smoke over the last several weeks from this historic wildfire season. Wildfire smoke can have lasting health effects and worsen chronic heart and lung diseases. This week I called on Congress to immediately pass my legislation, the Smoke Planning and Research Act, to help local governments address this public health crisis.

Good news! The full House will vote on my legislation next week. To learn more about the Smoke Planning and Research Act, click [HERE](#).

Letters I Wrote this Week

Letter Calling for Investigation of ICE Whistleblower Complaint

This week a whistleblower complaint was filed with the Department of Homeland Security Inspector General by a group of advocacy organizations alleging inhumane and negligent treatment of individuals in the custody of ICE at the Irwin County Detention Center in Georgia.

The complaint alleges that ICE denied basic medical care to detainees, that they performed a high rate of hysterectomies on women in custody, and that they failed to provide safe, healthy, and sanitary conditions to detainees.

These revelations are absolutely appalling. The Trump Administration's inhumane treatment of migrants is well known, but the allegations detailed in this complaint, if true, shock the human conscience and bring to mind the horrifying abuses of some of history's most brutal dictators. This week I called on the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security to immediately investigate this complaint and to brief Congress on their findings.

To read a copy of my letter, click [HERE](#).

Letter Calling on Vaccine Developers to Uphold Safety and Transparency

Last week, nine pharmaceutical companies currently developing COVID-19 vaccines signed a pledge committing "to developing and testing potential vaccines for COVID-19 in accordance with high ethical standards and sound scientific principles." The pledge was developed by these companies following a series of highly controversial statements by President Trump earlier this month that a COVID-19 vaccine would be available to the public in October, and that career scientists at the FDA were intentionally delaying the review and approval of a vaccine to hurt his reelection.

The American people must have the highest degree of trust and confidence in the safety and efficacy of any vaccine approved by the FDA. This week I wrote to the nine pharmaceutical companies currently developing COVID-19 vaccines expressing concerns that increasing political pressure threatens to compromise their pledges to transparency and safety. The letter requests information from the nine companies about their research and development efforts and how they intend to ensure that only a safe and effective product will be made available to the public.

To read a copy of the letters, click [HERE](#).

Letter Calling on Social Media Companies to Remove Wildfire Disinformation

Last week, the press reported a proliferation of social media posts falsely alleging that Antifa started recent wildfires that are devastating much of the western U.S. These posts have caused a deluge of 9-1-1 calls, leading to several local law enforcement agencies and the FBI to publicly plea for people to stop spreading misinformation and to stop calling 9-1-1 with rumors. The incident is even more problematic because Russia is a key spreader of the lie that Antifa is linked to wildfires.

This week, I wrote to the CEOs of Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook to express my serious concerns about the proliferation of wildfire disinformation on their platforms and the harmful impact of this content on the ability of first responders to combat wildfires. I called on Twitter

and YouTube to remove misinformation and disinformation that is thwarting the efforts of public safety officials to respond to the wildfires, and called on Facebook to remove harmful information more quickly.

To read a copy of my letter to Twitter, click [HERE](#).

To read a copy of my letter to YouTube, click [HERE](#).

To read a copy of my letter to Facebook, click [HERE](#).

Letter Demanding Answers from HHS about Family Separation Policy

Recent press reports indicate that Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar and other Cabinet officials were invited to a White House meeting in early May 2018 to discuss the Administration's plans to separate migrant families at the U.S. border. According to the report, "[n]o one in the meeting made the case that separating families would be inhumane or immoral."

These reports, if true, directly contradict testimony Secretary Azar gave under oath before my Health Subcommittee last year that he was not aware of the potential for family separations until "the days and weeks following the announcement on May 7th [2018]" of the implementation of the Zero Tolerance policy, which led to family separations. Secretary Azar also testified that "[i]f I had been alerted to it, I could have raised objections and concerns, absolutely."

This week I wrote to Secretary Azar demanding answers about his role in the Administration's development of its family separation policy. The Office of Refugee Resettlement within HHS played an integral role in implementing this inhumane policy, and as Secretary, Mr. Azar must be accountable to Congress about his role.

To read a copy of the letter, click [HERE](#).

Votes in the House This Week

The Equity and Inclusion Enforcement Act

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits schools from using federal funding for programs or activities that discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin. From 1964 until 2001, students and parents had the right to take schools to court over any policies that had a disparate impact on their access to a quality education. However, in 2001, the U.S. Supreme Court stripped discrimination victims of their right to bring disparate impact claims against schools receiving federal funding.

This week I voted for the *Equity and Inclusion Enforcement Act*, the first bill voted on by the House to address segregation in schools in nearly three decades. The legislation restores the private right of action for students and parents to bring disparate impact claims under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and requires every school district and institution of higher education receiving federal funds to have a dedicated employee to investigate any complaints of discrimination.

To learn more about the *Equity and Inclusion Enforcement Act*, click [HERE](#).

Resolution Condemning Anti-Asian Discrimination

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Asian Americans have repeatedly experienced harassment, violence, and discrimination by those who wrongly believe they are to blame for the virus. The Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council has reported over 2,500 incidents of coronavirus-related discrimination across the U.S. since March. Meanwhile, the President regularly refers to the coronavirus as the “Wuhan Virus” or the “Chinese Virus.”

Over two million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are currently working on the frontlines of the COVID–19 pandemic in health care, law enforcement, first responders, transportation, supermarkets, and other service industries. They should not be scapegoated as the source of this virus. This week I voted for a bipartisan resolution condemning all forms of anti-Asian sentiment related to COVID-19. The resolution calls on all public officials to condemn and denounce any and all anti-Asian sentiment in any form and calls on federal law enforcement officials, with state and local officials, to immediately investigate all credible reports of hate crimes and incidents and bring the perpetrators of any crimes to justice.

To read a copy of the resolution, click [HERE](#).

The *Pregnant Workers Fairness Act*

According to the Center for American Progress, 75 percent of working women will become pregnant while employed at some time in their life. As women increasingly become the primary breadwinners in American households, a growing number of pregnant workers are working later into their pregnancies to maintain their family’s financial security. Yet, too many pregnant workers are being forced off the job or denied reasonable accommodations like more bathroom breaks or the use of a stool to sit on during the workday to allow them to maintain a healthy pregnancy while they continue to work.

This week I voted for the *Pregnant Workers Fairness Act* to strengthen workplace protections for pregnant workers and ensure that they are not discriminated against in the hiring process or during their employment. This bill requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations for pregnancy, childbirth and any related medical conditions that may arise.

Bringing life into this world is not easy. Women deserve to know that with all the issues they may face during their pregnancy, job security will not be one of them.

To learn more about the *Pregnant Workers Fairness Act*, click [HERE](#).

In the Words of My Constituents

Every week hundreds of my constituents call and write to me to express their concerns, share their passions, and ask questions regarding legislation and policies. Over 109,920 constituents have contacted me in 2020. I actually read every communication and every constituent receives a personal response to their specific questions and comments from me. This week, 1,335 constituents contacted my office about issues including:

- 116 messages in support of the Marijuana Opportunity, Reinvestment, and Expungement Act, which decriminalizes marijuana at the federal level.
- 92 messages opposed to reported experiments on cats by the VA.
- 83 messages concerned about reports of hysterectomies at migrant detention centers.

Anna's Work in the News

My work is often featured in local and national press outlets and I share them with you here for your perusal.

David Lim, Politico (9/18/20) - "[White House blocked FDA commissioner from testifying to House panel](#)"

Katie King, *San Jose Spotlight* (9/18/20) - "['You are missing in action' — South Bay lawmaker takes FCC to task](#)"

Julia Ainsley, *NBC News* (9/17/20) – "[Democrats demand answers from Azar after NBC News report on family separation vote](#)"

Alexandra Levine, Politico (9/16/20) – "[Where Kim Kardashian meets tech policy](#)"

Kate Bradshaw, *Palo Alto Weekly* (9/15/20) – "[How to help the homeless and housing-insecure amidst a pandemic? Local leaders compare tactics](#)"

Anna's Recommended Reading and Watching

I frequently read articles or see videos that I think my constituents would benefit from. Check out these articles when you have some time.

USA Today Editorial Board (9/15/20) – “On COVID, politics infects science at the CDC and the FDA”

Dan Coats, *The New York Times* (9/17/20) – “What’s at Stake in This Election? The American Democratic Experiment”

The Washington Post Editorial Board (9/16/20) – “Young Americans are pitching in as poll workers. They should keep it up.”

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Let’s continue to keep our neighbors in our prayers, especially those who have lost their homes; our fire fighters and first responders, and in gratitude for the thousands of acts of kindness by so many.

Let’s also continue our individual responsibilities for the common good by washing our hands frequently; physically distancing (at least six feet); wearing a mask every time we go out; and avoiding large groups of people.

Stay healthy and stay strong.

And thank you for entrusting me to represent you.

Always my best,



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

