

My Legislative Agenda Assignment

The 3rd. District of Massachusetts is a diverse and thriving community, with Boston only a short commute away, yet just far enough off of the beaten path to be able to enjoy many of the traditional small-town New England charms. In fact, that's a pretty accurate representation of the district as a whole: traditional yet progressive. The region as a whole is solidly Democratic, and has been for over fifty years. The large Roman Catholic population provides stability to that Democratic base, while also providing a voice on some of the social issues of the Democratic Party. This base is what has kept the region solidly Democratic, without ever progressing to out and out liberal.

My own politics lean towards the liberal, with special interests in health care, transportation, social issues, and the mortgage industry. I feel strongly about many issues, as any responsible legislator should, but I am also an open-minded negotiator. I don't let religious convictions affect my decision-making when it comes to what is best for my constituents, and I think that this will be of the utmost importance as this term progresses. The Catholic population in the 3rd does not seem to lean to the fundamentalist side, but I will still handle those hot-button catholic issues like abortion and gay rights very carefully. Again, they are issues that I feel strongly about, but they are two that will never be approached in an adversarial manner by this office. These two issues aside, there are so many that we agree on, and that are vital to this region, it really excites me to get to work. The key issues that I have identified to focus on during my time in the House will be transportation, education, health care, the domestic mortgage market, and international human rights. The ways in which these issues relate to my constituents will be outlined in the casework bullet points that follow.

We are in an enviable position here: we are representing a region that has not elected a Republican in fifty years, and a population whose political ideologies run almost precisely parallel to my own. There will be a minimum amount of head-butting on the hot-button issues, and we will be able to hit the ground running with timely and effective legislation. Our country needs strong leadership right now, not someone telling them how to live their lives, but someone who will lead by example. Someone who is truly concerned about this southeastern corner of one of the oldest states in the Union, and the relevance of its people on the national stage.

Casework bullet points for mailer:

-I do not support the revival of a draft. Not only does it pull disproportionately from lower income levels and minorities, but I cannot support the expansion of a military that is already consuming so much of our national budget. Make sure to stress my support of troops, just not current White House and Pentagon policy. This should not be much of an issue, as our district is not a "military" district. There is only one military installation in the whole state, and that is Hanscom Air Force Base in Lexington (7th District).

-To go along with the previous point, I support a full withdrawal of the troops in Iraq. If that is successful, I can't imagine why a draft would ever be necessary. I would redirect the billions of dollars (12 per month to be exact) currently being spent on Iraq to the nation's health care and educational systems. Both of those are universal rights that NEED to be available to every American, no questions asked.

-On the draft issue, I oppose that, but would like to use it as a segue in to the notion of public service in general. It's true, I don't agree with mandatory military service, but I do want to really push the importance of service in other ways. It is essential for any civic-minded citizen to feel that he or she has done something to help their fellow Americans. I will encourage Peace Corps and AmeriCorps enrollment, but also things as small as volunteering at a soup kitchen once a week. The idea is SEERVICe, on any scale.

-I also want to stress my gratitude and respect for veterans, I don't want the word "unpatriotic" anywhere near my name just because I oppose a draft. There are 55,176 civilian veterans living in the 3rd. right now, and I want to retain their support. The Dept. of Veterans Affairs just awarded Shrewsbury a \$1.5 million grant to construct a new veterans facility that will be providing social services, including thirty beds for homeless veterans. I want that news front and center.

-Concurrently with a call for an end to the Iraq campaign, I want to start a campaign to give the notion of American preemption a better name. I want to intervene with medical supplies, money, and further logistical support to foreign countries (Africa in particular) to help combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria.

-This aid will also help me raise the issue of human rights abuses in Darfur (something 5 member of the Massachusetts Congressional delegation were arrested for at a protest at the Sudanese embassy), Zimbabwe, and China. This district has shown a strong historical support for human rights causes.

-In addition, a few more key issues should be represented: transportation, health care, and education.

-83 percent of our residents drove to work alone last year, with only 8 percent carpooling, and 3 percent taking public transportation. I want to see those last two numbers rise dramatically, it is completely unacceptable from an environmental and also an economical standpoint that those figures be so low. We need to make public transportation accessible, affordable, and reliable.

-The health care industry and educational services combined make up for 22% of the jobs in our district, so we need to pay special attention to them. With so many people involved in the two professions, shouldn't we be able to make both of those services affordable and reliable for all? The answer is yes, it is our right and responsibility to the 3rd District.