



The Second Session of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress convened on January 17, 2012. The House schedule allowed me to spend time in the First District and take meetings with constituents. I had the opportunity to meet with local Mayors to get updates on their communities, discuss local projects that are underway and their priorities for the year as well as sit down with regional planning organizations, including the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, for overviews of regional projects and challenges. I also met with Massachusetts Transportation Secretary Rich Davey and the local MassDOT District offices about state and regional transportation projects, including the Fitchburg Line and the reconstruction of local roads destroyed by Tropical Storm Irene.



On January 13, I attended the announcement of the demolition of the New England Log Homes site. This 8.2 acre parcel, located in the center of Great Barrington, has remained unused since the early 1990's, when the New England Log Homes company went bankrupt. I helped secure federal funds that will be used to begin the transformation of the vacant site. Demolition will allow the Community Development Corporation of South Berkshire to move forward with the redevelopment of the site. Coupled with the River School development across the river, the New England Log Homes project will create a more livable, walkable community that will provide affordable housing and greater opportunities for economic development in the region.

On January 18, thousands of western and central Massachusetts residents signed petitions, joined protests, and called on Congress to voice their objections to legislation that would give the government and content owners new powers to fight copyright infringement on the internet. I

oppose H.R. 3261, the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA), because I believe it could lead to censorship and anti-competitive behavior in the name of copyright protection. The United States must crack down on internet piracy of copyrighted material but I fear that SOPA represents overreach. I was glad when the House Judiciary Committee announced on January 20 that it would postpone consideration of SOPA until there is more agreement about the way to proceed. I will be working with my colleagues to urge progress on the issue that will focus on the problem of online copyright infringement while protecting due process and free speech.

On January 19, a federal judge ruled that Vermont Yankee can remain open, despite the State of Vermont's efforts to close the nuclear reactor. The Vermont Attorney General is currently considering an appeal of this decision. I share the concerns of the Vermont delegation and will continue to support their efforts to ensure that New Englanders have a say in their energy future.

On January 20, I signed a letter with many of my House colleagues to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton which urged increased leadership by the United States to address young people's reproductive health around the world. This includes working toward the removal of oppressive legal and social barriers, and the elimination of harmful practices such as early and forced marriage, marital and other forms of rape, and female genital mutilation. The co-signed letter urges U.S. delegates to support the UN Commission on Population and Development's resolution on adolescents and youth, which strives to support the goals mentioned above by the end of 2012.



The Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* was reached two years ago, on January 21, 2010. The decision overturned a century of campaign finance laws and allowed unlimited corporate and special interest donations into our political campaigns. With so much special interest money flowing through the political system, campaign finance disclosure must exist to get unlimited, secret donations out of politics. I support legislation like H.R. 5175, the Disclose Act, which was passed in the last Congress and would

require disclosure of campaign contributions while increasing transparency in our federal elections.

On January 24, President Obama gave his State of the Union address to a Joint Session of Congress. I am encouraged that President Obama laid out an agenda to rebuild the American economy in his State of the Union address. Americans are more confident about the economy than at any point since last May, but the middle class and unemployed Americans need continued support during this recovery. I believe that President Obama has the vision to return economic security to the middle class and support all Americans while building a long-term, sustainable economy.

The House and Senate are currently working on reauthorizations of the surface transportation programs, which expire at the end of March 2012. I am hopeful that we can find common ground and pass a multi-year authorization as the last two years of short-term extensions have been unproductive and disruptive for our state infrastructure programs. However, I am concerned that the House draft provides only negligible increases over the next five years that do not come close to address this country's infrastructure deficit. I will continue to monitor progress on the reauthorizations as the legislative process advances.

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