

The NUNES Report

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Quick Facts

In June, Rep. Nunes wrote to 1,485 constituents in response to their inquiries. Year to date, Rep. Nunes has responded to 6,326 constituents via the U.S. mail.



Congressional hearing on water

Rep. Devin Nunes brings House leaders to Tulare to hear testimony on water needs

At the urging of Rep. Devin Nunes, the House Subcommittee on Water and Power convened a congressional field hearing in Tulare to hear testimony on the water needs of the Central Valley.

Seven valley people, including farm, water and environmental interests were called to testify June 28 during a field hearing at the Heritage Complex.

At least six members of Congress were on hand to hear from a wide range of water, environment and agricultural experts on the needs of the Central Valley.

The House Committee on Resources is considering legislation to reauthorize a partnership between the state and federal government, called CalFed, to develop and protect water resources in California. While tens of millions of dollars has been spent over the years on environmental restoration projects, only a small percentage has been allocated to water supply.

Prior to the hearing, many community and indus-



More than 300 people filled the Heritage Complex of the International Agri-Center in Tulare for a rare Congressional field hearing on valley water needs.

try leaders, as well as concerned citizens, spoke at a rally to underscore the pressing need for more water storage in the Central San Joaquin Valley.

Among those called to testify during the hearing were:

- Tom Glover, Deputy Director, California Department of Water Resources
- Kole Upton, Chairman of the Friant Water Users Authority

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Nunes bill on the way to nat.'l health policy

Leaders in the House of Representatives put a bill introduced by Rep. Devin Nunes on the fast track to becoming law by folding it into the national Medicare prescription drug bill.

Mr. Nunes introduced H.R. 2471, which would allow hospitals to triage patients who come through their doors and refer them to non-urgent clinics and health care centers. The legislation would ease crowding, shorten emergency room waits and, for those who lack health insurance or a family doctor, introduce needy patients to low- or no-cost clinics.

A day after it was introduced, the language from that bill was adopted into the Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act of 2003 and passed out of the House Committee on Ways and Means.

"This is an exciting and

very welcome turn of events for the hospitals in my district, which are struggling to keep up with the numbers of patients flooding their emergency rooms," Mr. Nunes said.

The emergency room relief bill introduced by Mr. Nunes is one of several recommendations to come from a recent health care delivery summit in Visalia with more than 150 community and health care leaders.

Several other recommendations from that summit were presented to the House Committee on Ways and Means and have been included in the Medicare reform bill, including increased assistance to hospitals in rural areas and increased reimbursement rates for providers who care for government-insured patients, among others.

"It is very gratifying to know that we here in the



Dr. Phillip Hinton, CEO of Community Medical Center in Fresno meets with Rep. Devin Nunes in Washington, D.C.

Central Valley are having a positive affect on health care legislation aimed at improving quality and access to medicine around the country," Mr. Nunes said.

The Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act of 2003 strengthens the Medicare program through provisions such as preventive and wellness services, as well as by introducing

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Quick Facts

H.R. 1, Prescription Drug and Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 -- Voluntary Rx Drug Benefit Available to ALL Medicare Beneficiaries: \$250 deductible; \$251-\$2,000: 80% coverage, 20% cost-sharing; Catastrophic protection after \$3,500 out-of-pocket (100% of costs covered); Affordable premium around \$35 per month or about \$1 a day

Nunes improves health care for uninsured workers

Rep. Devin Nunes voted in favor of a bill to improve access and reduce costs of quality health care to Americans who need it most – employees of small businesses.

The *Small Business Health Fairness Act*, (H.R. 660) passed the House of Representatives with a bipartisan vote of 262-162.

"The epidemic facing uninsured Americans is not just a health problem, it's a quality of life problem," said Mr. Nunes. "Hardworking families are unable to get affordable health care due to skyrocketing costs. For a nation that boasts the

world's largest and most productive economy, that's unacceptable."

The Small Business Health Fairness Act will:

Provide quality health care to millions. 41 million Americans are without health insurance; nearly 60 percent are either employed by small businesses or dependent on someone who is employed by a small business.

Lower the cost of health insurance for employers. Small businesses will be able to create association health plans and purchase health insurance collectively for their workers at a lower

cost. Savings to employers and employees could range from nine to as much as 25 percent in reduced premiums.

Expand and improve health coverage. Requires association health plans to cover specific diseases, maternal and newborn hospitalization, and mental health illnesses.

Reduce the number of uninsured Americans. Recent studies show that up to 8.5 million uninsured workers and dependents could gain coverage immediately under the congressional plan.

Conservation request seeks to preserve Dry Creek habitat

Conservation proposal ranks high on President Bush's list

Rep. Devin Nunes is supporting President Bush's request of \$2.5 million to protect 7,700 acres of the Dry Creek watershed in Tulare County - known as the Dofflemyer Ranch.

At the foot of the Kaweah River alluvial plain lies an outstanding sycamore alluvial woodland, the largest in the Sierra Nevada and third largest in California, stretching along the lower five miles of Dry Creek. Surrounding the sycamore alluvial woodland is an extensive landscape of blue oak and foothill woodland that abuts one of the largest

protected blue oak woodland stands in the Sierra Nevada.

The Dofflemyer Ranch provides habitat for several sensitive animal species, including the valley elderberry longhorn beetle, western pond turtle, bald eagle, and a great blue heron rookery.

The Dofflemyer Ranch abuts lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, as well as the Army Corps of Engineers and contributes to the scenic view along Highway 198 leading to Sequoia/King's Canyon National Park.

This conservation easement enjoys local support from the Sequoia Riverlands Trust and from the California Department of Forestry and



Rep. Devin Nunes meets with ranch owner John Dofflemyer and SCE Regional Manager Mike Chrisman.

Fire Protection. The purchase total is \$5 million and the remaining \$2.5 million will be provided by state,

local and private funding.

Health cont.'d from page two

competitive alternatives under Medicare to give seniors real choice. In addition, changes to the provider reimbursements will better reflect the cost of delivering efficient and quality care in rural areas.

The reform bill will ensure a prescription drug benefit under Medicare for all seniors who chose to participate. In addition, the bill reemphasizes the need to assist low-income seniors by devoting extra help to those who need it most.

Some of the steps Mr. Nunes took to affect change on the Medicare bill include:

Disproportionate Share Hospitals

Congressman Nunes sent a letter to Speaker Hastert asking for his assistance in preventing pending Disproportionate Share Hospital

funding reductions in California. The State stands to lose \$184 million in federal Medicaid dollars without Congressional intervention. Mr. Nunes joined other members of the California Congressional delegation in asking House leadership to protect California hospitals from these reductions.

Emergency Room Modernization

Congressman Nunes introduced H.R. 2471, the Emergency Room Modernization Act. The bill, a product of the Rural Healthcare Delivery Summit in Visalia, reforms the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act. Specifically, the bill is designed to give emergency rooms more flexibility in managing non-emergency patients who enter the E.R. seeking medical atten-

tion. Under the Nunes bill, emergency rooms could divert non-emergency patients to health clinics or other appropriate medical centers for treatment. National studies have shown that as much as 10% of E.R. visits are non-emergency in nature, and are substantially contributing to the shortage of space in rural hospitals. Diverting non-emergency cases to health clinics, which are federally subsidized to treat the uninsured, will help to address serious over-crowding in local emergency rooms. **The Ways and Means Committee included the provisions of H.R. 2471 in the Medicare Prescription Drug bill, which passed in a full vote of the House.**

Mr. Nunes also supported:

Medicare Incentive Payment Program- H.R. 1 provides a bonus payment for physicians in underserved areas, based on the ratio of Medicare beneficiaries to physicians and specialist in a given area.

Full and Permanent Equalization of the Standardized Payment Amount: The FY03 Omnibus Appropriations bill included a temporary measure (which expires at the end of the fiscal year) that equalizes the Medicare inpatient standardized amount payment. Prior to this provision being enacted, hospitals located in cities serving a population of more than 1 million received payments that were 1.6 percent higher than facilities serving smaller areas. H.R. 1 equalizes this payment permanently.

New Terminus spillway on target

The enlargement of Lake Kaweah is more than just a construction project, it is the culmination of years of planning, research, cooperation and hard work on the part of multiple government agencies and individuals.

More importantly, it is having a far-reaching, positive affects throughout the Kaweah River Basin.

While flood control continues to be its primary purpose, the project is also welcomed for the additional benefits including water storage, water conservation and environmental enhancements.

By raising the spillway at the dam, the lake will increase its capacity by nearly 30 percent.

The project is estimated to cost about \$47.8 million, divided among the federal government (\$27.8 million), state government (\$13.4 million) and local agencies (\$7.3 million), including Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District, city of Visalia, Tulare and Kings counties and the Tulare Lake Basin Storage District.



Construction of six concrete Fusegates are underway at Lake Kaweah. The Fusegates are 21-feet high and 38-feet wide.

Taxes

Congressman Nunes co-sponsored H.R. 8, the Death Tax Repeal Permanency Act. This bill would make the repeal of the Estate Tax (otherwise known as the Death Tax) permanent.



- Gloria Morales, Businesswoman/Farmer in Fresno
- Daniel G. Nelson, Executive Director of the San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority
- Marc E. Christopher, Policy Advocate for the

Friends of the River

- Thomas Clark, General Manager of the Kern County Water Agency

and Keith Wat-

kins 2nd Vice President for the Tulare County Farm Bureau

Among the representatives who attended were: Mr. Nunes (R-Tulare), Resources Committee Chairman Richard Pombo (R-Tracy), Subcommittee Chairman Ken

Calvert (R-Riverside), as well as Reps. George Radanovich (R-Mariposa), Dennis Cardoza (D-Modesto) and Subcommittee Ranking Member Grace Napolitano (D-Santa Fe Springs).

“San Joaquin Valley continues to face a water crisis in which our water supplies have become inadequate to meet expanding needs,” Mr. Nunes said in the letter to Chairman Pombo and Subcommittee Chairman Calvert. “Demands by domestic users, industry, and environmental needs continue to grow with no relief in sight.”

Nunes packs legislative punch in June

Agriculture

Labor

Congressman Nunes sent a letter to Speaker Hastert, Majority Leader Tom DeLay, Majority Whip Roy Blunt, and Conference Chairwoman Deborah Pryce calling for changes in the current migrant farmworker H-2A visas. The changes include a one time opportunity to regularize the status of experienced farmworkers with an earned adjustment of status through future work in agriculture.

Nutrition

Congressman Nunes became an original cosponsor of the Healthy Nutrition for America Act. The bill seeks to promote improved nutrition for needy Americans, including women, infants and children and students, by revising and enhancing federal nutrition programs to provide greater access to and expanding the role of fresh fruits and vegetables and 100% juice products.

Grazing

Congressman Nunes became an original cosponsor



of H.R. 2395 which would provide suitable alternative grazing arrangements on National Forest System land to ranchers that hold a grazing permit adversely affected by the standards and

guidelines contained in the Record of Decision of the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment and pertaining to the Willow Flycatcher and the Yosemite Toad.

Farmworker Housing

Congressman Nunes sent a letter to Labor, HHS, and Education Appropriations Sub-Committee Chairman Ralph Regula asking that Congressional intent be observed in regards to grants for Farmworker Housing and the need for both temporary and permanent housing. This letter will hopefully direct the Department of Labor to change its Solicitation for Grant Applications to reflect this.

Education

After-School Programs

Congressman Nunes sent a letter to Labor, HHS, and Education Appropriations Sub-Committee Chairman Ralph Regula asking that funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers after-school programs to at least the FY2002 level. This program enables schools, in the most needy communities, to provide an after-school learning environment for students.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Congressman Nunes co-sponsored H.R. 438, the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act. This bill will expand current student loan forgiveness for teachers of Math, Science, and Special Education who teach in a Title I school. This legislation will provide up to a maximum of \$17,500 in

loan forgiveness. This bill is expected to be voted on in early July, and will provide support to many of the teachers with the 21st District.

Environment

Rep. Nunes wrote to Chairman John Duncan of the Subcommittee on Water Resources and the Environment, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure expressing his support for the Fish and Wildlife Habitat Restoration Project at Pine Flat Dam. The project, which has been understudy for several years, is intended to improve wildlife habitat along the Kings, and to improve the fishery in the river at and below Pine Flat Dam, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flood control project.

Foreign Relations

Armenia

Congressman Nunes, along with a number of colleagues, sent a letter to the Chairman of the Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee, Jim Kolbe in support of \$3 million for the Armenian Eye Care Project (AECF). This project seeks to reduce preventable blindness and its causes in Armenia. It will include research, direct patient care, public education, and medical education and training.

Vietnam

Congressman Nunes sent a letter to the Prime Minister of Vietnam calling for the release of Father Thadeus

Tulare County Adult Pre-trial Facility

Congressman Nunes sent a letter to Under Secretary of Homeland Security Asa Hutchinson requesting that the Bureau of Customs and Immigration Services or the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement purchase or rent the Tulare County Adult Pre-Trial Facility which is currently sitting empty. This will aid Tulare County and provide much needed jobs.

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Legislative work—cont.'d

Nguyen Van Ly, who was imprisoned by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam based on his religious beliefs.

Portugal

Congressman Nunes sent a letter to Portuguese Prime Minister Jose Manuel Durao Barroso thanking Portugal for hosting the summit in the Azores between President Bush, Prime Minister Tony Blair, and Spanish President Jose Maria Aznar. The letter also expresses thanks to Portugal for its help in the war on terrorism.

Rep. Nunes wrote a letter to Secretary of Defense Donald



Rumsfeld and Secretary of State Colin Powell urging them to meet with the President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Portugal, João Bosco Mota Amaral and a delegation of Portuguese parliamentary leaders when they come to Washington DC in July of 2003.

Grant Support

Commercial Growth - - Fresno County Grant

Congressman Nunes wrote a letter expressing support for a grant request submitted by the County of Fresno to the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development's Rural Business Opportunity Grant. The grant seeks \$50,000 to help develop commercial and industrial growth along Highway 99 between Kings-

burg and Fowler. The program would focus on targeting firms that offer plant tours and recruiting them into the area and also assist existing firms develop and advertise plant tours. This would encourage commercial and industrial growth and provide employment opportunities for local residents.

Hispanic-Serving Institutions -- Higher Education

Congressman Nunes wrote a letter expressing support for a grant request submitted by the Fresno City College Educational Resource Center to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The grant seeks \$600,000 to help Hispanic-Serving Institutions of higher education expand their role and effectiveness in addressing community development needs in their localities. This would include neighborhood revitalization, housing services, and economic development. This grant would enable low-income families achieve a higher level of educational empowerment and lower a significant barrier they face in identifying educational and career goals.

Housing Assistance

Congressman Nunes wrote letters expressing support for three grant requests submitted by the Housing Authorities of the City and County of Fresno to the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The first grant request seeks \$1,286,000 to help provide low-income and

homeless persons living with HIV/AIDS rental assistance. In addition, the grant will help provide credit counseling services, case management, life counseling, medical services, and transportation services.

The second grant request seeks funds to provide housing vouchers under the "Housing Choice Program" to enable persons with disabilities to lease affordable private housing.

The third grant request seeks \$60,000 to help provide housing counseling services to low-income families and prepare them for homeownership. Services funded by the grant would include assisting families during transition from renting to homeownership and training on how to make informed decisions in selecting, maintaining and retaining a home.

Judicial

Extradition

Congressman Nunes co-sponsored H.Con.Res. 93, which expresses the sense of Congress that the President should renegotiate the extradition treaty with Mexico. This is to ensure that the possibilities of the death penalty or life imprisonment does not interfere with a timely extradition of criminal suspects from Mexico to the U.S.

Methamphetamine

Central Valley High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA)

Congressman Nunes

wrote a letter to Chairman Ernest Istook of the Appropriation's Subcommittee on Transportation and Treasury urging him to look into the \$20 million increase in the Fiscal Year 2003 funding level for the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) - specifically the Central Valley HIDTA. This letter was cosigned by 30 of his colleagues. Congressman Nunes has received information that a major portion of the \$20 million increase will be designated for the Consolidated Priority Operational Targets (CPOT) program, which, in essence, duplicates the Organized Crime-Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) program. Considering that the Meth Caucus specifically asked for this money to help fight the meth problem, he believes that diverting this money from the HIDTA program is contrary to congressional intent. Furthermore, considering that the CPOT program mainly focuses on the top 53 international drug targets, he fears that the primarily California-based methamphetamine trafficking organizations will not receive the attention that was intended by the original funding request. Therefore, with decreased funding, the meth problem will far exceed our ability to deal with it effectively.

Protective Equipment and Training

To assist local law enforcement in the meth fight, Congressman Nunes co-sponsored the METH MASK

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Legislative work—cont.'d

Grant Act of 2003. This legislation would fund a \$25 million matching grant program to provide training for law enforcement officers to safely enter methamphetamine labs. Furthermore, it would provide the same law enforcement officers protective equipment including Air Purifying Respirators and NOMEX fire-retardant suits.

Public Lands

Right to Ride Legislation

Congressman Nunes, in a letter, urged his colleagues to become an original co-sponsor of the Right-to-Ride on Public Lands Act. The bill recognizes the historic value and use of pack and saddle stock animals on U.S. federal land. Livestock use on public land has a long tradition in American culture. President Teddy Roosevelt, an avid environmentalist and outdoorsman, explored the West extensively on horseback. John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, traveled with pack-horses in 1869 through what would later become Yosemite National Park. Pack and saddle stock provide a natural way for visitors to enjoy federal lands.

Healthy Forests Initiative

Over a month ago, the House of Representatives adopted the Healthy Forests Restoration Act on a sweeping bipartisan basis. Consequently, Congressman Nunes sent a joint letter with a number of his colleagues to Senators Bill Frist and Tom Daschle asking them to act with all available speed on the bipartisan Healthy Forests Restoration Act or its

Senate companion. With another devastating fire season now in full-swing, and daily reminders of the human and environmental horrors that catastrophic wild-fire bring, I believe it is critical that Congress quickly conclude its work on this legislation so that forest managers can begin theirs. The reason for my urgency is clear -- if there is any hope of implementing hazardous fuels reduction and forest restoration projects under Congressionally-enacted expedited procedures before the onset of the **2004** fire season an October 1 deadline must be met.

Social Services

Congressman Nunes sent a letter to the House Labor and Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Ralph Regula, seeking Committee support for a change in federal law, which would prohibit States from withholding Older American Act appropriations from local entities if they fail to pass an annual budget in a timely manner. The State government in California consistently fails to meet its Constitutional requirement to adopt a timely budget. Older Americans Act funds are essential in maintaining social and nutritional services for senior citizens. These federal dollars should not be held hostage by State governments that fail to meet budget deadlines.

Trade

World Trade Organi-

zation (WTO) Agricultural Negotiations

Congressman Nunes wrote to the United States Trade Ambassador Robert Zoellick expressing his interests and concerns in the current round of WTO (Doha) agricultural negotiations. The methodology used in the Uruguay Round, to reduce in lieu of eliminating subsidies, had little effect on our domestic fruit and vegetable industry. Of course, this was primarily because the industry does not have subsidies to reduce. Since the Uruguay Round fruit and vegetable exports have increased only slightly while imports have increased significantly (Importantly, fruit and vegetable exports to the European Union (EU) have declined over 18% while imports from the EU have increased by almost 45%). Most of our fruits and vegetables are exported to Canada and Japan but there are other Pacific rim countries which offer export opportunities. Many of the Asian countries have extremely high tariffs, and every attempt should be made to harmonize tariff levels around the world. In this regard, Congressman Nunes applauds the U.S. proposal to reduce tariffs to a 15% level within five years, and he expects USTR to stand firm in seeking this goal.

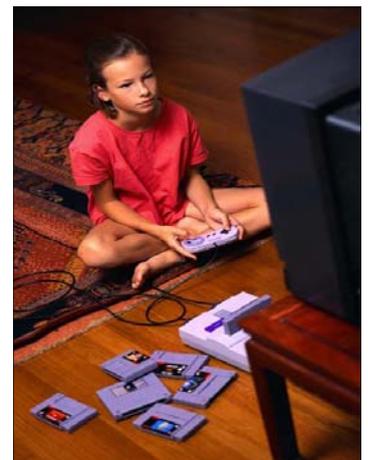
Unfair Trade Practices

Congressman Nunes co-sponsored the U.S. Agricultural Products Market Access Act of 2003 Act, which will give the United States Trade Representative

(USTR) additional tools in addressing unfair trade practices. Specifically, the bill establishes a mandate for USTR to initiate investigations and to proactively identify countries that are denying U.S. agricultural commodities market access. Each year, USTR would be required to report to Congress a list of countries that are unfairly discriminating against American agricultural products.

Video games

Congressman Nunes co-sponsored H.R. 669, the Protect Children from Video Game Sex and Violence Act. This bill would prohibit the sale of video games that depict extreme violence, nudity or sexual conduct to minors under the age of 18. Currently, several retailers enforce the rating systems on the back of the video games by asking purchasers proof of age. However, there are many who do not and minors can purchase many of these ultra-violent games. This takes parents out of the decision-making process.



Quick Facts

In the month of June, 1,872 web surfers visited Rep. Nunes' website at www.nunes.house.gov.

Health care summit a success



For years now the Central Valley has suffered from an acute case of poverty. It has infected families and communities throughout the region, eating away at our institutions like a cancer.

Increasingly, that cancer has spread through our health care delivery system. Those who live in poverty often rely on government-funded insurance. However, that insurance typically does not cover the full cost of providing service and creates a constant drain on medical resources affecting us all.

Some residents lack any type of insurance and frequently turn to hospital emergency rooms for non-urgent medical needs. Because federal regulations require that health care providers treat anyone regardless of their ability to pay, this also burdens a system already stretched thin.

The cumulative result is we have fewer and fewer resources to meet the needs of a large population on government insurance. New physicians just out of medical school with tens of thousands of dollars of loan debt can't afford to set up shop here. And physicians we've relied on for years are struggling to keep the lights on because of an underwhelming income base and high overhead costs.

The problem of poverty has a domino effect, and we're beginning to see them fall at an alarming rate.

But there may be some relief in sight. I asked a group of health care leaders to organize a summit focused on finding practical solutions I could craft into legislation and introduce in Congress. I cannot thank these health care leaders, who later formed the advisory committee of the summit, enough for the guidance and insight they provided in this process. Their efforts culminated in a well-attended conference in Visalia that produced promising

results.

Already, proposals made at the summit are being crafted into legislative language. I'm getting encouraging feedback from the Committee on Ways and Means on folding these proposals into the forthcoming Medicare reform bill.

Some of the proposed solutions include recruiting new physicians and keeping the loyal doctors we have by offering loan forgiveness programs and tax credits for those who treat patients with little or no insurance.

Another recommendation developed at the summit would deal with crowded emergency rooms. By creating flexibility in the regulations that require treatment of all who enter the emergency room, we believe patient screening and extending the business hours of clinic facilities in or near emergency rooms could alleviate some of the burden. But crowding in the emergency rooms also needs to be addressed by helping hospitals increase their bed capacity.

Other recommendations call on employers and federal officials for help. One such recommendation featured a federal income tax credit for employers of agricultural workers who provide basic family health care insurance. Another proposal was to increase the rate by which physicians and health care facilities are reimbursed for providing medical care to patients with government-funded insurance.

Even if we could get two to three of these proposals passed into law, it would be a significant improvement for the health care system in the Central Valley. And as a benefit, we could all take a measure of satisfaction in knowing that the lessons learned from our burden helped improve health care for our neighbors around the nation.

Editorial by Devin Nunes