

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO: CONNECTICUT**

**FROM: JOE LIEBERMAN**

**DATE: OCTOBER 3, 2006**

**RE: LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

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I wanted to share with the people of Connecticut my legislative accomplishments from this past session of Congress.

There is much to celebrate.

I worked with Senator Collins (R-ME) on the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee to:

- Conduct a thorough investigation of our government's failed response to the Hurricane Katrina;
- Draft and successfully push through a bill to reform FEMA so that we are better prepared for the next disaster; and
- Pass legislation that secures America's ports, protects our chemical plants and improves communications for our first responders.

We passed measures to preserve and protect our environment right here in Connecticut – bills like the Long Island Sound Stewardship Act and the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Act.

I fought to pass a bill to drastically improve the mental health care afforded to our brave servicemen and women and to protect our children from the harmful effects of being exposed to too much media.

And working closely with Senator Dodd, I was able to secure billions of dollars for Connecticut's defense industry. This money will boost Connecticut's economy and will help make sure that U.S. soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines have the resources they need to perform their missions.

We were also able to fight for millions of dollars for projects around the state that will make Connecticut a better place to work, live and raise a family.

There is still much to be done.

I have learned from my time in the Senate that it can take years to pass important legislation and I am committed fighting to pass bills I introduced this year that improve education, lower the cost of health care and that boost America's competitiveness so that our country continues to lead the global economy.

There was also progress on bills I introduced during previous sessions. Working with Democrats and Republicans alike, I was able to build support for meaningful steps to address climate change by adding supporters to the Climate Stewardship and Innovation Act, a bill that would fight global warming by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. I also led a bipartisan coalition to develop and introduce what I like to call the Set America Free Act, a bill that has the support of more than 25 senators from both parties. That bill would reduce our dependence on oil by 10 million barrels per day by 2031 and bring about the mass-marketing of advanced-technology, high-efficiency cars and trucks.

The key to passing these bills and many others is to continue to work in a bipartisan manner in what I believe is one the most polarized political climates I have ever experienced during my 18 years in the Senate.

### **Securing Our Ports**

I joined with Senators Collins and Murray to introduce legislation to improve the security at our nation's ports and protect against the danger of a weapon of mass destruction being smuggled in one of the millions of shipping containers that pass through our ports each year. Congress passed the port security legislation on September 30, 2006.

The bill approves \$400 million a year over five years for risk-based grants for training and exercises at ports. All ports will have an opportunity to apply for grants under this program.

The bill requires the nation's 22 largest ports, which handle 98 percent of all cargo entering the country, to install radiation detectors by the end of next year. These steps will drastically improve our ability to find dangerous goods and people being smuggled in to the United States. The bill would also establish pilot programs at three foreign ports to inspect 100% of all containers bound for the U.S. and move us closer towards the goal of inspecting all of the containers entering the United States through our ports.

### **Improving Communications for Our First Responders**

I was the lead sponsor of the Assure Emergency and Interoperable Communications For First Responders Act, legislation I drafted to improve the communications capabilities of our first responders, an essential component to making sure our country is better prepared to respond to natural and man-made disasters. The legislation would provide dedicated funding, strengthen federal leadership and fortify outreach and technical assistance to state and local first responders so that police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical workers can talk to one another across jurisdictional, departmental, and geographic boundaries – even in the wake of a disaster.

The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee approved this legislation and key provisions, including the creation of a new office in the Department of Homeland Security dedicated to emergency communications, were included in the FEMA reform legislation that Congress passed.

### **Protecting America's Chemical Plants**

Working with Senator Collins, I drafted the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006 – bipartisan, comprehensive chemical security legislation that would require the Department of Homeland Security to establish and enforce mandatory security standards at our nation's chemical facilities to guard against potential terrorist threats. Under this bill, chemical plants would be required to conduct vulnerability assessments and create site security and emergency response plans based on their specific vulnerabilities. The legislation encourages facilities to consider using safer chemicals or processes as a way to enhance security, and guarantees the right of States and localities to enact stricter chemical security rules. In June 2006, the legislation was approved 15-0 by the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.

The Senate and the House passed versions of this legislation as part of the Homeland Security appropriations bill. Though it fell short of my comprehensive legislation, this was an important first step since the Department of Homeland Security had no authority to regulate these dangerous facilities.

### **Investigating What Went Wrong with the Government's Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina**

We knew a hurricane like Katrina would hit the Gulf Coast one day, but yet every level of government was remarkably unprepared for such a storm. Much of the destruction and despair caused by the storm was amplified by the government's failed response.

The Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, of which I am the Ranking Member, was tasked with investigating the government's preparation for and response to Hurricane Katrina. The Committee's investigation, a bipartisan effort led by Senator Collins (R-ME) and myself,

examined in detail the actions of federal, state and local officials, especially as the storm made landfall and the following critical week. Over the course of 8 months, we interviewed more than 325 witnesses, reviewed over 838,000 pages of documents and conducted 22 public hearings with 85 witnesses.

The result was a 749-page report entitled “Hurricane Katrina: A Nation Still Unprepared” that issued 88 recommendations as to how America can be better prepared for a similar disaster. Immediately after issuing the report, our committee got to work drafting legislation to implement those recommendations, including the recommendation to reform and revamp FEMA.

### **Reforming FEMA So We Are Prepared for the Next Disaster**

The leading recommendation of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs’ report was to rebuild and strengthen our nation’s emergency preparedness and response capabilities. Working with Senator Collins, we succeeded in passing legislation to do just that

The bill, which was attached to the Homeland Security Appropriations Bill, goes a long way toward improving our readiness for another catastrophe. It recreates FEMA as a distinct, protected entity within the Department of Homeland Security and makes the FEMA administrator the principal advisor to the President for emergency management. The bill also directs FEMA to have a stronger regional focus and work closely and consistently with appropriate state and local governments, as well as private sector and non-governmental entities for planning emergency operations. And the bill also provides additional assistance to individuals and communities that may be struck by disasters and authorizes additional resources for both FEMA and the states to improve their preparedness as well as implementing many of our other recommendations.

### **Helping the Victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita**

I led the successful effort to extend disaster unemployment assistance (DUA) for those left unemployed as a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. On March 6, 2006, President Bush signed into law the measure, which was part of the Katrina Emergency Assistance Act. I pushed to provide an additional 13 weeks of DUA for victims of these hurricanes. I also wrote to the Department of Labor on March 29, 2006 to convince them that dislocated persons who left interim jobs to return to Louisiana should also be eligible for DUA. The Department of Labor agreed with my recommendation.

### **Improving Mental Health Care for Military Service Members**

Just last week, Congress passed a bill I introduced with Senators Boxer (D-CA), Clinton, (D-NY), and Kennedy (D-MA) requiring more thorough mental fitness screenings before our brave men and women are considered ready for

deployment. This legislation was prompted by a three part series in the Hartford Courant detailing numerous examples of soldiers who had long histories of mental illness, such as bipolar disorder, who were deployed into combat settings.

The bill, which was included as part of the National Defense Authorization Act, requires a review of the service members' current mental health and any treatment or care they may be receiving. The bill also requires the military to establish guidelines to determine when a service member should be referred to a mental health professional and mandates that health care professionals have training in those guidelines.

### **Preserving and Protecting Long Island Sound with the Long Island Sound Stewardship Act**

At the very end of the session, Congress passed the Long Island Sound Stewardship Act (LISSA), a bill that is critical to the health of Long Island Sound. More than a decade ago, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) identified the Long Island Sound region as vulnerable to degradation. A study of the area that was released in 2002 concluded that coordinated action was needed to save the Sound, prompting members of the New York and Connecticut delegations to take collective action to defend the Sound.

The result was LISSA, which I first introduced in 2004 with a bipartisan group of Connecticut and New York Senators and Representatives. The legislation establishes a broad-based Long Island Sound Stewardship Advisory Committee (Committee), a unique body comprising everyone who has a direct stake in the Sound – federal and state agencies, public-interest organizations and local landowners.

Once formed, the Committee will be charged with evaluating parcels of land within the Long Island Sound ecological region that have been volunteered for participation in the program and recommending to the EPA Administrator which parcels should be designated as “Stewardship Sites” eligible for special preservation funds. LISSA authorizes \$25 million per year for fiscal years 2007 – 2011 for the EPA Administrator to use to protect the Sound.

### **Designating Upper Housatonic a National Heritage Area**

Also at the very end of the session, Congress passed the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Act, a bill I introduced with Senator Dodd and others. The upper Housatonic Valley is a unique cultural and geographical region that encompasses 29 towns in the Housatonic River watershed, extending 60 miles from Lanesboro, Massachusetts to Kent, Connecticut. The valley has made significant national contributions through literary, artistic, musical, and architectural achievements and as the backdrop for important Revolutionary War era events.

The bill designates the Upper Housatonic Valley in Connecticut and Massachusetts as a National Heritage Area. As a National Heritage Area, the valley will be looked after by the National Park Service and will be eligible to receive \$1 million in annual grants, up to a total of \$10 million, for a variety of activities that conserve and protect the natural, historical, cultural and scenic resources in the area. Since 1984, Congress has designated only twenty-three national heritage areas, including the Quinebaug & Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor in Connecticut and Massachusetts in 1994.

### **Protecting Our Children with the Children and Media Research Advancement Act (CAMRA)**

Our children are facing an increasing barrage of influences from all sorts of media, as illustrated by a report by the Kaiser Family Foundation that found that children ages 2 to 18 are spending an average of six and half hours with different types of media each day. To determine the effect of this exposure, I worked with colleagues on both sides of the aisle, including Senators Brownback (R-KS), Clinton (D-NY), Santorum (R-PA), Durbin (D-IL) and Bayh (D-IN) to pass the Children and Media Research Advancement Act (CAMRA), a bill that authorizes new research into the effects of viewing and using electronic media, including television, computers, and video games.

CAMRA, which I first introduced in 2004, establishes a research program on children and media within the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention to work with the National Institutes of Health and the National Academy of Science to review and report on existing research on children and media and to set research priorities. The CDC is then charged with issuing grants over a period of six years to examine the impact of media, both positive and negative, on children and adolescents with a focus on how media affects their ability to learn and their cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and behavioral development.

### **Creating Jobs and Making Connecticut a Better Place to Work, Live and Raise a Family**

Working with Senator Dodd, I have continued to fight for more federal funding for Connecticut, including billions of dollars for Connecticut's defense industry. This funding, which will be used to build more submarines, helicopters and aircraft engines, will boost Connecticut's economy and will ensure that U.S. soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines are outfitted with the resources they need to perform their missions.

One of the most significant accomplishments of this past year was an amendment to the Defense Authorization bill that will enable the Air Force to

enter into a multiyear contract for 60 F-22 aircraft over three years. The engines for those aircraft will be built at Pratt & Whitney in Connecticut.

Senator Dodd and I were also able to secure millions of dollars in the Senate appropriations bills to improve Connecticut's roads and highways and provide alternative transportation options for Connecticut's commuters. We were also able to secure federal funding to make our water cleaner, our communities safer, and to help Connecticut's small businesses expand and grow.

I am confident that that funding for Connecticut will remain in the appropriations bills when the full Senate votes on the bills in November.