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Selected Congressional Accomplishments
U.S. Representative Walter Capps

U.S. Representative Walter Capps' guiding principle in the 105th Congress has been to restore the bonds of trust between citizens and their government. Since taking office, Capps has worked in a bipartisan fashion advocating the principles of fairness and fiscal responsibility to provide mainstream representation for the people of the 22nd District of California. Capps' accomplishments are indicative of his belief that when you put the common good before individual interests, everybody wins.

National Accomplishments:

* In March, Capps sent a letter signed by 40 Members of Congress to NBC and Ford Motor Co. in praise of their decision to air "Schindler's List." This letter of commendation was in response to comments from Rep. Tom Coburn (R-O.K.) criticizing NBC for exposing children to excessive violence and nudity.

* In May, Capps led a bipartisan group of freshmen in sending a letter to Speaker Gingrich urging his support of the balanced budget plan. In July, Capps joined the President and House leaders at a ceremony at the White House in celebration of the passage of this historic Bipartisan Balanced Budget Agreement.

* Capps fought to give immediate tax relief to family farms and small businesses by cosponsoring Rep. Bob Livingston's (R-L.A.) measure to immediately raise the estate tax exemption to \$1.2 million. Elements of this plan were incorporated into the estate tax relief provisions of the Bipartisan Balanced Budget Agreement. Capps also spoke on the House Floor on the need to preserve the family farm.

* Earlier this year, Capps introduced his first bill, the ALS Research, Treatment and Assistance Act of 1997. The bipartisan legislation, introduced with Rep. Ben Gilman (R-N.Y.), would waive the 24 month Medicare waiting period for people with ALS, cover prescription drugs to treat ALS under Medicare Part B, and direct NIH to double the current Federal funding available to fight this dreaded disease. The impetus for Capps' decision to introduce this bill has been his long-time friendship with former Santa Barbara County Supervisor Tom Rogers, who suffers from ALS, otherwise known as Lou Gehrig's Disease.

* Capps is one of the few House freshmen to co-sponsor the Meehan-Shays Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act. In June, he met with former Sens. Nancy Kassebaum Baker and Walter Mondale, co-chairs of the President's Campaign Finance Reform Commission to discuss approaches to the problem and offer his unique perspective as a freshman Member.

* Capps is one of only nine freshmen Members to sign the first letter to the President in support of the EPA's health-based air quality standards under the Clean Air Act to be phased in over a 15 year period.

* Because of his view that agriculture and environmental protection should be symbiotic, Capps became a member of the Congressional Farmland Protection Caucus.

** In early September, Capps introduced the Carizzo Plain National Conservation Act of 1997. He worked with the Bureau of Land Management and the Nature Conservancy to dedicate Carizzo Plain as a National Conservation Area. The Capps bill will support interagency cooperative successes in preservation and conservation, while allowing compatible uses, such as limited grazing, to continue.*

* In July, Capps called upon his 30 year history as a Religious Studies professor to testify before the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution against the Istook Religious Freedom Amendment -- a measure which has the propensity to alter the First Amendment and obliterate the separation of church and state.

Committee Accomplishments:

* As a Member of the International Relations Committee, Capps successfully amended the Foreign Relations Authorization Act concerning the deplorable situation in Tibet. Capps' amendment, which was passed unanimously by the House, directs the USIA to include individuals active in preserving Tibetan culture, religion, and language in its existing educational and cultural exchanges.

* In May, Capps and Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.) successfully offered an amendment to the Foreign Policy Reform Act which eliminates restrictions on expansion of a US presence in Vietnam, proposes concrete steps to promote human rights, and increases commitment to refugee issues within the context of the US-Vietnam bilateral relationship.

* Capps introduced his "Truth in Trade Act" -- legislation to change the present Most Favored Nation status to "normal trade relations." This bill was previously introduced in the Senate by Sens. Moynihan (D-N.Y.) and Roth (R-Del.).

* Capps' amendment to ensure full funding for NASA's Mission to Planet Earth (MTPE) Program was included in the Civilian Space Authorization Act during the Science Committee consideration of the bill. Capps also organized a bipartisan group of Members to urge for full funding of this project in the VA/HUD and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act. MTPE -- the \$1.4 billion critically important scientific research program which launches satellites to monitor and predict long-term global climate change -- benefits many sectors of the economy, including such diverse industries as agriculture, financial services, insurance, and disaster management.

* As a Member of the Science Committee's Subcommittee on Basic Research, Capps helped pass a National Science Foundation funding bill which is important for Cal Poly and UCSB.

Local Accomplishments:

* Capps spearheaded a grassroots campaign to get the Governor of Florida to overturn a state law which unfairly targets small Central Coast vintners by rendering direct wine shipments to Florida residents a felony for the vintner, shipper and consumer. In only the third instance of its kind, Capps got the entire California congressional delegation to sign a letter to Governor Chiles denouncing the measure. Furthermore, he has written letters to Sens. Boxer and Feinstein urging their support of this repeal effort. Earlier this August, Capps briefed local vintners at wineries throughout the 22nd District.

* In January, Capps asked President Clinton to declare San Luis Obispo County a Federal disaster area due to the flooding. He did, and homeowners and businesses are now eligible for grants and loans. So far, SLO has received over half a million dollars. Furthermore, Capps voted for Supplemental Disaster Relief Bill every time it came to the floor, despite the objections of those in both parties. He is also the co-sponsor of legislation to change the way disasters are funded -- streamlining the system to bring about more immediate relief.

* Soon after taking office, Capps toured Morro Bay Harbor, returned to Washington and started the fight to obtain Federal funds necessary to maintain the critical Army Corps of Engineers dredging project that will keep the Bay open and functioning. He wrote letters to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water (and met personally with Vic Fazio, D-C.A., the Ranking Member) to request \$3.2 million for dredging the harbor. As a direct result of Capps' intense lobbying efforts, full funding for dredging was successfully included in the House Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, even though none was provided in the President's budget.

* After visiting Vandenberg, Air Force Base and sending letters to the Chairman and Ranking Members of the House National Security Committee, Capps announced

that funding of \$17.1 million for additional family housing units and \$26.876 million for a new Launch Operations Control Center was successfully incorporated in the Military Construction Appropriations Act. Capps' painstaking attention to the appropriations process is indicative of his commitment to helping the people at Vandenberg, AFB and fostering the civil and commercial space industry.

* Capps obtained \$2.5 million for Santa Barbara to build a consolidate facility for electric buses. After Capps' intervention, a House Appropriations Subcommittee directed the Federal transit Authority to reimburse the Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District after it had built and transported five state-of-the-art buses to the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

* In February, Capps spoke on the House Floor on the importance of promoting accessible and quality education. Capps has repeatedly met with the Presidents, teachers and students of UCSB, Cal Poly, Allan Hancock College and Cuesta College to discuss the costs of college and his efforts in Congress to increase financial aid, promote lifelong learning, and open the doors of higher education to everyone. He also met with civic leaders in Paso Robles about their plans for a new community college.

* In July, Capps initiated a letter signed by 14 other Members of Congress to Education Secretary Riley in support of a Technology Innovation Challenge Grant for the Teach Net Project that will benefit Santa Barbara County and four sites across the country. The Teach Net Project would integrate technology and software into classroom curriculum. In August, Capps sent letters to Sens. Feinstein and Boxer to elicit their support for this worthy endeavor.

* Due of the stabbing death of Federal Corrections Officer Scott Williams at Lompoc Penitentiary, Capps testified before the Judiciary Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State, and Judiciary in support of reprogramming funds for the Federal Law Enforcement Dependents Assistance Act (FLEDA) -- legislation to provide funding for job training and education for children and spouses of Federal law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty. As a direct result of Capps' testimony, funds for FLEDA were successfully reprogrammed. Capps also testified on behalf of obtaining full funding for the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

* Capps co-sponsored the James Guelff Body Armor Act -- legislation to prohibit the mail-order sale of body armor to anyone other than law enforcement or public safety officers. This bill, which was brought to Capps' attention by Atascadero constituent Lee Guelff, is named after his brother James, a San Francisco Police Officer who was killed in the line of duty by a gunman wearing a bulletproof vest.