

**Friday, August 4, 2006**

There is only one thing more enjoyable than Thursday evenings, when the plane at National Airport or BWI surges forward, lifts off the runway, clears the congressionally induced hot-air-space of Washington, and whisks me to Long Island. And that is when the plane-ride marks the beginning of the August Recess. In fact, it's downright liberating. Five weeks away from Washington. No bluster, no banter; no pontificating, no punditry. The only screaming and jeering I will hear will be when I watch the Mets. (I confess: that's me doing the screaming and jeering).

Five weeks at home, away from the House.

This is not to say that the August recess is a vacation. I'll spend it meeting with dozens of constituents--speaking at Rotary Clubs and Chambers of Commerce, convening five sessions of my Energy Security Task Force, visiting local businesses, sitting with Fire Chiefs and veterans, working with state and local officials on congestion problems along Commack Road. And for eight days I will travel to Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Darfur and Rome.

But I'll also have a little more time to do the things that stay with me long after the Congressional schedule resumes.

One of my first stops this recess was the local kosher deli, where the waitress always briefs me on her grandson's progress in college. (She's a big fan of her grandson). On Monday night, the owner of a CD store shared his opinion of President Bush (not a big fan of the President).

Most of what I need to know as a Congressman I learn in diners and delis and schools and businesses on Long Island. I learn more about energy issues when I fill-up at the gas station than when I'm spun at a congressional hearing. I learn more about the needs of our Armed Forces by speaking with them in Iraq than listening to an expert in my Committee room.

So, if you happen to see me this August --or any weekend during the year-- don't be shy about letting me know how you feel. It doesn't matter if it's at a speech to hundreds, or if we just happen to bump into each other in the aisle of the supermarket.

The more I learn when I return home in August, the better a Representative I am when I return to the House in September.

Posted by: SI