

***Topics for Congressman Tom Perriello, February 17, 2009***

1. We are wasting vast sums on the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, on nuclear weapons, on foreign military bases, on "missile defense," on weapons systems that do not work or are designed to fight the Soviet Union or the Japanese fleet, while in fact research shows that investment in nonmilitary industries produces more and better paying jobs. House Financial Services Chairman Barney Frank has proposed cutting the war and military budget by 25 percent. Will you meet with him, offer to help, and let us know what we can do to help move resources where we truly need them?
2. George W. Bush without so much as consulting Congress, created a treaty for 3 more years of war in Iraq, bypassing the Senate's power to approve treaties and Congress's power to declare and end wars. Congresswoman Barbara Lee has introduced H.Res. 72, "Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that absent congressional approval the Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities During Their Temporary Presence in Iraq is merely advisory and not legally binding on the United States...." While there are good and bad measures in the treaty (and leaving aside the Pentagon's announced intention to ignore the withdrawal deadlines) the danger of allowing all future presidents this absolute power is too grave a risk. Will you cosponsor? How can we help?
3. The freedom to assemble and to organize in the workplace is a basic human right. The Employee Free Choice Act would allow workers to unionize through card check or by secret ballot, and would impose serious penalties on employers that break the law. Right now employers treat fines for illegal union busting as a minor cost of doing business and they prevent unionization by intimidating workers. This bill would strengthen the economy by enhancing job security, wages, healthcare, and pensions. It passed the House last Congress, and President Obama campaigned promising to make it law. Will you cosponsor? What can we do to help?
4. Another basic right is healthcare. Like peer nations around the world, the US should provide single-payer health coverage for a private medical system. Eliminating the wasteful for-profit health insurance companies has the approval of a vast majority of Americans. It would create 2.6 million new jobs, \$317 billion in business revenue, and \$100 billion in wages. Congressman John Conyers' H.R. 676 had 93 cosponsors last Congress and 42 thus far this year. Even if we do not get to single-payer this year, any compromise will be closer to it if there is a strong movement for it. Will you cosponsor? Can you or a staff person come to our public forum at the County Office Building at 6:30 p.m. February 23<sup>rd</sup>? Would such forums be useful elsewhere in the district? How else can we help?
5. We were pleased to hear the president propose cutting US and Russian nuclear weapons back to 1,000 each. We are grateful that the stimulus package didn't include \$50 billion in loan guarantees for new nuclear reactors and so called "clean coal." However, nuclear industry lobbyists are pushing to have Sen. Bingaman's (Energy Comm. Chair) upcoming Renewable Portfolio Standard bill declare nuclear power a renewable energy source, which it certainly isn't. Furthermore, the Nuclear Energy Institute and the nuclear utilities hope to set up a federal "clean energy bank" to finance nuclear reactors with taxpayer dollars in coming weeks. Will you oppose these efforts, and all efforts to fund nuclear energy and weapons, and focus on programs that will bring actual renewables on line and promote efforts toward energy conservation and efficiency? How can we help?
6. The US Army's School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Ga. -- renamed in 2001 the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) -- has long wasted our taxes on training Central and South American assassins and torturers. We should follow President Obama's lead in distancing the US decisively from torture. Congressman Virgil Goode voted against funding the school. Will you do the same? How can we help?