

12/30/2006 - Op-ed - Congressman Albio Sires: The First 100 Hours of the New Congress

For Immediate Release

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(Washington, D.C.) - The better part this election year has been a struggle. Many elected officials and their challengers running for office encountered controversy. Our fates hinged on our reputations, past performance and credibility.

As personal as some races became, in the end, the voters were smarter than the strategists. The voters spoke loud and clear, demanding a change in course in Iraq. They voiced their concern for the corruption that has compromised the integrity of the legislative process. They have asked for affordable medicine, education costs that won't become a life-long burden for their children, and a fair minimum wage. Americans demanded a new direction, and entrusted Democrats to take the helm. We promise to acknowledge their demands during the first 100 hours in Congress.

I was sworn in on November 13 as a freshman in the House of Representatives. I left the familiar faces of the Mayor's Office in West New York and the Speakership of the New Jersey State Assembly to represent my constituents in Congress. In Washington, continuing to improve people's lives will be the focus of my energy. This responsibility is sobering. It becomes very real when I come back home and shake the hand of an elderly constituent that needs cheaper medicine, or of the single Mom who pleads with me to afford relief when it comes time to pay for her children's college education. I know that the Democratic agenda outlined in the first hundred hours will fulfill the demands Americans made for a new direction, and the promises I made to the people of the 13th District.

On January 4 we will start fulfilling our promises. Democrats will begin by adopting an ethics reform package that will make this the most honest and open Congress in history. We will look to sever the ties between lobbyists and legislators, banning gifts and trips, as well as ending the abuse connected to privately funded congressional travel. We will abandon the practice of rushing bills through Congress in the dead of night. Democrats will ensure representatives, on both sides of the isle; that they have time to read legislation.

In addition, budget deficits need to be addressed. We cannot and must not pass trillions of dollars of debt on to our children. We will look to change the house rules to restore pay-as-you-go budgeting. This will begin to reverse the record budget deficits we have acquired in the last 5 years.

During the remainder of the first 100 hours of Congress, we will introduce legislation that will impact the daily lives of the people of New Jersey. The Six for '06 Agenda includes: improving health care by requiring Medicare to negotiate for lower prescription drug prices; raising the minimum wage, and making college more affordable by cutting interest rates on student loans. We will work with members of both parties to ensure their passage.

This election year, I have looked the people of my district in the eye and promised them a better future. Democrats in Congress will not disappoint. I want to shake the hands of my constituents and look them in the eye again knowing I have done my best. I look forward to the day I see a glimmer of optimism in their faces, and hear expressions of more confidence in our government due to our actions.