



Coalition for Democracy of Central New York

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Congressman Michael Arcuri
10 Broad Street
Utica, NY 13501

February 19, 2007

Dear Mike:

First, congratulations, on behalf of the Coalition for Democracy (CfD), on your election. Perhaps our sponsorship of your first debate with Ray Meier helped to set you off on the path to success.

We want to make you aware of issues that CfD will be addressing in 2007 and to seek your help on these matters. Among others, these issues include the following five.

1. Iraq and Pre-emptive Wars

Thank you for your speech and vote in favor of H. Con. Res. 63. Like you, we oppose the build-up of American troops in Iraq. At this point, given the mess that has been created by our ill-planned and unjustified pre-emptive war against Iraq, there are no good solutions. However, increasing our military presence there is surely among the worst of the limited choices we have. Instead, we should be initiating withdrawal of our troops from Iraq now while endeavoring to improve the situation there through diplomatic means and through financial, technical, and humanitarian assistance. We should be building a real coalition of nations willing to assist in providing security for and in the rebuilding of Iraq, including nations marked by President Bush as our enemies.

We hope that following your vote in favor of H. Con. Res. 63 you and your colleagues will quickly follow up with further measures that will ensure prompt initiation of withdrawal from Iraq. In addition, we hope that you will work to ensure that President Bush's pre-emptive war policy does not lead to similar catastrophes in Iran, Syria, North Korea, or elsewhere.

2. Healthcare

As you know, the U.S. leaves 47 million people uninsured and most of the rest of us worried about high costs and insufficient coverage. Employers are increasingly unable to afford healthcare coverage for their workers. And yet the U.S. pays twice what other countries pay for healthcare. CfD's Healthcare Work Group is committed to a "national healthcare system that is simple, portable, publicly funded, and

The Coalition for Democracy seeks to provide a strong, unified, grassroots voice in upstate New York to promote societal and environmental agendas that truly "provide for the general welfare", as referred to in the U.S. Constitution. The values guiding the Coalition are: Integrity, Justice, Freedom and Compassion.

*---Integrity demands of us, our public officials and our institutions responsibility, transparency, openness and accountability.
---Justice requires fairness, tolerance and respect for each other and for other peoples, cultures and religions as well as for the environment.*

--- Freedom requires an educated and informed electorate; responsible, independent and diverse media; and protection of individual rights and civil liberties.

---Compassion, as encapsulated in the Golden Rule, impels us toward a special concern for the health, education and welfare of the most vulnerable segments of society.

covers everyone." We do not support reforms that use our tax dollars to supplement private insurance coverage. To contain rising healthcare costs, we must capture the billions of dollars of administrative waste and profit-taking by the private insurance industry. We can do this by creating a universal national health insurance system, such as Canada's single-payer system. Our Healthcare Work Group supports Rep. Conyers' U.S. National Health Insurance Act, HR 676 and we urge you to co-sponsor this legislation.

3. Energy and the Environment

Whether "Peak Oil" is imminent or still years away, two things are clear: fossil fuels are becoming ever more expensive and the burning of fossil fuels is leading to unprecedented climate change. Both these outcomes are likely to have disastrous effects on civilization as we know it. There is hope of mitigating these outcomes if we take prompt and effective action to promote: (1) conservation (including enacting technology-forcing corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards and investing in mass transit) and (2) development and utilization of alternative energy sources that do not exacerbate climate change.

4. Election Reform

At least three actions are essential to ensure that our government is truly by the people and for the people: (1) ensure the integrity of our voting system; (2) reduce the influence of corporations and special interests; (3) eliminate gerrymandering.

With respect to the integrity of our voting system, until a way is found to ensure that computerized voting is secure, which is far from the case today, voting on paper ballots should be required, with counting by hand or optical scanning.

With respect to the influence of corporations and special interests, i.e., "big money," we support public financing for qualified candidates (with the caveat that the qualifications and other "rules of the game" should not unfairly disadvantage third party candidates.) In addition, we support real lobbying reform that would make it illegal for lobbyists, corporations, and special interests to make gifts of any kind to legislators and that would stop the revolving door between government positions and lobbying firms.

With respect to gerrymandering, the practice should be stopped by appointing independent commissions when redistricting is required, or by utilizing objective algorithms based on non-political factors.

5. Accountability

We believe there is ample evidence indicating that this Administration has violated the law and breached the public trust. We further believe it is incumbent upon the Congress to investigate these apparent malfeasances, including among others, domestic spying, misleading the public on the pre-war situation in Iraq, and condoning torture. If these investigations lead to a finding that the President and/or the Vice-President have committed "treason, bribery or other high crimes or misdemeanors," then an impeachment trial is required. We urge you to support H. Res. 635 and other measures that would implement such investigations.

We would appreciate learning your views on these matters and look forward to your response to this letter. In addition, as you may know, we are trying to schedule a public town-hall style meeting with you in the Oneonta area and also a second, private meeting with you and a few of our members in Oneonta or Utica. Hopefully, we will succeed in scheduling both such meetings within the next couple of months.

Very truly yours,