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In the U.S. House of Representatives, there are 21 different committees. While some committees are better known than others, such as the Armed Services and Ways and Means Committees, each House committee has distinct and equally important responsibilities. Generally, committees are the starting point for most legislative initiatives advanced in the House and Senate.

It was an honor to be recently named to the House Armed Services Committee and the House Education and Labor Committees. Serving on these panels will help me better represent my constituents in Congress, as well as our community's military families and veterans.

The Armed Services and Education and Labor Committees will be at the forefront of many important debates. This year, Congress is expected to reauthorize No Child Left Behind and several higher education programs, and consider several significant revisions to federal labor laws. These efforts will start in the Education and Labor Committee and it will be our job to put forward quality initiatives that reflect the interests of the American people.

During these debates, I will offer suggestions to improve our education system and rebuild our workforce. I intend to shape these ideas with the guidance and advice of our community's families, schools and small businesses.

Meanwhile, I also will be working with my colleagues on the House Armed Services Committee to set our national security policy. As a Marine combat veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, I hope to incorporate my own experiences and insight to ensure the best interests of our military men and women are always put first.

I intend to do everything I can to ensure our military forces receive the best equipment available and we continue developing innovative defense technology. While we must stay focused on winning in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is also important that we are prepared to face the threats of the future.

At the same time, I will ask our nation's military and civilian leadership tough questions on the full spectrum of defense issues. The Armed Services Committee, like any other committee, has an important oversight function. This is a responsibility that I take seriously.

Our nation faces immense challenges that will require steady leadership and creative solutions. The Armed Services and Education and Labor Committee will be front-and-center on issues of national and local importance. I look forward to engaging my colleagues on these matters while serving as your representative in Congress in the years ahead.