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It has been almost one year since I first walked on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives. It was an experience that has stayed with me every day since, whether I am voting on legislation or speaking with constituents at public meetings or other venues. In each of these situations, I am reminded of that first day and the responsibility to ensure the majority viewpoint of our community is well represented.

Many of you are aware of the challenges facing our nation and the policies that have been advanced through Congress over the past year. The legislative agenda has centered on policies that expand the function of government, increase the tax burden for working Americans and raise federal debt levels. Americans are rightfully frustrated with this approach.

Through countless conversations, phone calls and letters, I often hear about the need for less government intervention. I am reminded by San Diegans about their desire for fewer restrictions and greater financial freedom. Most often, I hear concerns from working Americans about the future of their children and grandchildren, and the debt burden that they will unfairly inherit.

These interactions have helped guide my efforts in Congress over the past year and remain an invaluable part of what helps shape my perspective on issues such as health care reform, cap and tax legislation or other legislative proposals. In fact, I opposed the stimulus package that, for all its promises, failed to keep unemployment levels in San Diego and nationwide below 10 percent.

On these and other spending measures, I believe we must put taxpayer interests above all else by curtailing expenditures, limiting taxes or supporting initiatives to reduce the deficit over time. Put simply, Americans should not have to work long hours and spend time away from their families, only to subsidize organization such as ACORN, labor unions or compensate for the bad business practices of Wall Street executives.

In following this direction, policy makers have overlooked perhaps the most important aspect of

our economy: the small business community. Small businesses are the primary employer in the country, providing most of the jobs in nearly every community. Tax and regulatory relief for these employers must consistently be among our top priorities, regardless of whether we are experiencing times of economic propriety or uncertainty.

All of these principles are reflected in legislation I have cosponsored or introduced myself, including measures to protect small businesses in today's economy. During debate on health care reform legislation, I successfully offered an amendment to protect small businesses from excessive government mandates even though I strongly opposed each version of this legislation at every turn throughout the legislative process. Also, I introduced legislation to protect small businesses against predatory ADA lawsuits.

Beyond these initiatives, I hosted a jobs fair for local businesses and job-seekers. The event was a tremendous success, bringing together hundreds of qualified job candidates with prospective employers. Based on this turnout, I intend to host another jobs fair in early 2010.

Another issue of focus for me is national security. My role on the House Armed Services Committee, in addition to my experience in the Marine Corps, has allowed me to substantively contribute to policy matters involving our troops and defense structure. This also ensures I can better represent San Diego's large military community and provides greater opportunity to bring more defense jobs to our region.

Of course, curtailing illegal immigration is another important effort I am undertaking. Now that immigration reform is expected to be on the table in 2010, it is important that any proposal that moves forward focuses on security and enforcement first. In anticipation of this debate, I am joining a bipartisan group of lawmakers to introduce the BRIDGE resolution - an initiative that rejects amnesty and reiterates the need for strong border and workplace enforcement. I have also introduced separate bipartisan legislation, H.R. 3289, to enhance the security presence along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The past year has been a rewarding experience and I look forward to continue serving as your representative in Congress. My offices in El Cajon or Washington DC are always open to all of you, and I hope you will keep me informed of your views as we confront the challenges facing our nation and work towards a brighter, more prosperous future.

One thing is certain: the American people are resilient and have always demonstrated an ability to recover from tough times. Together, we will rise to new heights and emerge stronger than before.