

Haverhill

U.S. Senator

Democrat

Paul E. Tsongas

Question: What priorities do you have to help ease the burden on taxpayers?

The unequal and often excessive tax burden placed on the American taxpayers today requires a comprehensive tax reform eliminating tax loopholes, shelters, and preferences, linked with tax relief targeted at those taxpayers strapped with an unproportional and excessive share of the tax burden. In Congress I voted for the Fisher-Corman amendment which would have increased the size of individual tax credits to lower and middle income taxpayers. I oppose proposals like Kemp-Roth and Steiger-Hanson which provide a disproportional amount of tax relief to upper income groups.

My commitment to addressing the issue of tax reform earned me a 94% rating from the group Taxation with Representation. I cosponsored legislation to provide tax credits for higher education to aid middle income taxpayers. I support a capital gains tax exemption for homeowners when they sell their homes and a tax credit to renters for a portion of the real estate taxes passed on to them by landlords. I also support the Massachusetts Classification Amendment, which is not a total solution to increasing property tax burdens, but it will prevent making matters worse here in Massachusetts.

Inflation is a more complex issue behind the demand for tax relief. With each dollar being pressed farther and farther, tax cuts are perceived as a readily accessible means of coping with inflation. What is needed, however, is a means of controlling inflation, and eliminating the hidden taxes resulting from inflation which push wage-earners into higher income brackets. Finding solutions to the menacing problem of inflation will help relieve the financial hardships many Americans now face.

Eliminating government waste and inefficiency is another means of relieving the tax burden. Legislation I wrote was adopted by President Carter in his most recent reorganization--consolidating the nation's Emergency Preparedness Agencies into a single department and saving \$15 Million annually.

As Senator, I will continue to fight to cut government waste, provide tax relief to lower and middle income groups, and reform the present tax structure.

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Question: Do you support a national health care program?

I STRONGLY SUPPORT THE KENNEDY NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN BECAUSE I BELIEVE NO AMERICAN SHOULD BE DENIED GOOD HEALTH BECAUSE OF INABILITY TO PAY FOR QUALITY HEALTH CARE. UNDER THE KENNEDY PROGRAM, EVERY AMERICAN--YOUNG OR OLD, RICH OR POOR--WILL BE COVERED BY A COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH CARE PLAN, ONE THAT PROVIDES FOR PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE SERVICES AND THE COSTS OF CATASTROPHIC ILLNESS.

IT IS NOT JUST THE POOR WHO NEED A NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN. SPIRALING HEALTH CARE COSTS HAVE PUT QUALITY CARE OUT OF REACH OF MILLIONS OF AMERICANS. OF THE 42 MILLION AMERICANS WITH INADEQUATE OR NO HEALTH INSURANCE 24 MILLION HAVE INCOMES BETWEEN THE POVERTY LINE AND \$20,000 A YEAR. BECAUSE HEALTH CARE COSTS ARE RISING MUCH FASTER THAN THE RATE OF INFLATION, FIFTY TO SIXTY PERCENT OF FAMILY BANKRUPTCIES ARE DUE TO COSTS OF MEDICAL CARE.

THE KENNEDY NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE PROPOSAL OFFERS THE ONLY REAL HOPE FOR CONTAINING HEALTH CARE COSTS. IT CONTROLS HEALTH CARE COSTS THROUGH APPLYING IMMEDIATE COST CONTAINMENT LEADING TO A PROSPECTIVE BUDGETING SYSTEM OF HOSPITAL AND PHYSICIAN EXPENDITURES. WITHOUT A MEANS OF CONTROLLING THE INCREASE IN HEALTH COSTS, ONLY THE VERY RICH WILL BE ABLE TO AFFORD HEALTH CARE IN THE NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE.

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Question: What kind of energy policy do you think the

United States should adopt?

I feel that a comprehensive energy policy must be one of the top legislative priorities of the 96th Congress. For this reason, I want to serve on the energy committee if I am elected to the Senate.

I favor a comprehensive energy policy which addresses both conservation and the development of renewable energy sources. It is clear that the nation's current reliance on foreign oil is unacceptable. It threatens the stability of our economy, fuels inflation and represents a risk to national security. I therefore favor the expansion of domestic energy supplies including production of oil off the Atlantic Coast, but only if adequate environmental safeguards are enforced. I am opposed to the complete deregulation of natural gas because of the devastating effect it would have on consumers in the Northeast. I am also concerned about the severe social and environmental impacts which would result from massive increases in coal burning.

Coupled with the use of conventional sources, conservation and solar energy can help meet our short-term needs and help decrease our reliance on imported energy. Government policies must encourage and promote the use of energy conservation measures in homes and industry. Every available option must be pursued to develop and commercialize renewable energy sources so that they can eventually assume the central supply role. Incentives such as government sponsorship of research and development, tax credits, loans and loan guarantees should be utilized to encourage their use. A good example of such an incentive is the Tsongas amendment to the 1978 Department of Energy appropriations bill, which provided funding for the government purchase of solar cells for its own use, thereby stimulating increased production and lower costs. It has already brought closer the day when solar electricity will be cost-effective for all Americans.

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Question: Do you support a meaningful sunset law which would set automatic termination dates for specified government agencies?

I not only support sunset legislation, I cosponsored the "Sunset Act" which requires the termination of all federal programs not evaluated and extended every six years. This legislation is important because it will significantly improve our ability to terminate programs which have served their purpose, cut duplicative programs, and require improvement of programs that are not providing the level of service we, the taxpayers, have a right to expect. The sunset legislation I cosponsored can save several hundred million dollars a year as well as increase the effectiveness of our government.

I have always supported more thorough Congressional oversight of federal programs to increase the public accountability of these programs. I cosponsored the "legislative oversight act" to improve Congressional oversight of federal programs. by requiring specific objectives for programs, information on the progress of programs in meeting these objectives, and periodic review of budgetary authority for these programs.

Sunset legislation is one of many steps we can take towards government reorganization to help eliminate the duplication of programs, cut unnecessary spending, and improve services. For example, I have introduced legislation consolidating several emergency preparedness agencies into one. This consolidation, which President Carter is adopting as part of his government reorganization plan, will save about \$15 million a year, eliminate several hundred unnecessary bureaucrats, and simplify the work of state and local governments when applying for disaster relief. I also cosponsored the bill to consolidate energy agencies and programs into the Department of Energy and have supported a federal Consumer Agency to consolidate many existing programs in that area. We can make our government more responsible by simplifying government rules and consolidating duplicative and confusing programs.

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Question: What assistance programs for the elderly do you think could be improved and expanded?

The inadequacies of the current Medicare-medicaid program demand a comprehensive program of national health insurance. I strongly support the Kennedy National Health Insurance Plan which will ensure access to quality health care for all Americans. Until this important legislation is realized, I will fight to reform the current Medicare program to emphasize preventive health care and home health services and to extend coverage to prescription drugs, eyeglasses, hearing aids, and dental services.

There is an unacceptable amount of poverty among older Americans. Social security should be amended to remove the limitation on outside income sources. Extension of CETA to provide job training to the elderly can offer the needed assistance to those senior citizens who want to work, but lack the necessary skills.

Elderly housing and neighborhood deterioration is another area of vital concern. Development projects like the Essex Towers in downtown Lawrence, not only provide senior citizens with affordable, decent and safe housing, but also brings life back into the city. I support legislation like the Housing Community Development Act which I cosponsored. It provides for increases rural housing grants and development of congregate facilities for the elderly in public housing.

Transportation, community nutrition, and the establishment of senior citizen multipurpose centers are other areas for improving and expanding services to the elderly. My record demonstrates my commitment to improving the quality of life for older Americans. As U.S. Senator, I will extend to all of the senior citizens of Massachusetts my commitment to continue to fight on their behalf.