

Castle, Moderates Unveil New Suburban Family Agenda -- May 10, 2006

Will push legislation backed by suburban voters including healthcare, environment, education, anti-crime initiatives

Washington, D.C. -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle, a member of the Suburban Agenda Caucus led by Representative Mark Kirk (R-IL), today participated in the unveiling of a new family agenda for Congress that will focus on addressing the needs and priorities of suburban communities throughout the United States. The Caucus is pushing individual bills backed by voters in suburban areas including 401 Kids Savings Accounts, Health Information Technology, Open Space Conservation and Internet Protection for Kids. Castle was joined by Speaker J. Dennis Hastert, Majority Leader John Boehner, Majority Whip Roy Blunt, and Members of the Suburban Agenda Caucus.

"This announcement, the first in a series of legislative initiatives that Congress is working on will be of huge help to suburban families throughout the U.S. Delaware has a large suburban community due to the surrounding cities of Wilmington, Philadelphia and Baltimore and I find that these pieces of legislation all address issues that are high priorities in the suburban community. I am happy to work with the rest of the Caucus and the leadership to move this agenda forward," Castle said.

The legislation involved as part of the Suburban Agenda is listed below:

1. HR 4894, the School Safety Acquiring Faculty Excellence Act: This legislation directs the Attorney General, at the request of certain state education officials, to conduct fingerprint-based checks of public or private school employees, job applicants, or volunteers for positions involving work with or around children.
2. Internet filters/Parental Warnings on MySpace.com and other networking websites: This legislation expands the Children's Internet Protection Act to include social networking websites.

3. HR 1514, Open Spaces Preservation Act: The legislation obligates 15% of farmland protection funds to help non-federal entities to purchase conservation easements.

4. HR 4157, The Health Information Technology Promotion Act: The legislation creates national standards for electronic medical records by creating the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology and clearly defines its roles and responsibilities within Health and Human Services (HHS). Specifically, the bill requires Secretary of HHS to develop a strategic plan to coordinate implementation efforts for health IT standards, HIPAA transaction standards, and new coding systems.

5. HR 5291, Gang Elimination Act of 2006: The legislation calls on the Attorney General to identify the top three gangs threatening the United States and to submit to Congress a detailed strategy to eliminate these gangs within four years.

6. 410 Kids Family Savings Act: The legislation allows savings accounts to be established in a child's name at birth in amounts up to \$2000 annually. The money for the accounts is contributed after taxes, but interest may accumulate tax-free and withdrawals for approved purposes would be tax-free. Money for the accounts may be used for college education expenses, first time home purchases, and/or could be rolled into a Roth IRA for retirement.