



2013 – A Year in Review:

Congresswoman Duckworth's First Year in Congress

Washington, D.C. – Today, Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth (IL-08) released a report on her first year as representative of the 8th Congressional District. Throughout the past year, Congresswoman Duckworth focused on being accessible to her neighbors, cutting waste and fraud in government and investing in programs that help working families achieve the American Dream. Congresswoman Duckworth remained dedicated to advocating for her constituents and ensuring that they have a strong voice in Congress. The remainder of this report highlights her accomplishments since she took the oath of office in January 2013.

Outreach and Accessibility to Constituents

Holding Herself to a Higher Standard

Congresswoman Duckworth kept her commitment to serve her constituents and work for them. [In February, Duckworth took an 8.4% pay reduction](#), the same percentage that most discretionary programs were cut as a result of the sequester. To date, she has already given over \$10,000 to the U.S. Treasury. Duckworth is also a cosponsor of the No Budget No Pay Act, which would prevent Members of Congress from being paid if they fail to pass a budget.

Congress at Your Corner

Congresswoman Duckworth held more than a dozen [Congress at Your Corner Events](#) (CAYC) throughout the 8th Congressional District. These events are held in venues such as groceries and libraries and are an opportunity for residents to share their questions, comments and concerns with the Congresswoman and her office. Recent CAYCs took place in Lombard, Glendale Heights, Bloomingdale, Elgin, Villa Park, Elmhurst, Streamwood and Palatine.

Roundtables

Congresswoman Duckworth held a variety of roundtables with mayors, state and local officials, advocacy groups and interested constituents. Roundtable discussions include topics like [Manufacturing](#), [Education and Sequestration](#), [Transportation](#), [Veterans](#), Student Loans, Medicare and [Immigration](#).

Casework

Congresswoman Duckworth made it a top priority to help constituents seeking assistance from a federal agency. This includes assistance with Social Security and Medicare payments, Veterans benefits and issues related to immigration. The Congresswoman was proactive in her outreach to her constituents – holding regularly Congress At Your Corner Events and Satellite Office hours throughout the communities. Congresswoman Duckworth is proud that she helped her neighbors solve hundreds of cases and helped them receive over \$238,000 in benefits last year.

Casework highlights are below:

- A constituent in Bloomingdale was waiting almost a year for deposits to his account from an IRS refund. Duckworth's office initiated the request with the Taxpayer Advocates Office who reviewed and approved the case for the IRS to make a check. The constituent received a Direct Deposit in the amount of \$95,063.71 and \$1,649.71 in interest on his 2012 IRS refund.
- A constituent in Hoffman Estates was having issues with her VA benefits. The Congresswoman's office inquired as to why there would be such a long period of time for a disabled person to wait for their benefits. She received \$9,864 as a direct deposit for her retroactive payment on Aid and Attendance from Veterans Affairs after the original filing in 2011.
- A constituent in Wheeling had been waiting over a year to receive her oath ceremony letter from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. The Congresswoman's office made an inquiry to the local field office to find out why there was a delay in processing. Soon after, she received the letter.
- A constituent from Addison came to the Congresswoman for help with VA benefits. The constituent is retired, but VA thought his income was too high to receive benefits. The Congresswoman's office asked it to look further into his case, and VA decided to reinstate his benefits and put him in Priority Group 5, which means he will not have any copays on services provided by VA.
- A homeless constituent in Elk Grove Village was having issues with the Social Security Disability office. He went all the way through the Social Security Disability process but was then audited for the denial. The Congresswoman's office helped expedite his case from the audit bureau and sent it back to the Hearing Judge. The constituent then won approximately \$50,000 in retroactive pay after waiting over 3 years.

Satellite Office Hours

Congresswoman Duckworth's office held satellite office hours throughout the District so that constituents could receive assistance and guidance without having to commute long distances. Satellite office hours were held in towns ranging from Bloomingdale to Bartlett and in convenient locations in these communities, including colleges, mosques, libraries, senior centers and municipality buildings.

[Help with the ACA](#)

Congresswoman Duckworth understands the confusion and frustration with signing up for the affordable care act and many of its provisions. That's why she's held workshops in the district where her neighbors can receive assistance. Her constituents can also receive assistance by contacting her Schaumburg office.

[Constituent Mail](#)

To keep her neighbors informed about her work in Washington, the Congresswoman responded to constituent letters in timely manner. Nearly 50,000 letters were sent out this year, with an average response time of one to two weeks.

[2013 Congressional Art Competition](#)

Congresswoman Duckworth hosted an [Art Competition](#) for students in the 8th Congressional District. The winning piece, by a Palatine High School senior, is currently on display in the Cannon Tunnel of the U.S. Capitol Building.

[Social Media](#)

Congresswoman Duckworth connected with her neighbors through various types of social media. Since January, the Congresswoman held multiple Twitter and Telephone Town Halls and Google hangouts. In addition, the Congresswoman maintained active and informative Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr accounts.

Legislative Successes

Gaining Assistance for Flooded Areas

- Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth (IL-8) joined Senator Dick Durbin (IL-D) and Senator Mark Kirk (IL-R) in a letter to President Obama from the Illinois Congressional Delegation supporting the state of Illinois' request that counties devastated by flooding receive a federal disaster declaration. [Duckworth led the effort to secure support among the members of the Illinois Congressional Delegation](#) in the House of Representatives. DuPage and Kane counties both received significant assistance. Duckworth helped residents in DuPage, Cook and Kane counties receive assistance.
- Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth (IL-08) helped get the Village of Bartlett a FEMA grant of \$3.8 million for a Stormwater Management Project. Funds from this grant will go towards the construction of two stormwater detention bases, a small berm and inlets to more effectively manage and control stormwater and flooding.

Cutting Waste and Fraud in Government

- Duckworth received national attention earlier this year for bringing attention to an IRS contractor exploiting loopholes meant to assist Veterans with disabilities. To prevent this from happening again Duckworth reached across the aisle to work with Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Darrell Issa (R-CA). The SERV Act will clarify the definition of active duty military service and training to exclude enrollment at a military prep school. It will also amend the Small Business Act and prevent individuals who only attended a military preparatory school from claiming "Veteran status" for the purposes of obtaining "Veteran-owned small business status."
- Using her position on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, Congresswoman Duckworth strived to provide greater accountability in government. Congresswoman Duckworth offered provisions to the [National Defense Authorization Act](#). They include returning our military to one camouflage pattern, which could save the U.S. Army nearly \$82 million dollars a year. In addition, Congresswoman Duckworth increased oversight for military equipment purchases. Given the massive cost overruns of programs such as the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) and the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF), Duckworth advocated for stronger oversight of those wasting taxpayer dollars and mechanisms that would root out unnecessary spending.
- Congresswoman Duckworth is a cosponsor and advocate for the [PRIME ACT](#). This bipartisan legislation, introduced by fellow Illinois Congressman Peter Roskam (IL-06), would enact stronger penalties for Medicare and Medicaid fraud and help prevent improper or mistaken payments related to the programs. It will also improve the sharing of fraud data across state and federal agencies and programs.

- In March, Duckworth's bipartisan amendment to the FOIA Oversight and Implementation Act passed the House Oversight and Government Reform committee unanimously. This amendment will make government more transparent by holding federal agencies accountable for unreasonable delays in responding to requests for information from the public.

Small Businesses and Manufacturers

- Duckworth made supporting small businesses and American manufacturers a priority in 2013. The first bill she introduced was the bipartisan [Small Business Paperwork Relief Act](#). This legislation will waive fines for most first time federal paper work infractions by small businesses.
- Congresswoman Duckworth hosted an Export Forum in Schaumburg in collaboration with the Export-Import Bank of the United States, community banks, and the Small Business Administration. The forum was an opportunity for small and medium size businesses, with 500 or less employees, to speak with federal and state government experts about how to increase foreign sales, extend credit to buyers and obtain protection against the risk of nonpayment. Over 100 business owners and members of the community attended.
- Congresswoman Duckworth also worked to make sure that the Affordable Care Act does not inhibit businesses from growing and creating jobs. Congresswoman Duckworth voted to delay the mandate for employers to offer their full-time employee coverage until it is certain that the Affordable Care Act does not hurt our small businesses.
- In November, Duckworth voted to allow her neighbors to keep their health plans when insurance providers began dropping them. She has been disappointed with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act and is a consistent advocate for providing accountability and reform.

Veterans and Members of the Military

- Congresswoman Duckworth introduced the bipartisan [Troop Talent Act](#). A similar bill was introduced in the Senate by Senator Tim Kaine of Virginia. The Troop Talent Act would improve the translation of military skill sets to civilian credentials or licenses, and allow Military Tuition Assistance to be used on courses and programs that guarantee a credential or industry certification after successful completion. Many provisions of the Troop Talent Act were passed as part of the National Defense Authorization Act in the House of Representatives.
- In addition, the Durbin-Duckworth [Service member Student Loan Affordability Act](#) would enable pre-service private or federal student loan debt to be consolidated or refinanced. This allows Service Members with Federal Family Education Loans or Perkins student loans to enroll in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program while they are serving and still take advantage of the 6% rate cap under SCRA.
- In June, Congresswoman Duckworth introduced a [Motion to Recommit to the Fiscal Year 2014 National Defense Authorization Act](#). This Motion to Recommit included more protections for victims of sexual assault in the military. Her amendment empowers victims of sexual assault by providing them with an alternative option to seek justice outside the chain of command.
- Congresswoman Duckworth also founded the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Caucus with Brad Wenstrup (R-OH) who is an Army Reserve physician. The caucus advocates for legislation that support Veterans and members of the military.

Education

- Congresswoman Duckworth helped introduce [H.R. 1595, the Student Loan Relief Act of 2013](#), a bill that was part of the effort that kept student loan rates from doubling in July 2013, and was outspoken in voting against legislation that would cut federal funding for public education. Her Troop Talent Act will also provide educational opportunities to service members transitioning into the private sector.

Transportation

- Congresswoman Duckworth advocated for and personally reached out to Secretary LaHood to gain approval for the construction of the [Elgin-O'Hare Western Access project](#). The project is expected to create 65,000 direct and indirect jobs by 2040 and save drivers \$145 million annually in time and fuel costs. Construction began on the Elgin-O'Hare Western Access project this November.

- She co-sponsored and advocated for legislation for a national infrastructure bank to bring similar projects to Illinois.

Supporting Programs that Assist Working Families

- Congresswoman Duckworth's dedication to preserving Social Security and Medicare remains steadfast. She voted to prevent Medicare from becoming a voucher program and proposed cutting waste and fraud to ensure the long term health of the programs.
- She also worked tirelessly to protect programs that help those in need get back on their feet. [Congresswoman Duckworth offered an amendment to the Farm Bill](#) earlier this year which was unanimously accepted by the House. It would require the Secretary of Agriculture to report to Congress on the effects of SNAP cuts on charitable food providers, like food banks and soup kitchens. Charities including the Church of the Holy Spirit Food Pantry in Schaumburg, IL and the Greater Chicago Food Depository would be greatly impacted by the drastic cuts and Duckworth consistently worked to prevent them.
- After the USPS had announced that it would be moving to a five-day delivery schedule, Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth [sent a letter to Postmaster General Donahoe](#) asking that the Post Office continue delivering medications to all Americans six days a week. Congresswoman Duckworth assembled a bipartisan group of lawmakers to address this issue for groups such as seniors and Veterans. 88 members of the House of Representatives signed Congresswoman Duckworth's bipartisan letter.

Immigration

- Congresswoman Duckworth is a strong advocate for comprehensive immigration reform that is practical, fair and humane. She believes that our country needs a long-term plan that will secure our borders, create a responsible path to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented individuals who are living in the shadows and keep families together.
- On October 14th, Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth (IL-08) announced her co-sponsorship of [H.R. 15, the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act](#). This bill contains many of the same provisions included in the immigration reform bill that passed the Senate in July.
- She is a co-sponsor of the [Protecting Immigrants from Legal Exploitation Act](#). The bill provides penalties for those who mislead immigrants by providing fraudulent services.

Disability Rights

- [Congresswoman Duckworth testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee](#) in support of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Duckworth has been a strong advocate of the CRPD, which is an international framework to protect the rights of people with disabilities based on U.S. Constitutional values and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

CODEL to Afghanistan, UAE and Thailand

- In May, Duckworth traveled on a House Armed Services Committee trip to the United Arab Emirates and Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, Duckworth met with members of the American military and leaders in the Afghan government. There she supported the pursuit of Al Qaeda and on Mother's Day discussed the important role women are playing in Afghanistan.
- She traveled to Thailand where she advocated for U.S. businesses and strengthened the relationship between the two nations. She worked with the U.S. State Department and the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the trip. Duckworth is fluent in Thai and spent part of her childhood in Thailand. Her visit included meetings with US Embassy officials, speaking with American Veterans living in Thailand, discussions with the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangkok and meetings with high ranking members of the Thai government. In her meetings, Duckworth advocated for U.S. businesses exporting to Southeast Asia.