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Return Incumbents To The House

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Connecticut enjoys considerable influence in the U.S. House of Representatives — more than its size would suggest — because of a strong group of incumbents. They include the fifth highest-ranking Democrat in the House, the second highest-ranking Democratic woman in the House, and New England's sole GOP representative, one of a dwindling number of moderate Republicans nationwide. Connecticut's able delegation will help the state and nation weather a tough two years ahead. The Courant endorses them all for re-election.

1st District

In a decade of service, U.S. Rep. *John B. Larson*, 60, of East Hartford has risen to become the fifth-ranking House Democrat, a position that accrues to the benefit of the district. He has taken principled stands against the Iraq war, the Patriot Act and the privatization of Social Security.

But perhaps the best reason to return Mr. Larson for a sixth term is his leadership role in the district. Since he arrived in Congress, he has pushed to revive the state's manufacturing economy by focusing on aerospace, fuel cells and other green technology. He was the driving force behind the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology in East Hartford, which provides services and resources to businesses and entrepreneurs in these industries.

Other political leaders have belatedly discovered the green economy; Mr. Larson was planning for it 10 years ago. There may not be a more important need in the state. He has also been a key player in the successful campaign to have Hartford's Coltsville named a National Historic Landmark, a step which should help the renewal of the former industrial complex.

With about 70,000 registered voters, less than half the Democrats' 180,000 (with 156,000 unaffiliated), Republicans have not aggressively contested the district in years. The GOP nominee this year is Joe Visconti, 51, a first-term West Hartford town councilman mostly known for his opposition to the Blue Back Square project. Green Party candidate Stephen E.D. Fournier, 63, a Hartford lawyer, is also seeking the seat.

2nd District

Joseph Courtney, 55 and a Democrat from Vernon, should be returned for a second term to the House. The sprawling district has many needs, and Mr. Courtney has been responsive to the major ones. He has gotten more shipbuilding work at Electric Boat in Groton, had the Eightmile River included in the

Wild and Scenic River program and pushed hard for the College Cost Reduction Act, a good first step toward solving the increasingly daunting problem of high tuition. He has pushed hard for improved health care.

We did not agree with his decision to vote no on the \$700 billion Economic Stabilization Act a few weeks ago, but we believe Mr. Courtney, normally a team player, understood the vote's importance and agonized over balancing the inclinations of his district, his party and his conscience.

Mr. Courtney has made a strong impression as a freshman, and has the potential to be a most effective congressman.

His principal opponent is Republican Sean Sullivan, 49, of Ledyard, a lawyer and retired Navy captain and former commander of the U.S. Naval Submarine Base in Groton. Mr. Sullivan is an impressive candidate, a conservative who favors stricter spending controls and increased use of nuclear energy as part of a broader alternative energy program.

Green Party candidate G. Scott Deshefy, 56, of Lebanon is also running for the seat.

3rd District

Rosa DeLauro, 65 and a Democrat from New Haven, is seeking a 10th term in the House. She understands better than many of her colleagues the watchdog role that Congress should play, and has pushed hard for greater oversight of consumer goods.

She has been a vocal critic of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, calling it a handmaiden of the industries, and has proposed a bill that would break it into two agencies, one to oversee the safety of food, the other drug safety. Both are vitally important for reasons of health and national security, and Ms. DeLauro should be commended for taking on the issue.

A tenacious lawmaker, she pushed for years for a law guaranteeing equal pay for women and finally got a bill through the House. Same with a bill that would guarantee women who've had breast cancer at least 48 hours in the hospital.

We would like to see Ms. DeLauro intervene more forcefully in the ongoing fiasco about locating an Army Reserve training center in Middletown. She should have the legal language clarified so the Army can find the best location for a base in central Connecticut, and not be limited to sites in Middletown.

As in the 1st District, Republican opposition is token, this time provided by Boaz "Bo" ItsHaky, 49, of Bethany, an Israeli-born acupuncturist who came to this country in 1989 and has unsuccessfully run for first selectman and a state Senate seat. Green Party candidate Ralph A. Ferrucci, 36, of New Haven is also in the race.

4th District

We endorse 21-year Republican incumbent U.S. Rep. *Christopher Shays*, who lives in Bridgeport, both because of what he is and what he represents. He is the last Republican House member from New England, but more important, one of the last Republican moderates in Congress. The GOP loses this limb of the party at its peril and the country's.

Mr. Shays, 63, is a social progressive with a good environmental record and a fiscal conservative. He has one of the best ideas we've seen for immigration reform, a "blue card" granting legal, though noncitizen, status to undocumented workers who don't have criminal records.

He's a hard worker and has stood up to his party's leaders. However, we fervently disagree with his support for the Iraq war and his seemingly changing support of timelines for withdrawal from Iraq. He believes the surge of U.S. troops has calmed the country, but is willing to admit, as some in his party are not, that the surge doesn't justify the war.

Mr. Shays has survived some tough challenges in the past. His task this year is daunting, because he faces an apparent Democratic surge and an impressive challenger.

Democrat Jim Himes, 41, of Greenwich was born in Peru, raised by a single mother in a small town in New Jersey, went to Harvard and won a Rhodes scholarship. He spent 12 years as an investment banker with Goldman, Sachs, running the firm's South American operation, then left in 2002 to head a nonprofit that builds affordable housing.

Unlike so many members of Congress, Mr. Himes actually understands what went wrong with Wall Street. He believes that deficits matter and that the Bush tax policies have added to the country's fiscal problem. He wants to rebuild the country's infrastructure and revive its cities.

Mr. Himes has a good grasp of energy issues and would push for policies that would save energy in buildings, which account for almost 40 percent of U.S. energy consumption.

So, props to Mr. Himes, nod to Mr. Shays.

Green Party candidate Richard Z. Duffee, 60, of Stamford and Libertarian Party candidate Michael Anthony Carrano, 29, of North Haven are also running for the seat.

5th District

When talks between the state and Amtrak lagged over the expansion of commuter rail service on the New HavenHartford Springfield line, U.S. Rep. *Chris Murphy* intervened and got the ball rolling. In doing so, Mr. Murphy, a Democrat from Cheshire and a one-term incumbent, showed that he understood the importance of energy conservation to the nation's future.

Although much of the energy debate has focused on offshore drilling, Mr. Murphy could see that getting people onto trains, and thus out of cars, would save a lot of energy right away. This pragmatic intelligence, the ability to see what is right in front of his nose, has influenced much of Mr. Murphy's work in Congress. He has pushed for more disclosure of profits and CEO salaries in government

contracting, stronger congressional ethics and more federally funded supportive housing. He is the youngest member of the delegation at 35, yet has the poise of a veteran legislator. He said he challenges voters to understand the subtleties of issues — a bold thought. He deserves another term.

His Republican opponent, David Cappiello, 40, is, as Mr. Murphy was two years ago, a bright, young and successful state senator trying to move up.

Mr. Cappiello casts himself as a budget hawk. He opposes public financing of campaigns as well as government-funded health care, and favors a strict immigration policy, a position this page has opposed. He was one of the first Republicans in the legislature to call for the resignation of Gov. John Rowland, with which we agreed. Mr. Cappiello will be heard from again, win or lose.

Green Party candidate Harold H. Burbank II, 51, of Canton, and Independent Thomas L. Winn, 57, of Watertown, round out the list of candidates.

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