

REP. BARNEY FRANK

Take Back America Conference

Campaign for America's Future / Institute for America's Future

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Thank you. I came, accompanied by Congressmen John Kierney and Rush Holt. We can bring one piece, not of good news because we don't get much of that these days, but what passes for joy among us - the absence of bad news. As we left, we got confirmation that the Republican effort to undue the Fair Labor Standards Act tomorrow has been pulled from the floor.

I'm pleased, because first of all substantively it is at least one piece of the New Deal that will survive this crowd; we're not sure about Social Security, public housing and some others. But it also is an indication that I have been looking for desperately that there is at least some limit to the self-abuse in which the moderate Republicans will engage. So, they did finally say that this was a little bit too much and they will not be trying to undue the overtime requirements tomorrow. They may try again, but they folded today.

I did want to say that we have to acknowledge that many of us we have underestimated President Bush intellectually. I believe he is going to astound us by winning a double Nobel Prize this year. As you know, in addition to the long-term prize in literature, recently they added a prize in economics. For his theory that you can pay for two wars with three tax cuts, George W. Bush, I believe, ought to be awarded the double Nobel Prize for economic fiction in this current year.

I want to introduce a really very important figure—Arianna Huffington. It makes sense to introduce Arianna for a number of reasons. Being introduced by a gay Congressman will not be all that new an experience for Arianna, because of who she's been. She is a voice of reason and sanity in the editorial pages of the conservative *Boston Herald*. I don't know whether they are suffering from cultural lag and aren't quite sure who she is now, but she does pop up there from time to time. Arianna has become someone who makes an enormous difference, by virtue of her wide experience in this country, by her personal knowledge of the people, added to her intellect—which is considerable, her marvelous gift for felicitous expression and most important, a set of values that simply could not be turned away—a set of values that put justice and fairness and honesty and integrity at the center of her work, and her work is to try to put those at the center of our politics. I regularly have to write back to my constituents and send them press releases that nobody published and things that we don't get in the press. The media are a whole other subject.

But in an atmosphere in which breaking through the miasma with the cry for decency and fairness and the objection to the outrageous unfairness that is now being perpetrated, Arianna Huffington is one of our most extraordinary assets.

By the way, I gave you some of the good news; the other news is that we were kept late passing their so called late-term abortion bill, which will now presumably pass the Senate and be signed into law. But this whole set of really militantly reactionary public policies that we are dealing with, to which the press has been less alert than it should be—the press would be a lot less alert even than they are if it weren't for the extraordinary gifts that Arianna Huffington brings. She is a marvelous articulator of the values that people here share and I am honored to be able to introduce her. Arianna Huffington.