



Pitts: Editorial requires a response

When a mistake is made, a person of integrity understands that he or she has to face the consequences. I was prepared to "take my lumps" last week after my office sent an embarrassingly out-of-date letter to a constituent.

Predictably, my opponents in the Democratic Party and the blogosphere had a field day with it. I took it in stride. In politics, one has to have thick skin.

I do, however, take exception to the *Intelligencer Journal* editorial from Friday that suggested that I am "out of touch." In our democracy, that is a terribly strong accusation.

No member of Congress works harder to listen to and communicate with constituents than I do. Over the last year alone, I corresponded with fully 38,000 constituents and I helped 2,300 people resolve problems with federal agencies. In the same period, I visited dozens of factories, food pantries, businesses and community groups. I meet annually with township supervisors and other community leaders from all over the district. I hold town hall meetings, both in person and by phone.

I am perhaps the only member of Congress who writes detailed memoranda to constituents, explaining my views and votes on the most important issues: job creation, energy costs, the House health reform bill, the final version of health reform, the stimulus bill, cap and trade legislation and the bailout bill.

In the last few months, I have held several important events in the district. I convened local health care professionals to discuss how the president's health care law will affect patients and employers.

Sen. Pat Toomey and I cosponsored an event with local companies to highlight how Pennsylvania's medical device companies will play a big role in our economic recovery. I even convened an official health subcommittee hearing in Chester County.

Only one of these events was reported by your newspaper, on an inside page. A clerical and database mistake, however, in one out of 38,000 constituent letters was front-page news.

The editorial also criticized my increased fundraising. The amount I raise from national sources has indeed increased. Had you inquired or researched this, you would know that this is typical of senior members of Congress who chair major committees and subcommittees. The better part of this national money is used to strengthen our Republican majority in Congress. Last year alone, I raised and gave more than \$200,000 to candidates and party organizations.

I have spent the better part of my working life in public service: teaching, in combat in Vietnam and in politics.

All of these jobs have required a strong work ethic and the ability to stay cool under fire. I can take criticism when it is fair. When it is not fair, it requires a response.

Joe Pitts, U.S. Representative, 16th Congressional District