



[jerrymcnerney.org](http://jerrymcnerney.org)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
OCTOBER 2, 2006

For more information contact:  
Robert Caughlan  
925-833-0643

## **Pombo Refuses to Investigate Sex Slaves and Sweatshops**

DUBLIN, CA: Jerry McNerney who is running for Congress against Richard Pombo today said, "Pombo's continued failure to investigate the sex-slave scandal in the U.S. Territory of the Mariana Islands is shameful. People have known about these charges for years and Pombo's committee has the ability to stop this abuse. Instead, he has stonewalled many requests for investigation and reform."

The Mariana Islands are a U.S. Trust Territory in the Asian Pacific. They are also home to many large clothing businesses because, until recently, they could put "Made in USA" labels on their products and can still import textiles duty free. However, they do not have to conform to U.S. minimum wage or labor safety laws. But that's just the start of the real scandal. There have been many charges about abuse of the female workers including illegal importation, sex slavery, and forced abortions.

The Sacramento Bee reported Friday that, "Rep. John Doolittle helped Jack Abramoff secure a lucrative lobbying contract with the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in 1999 and then assisted the now-disgraced lobbyist's efforts to route federal money to the islands and defend its garment industry, newly obtained documents show."

Doolittle's opponent, Charlie Brown, has made Doolittle's involvement in the Marianas a major issue. However, the Resources Committee in Congress has jurisdiction over the Mariana Islands, and Richard Pombo is chair of that committee.

"Many people have speculated about the reason Tom DeLay appointed Pombo as chairman of the Resources Committee over more senior members. Some believe it was to protect Abramoff's biggest client, the Mariana Islands. I don't know and DeLay isn't telling. But certainly that was the result." McNerney observed, "DeLay, Doolittle, and Pombo all got huge amounts of money from Abramoff—who earned millions to lobby Congress against enacting U.S. labor standards and immigration practices. The whole thing stinks."

In 2004, a year after assuming the chairmanship that put him in charge of this Trust Territory, Pombo traveled to the Marianas with his brother and other members of Congress. Secretary of the Interior, Gale Norton (who also resigned under a cloud) singled out Pombo's role in getting the islands \$150 million in federal funding to "cope with the social costs of immigration."

But reports about sweatshop conditions and abuses of the female garment workers kept emerging. Recently a national magazine and a documentary film have told stories of forced prostitution and abortions. Pombo has ignored repeated requests by neighboring Congressman George Miller to investigate the situation and resolve the issues. (See Miller's web site for a complete history)

Charlie Brown took out a radio ad blasting Doolittle for his role in the Mariana scandal.

And, Jerry McNerney, Pombo's opponent in the race for the 11<sup>th</sup> Congressional District seat, speaking to a campaign rally near Pleasanton on Saturday said, "Since Richard Pombo refuses to do anything to reform this situation, it will be up to the voters to help clean house by voting for me and removing Mr. Pombo on November 7<sup>th</sup>."

###

*Jerry McNerney is a nationally recognized expert in wind engineering and renewable energy, with a PhD in mathematics. During his career in wind energy, McNerney's work contributed to saving the equivalent of approximately 30 million barrels of oil, or 8.3 million tons of carbon dioxide—the main greenhouse gas—as well as other harmful pollutants. The Democratic nominee for California's 11<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, Jerry has been married for 29 years and has three grown children.*