# [***Congressman visits, speaks with Grand Valley State U. students***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:47KH-0VS0-00K4-14P5-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

"It's an interesting time in politics, in governments," said moderator, Dr. Paul Leidig. The conversation then turned to several issues concerning the American people; some of which where foreign affairs, the Patriot Act, religion in government, taxation, and many others. Congressman Pete Hoekstra was the speaker on these diverse issues as he was on the Grand Valley State University campus Tuesday, November 19.

Hoekstra is a native of the Netherlands, but is now living in Holland, Mi. The House of Representatives elected Hoekstra into the house in 1992. He serves on the Intelligence, Budget, and Education Committees. Hoekstra has visited Grand Valley's campus in the past, and was asked to come again by the College Republicans. The event took place at 2:30 pm in the Pere Marquette Room, in Kirkhof. Students filled the chairs as Hoekstra took on the many political issues that we all face.

Grand Valley State U.

Following Leidig's opening; Hoekstra only took about ten minutes to introduce a few topics that he felt were relevant in politics at this time. He spoke on the "War on Terrorism" and how it affects people in Michigan. "The war on terrorism and the terrorists' attacks on September 11 had a tremendous impact on our economy," said Hoekstra. He hopes that with his position on the Intelligence Committee that citizens of Michigan will put more attention toward what is going on in Afghanistan and with the economy. The Budget Committee is also something that Hoekstra serves on and feels is something that people should care more about. Taxes is why we should care more about this committee said Hoekstra. The surplus that the committee has been creating, and hopes to continue creating, will be used to start paying off government debts and if those debts do not get paid then the public will start paying them, through taxes. "Lots of things going on at the federal level," remarked Hoekstra as he passed the floor onto the students for close to an hour of open questions.

Foreign affairs were the first topic on people's minds. A two-part question about actions in Iraq and dealings with Saddam provided Hoekstra with some good material to speak on. American planes being shot at over Iraq's no-fly zone was a concern, but Hoekstra assured the audience that Iraq can not hit our planes. America's reason for having planes in the no-fly zone is to ensure that Iraq does not have planes up there. Hoekstra explained that Iraq's missiles are radar guided, but they can not leave their radars on for more than a second because then we will know where they are firing from. Because of that they can not take an accurate shot at our planes.

"There is a possibility they will get lucky which will be a very tragic thing, but the likelihood of them hitting us is very, very low," said Hoekstra.

The second part of the question pertained to the concern of Iraq being able to hide the materials they are using from our inspectors. Iraq's been hiding stuff for the past five years, since the last inspectors were there, according to Hoekstra. The substances that Iraq is using leaves certain markers or signatures that the inspectors are trained to pick up on, and satellites are monitoring movements in Iraq incase they try to move any large objects. These precautions and ensuring that the inspectors are able to go anywhere they want should cut down the concern of them being able to hide anything.

A question about the speed and approach that the Bush administration has been taking with Iraq was asked. Hoekstra agreed with the approach that Bush has taken, and that there is no argument that "he is going at it alone", being that we now have support from Sierra and Iran. Along with the foreign affairs topic was a question about North Korea's nuclear capabilities. Hoekstra said that North Korea does not yet have a nuke, but that they could have one within the next 12-18 months, and that they may have the technology to aim and fire it at the U.S. Actions have been taken in stopping shipments of fuel oil to North Korea and putting pressure on them to live up to their agreements of not building nukes, said Hoekstra.

Hoekstra's opinion on the affects of the Patriot Act on civil liberties was asked by an audience member. Hoekstra answered, "I don't think the Patriot Act will really infringe on civil liberties." The government is trying to update surveillance or spy laws on American citizens to match current technology. The objective is only to be able to watch anyone that may have evidence pointing to them being a terrorist, it is a reasonable extension of new technology such as ***cell phones*** and e-mail, said Hoekstra.

A long and in-depth conversation about religion in schools and in the government was sparked by another question concerning civil liberties. A Justice in Alabama that must remove a large piece of granite displaying the Ten Commandments influenced this question.

"I think we've gone the wrong way in this whole separation of church and state... America was not founded on the belief that government should be anti-religious," answered Hoekstra. He mentioned the House of Representatives, and that fact that when you stand at the front of the house looking out at that the panel and look up there is a picture of Moses, and right behind you will be the words "In God We Trust". The house also begins each session with prayer.

Being a republican on the House of Representatives, Hoekstra was asked about their taxation agenda for the year. He listed off a short piece of the republicans agenda, which included cutting capitol gains, changing the tax ratio for dividends to be equal to capitol gains, allow for an increase in losses ( for businesses), and taking a look at Bush's tax plan. One aspect that Hoekstra spoke very strongly on was the death tax. "It's [the death tax] gotta go," he said. The death tax takes 60 percent of you own and gives it to the government when you die, because of that the number of privately owned businesses is dropping why publicly owned and run corporations are growing.

Once the questions slowed down food was brought in and everyone moved about the room talking with Hoekstra and each other about some continuing issues.

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