

[Touching base: Watt visits kids' community garden during city tour](#) (High Point Enterprise – August 10, 2011)

By Paul Johnson

Rep. **Mel Watt** has endured a lot of lessons in Congress this year about budgets, deficits, debt ceilings and the specter of a U.S. government default. On Tuesday, the congressman enjoyed a lesson in his district from a group of High Point children growing vegetables in a well-tended garden near downtown High Point. **Watt**, D-12th, visited with girls and boys who have devoted part of their summer to planting and caring for vegetables through the Fairview Family Resource Center, a program of the nonprofit community group Family Service of the Piedmont. The young gardeners have raised tomatoes, cucumbers, okra and other vegetables at plots next to and near the Southside Recreation Center. **Watt**, as part of his 15th annual Trading Places tour of his congressional district, spent an hour talking with the children and checking out the plants they've nurtured. **Watt** is spending the congressional recess week visiting constituents, an annual summer rite for the 10-term congressman from Charlotte. His district meanders from the Charlotte metropolitan area through the central Piedmont to High Point and the Triad.

Watt's

activities this week will range from preparing popcorn at a retail store to helping as a summer camp counselor.

Watt's

visit takes place during a congressional season that has been bitterly partisan and caustic, even by standards of recent testy disputes on Capitol Hill. One result – national polls after the debt ceiling debate show that public approval of Congress has fallen to modern historic lows, with more than 80 percent of Americans giving Congress poor marks.

Watt

said Tuesday the conservative Tea Party movement has brought another complication to the efforts in Congress to reach compromises. "The Tea Party has created fear among so-called moderate Republicans that if they don't get in line, they'll face a primary challenge. They're intimidating their own people,"

Watt

told The High Point Enterprise.

Watt

acknowledges Democrats in the past would set litmus tests for elected officials or have them face primary challenges. But he said the practice now has become much more pronounced between Tea Party activists and other Republicans.

