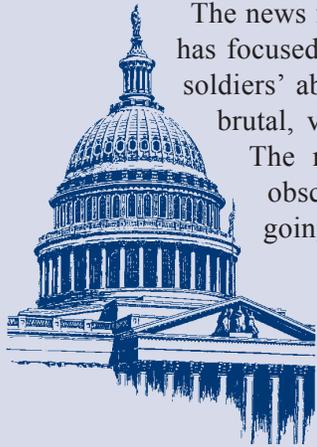


Jo Bonner

THE WASHINGTON CYBER REPORT

315 Cannon House Office Building ★ Washington, DC 20515 ★ (202) 225-4931 ★ May 2004

LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES FOR MAY



The news from Capitol Hill in recent weeks has focused almost exclusively on American soldiers' abuse of prisoners in Iraq and the brutal, videotaped murder of Nick Berg. The media attention on these issues obscured some other important work going on in Congress.

The House passed three significant tax bills to make repeal of the marriage penalty tax permanent, to extend for one year the current income exemptions from the alternative minimum tax (AMT), and to permanently extend the 10 percent individual income tax rate bracket.

After weeks of intense negotiations, House and Senate conferees finally reached agreement on a final budget resolution for fiscal year 2005. The major issue that was difficult to resolve was applying pay-as-you-go (PAYGO) rules to extensions of prior tax cuts, like those mentioned above, and not just to future new tax cuts. The House and Senate are expected to consider the conference report in the coming days.

President Bush asked lawmakers to approve a \$25 billion "contingency reserve fund" for the first quarter of fiscal year 2005 to ensure that the Pentagon has enough money to finance military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan between the end of the current fiscal year on September 30 and the new calendar year. His original budget did not anticipate additional costs for these conflicts, although the House-passed budget resolution did accommodate \$50 billion.

The Senate Armed Services Committee finished its markup of the fiscal 2005 defense authorization bill (S 2229) just in time to convene a high-profile May 7 hearing at which Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld answered questions about the military's abuse of Iraqi prisoners. The House Armed Services Committee completed its work May 12, setting the stage for the full House to take up the bill (HR 4200) on May 19.

SENIOR CITIZENS SEMINAR - JUNE 7

I am pleased to announce that I will be hosting two "senior citizen seminars" on Monday, June 7, 2004. During my recent series of town meetings throughout the First District, many of the men and women in attendance posed questions and shared comments that reflect ongoing confusion regarding both changes to the Medicare program and the new prescription drug benefit.

As a result, I am hosting these conferences in an attempt to provide further information on the revised Medicare program, as well as to provide representatives from the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Social Security Administration, and the financial planning community with the opportunity to share information on retirement and pension benefits and the best way to set financial plans for the future.

Following are the times and locations for these events, as well as a breakdown of the agenda for each:

Monday, June 7th - Event One

James P. Nix Senior Center, One Bayou Drive, Fairhope

8:30-9:00 - Event registration

9:00-9:05 - Welcoming remarks

9:05-9:10 - Remarks by Rep. Phil Gingrey (GA)

9:10-10:30 - Medicare session and Q&A

10:30-11:00 - Financial planning session

11:00-11:15 - Break

11:15-11:45 - Social Security benefits breakout session

11:15-11:45 - VA benefits breakout session

11:45-12:00 - Event wrap-up

Monday, June 7th - Event Two

Mary Abbe Berg Senior Center, 1717 Dauphin Street, Mobile

1:30-2:00 - Event registration

2:00-2:05 - Welcoming remarks

2:05-2:10 - Remarks by Rep. Phil Gingrey (GA)

2:10-3:30 - Medicare session and Q&A

3:30-4:00 - Financial planning session

4:00-4:15 - Break

4:15-4:45 - Social Security benefits breakout session

4:15-4:45 - VA benefits breakout session

4:45-5:00 - Event wrap-up

To register for one of these events, including your preference for the breakout session you wish to attend, or for further questions, please call my office at **800-288-8721**. I anticipate these will be very valuable conferences, and I look forward to having you in attendance.

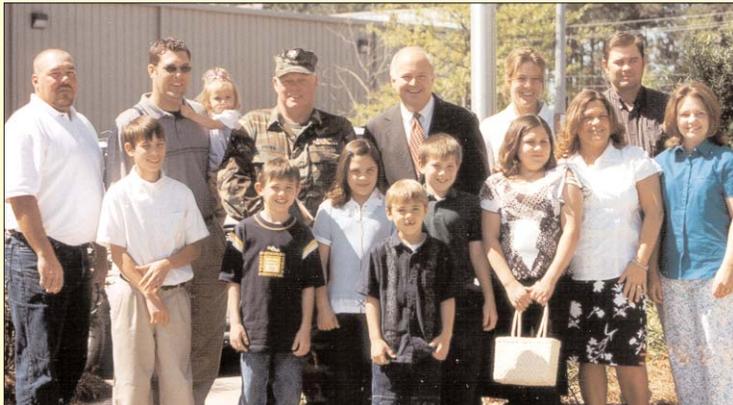
ABU GHRAIB ABUSE ABHORRENT

Like most Americans, I found soldiers' treatment of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison to be abhorrent. There is virtually unanimous revulsion over these incidents. I am extremely disappointed in the actions of what appears to be fewer than twelve soldiers who have single-handedly jeopardized our mission in Iraq.

At the same time, however, I feel it is a mistake to allow the actions of a few soldiers to detract from previous successes and our ongoing mission in Iraq, as well as the positive impact our soldiers have made in the lives of cities and towns throughout that country. In one of my recent weekly news columns, I addressed many of these issues as well as the aftermath of the abuse allegations and the murder of American Nick Berg. This column is available for viewing at the following link: <http://bonner.house.gov/HoR/AL01/News/Columns/2004/Fallout+from+Abu+Ghraib.htm>.

There will undoubtedly be additional investigations into prisoner abuses in Iraq and elsewhere. It is important to our national esteem to get to the bottom of the problems in the military that would allow such activities and to insure they are corrected.

VETERAN AWARDED PURPLE HEART AFTER MORE THAN 30 YEARS



It was a privilege to present the Purple Heart to Mr. David L. Brown, a former member of the United States Navy. Mr. Brown was honored as the result of wounds received in action January 31, 1968 during the Vietnam Conflict. Mr. Brown attempted for over thirty years to obtain this medal, but was unable to locate information verifying his claim. As a result of the efforts of Kay Williams in my district office, this supporting documentation was located, and Mr. Brown received notification of the award from the Navy Personnel Command, Retired Records Section on March 12, 2004.

Pictured above with me is Mr. Brown with his children and grandchildren after the ceremony held in my district office on March 26, 2004.

2004 CONGRESSIONAL ART COMPETITION A SUCCESS

On April 25, 2004, I was pleased to host a reception for the winners of this year's First Congressional District Art Contest, "An Artistic Discovery." I have been honored to continue sponsoring this annual event because of the exposure it provides for talented young artists in our area.



Wilson Rushing poses next to his winning artwork "Wilson Cubed".

"Best in Show" honors were presented to Wilson Rushing, a student at Baker High School. Wilson's piece, "Wilson Cubed," will be displayed in the halls of the United States Capitol complex for one year along with the winners from other congressional districts across the country. A public unveiling ceremony will be held in the Capitol building on Tuesday, July 13, 2004.

Below is a complete list of the winners from this year's competition. Congratulations to all of them for entering such great work!

First Place: Wilson Rushing, Baker High School
Title of Work: "Wilson Cubed"

Second Place: Zach Tapscott, Theodore High School
Title of Work: "Face the Music"

Third Place: Catherine Thames, St. Paul's Episcopal School
Title of Work: "Tessellating Dragons"

Honorable Mention: Kimberly Chilson, Monroe County High School

Title of Work: "Melancholy Midnight"
James Wenzel, St. Paul's Episcopal School
Title of Work: "Still Life"

Lucas McFalls, St. Paul's Episcopal School
Title of Work: "Self Portrait"

Heather Patterson, Davidson High School
Title of Work: "Self Portrait"

From the mailbox...

Congressman Bonner,

Greetings to you and yours from us and ours. Thank you. Words alone are inadequate to express our gratitude to you. For you have exceeded the call of duty to my family and myself. For all you have said and done, if we tried to say Thank You ten thousand times, it would not be enough, nor would it be equivalent to the Thanks that is in our hearts.

You are the best Congressman on the face of the earth, and if there is ever anything my self or my family can do for you, please don't hesitate to call.

Sincerely, A sister to a fallen hero in Iraq

