

# Town Meetings set for March — See schedule on page 2

Alabama's First District

## CONGRESSMAN JO BONNER

### THE WASHINGTON REPORT



315 Cannon House Office Building ★ Washington, DC 20515 ★ (202) 225-4931 ★ Spring 2005



Dear Friend,

In a recent interview with a newspaper reporter, the question was posed, "What has given you the greatest sense of satisfaction from your first term in Congress?"

After pausing for just a

moment, I replied that while there have been many valuable accomplishments over the past two years, perhaps none stands out more than having watched our office — *your* Congressional office — help so many different people with so many various problems.

Whether it is assisting a family or a community get back on its feet following the ravages of Hurricane Ivan or helping an individual obtain a disability benefit to which he or she might be entitled, it is a rare day that our office doesn't have an opportunity to help someone cut through the red tape of the federal government.

That is not to say we can always solve your problem to your satisfaction or get you the answer you are seeking. However, when you find yourself in need of a helping hand, especially if you are dealing with one of the hundreds of government agencies out there, I hope you won't hesitate to call on our team. After all, it is our job to serve as your liaison to the federal government. Please call or write whenever you think we can be of help.

#### *Plate full of challenges, opportunities*

As the 109th Congress gets under way, the challenges that confront us are as daunting as they are filled with opportunity.

Even before we consider tackling some of the "big ticket items" President Bush put before us during his recent State of the Union address (see articles, "Ambitious Agenda," page 2, and "Rx: The State of Social Security," page 4), there is a fairly long laundry list of "unfinished business" that, for

apparent in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Among other things, The Real ID Act's chief aim is to ensure strong security standards for the issuance of drivers' licenses, especially to illegal aliens (it does not mandate a national ID card, as some of its critics have claimed). Other key components of the bill include tightening an asylum system that was abused by the 9/11 terrorists, as well as closing a 3-mile hole in the fortified U.S./Mexico border fence near San Diego.

Another important bill left over from the 108th Congress that should receive early action is the six-year highway and transit bill entitled the Transportation Equity Act - A Legacy for Users (TEA LU).

This bipartisan legislation, H.R. 3, was introduced by Rep. Don Young of Alaska, the chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

If approved by the Senate, TEA LU would provide almost \$284 billion over the next six years in guaranteed federal funding to address the pressing needs of America's highway and transit systems. With more than 42,000 Americans killed each year on our nation's highways — and nearly one-third of all fatal crashes occurring because

of substandard road conditions and roadside hazards — the time to act on this important legislation is now.

#### *Town Meetings/School Visits to Highlight Spring/Summer*

After hosting a record number of town meetings during my first term in office, the temptation might be to slow down and refocus our attention elsewhere.

However, at every one of the 90-plus town meetings we held over the past two years, not only

See **Letter** continued on page 2



*South Alabama couldn't have been better represented than when the Azalea Trail Maids marched in the parade for the 55th Presidential Inauguration on January 20th. Here, the young ladies prepare for a private tour of the Capitol, exchanging their trademark hoop skirts and parasols for a more comfortable - and warmer - pair of jeans and tennis shoes.*

one reason or another, Congress failed to complete during the 108th Congress.

One of the first "carry over" bills to already meet with success in the House is H.R. 418, The Real ID Act, which was introduced by Congressman James Sensenbrenner, R-Wisconsin, and passed the House 261-161 on February 10.

This bill, if approved by the Senate, would address a number of vulnerabilities in our border and homeland security efforts, issues that became

(Letter continued from page 1)

did we come away with a feeling of being accessible, but also with an arsenal of new suggestions about how our government could do things better. One thing is certain: few of the really good ideas you hear on your nightly news ever originate in Washington, D.C.!

Over the course of the next several months, we have another 40 town hall meetings scheduled throughout Southwest Alabama (see opposite column for our first round in March).

In addition to the public meetings we have coming up, my staff and I are well into a comprehensive tour of the more than 250 schools located in the six counties that make up the First Congressional District. Visiting with our nation's future — from children in the first grade all the way up to juniors and seniors in high school — is a constant reminder about our obligation to leave things in a better state than we found them.

As is always the case, I look forward to visiting in your hometown in the coming weeks and months. Please don't ever hesitate to call on us — TOLL FREE — when we can be of service.

All the best...

*To Bowmer*

## GOOD NEWS FOR WASHINGTON COUNTY



Alabama Governor Bob Riley recently joined me and a host of local officials and residents in Chatom for some long-overdue good news on the economic front. AC, Inc., a Huntsville-based company which also operates plants in Clarke and Choctaw counties, recently received an Army contract to make military combat uniforms. The company plans to hire 50 workers initially, with the total workforce possibly going over 200 within the next few years. Chatom Mayor Harold Crouch, as well as other local leaders, deserves a well-earned "pat on the back" for his hard work to bring these new jobs to Washington County. Naturally, I was pleased our office could be of some assistance as well.

## March town meetings scheduled

One of the many accomplishments from the 108th Congress of which I am most proud was the number of town meetings my staff and I held throughout the First District.

In fact, by the end of last year, we had hosted over ninety meetings at locations throughout all six First District counties.

Although this was a demanding and rigorous schedule, it was one we enjoyed completing. As you know, the job of congressman is broken into two broad areas. The first requires that your representative either support or oppose legislation pending before Congress in hopes of trying to best reflect the interests and values of his or her constituents.

The other aspect of the job — and the one which I particularly enjoy — is trying to help constituents cut through the layers of federal bureaucracy and red tape to get the help they need and deserve.

In both cases, my job is made much easier when I can come back home and get feedback and suggestions directly from the people I represent. Following a long-standing tradition of being accessible and bringing "Washington back to South Alabama," our office has continued its history of successful town meetings by scheduling town meetings throughout the First District for the week of March 21. In addition, we are finalizing the schedule for another round of meetings this summer. Please check our website closer to August for a final schedule with times, locations, and dates.

With so many important issues facing our district, our state, and our nation, these meetings will once again be a good opportunity for you to come out and share your opinions. Hope to see you at one of our upcoming town meetings!

### Monday, March 21

- 7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. - Citronelle  
City Hall
- 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. - Satsuma  
City Hall
- 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. - Prichard  
City Hall
- 1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. - Tillman's Corner  
Tillman's Corner Community Center

### Tuesday, March 22

- 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. - Fairhope  
City Hall
- 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. - Foley  
City Hall
- 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. - Gulf Shores  
City Hall
- 2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. - Orange Beach  
City Hall
- 4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. - Robertsedale  
City Hall

### Wednesday, March 23

- 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. - Bay Minette  
City Hall
- 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. - McIntosh  
Town Hall
- 12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. - Chatom  
Town Hall
- 2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. - Jackson  
City Hall
- 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. - Grove Hill  
Town Hall
- 5:30 - 6:30 - Thomasville  
AL Southern Thomasville Campus, Rm. 3004

### Thursday, March 24

- 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. - Beatrice  
Beatrice Baptist Church
- 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. - Monroeville  
City Hall
- 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. - Excel  
Town Hall
- 1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. - Atmore  
City Hall
- 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. - Pollard  
Town Hall

# Keeping the promise of Social Security — Today...and Tomorrow



*"One of America's most important institutions — a symbol of the trust between generations — is also in need of wise and effective reform. Social Security was a great moral success of the 20th century, and we must honor its great purposes in this new century. The system, however, on its current path, is headed toward bankruptcy. And so we must join together to strengthen and save Social Security."*

— President George W. Bush  
State of the Union Address

In recent weeks, President George W. Bush has undertaken perhaps the most ambitious challenge of his administration: an effort to strengthen — and according to the President — save Social Security.

But the President's proposal, built around a new option that would give younger workers the freedom to invest part of their payroll taxes in voluntary personal accounts, is already being hotly debated on Capitol Hill.

Is Social Security a problem that only needs a band-aid, as his critics have suggested?

Or is the President being bold to try to tackle this problem before it becomes a crisis, as his supporters have suggested?

Using the following facts (as established by the Social Security Administration) as well as the proposal from the President, you can be the judge. A First District survey, which includes a number of questions on Social Security, can be found on page 5 of this newsletter, as well as on my homepage at <http://bonner.house.gov>. The results will also be posted on our website.

## Background

During the height of the Great Depression, when 25 percent of all Americans were out of work and millions lost almost everything they owned, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt offered the country a "New Deal" in hopes of providing some much-needed relief during what was then — and remains today — the worst economic crisis in American history.

Many of the social programs that helped to get America back on its feet have long since been discontinued. But one program, Social Security, has stood the test of time. Signed into law on August 14, 1935, the Social Security Act established two social insurance programs on a national scale to help meet the risks of old age and unemployment.

From the outset, Social Security was designed as a pay-as-you-go system, meaning payroll taxes paid by current workers are used to pay the benefits for current retirees.

However, in 1945, when the government first began keeping Social Security statistics, there were 41 workers paying into Social Security for every person receiving benefits.

By 1950, the number of workers paying into Social Security had dropped to 16 workers for every person receiving benefits.

**Number of workers who pay into Social Security for every person receiving benefits**



And today, slightly more than three workers pay into Social Security for every person receiving benefits. By the time today's young workers retire, there will be only two workers to support each person on

Social Security. And in just 13 years, in 2018, Social Security will, for the first time ever, be paying out more than it takes in.

Currently, there are some 45 million Americans receiving Social Security benefits, with millions more nearing retirement.

## The challenge

In fairness, the President has never promised that creating optional personal savings accounts alone will permanently fix the impending Social Security crisis. In fact, in his State of the Union address last month, the President said "fixing Social Security permanently will require an open, candid review of the options." (See our First District survey on page 5 for the option you most prefer).

Under the President's proposal, young workers would be able to set aside up to four percent of their payroll taxes in a personal account — a nest egg, so to speak — that can be called their own, that the government cannot take away, and that they could one day pass on to their children.

Personal accounts would also give younger workers the freedom to share in the benefits of economic growth by participating in markets through sound diversified investments. Currently, Social Security pays out about 1.01 percent annually in return on a taxpayer's investment compared to 9.47 percent under model TSP (see inset).

The President has repeatedly promised that the Social Security system will not change "in any way" for Americans who are 55 or older. Moreover, he has made it clear that participation in this new option would be strictly voluntary, meaning if a taxpayer wanted to stay in the traditional Social Security program, then that option would be available as well.

Clearly, fixing Social Security will require bipartisan cooperation. In the coming months, both Congress and the President will be considering a variety of plans that have been proposed to fix Social Security once and for all, as well as establishing personal accounts.

What are your thoughts? Please complete our survey on page 5.

## DID YOU KNOW...

- ▶ FDR signed the Social Security Act into law on August 14, 1935.
- ▶ Original act was to provide continuing income during retirement. It was expanded over time to cover disabled workers, spouses and dependents.
- ▶ Life expectancy in 1935 was 61 years.
- ▶ Life expectancy today is 77 years.
- ▶ There were 41 workers for every retiree in 1945.
- ▶ There are 3 workers for every retiree today.
- ▶ Number of beneficiaries in 1937: 53,236.
- ▶ Number of beneficiaries in 2001: 45 million.
- ▶ Number of beneficiaries in 2030: 70 million (projected).
- ▶ Between 1949 and today, Social Security payroll tax has grown from 2 percent to 12.4 percent.
- ▶ The combined rate of return for the Federal Employee's Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) over the past 16 years (the plan on which the President is basing the Personal Savings Accounts) is 9.47 percent.
- ▶ According to the Heritage Foundation, the average Social Security rate of return for a married, dual income couple born in 1965 living in South Alabama will be 1.01 percent assuming that couple continues to participate in the Social Security system as it currently exists.

# “Freedom” and “Opportunity” kick off second term

The first two months of 2005 marked a unique moment in the history of the American presidency.

For only the fifth time in the past 40 years, a president delivered both an Inaugural address and a State of the Union address in the same year. At the beginning of their second terms in office, Presidents Johnson, Nixon, Reagan, and Clinton, as well as the current occupant of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, all had the rare opportunity to appear before the American people twice during such a short period of time.

If President George W. Bush used his January 20th Inaugural speech to talk about America's role in spreading freedom and liberty throughout the world, he devoted the vast majority of his State of the Union address to advance a domestic agenda filled with spreading opportunity and ownership here at home.

## Advancing Freedom and Liberty

Set against a backdrop that paid tribute to the men and women of our armed forces, the President's second Inaugural speech, which lasted only 21 minutes, reiterated a common belief that the United States is indeed the beacon of hope and liberty around the globe.

"We will consistently clarify the choice before every ruler and every nation: The moral choice between oppression, which is always wrong, and freedom, which is eternally right," the President said. "America will not pretend that jailed dissidents prefer their chains, or that women welcome humiliation and servitude, or that any human being aspires to live at the mercy of bullies," he added.

Hundreds of South Alabamians and their families who made the journey to Washington joined some 500,000 Americans who braved a cold winter's day to witness the President taking the Oath of Office from an ailing Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist.

Without question, we were all proud to have the lovely Azalea Trail Maids of Mobile and the Auburn University Marching Band represent our great state in the Inaugural Parade.

## Building on success

Just two weeks after being sworn in to his second term in office, the President returned to the Capitol to address a joint session of Congress — and millions of Americans watching from home — as he delivered his fourth State of the Union message since taking office.

During his 53-minute speech, the President touched on many of the major themes he championed during his first term. This list is at the core of his agenda for the next four years as well, and includes many areas which have already received a great deal of attention:

- making the tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 permanent;
- developing and implementing a comprehensive energy poli-

cy which relies on increased production and alternative fuel sources;

- modernizing an out-of-date immigration system; and

- making health care more affordable while providing greater access and options for better coverage for American families.

Not only did the President unveil his list of domestic priorities for his second term, he also talked at length about the successes we have witnessed around the world with democratic elections in the Palestinian territories, Afghanistan, the Ukraine, and most significantly, Iraq.

The President once again paid tribute to the men and women of our armed forces who have sacrificed so much in

the defense of our homeland and in securing freedom for millions of men, women, and children abroad.

Throughout the President's address, many members of Congress — myself included — raised their index fingers which had been dipped in purple ink as a symbolic gesture of solidarity with the newly-freed Iraqi people.

It was a strong sign of the change that has occurred in that country during the past two years from the color of red — representing the color of blood spilled during the 24-year rule of Saddam Hussein — to the hue of purple, marking the fingers of those Iraqi citizens who risked their lives to cast their first votes in freedom.

In what was clearly the most poignant and moving moment of the night, the mother of Marine Corps Sergeant Byron Norwood, recently killed in action in Iraq, and Safia Taleb al-Suhail, an Iraqi woman whose family suffered unmercifully at the hands of Hussein's regime and who cast her first vote in this election, joined in a tearful embrace.

It was a powerful scene: one mother, whose son had given his life in Iraq, embracing another for whose freedom his life had been given. It was difficult to find a dry eye in the House chamber at that point, and even the President was visibly moved by the embrace.

## Expanding Ownership and Opportunity

In outlining his goals for the next four years, the President spent much of his State of the Union address talking about what many see as his top policy initiative: saving Social Security (see article, page 3).

Citing Social Security as one of America's most important institutions, the President said the system "on its current path is headed toward bankruptcy."

In fact, according to the Social Security Administration, Social Security will be paying out more than it takes in just 13 years from now, in 2018. And by the year 2042, if no changes are made, the entire system will be completely exhausted and bankrupt.

"Fixing Social Security permanently will require an open, candid review of the options," the President

said. And in considering a wide range of suggestions to permanently fix Social Security, the President said "we have the responsibility to make the system a better deal for our younger workers."

President Bush promised every American 55 and older that Social Security would not change for them

**“Our generation has dreams of its own, and we also go forward with confidence. The road of Providence is uneven and unpredictable — yet we know where it leads: It leads to freedom.”**

— President George W. Bush

"in any way." He went on to outline a new option, voluntary personal retirement accounts, which he said would guarantee younger workers an opportunity to set aside money "in your own retirement account, so you can build a nest egg for your own future."

The concept behind the President's proposal for voluntary personal retirement accounts is similar to a program that federal employees already have, the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). TSP lets workers deposit a portion of their paychecks into any of five different broadly-based and diversified investment funds.

Unlike current Social Security benefits, retirees would be able to pass along the money that has accumulated in his/her personal account to their children or grandchildren.

## Dream big

The President closed his State of the Union message with a reminder from one of his predecessors, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who said, "Each age is a dream that is dying, or one that is coming to birth."

The President added, "We live in the country where the biggest dreams are born. The abolition of slavery was only a dream — until it was fulfilled. The liberation of Europe from fascism was only a dream — until it was achieved. The fall of imperial communism was only a dream — until, one day, it was accomplished. Our generation has dreams of its own, and we also go forward with confidence. The road of Providence is uneven and unpredictable — yet we know where it leads: It leads to freedom."

For a complete text of both the Inaugural Address and the President's State of the Union, go to [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).



Over 500,000 people — many from South Alabama — braved a cold winter's day to take in the history and the significance of the 55th Presidential Inauguration. In taking the Oath of Office, President Bush became only the 16th president to be sworn in to a second term in office.



Every American soldier — active duty, guard and reserves — can take ownership and pride in knowing that their contributions over the past two years have helped to enable the people of Iraq to vote in their first-ever free election. Here, a group of Iraqi women hold up their purple-stained fingers as a show of pride in their newly-attained freedom. My hope and prayer continues to be with those who make freedom possible, here at home and around the world.

## What do you think?

With so many important issues being considered by Congress, please share with me your thoughts on some of the following "hot topics" making the news. Please circle your choices and return this survey to the address listed below. Thanks for your input.

### Social Security

1. Do you agree with the President that Congress should begin work now to keep Social Security from going bankrupt or do you think this should be left to future administrations and future Congresses to solve?

- A. The President and Congress should begin work now
- B. Social Security isn't in a crisis; this can wait until later

2. Do you favor or oppose the President's proposal to create voluntary Personal Retirement Accounts as part of the Social Security system?

- A. Strongly favor
- B. Somewhat favor
- C. Somewhat oppose
- D. Strongly oppose

3. Over the years, several recommendations have been made to keep Social Security from going bankrupt. Would you favor:

- A. Indexing benefits to prices rather than wages
- B. Increase the retirement age
- C. Discourage early collection of Social Security benefits
- D. Change the way benefits are calculated
- E. Means-test or otherwise limit the benefits for wealthy retirees

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to receive my weekly column and monthly cyber report via email, please

provide your email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Return to: Congressman Jo Bonner, 1141 Montlimar Drive, Suite 3010, Mobile, AL 36609

### Taxes

4. Over the past four years, has the amount of federal taxes you have paid:

- A. Increased
- B. Decreased
- C. Stayed about the same

5. Thinking about the country's tax system, do you think:

- A. The current tax system works pretty well as it is now
- B. Some changes are needed, but basically it should stay the same
- C. Major changes are needed
- D. A complete overhaul of the current system is needed

6. If you answered C or D to question 5, would you prefer to replace our current tax system with:

- A. A simple flat tax that could be filled out on a form the size of a post card
- B. A national sales tax which would replace our current income tax and, in so doing, eliminate the need for the Internal Revenue Service

7. Which of the following bothers you the most about taxes:

- A. The large amount you pay in taxes
- B. The complexity of the tax system
- C. The feeling that some wealthy people get away with not paying their fair share
- D. That some low income workers pay no federal income tax

## Projects Funded in FY 2005

The conclusion of the 108th Congress also brought with it the conclusion of the appropriations process for Fiscal Year 2005.

While most of the thirteen annual appropriations bills which fund the federal government were completed and passed by the House of Representatives — and four had also been passed by the Senate and signed into law by the President — it became necessary for Congress to bundle the remaining nine appropriations measures into one omnibus bill. The final measure was passed by the full House on November 20, 2004, by a vote of 344-51.

Ideally, each of these thirteen bills should have been passed by both houses of Congress prior to October 1, the start of the new fiscal year. Unfortunately, the unfinished appropriations bills have been grouped into one omnibus measure for the last two years.

I'll be the first to admit that the omnibus process is far from perfect. That said, passage of the omnibus, even with all its shortcomings, provided some significant benefits for South Alabama. The list below represents a pretty solid return on the tax dollars we send to Washington in the first place. Special thanks to the many educational, community, and business leaders who worked tirelessly to make your needs and priorities known to those of us on Capitol Hill.

An artist's rendering of the new Cancer Center at the University of South Alabama. Groundbreaking on the \$120 million-plus facility will occur this spring.



### Federally funded South Alabama projects\*

Alabama School of Math & Science.....	\$100,000
Alabama State Docks - Choctaw Point terminal.....	\$10,000,000
Alabama State Docks - Garrows Bend.....	\$1,000,000
Alabama State Docks - Harbor dredging.....	\$20,000,000
Brewton flood study.....	\$145,000
Clarke County Economic Development Initiative.....	\$750,000
Fairhope Arts Center.....	\$250,000
14-Mile Bridge.....	\$5,500,000
Jackson water improvements.....	\$250,000
Mobile Airport Authority - runway.....	\$1,000,000
Mobile, City of - Saenger Theatre.....	\$200,000
Mobile, City of - Greenways/Broad St. initiative.....	\$1,000,000
Mobile Infirmary digital mammography.....	\$100,000
Mobile-Tensaw Delta.....	\$1,200,000
Alabama national forests.....	\$1,900,000
Orange Beach - Hwy. 82 lighting.....	\$250,000
Orange Beach - Robinson Island.....	\$1,000,000
Southern Rapid Rail - Hamilton Blvd. grade crossing.....	\$1,000,000
USA Youth Violence Prevention.....	\$700,000
USA oyster bed reseeding.....	\$800,000
USA Cancer Institute.....	\$20,250,000
USA Smart Energy Management.....	\$1,000,000
USA Coastal Transportation Engineering.....	\$750,000
USA Center for Rural Vehicular Trauma.....	\$500,000
USA Center for Estuarine Research.....	\$1,000,000
USA Mitchell College of Business.....	\$400,000

\*Actual funding will be reduced a small amount by an across the board cut.

## 108th Legislative Wrap-Up

The second session of the 108th Congress, while active, regretfully did not result in the passage of some critical legislation.

Aside from the delays that arose during deliberation of such measures as the national energy policy and the implementation of harsher penalties for the broadcast of indecent material, obligations in our home districts leading up to November 2 curtailed congressional activity in the nation's capital.

Nevertheless, in the final months of the session, we were able to pass some important legislation that will affect Americans at home and abroad. Some of these measures include:

- ▶ **Intelligence Reform Act.** The conference report for the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act, which passed the House by a vote of 336-75, will have far-reaching effects on the nation's intelligence community. From the creation of a new director of national intelligence (the President recently nominated Ambassador John Negroponte to assume this important post), to the streamlining of our intelligence services, this legislation is intended to have a significant impact on our national security in our post-9/11 world.

- ▶ **Across-the-board tax relief.** The tax legislation passed by Congress and signed into law by the President increases the Child Tax Credit, eliminates the marriage penalty, and creates a 10 percent bracket, saving the typical family of four over \$900 next year.

- ▶ **Emergency wartime supplemental.** Congress approved an additional \$25 billion for military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq to ensure our men and women serving overseas have the equipment and support to carry out their mission.

- ▶ **A ban on new Internet-access taxes** was extended until 2007. The previous ban had expired on November 1, 2003, and representatives of Internet and technology industries had expressed concern that individual state legislatures would take the opportunity to impose new taxes on both Internet service providers and their consumers.

- ▶ **Federal programs used to provide the resources to educate nearly 6.7 million disabled students** were reauthorized. This legislation, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), calls for \$12.4 billion in funding for special education programs in FY 2005 and a gradual increase to \$26.1 billion by FY 2011.

With the 109th Congress now underway, there are obviously many issues left unfinished which we should have the opportunity to consider. Among these items are a six-year reauthorization of the nation's surface transportation law that is important in determining the allocation of highway money to individual states, and the completion of work on a new and comprehensive energy policy — a measure which passed the House of Representatives twice in the 108th Congress.

Additionally, we must work even harder to bring fiscal discipline to our spending in Congress and ensure that we exercise greater responsibility in the manner in which we spend your money.

Make no mistake, the next several months promise to be filled with some tremendous challenges, and your input will be important. I encourage you to contact my office or visit with me at one of my upcoming town meetings to make your views known on these and other important issues.



*I was honored to be recognized by the National Association of Manufacturers for my work on legislative issues important to the manufacturing and small business community. Pictured with me are Tom Bates, Vice President and Site Manager for the Degussa Plant in Theodore, and Win Hallett, President of the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce.*

## Alabama native takes helm of State Department

Earlier this year, Birmingham, Alabama-native Dr. Condoleezza Rice joined the ranks of famous sons and daughters of our state when she was confirmed as the 66th Secretary of State of the United States. Her appointment to this position by President Bush followed a long tenure as head of the National Security Agency (NSA).



I know I speak for men and women throughout this state when I say how proud I am of Dr. Rice and her great accomplishments. Even in the face of the obstacles she faced as a child growing up in Birmingham — the challenges of a segregated South, an educational system which offered her no promise for a bright future, and life as a child whose parents had died at a young age and who was being raised by relatives — Dr. Rice persevered, set goals, and met every challenge thrown in her path. As the first female African-American secretary of state, she has established herself as a strong role model for young men and women everywhere and will undoubtedly provide the same level of commitment and dedication to our President and country as she has throughout her long, distinguished career.



Arizona Senator John McCain is one of many interesting guests to have appeared on our weekly television show, "Congressional Report." For the past 32 years, WKRK-TV News 5 in Mobile has aired the show as a part of their Sunday morning programming. Tune in each week at 10:00 a.m. for a timely discussion on some of the stories making the news in Washington as well as back home along the Gulf Coast.

## Congratulations to our 2005 academy nominees!

As any student of American history knows, the five U.S. Service Academies have produced some of the finest leaders the world has ever known.

Moreover, the education students receive at these institutions — the United States Military Academy at West Point, the Naval Academy at Annapolis, the Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, the Coast Guard Academy at New London and the Merchant Marine Academy at King's Point — is one of the best money can buy.

Recently, I was privileged to host my second annual Academy Night for students interested in obtaining information on the nomination process for these five institutions. The turnout at the Dr. Monte L. Moorer Theatre of St. Paul's Episcopal School in Mobile was very encouraging, and I was pleased that so many young men and women from throughout South Alabama expressed an interest in this process.

Listed below are the names of the 26 young men and women I was privileged to nominate for the Academies' consideration. Not surprisingly, many have already received their appointments to begin their college careers later this year.

For those South Alabama students interested in attending a service academy, it is never too soon to begin the nomination process. One thing is certain: gaining admission to one of the five academies is not easy.

However, it is a great opportunity for anyone interested in pursuing a degree and career through the military, Coast Guard, or Merchant Marine.

Students currently completing their junior year in high school are eligible to apply for a nomination in the spring of 2005, and the nomination file must be completed in my office by December 1, 2005.

In addition to the basic age requirements, candidates for admission must also display significant degrees of academic achievement (displayed by high school transcripts as well as SAT and ACT scores); have demonstrated leadership in school, church, or community activities; be of good moral character; and successfully complete a medical review and physical aptitude examination.

Our office looks forward to working with any interested students and their families towards a nomination to one of the five academies. For more information, you should contact my Mobile district office at 251-690-2811 or 1-800-288-8721. Additionally, information is available on my website at <http://bonner.house.gov>.



Amanda Beck



Charmaine Brown



Hank Bullock



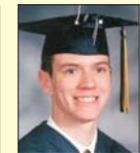
Tim Diegmann



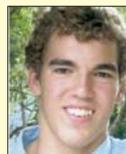
Ben Duke



Mason Dyess



Jimmy Gendron



Glen Gregory



Crockett Hailey



Andrew Haire



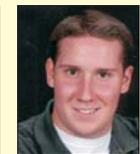
Harry Hardman



Christine Hernandez



Donell Hill



Bradley Howard



Chardette James



Dan Keyser



Caleb Laub



Tara Lenn



Steele Lightfoot



Lucas Napper



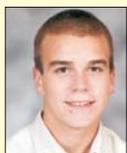
Jerry Pribyl



Eric Rew



John Smith



Dylan Vest



Justin Williams



Aaron Williamson



Recently, my staff and I bid a fond farewell to our longtime friend and associate, Nancy Tippins, who said good-bye after almost thirty years. Nancy, shown above with my predecessors and her two former bosses, Jack Edwards and Sonny Callahan, logged in almost three decades of service to the people of South Alabama, culminating in her service as my legislative director. While we naturally are sorry to lose Nancy's wealth of experience, I am pleased she has chosen to make South Alabama her new home.

## Still among most conservative

Each year, the highly respected, non-partisan magazine *National Journal* releases its rankings of the most liberal and conservative members of Congress.

The rankings for each member of the House of Representatives and Senate are calculated based on a series of votes on a wide range of social, economic, and fiscal legislative issues. This year, *National Journal* compiled a list of 149 key votes taken by both the House and Senate.

For the second year in a row, my vote rating placed me among the most conservative members of Congress, placing second among the nine-member Alabama Congressional delegation with a score of 87 out of a possible 100.

While labels such as "conservative" and "liberal" typically miss the point, my staff and I work overtime to always reflect the conservative values and ideals of my constituents in South Alabama. It's an honor for us to have the opportunity to serve you during this historic time.

## How to Contact Us...

**DC Office:**  
315 Cannon HOB  
Washington, DC 20515  
Phone: (202) 225-4931  
Fax: (202) 225-0562

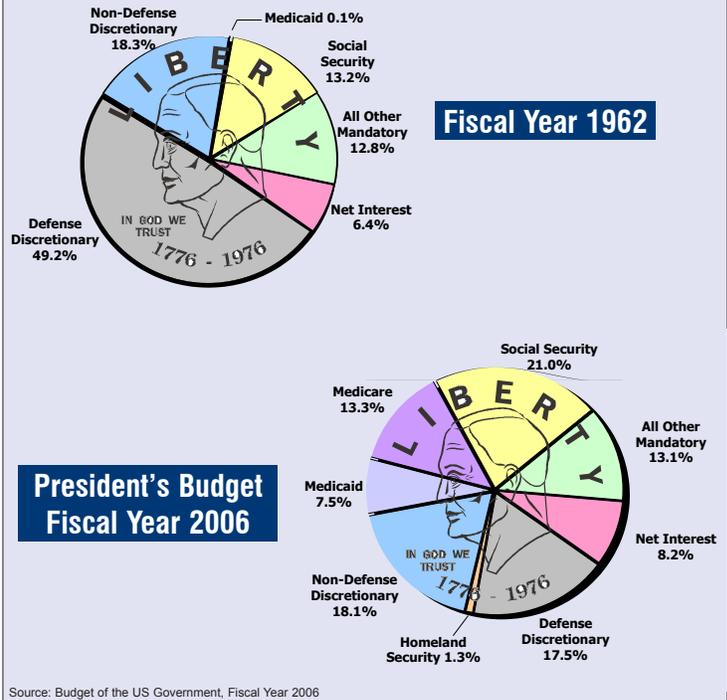
**Mobile Office:**  
1141 Montlamar Drive  
Suite 3010  
Mobile, AL 36609  
Phone: (251) 690-2811  
Fax: (251)342-0404  
Toll Free: 1-800-288-8721

**Baldwin County Office:**  
1302 N. McKenzie St.  
Foley, AL 36535  
Phone: (251) 943-2073  
Fax: (251) 943-2093

Web site: <http://bonner.house.gov>

## Did you know...

### The Federal Government Dollar Spending



## Transit Summit big success

Recently, Envision Coastal Alabama hosted the 2005 Regional Transit Summit in Mobile, with over 250 community leaders in attendance. The Transit Summit was a follow-up to the Southwest Alabama Leadership Summit, which I hosted in November 2003. The overall goal of both meetings has been to develop a long-range, regional approach to economic development.

Envision Coastal Alabama is a program started by the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce in recent years to bring the citizens of Mobile and Baldwin Counties together to develop plans for bringing new business and residential growth to the area.

This year's conference, which expanded its focus to include all six First Congressional District counties, was intended to allow interested parties to contribute to a regional discussion on the public transportation needs of our area. The improvement of our transit infrastructure is vital as we look for ways to attract new industry and enhance economic and workforce development.

I was pleased that my friend and colleague, Congressman Artur Davis of Birmingham, was able to join me at this important event.



My friend and colleague, Congressman Artur Davis (left), recently traveled to Mobile to give the keynote address at the 2005 Regional Transit Summit. Pictured with us is Dr. Phil Norris, Director of the University of South Alabama Fairhope Campus and Envision Coastal Alabama Equity co-chair.