



Dear Friend

It is a tremendous honor to bring you this update from Washington, D.C. — my first as your representative in our nation's capital. Since newsletters such as this are time consuming and often costly to produce, we wanted to make certain we had all of our offices up and fully operational before we published our very first newsletter.

As you can imagine, the first seven months in office have certainly been an exciting and memorable time for my family and me. Not a day has passed since I took the Oath of Office on January 7th that I haven't given thanks to God for the privilege you have given me to be your voice and link to the many important issues facing our country.

As only the fourth person to represent the First Congressional District in the past 66 years, I realize some pretty big shoes have been worn by my three most immediate predecessors — former congressmen Frank Boykin, Jack Edwards and Sonny Callahan.

When combined, these three men provided nearly seven decades of outstanding constituent-oriented representation in the U.S. Congress, each leaving their own indelible mark on Alabama history. Every man, woman and child who called on them for assistance could always be assured they would receive the best representation possible.

It is, therefore, with the same commitment to hard work and fairness for one and all — regardless of race, religion or political persuasion — that I begin my service in the federal legislature.

"The People's House"

Since the formal establishment of Congress in the late 18th century, only 11,647 men and women have served in the House. When you consider the hundreds of millions of people who have called

America home over the past 227 years, it becomes very clear just how small the percentage is of people who have been honored to sit in the House chamber and participate in some of the great debates that have defined our past and shaped our future.

There's an even more fascinating fact about serving in Congress that bears mentioning.

Our Constitution allows men and women to be appointed to serve in the U.S. Senate in the event of a vacancy. Even former President Gerald Ford showed in the early-1970s that you could end up in the Oval Office without ever being elected by the American people.

But our Founding Fathers, in their infinite wisdom, intended for the House of Representatives to always remain "the People's House." To ensure this legacy, the only way you can serve in Congress is to be elected by the people you represent.

As I've said many times over the past several months, my staff and I work for you, the people of South Alabama — all 635,300 men, women and children who live in the six First District counties of Baldwin, Clarke, Escambia, Mobile, Monroe and Washington.

While it is impossible to believe we can make everyone happy all of the time — in fact, that is not even a goal given the vast number of controversial issues which come before Congress for debate and a vote — it is my intention to always give you the kind of service for which you can be proud: honest, dedicated public service that at all times puts the best interests of the entire area first.

Challenging times, hopeful signs

If you were to keep a diary, the first seven months of 2003 would be unlike any comparable period in recent history.

Ranging from tragedy — such as when we awoke one Saturday morning in February to learn the Space Shuttle Columbia had exploded just minutes before touchdown at Cape Canaveral, Florida, killing all seven astronauts on board — to moments of triumph, such as when the world witnessed the people of Iraq pulling down

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Thirty town meetings held

More scheduled this month

As members of the U.S. House of Representatives, congressmen often wear two hats.

One portion of the job requires that they support or oppose legislation that is pending before Congress in hopes of trying to best reflect the interests and concerns of their constituency.

The other portion of the job and, quite frankly, the one I particularly enjoy is trying to help cut through the layers of federal bureaucracy and red tape in order to help a constituent receive the benefits he or she deserve.

Both responsibilities, however, are made easier when your representative works overtime to be accountable to the people who sent him to Washington in the first place. And following a long-standing tradition of being accessible and bringing "Washington back to South Alabama," our office is continuing with a regular slate of "town hall" meetings every time the Congressional calendar permits.

Already this year, we have held over 30 town meetings in communities throughout all six First District counties. My personal goal is to hold some 60 meetings by the end of my first year in office.

Following a model established by my predecessor, former Congressman Sonny Callahan, these town meetings provide you and your neighbors with an opportunity to express your views on an assortment of timely national issues.

See Town Meetings continued on page 3



One of Baldwin County's most civic-minded leaders, Mr. Jimmy Faulkner, was on hand to welcome us to our first Bay Minette Town Meeting and to talk about issues of importance to his community.



In all likelihood, our recent town meeting in Perdue Hill, population approximately 250, was the first one in the history of this Monroe County community. More than 50 people turned out to welcome my staff and me to discuss current events in Washington.

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Reflections from the first 7 months

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a statue of Saddam Hussein and ripping it apart, piece-by-piece — it is truly hard to recall a time when there have been as many domestic and international challenges that have more directly affected our own way of life.

Such incidents have certainly played into making the Congressional calendar one of the busiest and, at times, most contentious I have witnessed in many years.

In January, the president used his State of the Union speech to urge Congress to pass a Jobs and Growth Bill to get a sluggish economy moving in the right direction again.

Although the tax relief portion of what Congress eventually passed and the president signed into law differed in both size and degree from what the Bush administration had initially requested, the early signs indicate the national economy is finally moving in the right direction again after a decline which began in the closing months of the previous Clinton administration and worsened significantly in the aftermath of September 11.

Of major importance to those of us in South Alabama, however, is the assurance that as the national economy continues to improve, our own local economy must begin to turn around as well after more than a decade of disappointment in many sectors.

While the debates were sometimes heated on what it would take to get the economy growing again, there was bipartisan support for President Bush's decision to move forward with Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Although the war phase was prosecuted in near-record time and brought with it an end to one of the most oppressive regimes in modern times, many legitimate questions remain in terms of how long our presence will be required and what kind of country will eventually evolve as a free Iraq comes of age.

Sadly, the cost of war became personal to many of us in Alabama as some of our best and brightest made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country.

Each of these losses should make us all pause and give thanks that our nation is still full of young men and women who volunteer every day in defense of this great country and the liberties we hold so dear.

Strengthening Medicare, Providing help with Prescription Drugs

In the midst of debates on an economic stimulus package and finding ourselves involved in two wars (Iraq and the ongoing war on terrorism), Congress also found a way to pass the budget ahead of schedule, marking only the sixth time in the last 29 years that the April 15 budget deadline was met.

In addition to funding key domestic and international priorities for the upcoming fiscal year, the budget also maintains a modest degree of spending

discipline with a pledge to hold government spending growth to 4%.

Included in the budget resolution is \$400 billion over 10 years to modernize and improve Medicare and to add a prescription drug benefit for our neediest senior citizens.

Since its creation in 1965, Medicare has improved the quality of lives of millions of senior citizens. And thanks to technological advances in health care, today's seniors are living longer, healthier lives than any generation in our nation's history.

However, the health care we enjoy today is much different (and much more expensive) than it was 40



With some 150 friends and relatives on hand, January 7th will definitely go down as a special day in the family scrapbook. House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert administers the Oath of Office in a private ceremony in his office.

HOUSE ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE 108TH CONGRESS

- Passed Medicare prescription drug benefit
- Passed first Homeland Security Appropriations
- Passed legislation to provide better access to health insurance for small business employees
- Passed law establishing Health Savings Accounts
- Passed permanent repeal of Death Tax
- Passed bill to accelerate refundable child tax credits to low income families
- Passed bill to curb abuses of class action lawsuits
- Passed the Jobs and Growth Act
- Passed Healthy Forest Initiative
- Passed comprehensive energy plan
- Passed the President's Emergency Plan for Global AIDS Relief
- Created national Amber alert system
- Passed Partial Birth Abortion Ban
- Passed Patient Safety legislation
- Extended unemployment benefits for out-of-work Americans
- Passed ban on human cloning to prevent the creation of human embryos
- Passed wartime budget
- Passed welfare reform

years ago. And given the fact that Medicare had not adapted to the 21st Century, it became all the more imperative that Congress do something now to preserve Medicare — and modernize it. House passage of H.R. 1, the Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act of 2003, on June 27, offers possibly the best opportunity since Medicare's inception to strengthen it and make it more adaptable to today's challenges.

At the time this newsletter was going to print, the

House and Senate were still working out the differences, which were considerable, between our two bills. It is my hope, at the end of the day, the three guiding principles contained in the House version of this legislation will remain intact.

Principle 1: Guarantee all senior citizens an affordable prescription drug benefit under Medicare. It would allow all seniors to voluntarily participate in a Medicare plan that provides prescription drug coverage and negotiates discounts. It would help seniors lower their prescription drug costs. And it would provide additional assistance for low-income seniors who need the most help to improve their quality of life.

Principle 2: Protect senior citizens with the right to choose a benefits package that is best for them. It would provide seniors with a better range of planned options than under Medicare. It would also cap out-of-pocket costs so seniors won't risk bankruptcy in case of serious or catastrophic illness.

Principle 3: Strengthen Medicare for all senior citizens and for future generations by ensuring delivery of needed health care services in rural and urban America. It would also create structural improvements to curb runaway health care costs that jeopardize Medicare's financial future.

Looking ahead

Clearly, no one has a crystal ball or can predict what lies ahead for the United States or South Alabama, for that matter, in the coming weeks and months.

Certainly, the challenges we continue to face here at home — affordable prescription drugs, a strong homeland defense to combat terrorism, the need for a resurgent economy and more jobs — would be at the top of most individuals' lists. Not surprisingly, those items and many more are at the forefront of our efforts in the House of Representatives through the remainder of the 108th Congress.

Whether it is developing a comprehensive national energy policy to help America become more independent from foreign oil and gas, putting a permanent end to the onerous death tax or promoting children's safety by expanding Amber Alerts, you can be assured of one thing — there is always something important on the front-burner of the American agenda.

And that agenda — our agenda — can only be made more inclusive if your views are expressed and your voice is heard.

That is one of my primary roles and responsibilities as your U.S. Congressman. It is a privilege you have given me; it is an honor I take seriously.

I hope you will accept this as your personal invitation to contact our office anytime you feel we can be of service or assistance. And thank you, once again, for the opportunity to be your representative from South Alabama. Hope our paths cross soon.

A fallen hero: PFC Howard Johnson, II

Hundreds of South Alabama families have been affected by the recent war in Iraq, with loved ones being called up and deployed overseas as well as to other assignments here in the states.

While, thankfully, the recent war proceeded at a rate much quicker than was initially anticipated, it unfortunately did not do so without the loss of some of our finest young men and women.

The first Alabama casualty of the war hit especially close to home as literally thousands of people throughout the First Congressional District were deeply saddened by the combat-related death of PFC Howard Johnson, II, of Mobile.

At the time of his death, Private Johnson was serving with the Army's 507th Maintenance Company based out of Fort Bliss, Texas. His unit was ambushed in the early days of the war as it was moving to a forward position in Iraq to provide defensive cover for advancing troops.

A 2001 graduate of LeFlore High School, Howard joined the Army immediately upon graduation. Like so many other young men and women, he put choices he could have made with his life on hold to devote the next several years to the defense of this great country and the liberties which we hold so important.

By making the voluntary decision to protect his country and fellow citizens, and by participating in the liberation of people he had never met in a country thousands of miles away from home, Howard Johnson, II, displayed the very best qualities found today in so many of our armed services personnel.

We should all be grateful and proud of his commitment and dedication, and offer our prayers for him, his family and all the members of our armed forces at home and abroad.

Other Alabamians who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in Operation Iraqi Freedom include: Pfc. John E. Brown, 21, Troy, April 14, 2003; Chief Warrant Officer 2 Robert William Channell, Jr., 36, Tuscaloosa, April 22, 2003; Sgt. Timothy M. Conneway, 22, Enterprise, June 28, 2003; Sgt. Troy David Jenkins, 25, Repton, April 19, 2003; Spc. Cedric L. Lennon, 32, West Blocton, June 24, 2003; and Pvt. Kelley S. Prewitt, 24, April 6, 2003.



PFC Howard Johnson, II

Town Meetings set for August

(continued from page 1)

In addition, members of my district staff are always available to help with any cases or matters that need a personal touch. Listed below is the schedule for the next series of town meetings — 12 in all — that are coming up in August. In addition, let me encourage you to check your local newspaper, my Internet website, or call our district office at 251-690-2811 or 1-800-288-8721 to find out when and where our next series of meetings will be held.

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

<u>Tuesday, August 12</u>	<u>Wednesday, August 27</u>
9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. - Fort Morgan Peninsula Golf Club	8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. - McIntosh McIntosh Town Hall
11:00 a.m. - Noon - Elberta Elberta Town Hall	10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. - Jackson Jackson City Hall
3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. - Silverhill Silverhill Little Hall	2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. - Millry Millry Town Hall
<u>Wednesday, August 20</u>	<u>Thursday, August 28</u>
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. - Excel Excel Town Hall	8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. - Wilmer First Baptist Church of Wilmer
2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. - East Brewton East Brewton Council Chambers	10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. - Satsuma Satsuma Town Hall
4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. - Poarch Creek Indian Reservation Tribal Auditorium Building 200	2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. - Irvington Irvington United Methodist Church

New Baldwin County Office open to serve South Alabama

This spring, close to 200 well-wishers were on hand to help cut the ribbon and open the doors to our new Baldwin County Congressional Office, located on Highway 59 in Foley.

In a district of 635,300 people, it is often difficult for many constituents to travel to Washington, D.C., or visit our main office in Mobile to meet with me or members of my staff on various issues of concern.

In an effort to be even more accessible in the months and years to come, we made the decision to open a second district office, with the sole purpose being to make the constituent service you receive from our team second-to-none.

Given that Baldwin County is one of the fastest-growing counties in Alabama, it only made sense to put the new office in an area central to this growth.

Already, the response to our new office has been tremendous. As more and more people realize this office is open, constituents from Baldwin County, as well as other parts of the district, are finding our new office both convenient and useful. Jon Hand, my field representative who is responsible for visiting Monroe, Escambia and Baldwin County communities each month, is also the manager of our new Baldwin County office. Let me encourage you to call on this new resource anytime you feel we can be of service. The address and telephone numbers for the new office are located on page 5 of this newsletter.



Members of my district staff helped welcome more than 200 people to the grand opening of our new Baldwin County office.

Three Committees guarantee plenty of work, opportunities

A member of Congress, be it a freshman or a 20-year veteran, is always interested in obtaining a position on a committee that will be of direct benefit to his or her district.

As such, when the 108th Congress convened in January, I was extremely honored that members of the Republican Steering Committee appointed me to three key House committees — Budget, Agriculture and Science.

The Budget Committee is responsible for establishing the fiscal blueprint for our nation. While the Budget Committee doesn't spend your money — that is the job of the Appropriations Committee — its role in trying to put parameters on overall government spending is a key ingredient in the beginning stages of the process.

Personally, I am proud that for the first time in years, both the House and Senate agreed to a budget resolution which brings a modest degree of fiscal sanity back to the process, something previous Congresses could not always say.

The Agriculture Committee has the responsibility for authorizing projects ranging from conservation and forestry to specialty crops and livestock.

In fact, just a few weeks ago, we were successful in bringing House Agriculture Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte, R-Virginia, to Mobile to meet with a number of farmers and other leaders in agriculture. Given Alabama's long-term relationship to the land — as well as the diverse number of crops being grown in South Alabama today — serving on the Agriculture Committee is a good place to try to help make a positive difference for First District farmers and families.

My appointment to the Science Committee comes at an important time in the history of NASA.

With the tragic loss of the Space Shuttle *Columbia* back in February, being the only Alabamian to serve on the Science Committee carries with it great responsibilities involving Alabama's role in the space program. In addition to having oversight over NASA, the committee also has jurisdiction over the National Weather Service, marine conservation and energy development.

While each of these assignments, individually, are important to many aspects of today's economy both here in South Alabama and throughout the country, you can rest assured we will always be on the lookout for ways where my service in Congress results in the most direct benefit to you and your families.

Theodore student wins high school art competition

The First Congressional District Art Competition, now in its 22nd year, was on exhibit April 7 through May 3 at the Mobile Museum of Art.

The competition was open to all high school students in grades 9-12. A public ceremony was held on the final day of the exhibit, Saturday, May 3, to honor the participating students and teachers.

This year's winner was Zach Tapscott, a sophomore at Theodore High School, who was awarded Best of Show for his entry "Disco Diva." Zach's artwork is currently on display as a part of the national exhibition in the tunnel of the Cannon House Office Building leading to the United States Capitol.

Other winners this year were Libby Lord from St. Paul's School, second place, and Brett Mouron from Murphy High School, third place. Honorable mentions went to Gaynor Luce, St. Paul's School; Skye Poole, Baker High School; Benjamin Frazier, LeFlore High School; Brian Hampshire, LeFlore High School; and Melvin Todd, LeFlore High School.

Many thanks to Dr. Robert Bantens of Mobile who volunteered to judge the 2003 competition. Additional thanks go to all of our sponsors for this event.

Congratulations to all our winners and good luck to next year's participants!



For someone who can't draw a straight line with the help of a ruler, it was a real pleasure meeting some of the winning students at our recent District Art Contest. Pictured with me from left to right: Brett Mouron; Zach Tapscott, Best of Show winner; Skye Poole; and Benjamin Frazier.

Best staff on Capitol Hill

With rare exception, a congressman is only as good and effective as the people with whom he surrounds himself.

In our case, while the jury may still be out about how good or effective your new congressman is, let there be no confusion over the talents and abilities of the 14 people who work with him on your behalf.

Without boasting, the people of South Alabama should consider themselves extremely fortunate — and I consider myself personally blessed — to have perhaps the most experienced staff of any freshman member of the 108th Congress.

Together, these talented men and women bring together a combined 120 years of public service, and I am very confident they will continue their tradition of fine customer service for each person and their families.

Permit me to take a moment to recognize each of these individuals; please don't hesitate to call on any of them for any assistance you may need.

Washington Office:

Alan Spencer - Chief of Staff
 Nancy Tippins - Legislative Director
 Michael Galloway - Legislative Assistant
 Kelle Strickland - Legislative Assistant
 Matt Rhodes - Press Secretary
 Marcy Pack - Executive Assistant/Washington Scheduler
 Errical Pouncy - Director of Constituent Services

Mobile and Baldwin County Offices:

Eliska Morgan - Deputy Chief of Staff/District Director
 Kay Williams - District Scheduler
 Elizabeth Roney - Senior Caseworker
 Dixie Patrick - District Office Manager
 Landra Day - Constituent Services Rep./Grants Coordinator
 Frazier Payne - Field Rep. for Mobile, Clarke and Washington Counties
 Jon Hand - Field Rep. for Baldwin, Escambia and Monroe Counties



Coming to Washington? South Alabama native Errical Pouncy (right), our new Director of Constituent Services, will be happy to help make your trip to our nation's capital both memorable and enjoyable. And contact my Executive Assistant, Mobile native Marcy Pack (left), to schedule a meeting with me next time you are in Washington.

Please share your views...

As your representative in Congress, it is important that I hear from you.

Please take a moment to fill out this card and return it to my District Office in Mobile.

We appreciate your time and hope you won't hesitate to call on us whenever we can be of service.

Please rank the following issues in order of their importance to you and your family, with 1 being the most important:

- _____ Securing our homeland/fighting global terrorism
- _____ Promoting jobs and economic growth
- _____ Reforming Medicare and providing prescription drug coverage
- _____ Taking care of veterans
- _____ Reforming/simplifying the tax code
- _____ Reducing the budget deficit and national debt
- _____ Preserving Social Security
- _____ Protecting gunowners' rights
- _____ Protecting the environment
- _____ Other _____

Please indicate if you would like information on the following:

- U.S. flags flown over the Capitol
- Tours of the U.S. Capitol
- Academy nominations
- Congressional Art Contest
- I'd like to receive your weekly news column:
 - Please add my name to your *mailing list*
 - Please add my name to your *e-mail list*

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

 Please clip out this reply card and return it to: Congressman Jo Bonner, 1141 Montlimar Drive, Suite 3010, Mobile, AL 36609.

Protecting our Veterans top priority

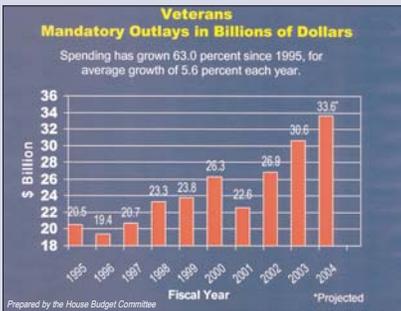
One of the most frustrating aspects of being in Congress is watching both individuals and special interest groups take something good and attempt to turn it into something negative.

A recent example of this occurred during consideration of the Fiscal Year 2004 budget which was passed earlier this year by the House.

During the course of the debate, many South Alabama veterans contacted my office — and several spoke up at a number of our town meetings — over rumors they had heard that many key VA programs were going to be significantly cut. Let me assure you that nothing could be further from the truth.

The budget that was eventually agreed upon by both the House and Senate set funding levels for veterans programs (mandatory and discretionary) for FY '04 at \$63.8 billion, a total of \$6.2 billion — 10.7% — more than the funding for Fiscal Year 2003.

In addition, the budget calls for an increase of \$3.4 billion over FY '03 levels for veterans' health care and discretionary spending. While there is still some work remaining before the final VA appropriations bill is approved for FY '04 and sent to the president for his signature, these numbers reflect positive work being done on behalf of the men and women who have served our country in the armed forces.



It is important to also note that since 1995, when Republicans assumed the majority in the House of Representatives, mandatory spending for veterans' programs has increased an average of 5.6 percent per year with a total increase of 63 percent. Equally important are the increases in discretionary spending for veterans' medical care since 1998, which has grown by a total of 40 percent or an average increase of 6.9 percent per year.

No one group of individuals has given more in the service of this great country than our veterans. From men and women who served in World War II, to those who are returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom and will, in the years ahead, need assistance from the VA, these patriotic Americans deserve the very best care and finest programs available.

As long as I have the privilege of serving you in Washington, you can be certain I will do all I can to ensure that America continues to honor the commitment we have made over the years to our true heroes, our veterans.

All South Alabama veterans are encouraged to contact our district offices in Mobile or Foley if you have specific questions about a benefit to which you believe you may be entitled.

Bonner named Assistant Whip

Whether it is in high school or Congress, a freshman is still a freshman in the sense that there are many more senior members ahead of you in terms of clout and seniority.

That said, our goal was always to hit the ground running on day one, taking advantage of my previous experience working on the staff of former Congressman Sonny Callahan, in hopes of smoothing the transition from an 18-year veteran to a freshman lawmaker.

And one of the first signs of our success came in the early days of the 108th Congress when I was named one of the Assistant Whips to House Majority Whip Roy Blunt (R-MO).

In case you are not familiar with the terminology, the Majority Whip serves as the chief assistant to the Majority Leader in the House. Whips and their assistants are primarily responsible for discussing pending legislation with members of their own party to gauge the level of support or opposition for those measures, as well as to encourage members to support the interests of the majority party and to ensure that these representatives are in attendance for all important votes and debates. Being a member of the "Whip Team" also guarantees you a seat at a weekly leadership meeting, held in the Capitol, to discuss the coming week's legislative agenda.

It is truly an honor to be named an Assistant Whip as a freshman member of the House and represents another opportunity to put South Alabama's interests on the table when national legislation is being discussed.

How to contact us

I am proud to be your representative in the United States Congress and I hope you won't ever hesitate to contact me at any time you feel you need my help. I've provided the following contact information to make my office as accessible as possible and hope you'll use it whenever necessary.

DC Office: 315 Cannon Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
Telephone: 202-225-4931
Facsimile: 202-225-0562

Mobile Office: 1141 Montlimar Dr., Suite 3010
Mobile, AL 36609
Telephone: 251-690-2811
(out of area): 800-288-8721
Facsimile: 251-342-0404

Baldwin Co. Office: 1302 North McKenzie
Foley, AL 36535
Telephone: 251-943-2073
Facsimile: 251-943-2093

In addition, you can also contact me on the worldwide web at www.house.gov/bonner. This site can be used not only to send me an e-mail regarding an issue of concern to you and your family, but as source of information on a wide range of services that my office provides — everything from obtaining a flag that has flown over the United States Capitol to signing up for my weekly newsletter. The site will be updated often, and I hope you will visit on a regular basis.

Astronaut visits Gulf Coast Exploreum

I don't think there's any young boy or girl in America today that hasn't at some point dreamed of becoming an astronaut and soaring into outer space. Even if it's watching a television program on the moon landing or the international space station, there's a special excitement in the eyes of a child thinking of flying through the stars.

That look of excitement could be found on the faces of dozens of young schoolchildren recently when they had the privilege of visiting with a "real live astronaut" at the Gulf Coast Exploreum in Mobile. On Friday, May 2, 2003, Art Stephenson, Director for NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center, and Astronaut Garrett Reisman accepted my invitation to the Port City to discuss their careers with a crowd of enthusiastic children. Each child was thrilled to meet these two men and excited to see demonstrations of authentic space equipment and hear about what it's like to work hundreds of miles above the Earth.

As these pictures clearly show, it really was a special day, and a big word of thanks is extended to NASA for allowing Mr. Stephenson and Dr. Reisman to share their knowledge and expertise with tomorrow's future leaders, scientists, businessmen and women — and astronauts!

Right: Astronaut Garrett Reisman and I visit with students from Atmore, Alabama who learned about missions in space and my role on the Science Committee.



Garrett Reisman demonstrates various aspects of the space suit.



Protecting the Pledge



As you are no doubt aware, our Pledge of Allegiance has come under attack in recent months from certain segments of the judicial system.

Specifically, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in California stated in a ruling that the phrase “one nation, under God” is an unconstitutional endorsement of religion. The court went on to say that reciting the pledge in schools is a means of coercing students into participating in a religious exercise.

Now I don't know about you, but to me, reciting the Pledge of Allegiance has always been a declaration of my patriotism and support of the United States, not the practice of a religious ceremony.

You may be pleased to know that an overwhelming majority of Congress — both Democrats and Republicans — agree the courts are wrong.

The 108th Congress has responded to the Court's ruling in a number of ways. First up was H. Res. 132. This sense of the House resolution was approved on March 20 by an overwhelming vote of 400-7. In essence, this resolution emphasizes the fact that the phrase “one nation, under God” reflects the faith of our Founding Fathers and thus the founding of this nation. Moreover, it underscores that the voluntary recitation of the pledge should be encouraged and continued as a patriotic act, rather than a statement of religious belief.

More recently, the “Pledge Protection Act of 2003,” of which I am an original cosponsor, was also introduced. This bill would prohibit any court established by the United States Congress — which includes all Federal courts except the U.S. Supreme Court — from hearing any claim that the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance violates the First Amendment of the Constitution.

I believe the Founding Fathers would be greatly distressed at the recent controversy surrounding this profession of our patriotism, and I hope these recent actions have sent a strong signal of the American people's continuing support for the Pledge. You can be assured we will continue to do all we can to ensure this practice continues for many years to come.

Masland carpet on display in DC office

When visitors walk into our Washington office, they are greeted with more than just a friendly smile and a familiar southern accent.

Thanks to the talents and generosity of the folks at Masland Carpets and Rugs, with plants in Saraland and Atmore, Room 315 Cannon also has a one-of-a-kind masterpiece — a handmade carpet featuring the Seal of Congress.

Having visited the Masland plants a number of times, I was fairly familiar with the quality of their product. But when the Masland team offered to let me showcase one of our local industries, I couldn't help but be extra proud of the attention to detail that went into every stitch. It is truly a masterpiece.

In addition to becoming a conversation piece on Capitol Hill, the carpet has also made the staff a little more observant whenever someone comes into the office for a meeting and has mud on their shoes. The message: Visitors welcome; Mud isn't!



Left: Five of our interns who assisted our Washington staff this summer, (l-r) Heather Scott, Allison Luka, Laura Pearson, Kari Kant, and Billy McFarland, join me in admiring the beautiful carpet made by the talented folks at Masland Carpets and Rugs of Saraland and Atmore. The new carpet has certainly been the talk of Washington.

Leaders of tomorrow meet with government officials, media pros

This spring, I was honored to continue a tradition begun by my predecessor, former Congressman Sonny Callahan, by playing host to our first “Workshop for High School Leaders.”

The workshop, which was held this year on the campus of the University of South Alabama, is a way of affording high school students from throughout the First District an opportunity to participate in a series of stimulating and informative meetings with representatives from all levels of state and federal government, as well as members of the Gulf Coast broadcast and print media.

Close to 125 young men and women, representing the finest students from South Alabama, were given the opportunity to question the panelists on issues that concern them, their friends and their families. As in years past, this year's conference proved to be highly successful as well, and it was personally very encouraging to see the leaders of tomorrow take such an interest in the events shaping the world around them.

This year the students heard from a distinguished panel of local and state leaders, including: Alabama Supreme Court Justice Douglas Johnstone, Alabama Court of Civil Appeals Judge Craig Pittman, U.S. District Judge Ginny Granade, and Mobile County Circuit Judge Herman Thomas.

Representing South Alabama's media professionals were WALA-FOX 10's Bob Grip, WKRK-News 5's Rose Ann Haven, WPML-TV 15's Rebecca Wilson and the *Mobile Register's* Mike Marshall.

Finally, the special guest to visit with the students was Alabama Governor Bob Riley, who not only was generous with his time, but answered a host of pretty tough questions posed by the student leaders.

Plans are already underway for next year's workshop. All of our guest panelists deserve a special “thank you” for taking time out of their busy schedules to discuss current events with some of South Alabama's future leaders. To learn more about next year's conference, please contact Frazier Payne in our Mobile office at 251-690-2811.

WKRK, “Congressional Report” mark 30 years together

Beginning in the early 1970s, three members of Congress — Bob Sikes from Florida, Jack Edwards from Alabama and a freshman representative from Mississippi, Trent Lott — sat down in front of a television camera and spent the next thirty minutes discussing current events in Washington, D.C., and how those events might impact their constituents along the Gulf Coast.

Thus began the “Congressional Report,” the longest-running public affairs program of its kind in the country.

And thanks in large part to the continued support and civic-minded programming of WKRK-TV 5 in Mobile, the “Congressional Report” remains on the air today, even though the format has been altered slightly and the hosts have changed with the times as well.

The mission of the weekly “Congressional Report” remains the same as it did 30 years ago — to provide a local flavor to events occurring in our nation's capital. As the new host of “Congressional Report,” I try to bring into your living rooms each week a guest — usually of local, statewide or national prominence — for a timely discussion on the current issues of the day.

Be sure to tune in to WKRK-TV 5 every Sunday morning at 10:00 a.m. for the next edition of “Congressional Report.”



House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert was a recent guest on “Congressional Report.”

Summer Intern program offered in DC, District Offices

One of the most enjoyable aspects of my job is being able to offer summer internships to eager and enthusiastic young men and women from South Alabama. If your son or daughter has completed one semester of college, they are eligible to apply for a position in my Congressional Intern Program.

As an intern, the responsibilities of the job vary widely from day-to-day office work (making copies, folding letters, running errands) to such exciting opportunities as attending committee meetings and researching and responding to legislative inquiries. Interns will also have the opportunity to tour one of the most fascinating, interesting and powerful cities in the world and, as the pictures here clearly demonstrate, you never know who you'll run into in the halls of the Capitol!

We also offer an intern program in our district office for those who may want to stay closer to home. While the responsibilities are quite similar to those in our Washington office, the likelihood of running into any well-known political figures is pretty slim. However, working in the district offers an entirely different perspective as the primary role of this office is constituent service offering direct contact with residents of the First District including community and local government leaders.

For information on the 2004 Summer Intern Program or to obtain an application, please call or write my intern coordinator, Marcy Pack, in my Washington office. I hope to see many of you in our nation's capital next year!

Spring Interns

Abby Grodnick, Mobile
Kelly Grosso, Brewton
Taylor Grosso, Brewton

Session 1:

Hunter Butler, Magnolia Springs
Christy Dobson, Mobile
Ric Lacey, Fairhope
Bubba Phillips, Satsuma

Session 2:

Patricia Hooks, Mobile
Brad Israel, Mobile
Andrew McKinney, Orange Beach
Kathryn Roberts, St. Stephens
Mona Scruggs, Excel

Session 3:

Kari Kant, Fairhope
Allison Luka, Fairhope

Billy McFarland, Tuscaloosa
Laura Pearson, Spanish Fort
Heather Scott, Daphne

Session 4:

Jamo Ladd, Mobile
Lauren Hastings, Matthews, NC
Susan Swift, Atmore
Elizabeth Tyson, Mobile

District Office interns:

Jessica Irizary, Mobile
Justin Smith, Mobile
Brooks Morgan, Fairhope
Carla Herrera, Mobile



Right: Distict interns Jessica Irizary (left) and Brooks Morgan (right).



Our Washington interns meet Senator Trent Lott after filming of "The Gulf Coast Congressional Report." From left to right: Mona Scruggs, Andrew McKinney, Senator Lott, Brad Israel and Kathryn Roberts.



2003 summer interns (l-r) Bubba Phillips, Christy Dobson, Hunter Butler and Ric Lacey grab a photo op with former Senator and presidential nominee Bob Dole.

No more calls



If your family is like millions of others across the country, then invariably your phone rings twenty times a night with calls from groups offering everything from free cruises to secrets on how to make a fortune by working out of your home. I personally cannot think of anything quite as annoying as these unwanted calls and have wished for years that there were a way to stop them.

Now there is.

Due to an overwhelming demand for a way to prevent these bothersome calls, the Federal Trade Commission on June 27 launched a national "do not call" registry. By calling the FTC toll-free telephone number or logging on to the "do not call" website, consumers can add their names to a growing list of households who can request that unwanted telemarketing calls be blocked. Enforcement of this list by the FTC will begin on October 1, and companies and organizations that do not honor these requests will be assessed some extremely serious financial penalties.

For more information on this new program or to register your phone number on the "do not call" list, call the toll-free telephone number at 1-888-382-1222 or visit the official website, www.donotcall.gov.

Homeland Security funded

With the recent passage of the first Homeland Security appropriations bill, another major step was taken in ensuring that our country never again must face a tragedy reminiscent of the horrors of September 11, 2001. This measure includes a total of \$29.4 billion for FY 2004 and will fund nearly all of the major agencies and measures administered by Secretary Tom Ridge.

While most people are aware of the larger-scale protective measures taken by the Department of Homeland Security (airports, trains, larger buildings and monuments), the total list of infrastructure and other items that must be protected by the department is overwhelming. I cannot list everything in this space, but consider the following highlights from the list. You will certainly get a better appreciation of the awesome task facing this new agency:

- The United States shares 2000 miles of border with Mexico and 5500 miles with Canada, along with 9500 miles of shoreline;
- There are 157 land ports of entry and 361 seaports in this country;
- 440 million visitors come to this country every year by land, sea and air;
- 768,000 commercial flights enter the United States each year at 429 commercial airports;
- There are over 4 million miles of highways and freight railways; and
- The United States contains 300,000 oil and natural gas wells, 1800 federal reservoirs, 9300 electrical power plants and 104 nuclear power plants.

Local teacher receives Einstein Fellowship

Recently, one of South Alabama's outstanding educators received a truly significant honor. Charlene Dindo, the director of the Pelican's Nest Science Lab for the Fairhope K-1 Center and the Baldwin County Public School System, received an Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship Award, the first Alabama educator ever to be afforded this honor. The Einstein Fellowship is designed to bring classroom practice and informational policy together and allows teachers for grades K-12 to develop and broaden education perspectives and increase individual knowledge of available programs, information and resources around the country.



Charlene Dindo

During her 11-month Congressional appointment in the Washington, D.C., area, Charlene worked at the National Science Foundation in the Elementary, Secondary and Informal Education Division, an agency that focuses on the needs of K-12 teachers and students in the fields of science, math and technology.

We are all extremely proud of Charlene for this professional accomplishment and for all of the tremendous work she and all South Alabama teachers and administrators perform every year.

Amber Alert signed into law

A parent's worst nightmare has to be the thought of having one of our children abducted while on the schoolyard, playing at home or shopping at the mall. Just as difficult have been the images we have seen on the news in recent months of the abductions of Elizabeth Smart, Samantha Runnion and Erica Pratt.

The 1996 abduction and murder of nine-year-old Amber Hagerman in Texas led to the creation of the so-called "Amber Alert" system that provides bulletins and broadcast notifications of missing and abducted children. Following its initial implementation, states all across the country adopted their own systems to combat the nightmare of missing children.

Earlier this year, Congress took a major step in the fight to protect our children by passing the "Amber Alert Act," a measure that was subsequently signed into law by President Bush. This measure is designed to combat and prosecute crimes of violence against children, minors, juveniles, adolescents, and infants. In addition, it amends the sentencing guidelines used in federal cases involving crimes against children.

Protecting our children is not just a job for the government or law enforcement agencies - it is a job for all of us and our communities. For more information on the "Amber Alert" and how you can get involved, please visit the program's official website at www.codeamber.org.



The death of the Death Tax

I would certainly argue that two of the most significant pieces of legislation passed by the House during the first several months of the 108th Congress were H.R. 8, the *Death Tax Repeal Permanency Act of 2003*, and H.R. 2, the *Jobs and Growth Tax Act of 2003*. The first of these bills, passed by a vote of 264-163, represents a major step in eliminating what is an inherently unfair and burdensome tax. In essence, the "death tax" is double taxation - once on the person who is earning the money and trying to succeed, and again on the descendants and beneficiaries following the inheritance of any property or money. I, for one, am extremely pleased this bill was passed and am hopeful the Senate will take similar action in the weeks ahead.

What is remarkable about the jobs and tax bill is that at the beginning of the year, the president's goal of passing this significant measure had been given very little hope of passage - but the tremendous energy exerted by the members of the House leadership and the strong effort put forth by the administration helped get this plan "over the top." Since that time, a compromise measure was developed by members of the House and Senate and signed into law by President Bush. As your representative in Washington, I was proud to be involved in the passage of a plan that, while not as far-reaching as many in the nation's capital would have liked, will lead to significant benefits for many in South Alabama and provide a much needed jump-start for the economy.

In its final form, this measure includes many important provisions for individuals and businesses, including:

- A reduction in the tax rates on capital gains and dividends to a range of between 5 and 15 percent, depending on individual income levels. This provision expires in 2009, at which time individuals in the lowest income brackets would pay no dividend taxes, and their rates would return to previous levels the next year.
- Acceleration of the cuts in individual income tax rates, increasing the child tax credit to \$1000, eliminating the marriage penalty and expanding the 10 percent tax bracket (all of which expire in 2006).
- An increase in the small business equipment purchase deduction to \$100,000 along with raising the equipment depreciation from 30 to 50 percent (provisions expire in 2005).
- Providing a total of \$20 billion in Medicaid assistance and aid to individual state and local governments over a two-year period.

This measure certainly marks a tremendous victory not only for the members of Congress and the president, but also for the millions of Americans who will benefit in the years to come.

Helpful numbers and links

U.S. Capitol Switchboard - (202) 224-3121

Congressman Jo Bonner

Mobile Office - (251) 690-2811
Baldwin County Office - (251) 943-2073
Washington Office - (202) 225-4931

Senator Jeff Sessions

Mobile Office - (251) 414-3083
Washington Office - (202) 224-4124

Senator Richard Shelby

Mobile Office - (251) 694-4164
Washington Office - (202) 224-5744

The White House

Main Operator - (202) 456-1414
Comments Line - (202) 456-1111

Alabama Legislative Delegation Office

Mobile County - (251) 208-5480
Baldwin County - (251) 937-0240

Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services

Information - 1-800-375-5283
Forms line - 1-800-870-3676

Cancer Information Service- 1-800-4CANCER

AIDS Hotline - 1-800-342-AIDS

Consumer Product Safety Commission - 1-800-638-2772

Department of Veterans Affairs - 1-800-827-1000

Federal Information Center - 1-800-346-3364

IRS Taxpayer Assistance - 1-800-829-1040
TTD for Hearing Impaired - 1-800-829-4059

Medicare - 1-800-292-8855

Passport Services (New Orleans) - 1-504-412-2600

Secret Service - (251) 441-5851

Social Security Hotline - 1-800-SSA-1213
TTD for Hearing Impaired - 1-800-325-0778

State Department Travel Advisory & Visa Information
Citizen Emergency Center - (202) 647-5225

To Report Illegal Drug Smuggling - 1-800-BE-ALERT

To Report Toxic Chemical & Oil Spills - 1-800-424-8802

Need to locate information about a Federal Agency? Try this helpful link that lists all the Federal agencies:

<http://www.infoctr.edu/fwl/fedweb.exec.htm#feddept>.

Get the latest on federal legislation: www.congress.gov.

Get the latest news on events taking place in Alabama at www.al.com.