

Jo Bonner



THE WASHINGTON CYBER REPORT

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SEE PAGE 2 FOR APRIL TOWN MEETING SCHEDULE

LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES FOR MARCH



To most people, "March Madness" connotes the NCAA basketball tournament. Here in Congress, the term could well apply to the annual kick-off of the congressional budget process. The president sent his budget to Capitol Hill in February and Congress is due to pass its budget resolution, which is a non-binding blueprint for appropriations, tax, and reconciliation legislation, by April 15.

The House version cleared the Budget Committee on which I serve on March 17. Total discretionary spending would be \$819 billion, with most non-defense accounts frozen at the current year's level. It proposes to cut the budget deficit in half within 4 years by percent of GDP and by actual dollars. It also follows up on the effort started last year to reinvigorate oversight responsibilities and reduce the massive amounts of wasteful Washington spending.

The Senate passed its budget resolution on March 12. It differs significantly from the House resolution and, following House passage, it must be reconciled with the Senate's plan.

PAYGO

The Budget Enforcement Act of 1990 established a "pay-as-you-go" (PAYGO) requirement that legislation proposing new direct spending or decreasing revenues for a fiscal year must not result in a net cost for that year. The PAYGO requirement is enforced after the close of a congressional session by sequestration, which involves automatic, largely across-the-board cuts in nonexempt programs. (There has never been a PAYGO sequester.) In 2002, Congress essentially repealed the PAYGO provision. There is considerable interest in reinstating PAYGO, and the Budget Committee voted to bring back PAYGO by passing the Spending Control Act. This is an extremely useful budget enforcement tool, and I am hopeful it will be enacted.

BROADCAST DECENCY

On March 11, the House passed the Broadcast Decency Act, a bill I was proud to cosponsor, to increase penalties on broadcasters and performers for indecent programming on television and radio. The Senate Commerce Committee approved a similar bill on March 9. This legislation has been long in the making, but it gained momentum following the Super Bowl halftime program featuring an indecent act by entertainer Janet Jackson. The strong bipartisan vote in the House (391-22) indicates this bill, or some version of it, should be enacted into law.

FIRST DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT OF THE MONTH

VOA Southeast, Inc.

Volunteers of America is a national, nonprofit, spiritually based organization providing local human service programs and opportunities for individual and community involvement. Volunteers of America Southeast, Inc., is a chartered member of the national Volunteers of America.

One of VOA Southeast's programs worthy of mentioning is its donation of phone cards to our service members fighting the war on terrorism overseas. All you need to do is provide the name and address of your loved one to the VOA and a phone card will be sent directly to the service member. This program has enabled a tremendous number of families to keep in touch during this difficult time of separation.

VOA Southeast has also been instrumental in setting up visits with area schools to honor those children whose loved ones are serving overseas. I have had the privilege of participating in each of these programs by sharing slides from my trip to Iraq last December and answering questions about my experience with our troops.



Students from Semmes Elementary wave the American Flag.

Thank you, VOA Southeast, for your commitment to our troops and their families. And thank you to all of those from south Alabama who are sharing their loved ones with the U.S. military.



Left: Dr. Wallace Davis and I watch as the color guard closes the patriotic ceremony at Semmes Elementary School.

THE "REPORT CARD" IS IN



As is the case with me and every member of the House of Representatives, the most important "report card" we receive on our performance in Washington is the one our constituents give us every two years.

In addition to this evaluation, however, we in Congress also receive periodic evaluations from organizations and groups here in Washington and across the country. Recently, the National Journal issued its annual ratings on members of the House and Senate and calculated members' conservative or liberal scores based on 73 votes we cast in 2003 on important economic, social, and foreign-policy legislation.

I am proud to report that I received a conservative score of 87.7, meaning that my views on important legislative and policy issues make me more conservative than almost 88 percent of the other members of the House. My score places me as the second-most conservative member of the Alabama congressional delegation and is a positive indicator that the work I am doing and the votes I cast are in line with the First District's conservative values.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON CHAIRMAN GREENSPAN'S COMMENTS

A few weeks ago, national newspapers and network television news broadcasts were loudly proclaiming the news that Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve, was calling for a cut in Social Security benefits. His comments were issued during an appearance before the House Budget Committee on which I serve.

Or were they?

Let me state at the outset that no one here in Washington intends to cut anyone's Social Security benefits. Moreover, the reports on what Chairman Greenspan "said" are another example of comments taken out of context.

During his appearance before the committee, the chairman took full opportunity to acknowledge that federal spending for mandatory programs is out of control. He also stated that it is imperative that Congress find a way to control the growth of these programs, including spending for Social Security and Medicare.

Equally important is that the chairman has advocated - and continues to advocate - the position that the tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 need to be made permanent. Taking this step would encourage strong and sustainable economic growth.

The inaccurate reporting of Chairman Greenspan's remarks is a good reminder that we can't always take at face value the reports on the evening news or in daily papers. I would encourage everyone who has questions about what you may hear regarding supposed changes to Social Security or Medicare to contact my office for assistance and get what Paul Harvey refers to as "the rest of the story."

BONNER STAFF PARTICIPATES IN DERELICT CRAB TRAP CLEANUP

For the second year in a row, my staff participated in the Derelict Crab Trap Recovery Program on Saturday, March 13. The event was organized by the Alabama Marine Resources Division and the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program. Volunteers from a number of local organizations, as well as others from the University of Southern Mississippi and The University of Alabama, collected over 350 derelict crab traps from our area waters. For more information, visit www.mobilebaynep.com.

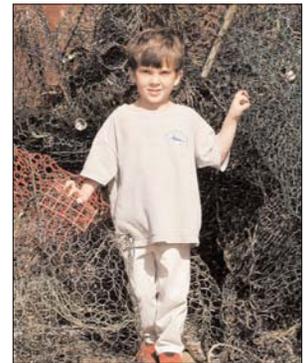
Thanks to all of you who volunteered your time for such a worthy project!



Students from The University of Alabama pose after a morning of collecting crab traps (and lots of trash) along Little Dauphin Island. Pictured are l-r: Larry Greene, Angie Obery (visiting from Oregon), Dan McGarvey, Erika Rincon and Abby the chocolate lab.



Pictured above is a load of crab traps and trash collected on Little Dauphin Island.



Peter Cane, son of Grey and Mary Cane, stands in an early pile of traps at the Meaher State boat launch in Spanish Fort.

APRIL TOWN MEETING SCHEDULE

Tuesday, April 6

9-10 a.m. - Gulf Shores

Gulf State Park

10:30-11:30 a.m. - Foley

Baldwin Mutual

315 East Laurel Ave Foley

1:30-2:30 p.m. - Fairhope

City Council Chambers

3-4 p.m. - Daphne

City Council Chambers

4:30-5:30 p.m. - Bay Minette

City Council Chambers

Wednesday, April 7

9-10 a.m. - Citronelle

Convalescent Center

10:30-11:30 a.m. - Creola

City Hall

4-5 p.m. - Grand Bay

First Baptist Church

6-7:30 p.m. - LNG Meeting

Mobile City Hall

Thursday, April 8

9-10 a.m. - Brewton

Council Chambers

10:30-11:30 a.m. - Atmore

City Hall

1-2 p.m. - Monroeville

Old Court House

3-4 p.m. - Grove Hill

Town Hall

4:30-5:30 p.m. - Jackson

City Hall