Town Meetings set for August — See schedule on page 3

Alabama's First District

CONGRESSMAN JO BONNER

THE WASHINGTON REPORT

422 Cannon House Office Building ★ Washington, DC 20515 ★ (202) 225-4931 ★ Summer/Fall 2008

Dear Friends,

I wish I had a nickel for every time I have been asked recently, "*How high is gas going?*" or a dime for the follow-up question, "*Is Congress ever going to do something to bring the price of gas back down?*" Needless to say, my family would not have very much to worry about, at least not financially.

It has been a strange summer when, regardless of any good thing that might happen, the soaring price Americans are paying at the fuel pump has put a sour taste in practically everyone's mouth, as well as a dark cloud over most every outlook for the immediate future.

Sadly, these record-high gas prices have also had a domino effect on nearly every other segment of the American economy...from food in grocery stores, to fertilizer for our gardens, the scaled-back family vacation, even drugs for our sick and elderly. You name it, and there are very few areas where spiraling energy prices have not left their ugly mark.

Not to be one to say "I told you so," but I have been preaching — long before I came to Congress — that America has been staring a true, full-blown energy crisis in the face for decades, not just the past few months or years.

Regretfully, every other time when spikes in energy costs have occurred, just as soon as the price of gas went back down, it seemed most Americans somehow believed the problem had simply gone away.

This time, however, it is crystal clear that there is no silver bullet to get us out of this mess. And sadly, just as it has taken a long time to get into this situation, it will take us a while to get out of it. To that end, take a moment and look at our comprehensive energy outlook on page 4.

Proud to serve, but…

As the commencement speaker for three area high schools earlier this year, I had an opportunity to visit with a number of recent graduates and many of their families to discuss some of the concerns and frustrations that many of our young people have about the direction in which our country is headed.

One conversation that stands out was with a young man who, very politely but directly, asked me: "Are you proud to be in Congress at a time when it seems our entire government is so dysfunctional?"

As I looked into the eyes of this 18-year-old, standing tall and proud with his newly-signed diploma in hand, I could not help but be impressed with the sincerity of his question.

"It is true," I said, "that serving in Congress is one of the highest honors you can bestow upon an individual." But, I went on to add, "Serving in public office today also comes with a lot of personal frustrations."

I explained to this young man that when you are one of 535 (counting the Senate), there is very little one can accomplish on one's own; it is imperative to find common ground with others of the same mind and purpose.

"For sure, there are a host of challenges facing our nation," I responded. "Winning an unpopular war, slowing the avalanche of reckless spending that has beset Washington in recent years, making our country energy independent and tackling tough issues like immigration reform, saving Social Security and bringing health care costs under control — these are all things we *could* do. However, none can be accomplished until we lower the heated — and often personal — rhetoric in the most partisan battlefield of all, the Halls of Congress."

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What Next?

The headline of the June 18th *Press-Register* said it all…
"HOLDING PATTERN."

As anyone who flies knows, it is not uncommon to hear pilots announce the plane is waiting for further instructions before proceeding.

So it seems, is the fate of the effort to build new refueling tankers for the Air Force.

Clearly, the news from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) — that they were sustaining Boeing's protest of the contract to Northrop Grumman — was a disappointment to those of us along America's Gulf Coast.

After all, we were repeatedly assured by the Air Force that "we got this one right," referring to the 28-month competition between Boeing and Northrop Grumman.

So what is next?

In light of the GAO's findings, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates announced an expedited re-competition of the tanker contract last month. This new, abbreviated competition will be much shorter than the original competition with an award expected to be announced by the end of the year.

While many key decisions are being made as this article is written, two things remain undisputed:

First, the GAO said *absolutely nothing* about which plane was better. That leaves us with the undisputed fact that the problems the Air Force had with the Boeing KC-767 — and there were many — have not gone away. It remains an old, outdated and less capable airplane as evidenced by the fact it has lost to the KC-30 in the last four international competitions.

Secondly, the team behind Northrop Grumman and EADS — from the highest elected officials in our state, county and city, to the thousands of citizens who signed on-line petitions — all remain *one million percent committed* to our goal to bring the manufacture of big jets to Mobile.

As with most flights these days, there is always a chance for some occasional turbulence.

In the end, the traveling passenger simply wants to get to his final destination — if not on time, at least in one piece.

This journey will not be complete until we succeed. Rest assured, we will keep you posted.

(**Letter** *continued from page 1)*

As I was heading home that evening, confident that another class of graduates was about to take on the challenges of the world, I reflected on what might have motivated that young man to ask his question.

While I did not get his name and do not recall where he said he was going to college, let me make a solemn promise to him and all others like him.

While it is true I only have one vote, one voice, and in many respects, one opportunity to make a difference, you should know that your congressman is going to do everything humanly possible to be that one positive change agent to help turn things around.

For, without a doubt, America is too great — and our people are too fine — to continue down this path where our government simply sits on the edge of the cliff, paralyzed, waiting for someone else to do the right thing.

Good news, in spite of it all

Notwithstanding the many challenges facing America, south Alabama has been the beneficiary of some outstanding news over the past few years.

From attracting the biggest economic development project in the history of our state, ThyssenKrupp Steel in May of 2007, to having the metropolitan area with the fastest growing economy projected over the next five years — we truly have so much for which to be thankful (see articles on *Recent Headlines*, page 5 and *Workforce 2013*, page 8).

Like my pastor reminded us at church a few months ago, we are looking at unprecedented opportunities here in southwest Alabama…opportunities that will translate into a better quality of life for all of our communities, neighbors and friends.

Students from Alma Bryant High School are working this summer to make their futures brighter, and I was pleased to host a lunch bringing in area officials to show the students their future opportunities in south Alabama.

As such, we have a moral obligation to make certain that our young people realize that the future they are about to inherit is as bright as anytime in our 300-plus year-old heritage.

To that point, in June, I hosted a luncheon with a group of students from Alma Bryant High School in Irvington. These students — part of a summer personal development and leadership program — joined me in the Regions Bank conference room, 29 stories atop the new RSA Battle House Tower.

Meeting with the students were officials with Austal, ThyssenKrupp Steel, Alabama Industrial Development and Training, and Mobile Works, among others. The purpose of the meeting was simple: to show these students the real possibilities of their future in south Alabama.

While no one has a crystal ball, it is clear the fundamentals are in place for a robust and bright future for all of southwest Alabama. My staff and I intend to continue the small role we play on a daily basis in helping to make this potential a reality.

Do not forget, my staff and I work for you. Hope you will not hesitate to call on us whenever we can be of service.

Jo Bonner

This summer, Congress finally passed the 2007 farm bill, completing more than a year of comprehensive reauthorization of the nation's agriculture policies. The farm bill governs federal policy for commodities, nutrition, energy, and research, setting five year standards for many of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) programs.

I was proud to participate as a member of the House Agriculture Committee for much of the bill's progress and believe we were able to make many significant reforms that will be a direct benefit to Alabama's farming families. Alabama's number one industry, agriculture, is a multi-billion dollar business in our state — encompassing everything from 40-acre farms to large industrial operations covering thousands of acres.

Though I was not able to complete work on the farm bill as a member of the committee because of my recent appointment to the House Appropriations Committee, my colleagues Rep. Terry Everett (R-Rehobeth) and Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Saks) continued to work in the trenches.

As you know, drought remains an annual danger to our state, especially during the hot summer months. The farm bill includes language that will enable farmers to establish on-farm reservoirs to ensure an adequate supply of rain-fed groundwater to keep crops growing and livestock healthy.

Nutrition has always been a big part of agriculture legislation, and the 2007 farm bill is no different. This year's farm bill puts a focus on local nutrition programs like farmers' markets and school lunches, helping local farmers bring to market — and to the school lunch table — the fruits and vegetables grown right here in south Alabama.

Additionally, thanks to enhanced research funding, universities around the state and nation will also be able to investigate the possibility of converting Alabama's timber and switchgrass resources into cellulosic ethanol — working to lower prices at the pump without raising them at the grocery store. Conservation programs initiated at USDA will also help Alabama's farmers develop advanced row crop farming methods, putting our land to its best use.

The final bill was passed in June, after a presidential veto, with a broad bipartisan majority, including the support of the entire Alabama delegation, allowing Alabama's farmers to move on with their business.

While it is true that this legislation did not go as far as it could to reform outdated subsidies such as direct payments, Congress was nevertheless able to set a cap on direct payments for the first time in the farm bill's history.

This spring, I spoke to Mr. Derek Barry's government class at the Alabama School for Math and Science where we discussed the many ways in which Alabama has changed over the years, both economically and politically.

ThyssenKrupp Breaks Ground

I joined (l to r) Senator Richard Shelby, Senator Jeff Sessions, Dr. Ekkehard Schulz, Governor Bob Riley, and Dr. Karl-Ulrich Koehler at the Thyssen-Krupp groundbreaking.

Photo credit: Mary Hattler, Press-Register.

Last year, ThyssenKrupp announced plans to build a state-of-the-art carbon and stainless steel processing facility in southwest Alabama. Late last fall, those plans became a reality as ThyssenKrupp broke ground at the approximately 3,500-acre site. Governor Riley, Senators Shelby and Sessions and I were on hand for the event.

This new plant is one of the largest private industrial development projects in the United States, with ThyssenKrupp and the people of Alabama investing $3.7 billion in this new facility. It is scheduled to be operational in March 2010.

During construction, the facility will create upwards of 29,000 jobs then 2,700 permanent jobs once the plant is fully operational.

Steel manufacturing played a major role in Alabama's industrial revolution. In fact, steel was Alabama's "cash crop" at the turn of the last century. Now in 2008, Alabama is one of the leading producers of automobiles in the United States with over 300 automotive related companies — a 286% increase since 1991.

ThyssenKrupp's new facility will process carbon and stainless steel for manufacturers in the United States and throughout North America serving the automotive, construction and household appliances industries.

Alabama's steel legacy has certainly come full circle. Together, the ThyssenKrupp team, along with the people of southwest Alabama, are prepared to show all what a world-class partnership can produce.

Insurance Rates Fluctuate

With hurricane season 2008 already in full swing, having affordable and comprehensive insurance is key for many homeowners along Alabama's Gulf Coast.

Few south Alabama families have been exempt from the painful increases in insurance rates over the past few years. However, the problem with finding available — much less affordable — insurance is not limited to Alabama, but includes the entire Gulf Coast.

As you may know, insurance historically has been regulated at the state level and not by the federal government, but insurance companies left many homeowners in a bind after Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina. To be of assistance, I co-sponsored H.R. 920, the Multiple Peril Insurance Act of 2007, which was sponsored by my friend, Mississippi Rep. Gene Taylor (D-Bay St. Louis).

Among other things, H.R. 920 would require insurance companies to cover both wind and flood damage in one policy. It was included in a broader bill, H.R. 3121, the National Flood Insurance Reform and Modernization Act of 2007. While this language is far from perfect, it sent a strong message to the insurance industry…no longer will these national companies be able to "cherry-pick" coverage between wind damage and flood damage.

Although H.R. 3121 passed the House, a similar bill that was approved by the Senate did not include the provision for wind and flood coverage. As this newsletter went to press, it was uncertain what language would end up in a final version of the flood insurance reform.

Please know as the insurance legislation debate continues, I will keep you posted of changes — which will hopefully provide much-needed relief in this important area.

Twelve Town Meetings Scheduled

The August district work period is always a personal favorite, not just because I get to spend more time in the district with my family and friends but because it affords me an opportunity to travel the First District, speaking to civic clubs, visiting schools that have begun a new year and perhaps most enjoyable, holding town hall meetings in all six counties of Alabama's First District.

Listed below are the times and locations for our next series of town meetings:

Monday, August 11

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. - Bay Minette
City Hall
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. - Atmore
Municipal Auditorium
1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. - Brewton
City Hall
3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. - Monroeville
City Hall

Tuesday, August 12

9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. - Grand Bay
Senior Center
1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. - Creola
City Hall
3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. - Chatom
Town Hall
5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. - Jackson
City Hall

Wednesday, August 13

2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. - Semmes
Semmes Community Center

Thursday, August 14

8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. - Fairhope
City Hall
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. - Foley
City Hall
3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. - Lillian
Lillian Community Center

With so many important issues to discuss these days, I am looking forward to visiting in a town near you. Hopefully, you will not hesitate to call on us if we can be of service. If you ever need an appointment to discuss an issue privately, as opposed to a public setting, please call my district scheduler, Landra Day, at (251) 690-2811 or (800) 288-8721, to set up a convenient time. When not in Washington, we try to schedule as many appointments as possible in both our Baldwin County and Mobile offices.

Art Contest Draws Strong Interest

I presented Mae Stimpson her "Best of Show" certificate at an awards presentation at the Mobile Museum of Art.

Each spring, the U.S. House of Representatives hosts a nationwide art competition, spotlighting talented young artists throughout the nation.

Mae Stimpson, a recent graduate of St. Paul's Episcopal School in Mobile, was this year's winner. At the time of the contest, Mae was a student of art instructor Beth Compton and was awarded first-place honors for her entry, "Broken Dreams."

Her artwork, along with other winning entries from the 50 states, will be displayed for one year in the United States Capitol building.

One of Mobile's most accomplished artists, Eugenia Foster, was the judge for this year's competition. As in previous years, all of the entries were evaluated "blind," meaning no contestant information was provided in advance to the judge.

In addition to Mae, other winners from this year's competition are: Second Place: Matthew Lee, Alabama School of Math and Science; Third Place: Lauren Oliver, Fairhope High School; Honorable Mentions: Tim Kidd, Fairhope High School; David Willoughby, Daphne High School; Meredith Magee, St. Paul's Episcopal School; Sara Bowen, Alabama School of Math and Science; and Jamie Stauter, Spanish Fort High School.

Will Sticker Shock Prompt Congress t

With $4 gas, $5 diesel and $13 natural gas, we know we have a problem. The bigger question is how are we going to fix it?

Not surprisingly, fuel costs rank as the number one issue of concern for the average American family. It is hard not to see why…spiraling energy costs have had a domino effect on practically every other segment of our economy.

I literally cannot count the number of times someone has approached me at the grocery store — or met with me in my office — asking what Congress can do to make fuel prices affordable. I wish there was a simple answer or an easy fix; sadly, there is not.

That said, the good news is we have the resources within our own country to directly lower the cost of fuel at the pump. While no one is suggesting we can "drill" our way out of this problem, as the editorial from the June 17th *Press-Register* noted, drilling must be part of any solution.

Listed below are some interesting facts which might help shed some light on how we got into this mess, how bad it really is, and what we can do to turn things around. We have also included a list of bills before Congress that I have co-sponsored and am working hard to enact into law.

As always, your thoughts on this and any other matter are always appreciated.

Just the facts...

On April 24, 2006, then-Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi said, "Democrats have a common sense plan to help bring down skyrocketing prices." Since 2006, gasoline prices have risen by more than $1.65 per gallon, and incredibly, the new majority has called for an additional 50-cent tax on every gallon of gasoline while voting at least four separate times to increase energy taxes this Congress alone. Surely, this is not quite the "common sense plan" most south Alabamians would expect.

> *"Democrats have a common sense plan to help bring down skyrocketing prices."*
>
> then-Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi
> April 24, 2006

America's birthday, an Apple, and Silly Love Songs

Much has been made about the fact that America has not opened a new refinery since 1976. In fact, there were 319 refineries in operation in the U.S. in 1976; today, there are only 149.

How long ago has it really been? To refresh your memory, 1976 was the year America celebrated our bicentennial; Jimmy Carter defeated Gerald R. Ford for the presidency; Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak founded Apple Computer Co. in Mr. Jobs' garage; and Paul McCartney and Wings had the number one hit with "Silly Love Songs."

Does a solution run through Alaska?

Very few Americans have been to the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve, more commonly known as ANWR. Yet, millions of Americans claim to be experts on this frozen tundra, where about 220 residents of the Kaktovik village live.

Consider this when you think about ANWR:

Exploration and development could occur on some 2,000 acres of a 19 million-acre reserve. This would be akin to a postage stamp on a football field.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, ANWR holds a mean estimate of 10.4 billion barrels of recoverable oil. ANWR can produce one million barrels per day, in an environmentally safe manner, and there is enough room in the Trans-Alaska Pipeline to ship it.

This is enough oil to replace all the oil that Americans will buy from Hugo Chavez of Venezuela for the next 30 years.

During the 12 years there was a Republican majority, the House passed legislation to explore in ANWR at least 7 times. Had President Bill Clinton not vetoed ANWR drilling in 1995, ANWR oil would be on-line now.

The Washington Post

Finally, oil development on Alaska's North Slope has not endangered any species of wildlife since production began in 1977. Some environmental groups claim its development could be devastating to animal populations, including the caribou. However, from 1978 until 2000, the caribou population increased from around 6,000 to over 29,000.

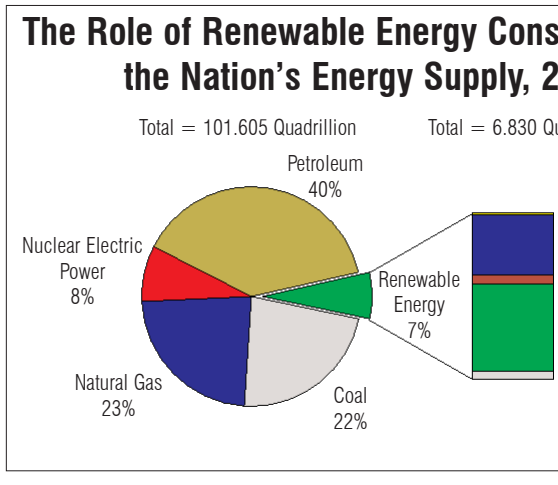
Drilling in our own backyard

For the past 27 years, Congress has locked up 85 percent of our offshore natural gas and oil reserves to exploration along the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) — the shelf off the Pacific, Atlantic and Gulf coasts — even as natural gas prices in America have gone up by more than 1,000 percent and oil has increased over 300 percent since 1999.

Sadly, over the years, Congress has failed the American people.

Because of this ban, American industries have been forced to relocate overseas — not just because of cheaper labor but also because of cheaper energy.

And this exodus, especially in the chemical, plastics and fertilizer industries, has robbed the U.S. economy of more than one million of some of the best-paying jobs in the country.



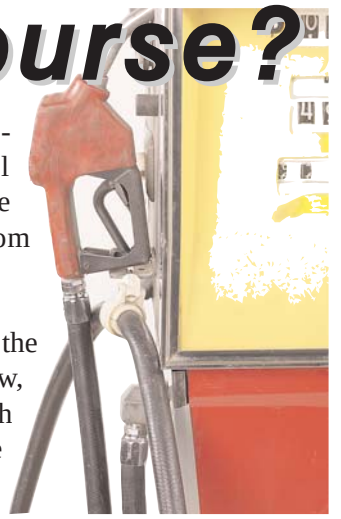
We know that drilling alone will not solve our problems in the long-term. But with 86 billion barrels of oil — and more than 420 trillion cubic feet of natural gas — on the OCS, it is irresponsible to turn a blind eye to energy that is right here in our own backyard.

Consider the following:

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita destroyed 113 platforms and damaged 457 pipelines in the Gulf of Mexico, leading to a shutdown of oil and gas production. And yet, according to the U.S. Minerals and Management Service, "there were not accounts of spills from facilities on the OCS that reached the shoreline."

To that end, I recently cosponsored the Deep Oceans Energy Resources Act of 2008, H.R. 6108. This bill not only opens new areas to energy exploration, it amends Alabama's seaward boundaries from its current three nautical miles to 12

o Change Course?



nautical miles. By extending our seaward boundaries, Alabama will have the ability to control more energy production off our coast and will be able to receive even more royalty payments from new energy leases.

Cutting the Red Tape…

Some claim nuclear power should be a part of the solution to our energy problems. As you may know, nuclear power currently supplies the United States with 20 percent of our electricity and has proven itself to be safe, carbon-free and environmentally friendly. In fact, France relies on nuclear power for 80 percent of its electricity needs and has done so for years.

Meanwhile, bureaucratic red tape ties the hands of companies from investing in this technology — all the while, other countries continue to move forward taking charge of their energy production. This is not a new idea: the White House has called for an expansion of nuclear power. The Administration requested $801.7 million for the Department of Energy nuclear energy research and development and infrastructure in FY2008, nearly a 30 percent increase from the funding level in FY2007. The request would have boosted funding of the Advanced Fuel Cycle Initiative.

Our friends in the majority, however, are pushing production overseas and increasing our dependency on foreign resources, subjecting everyone to higher energy prices. We need to push forward with safe production of energy — whether it be nuclear, wind or hydroelectric; all cards must be on the table.

What can be done?

So, you ask, what is your congressman doing to lower the price of gas? Although we are now in the minority, House Republicans are reaching out to the Democratic majority with a number of bills, which would not only lower the price we are paying for energy but would also make us far less dependent on foreign countries.

Here are just a few bills I am actively supporting (a more detailed breakdown on each of these bills appears on my Energy Page on my website http://bonner.house.gov):

- H.R. 3089, No More Excuses Energy Act of 2007
- H.R. 2279, Expand American Refining Capacity on Closed Military Installations
- H.R. 5656, To Repeal the Ban on Acquiring Alternative Fuels
- H.R. 2208, Coal-to-Liquid Fuel Act
- H.R. 2493, Fuel Mandate Reduction Act of 2007
- H.R. 6107, American Energy Independence and Price Reduction Act
- H.R. 6108, Deep Ocean Energy Resources Act of 2008

sumption in 2007

uadrillion Btu

Solar Energy 1%
Hydroelectric 36%
Geothermal Energy 5%
Biomass 53%
Wind Energy 5%

Finally, in an analysis compiled by the House Republican Whip, 91 percent of those in the House minority have historically voted *to increase* the production of American-made oil and gas while 86 percent of those in the House majority have historically voted *against increasing* the production of American made oil and gas.

It was obviously much easier to lock away our oil and gas reserves back when oil was $10 a barrel and natural gas was $2 a cubic foot. Today, however, both sides of the aisle have an obligation to put aside their partisan differences and work together on legislation that will make America truly independent from foreign oil.

Recent Headlines...

As you know, we have shared in many good news announcements over the last several years.

In fact, nearly $7 billion in industrial projects — and more than 24,000 jobs — were announced for Alabama during 2007, a record-setting amount. Mobile County ended 2007 as the top location for new business in Alabama. Incredibly, out of all the metropolitan areas in the United States, Mobile County will have the fastest growing economy over the next five years according to Moody's Economy.com. *Site Selection* magazine even ranked Alabama's 2007 business climate as Number 5 in the nation.

Here are some other recent headlines you may have missed:

▶ Mobile-based C&G Boat Works Inc. will build a fourth yard patrol boat for Naval Sea Systems Command, an $8.4 million contract.

▶ FedEx Express and Mobile Aerospace, Mobile's largest private employer, announced a $470 million Passenger-to-Freight conversion contract.

▶ Berg Pipe is building a $75 million, 100-worker plant in Mobile along with a $37 million, 150-worker plant in Prichard.

▶ The $624 million Dale Earnhardt Jr. Speedway in Prichard is expected to be ready for the 2010 racing season.

▶ The $300 million Mobile Container Terminal at Choctaw Point is poised to start operations next month.

▶ The Port of Mobile is now the 10th largest in the United States.

▶ The Navy's new Littoral Combat Ship (LCS), the *USS Independence*, built by General Dynamics and Austal USA, made its debut on the Mobile River this past spring.

▶ Carnival Cruise Line recently named Mobile's cruise terminal the Port of the Year — its top national customer service award — an even more impressive distinction when you consider Carnival has terminals throughout the country, from Miami to Los Angeles to Honolulu.

▶ Vanity Fair is adding 200 workers to its distribution center in Monroeville, and International Sign & Design plans to hire 125 workers over the next three years in Monroeville.

▶ The University of South Alabama, in alliance with the Mobile Infirmary Medical Center, is now home to a state-of-the-art cancer research institute, the Mitchell Cancer Institute.

Unfortunately, not all news regarding our local economy has been as positive as the news we have come to expect. Most notably, the GAO's decision to sustain Boeing's protest of the Air Force tanker contract took most of us in Alabama by surprise (see article page 1). Earlier this spring, Georgia-Pacific Corp. cut 67 employees from its Monroe County plywood mill, and Vanity Fair announced it will be closing its last remaining manufacturing plants in southwest Alabama, eliminating 180 jobs in Monroeville and 90 in Jackson. The Alabama timber industry has also suffered losses.

While these layoffs have hit particularly hard in certain areas of southwest Alabama, the opportunities for our region are plentiful. It is an exciting time to live in south Alabama, and the coming years hold much promise for our region and our state.

Progress in Iraq Slow, But Steady

As we recently marked the five year anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom, it is obvious there is much work left to do.

Regretfully, one seldom comes across much positive media regarding the War on Terror. This is not because good things are not happening — they are. Our men and women in uniform continue to do an amazing job in spreading the cause of freedom in Iraq, as well as in Afghanistan.

From allowing women to cast their first vote, to ensuring that young boys and girls have an opportunity to learn to read and write, we should all be proud of what our armed forces have been able to accomplish in five-plus years.

In fact, General David Petraeus, the top Commander in Iraq, believes there are many signs of progress.

On his two most recent trips to Washington, General Petraeus briefed Congress on many positive movements in the war. According to General Petraeus, violence and civilian deaths have been reduced substantially, al Qaeda and a number of other extremist groups have been dealt serious blows, the capabilities of Iraqi Security Force elements have grown, and noteworthy involvement of local Iraqis in their own security have been reported — all examples of a positive shift.

On my two previous trips to Iraq — I am waiting another opportunity to visit with our troops in theater, hopefully later this summer or early fall — it was remarkable to see the spirit and determination of our young men and women in uniform. With such a drumbeat of negativity in the national press, especially now that the war is over five years old, it would not be surprising to see troop morale begin to suffer. Fortunately, that does not appear to be the case.

Whether it is in the mountains of Afghanistan or in the deserts of Iraq, time and again the courage and bravery of the American warfighter is a constant source of inspiration.

A few weeks ago, I had an opportunity to meet with a delegation of senior Iraqi government leaders who traveled to Washington to meet with President Bush and a number of Members of Congress. Many of these Iraqi leaders live in the al-Anbar and Ramadi provinces. Until recently, these two areas have been the sites for some of the war's toughest fighting.

General David Petraeus is the Commanding General for the Multi-National

These tribal leaders all stated that as a result of the positive effect of last year's troop surge, al Qaeda is on the run in Iraq. Even the governor of al-Anbar province said he could see a rising consensus among the Iraqi people that they want to take ownership over their own future.

Without a doubt, all Americans are anxious for the day when our brave men and women in uniform will be able to return home and watch, from a distance, as the seeds of democracy they helped sow take root and prosper. May that day come sooner rather than later.

Meanwhile, may God continue to watch over all of our troops, as well as their families and loved ones back home.

Legislative News in Brief...

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

In February, I was honored to be appointed to the House Committee on Appropriations — a seat previously held by my two predecessors, former congressmen Jack Edwards and Sonny Callahan. Additionally, I continue to serve on the House Ethics Committee and the Budget Committee. The Appropriations vacancy I filled was created when former Mississippi Rep. Roger Wicker was appointed to the U.S. Senate following the resignation of Sen. Trent Lott.

TAX INCREASES

Since control of Congress changed hands in 2006, any realistic chance of keeping the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts in place seems slim, at best. Although the Democratic majority claims otherwise, the fact remains that the budget, which passed the House this summer, will impose a $683 billion tax hike on American workers and businesses — the largest tax hike in American history! The average taxpayer in Alabama will be paying $2,556 more in annual taxes. This tax increase hits middle-class parents and workers the most, especially in these times of economic uncertainty. I will continue to oppose these new tax increases as well as new government spending.

FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE AND SURVEILLANCE ACT (FISA)

Earlier this year, Speaker Nancy Pelosi and her Democratic colleagues allowed critical counterterrorism protections to expire. Without these protections, America is at significant risk and potentially blind to new terrorist plots. This simply did not have to occur as a majority in the U.S. Senate had passed a version of the FISA bill that was never considered in the House. The compromise bill, finally brought to the House floor in June, modernizes our terrorist surveillance laws while providing strong civil liberties protections. At the writing of this newsletter, the Senate was considering the House language.

TROOP FUNDING

After months of negotiation, an agreement was finally reached in June to ensure our men and women in uniform will have the resources they need well into next year. House Republicans insisted the $165 billion bill not include restrictions that hamstring our commanders in the field or increase taxes on the American people. It will also provide veterans and their families a better education after they return from Iraq and Afghanistan. I was proud to support this important funding.

RETIREMENTS

Our delegation meets each month in Washington to discuss legislation and how it might impact the people of Alabama. From left to right, Sen. Richard Shelby, Rep. Spencer Bachus, Rep. Artur Davis, Rep. Bud Cramer, Rep. Terry Everett, Rep. Mike Rogers, Sen. Jeff Sessions and Rep. Robert Aderholt. Both Bud and Terry have announced plans to retire at the end of the 110th Congress; our entire state is grateful to them for their outstanding leadership over the years.

Another Successful Workshop for High School Leaders

Students from Bayside Academy joined me for my annual Workshop for High School Leaders where we had the opportunity to discuss the federal legislative process.

This spring my annual Workshop for High School Leaders was held at the Laidlaw Performing Arts Center Recital Hall on the campus of the University of South Alabama in Mobile.

For over 20 years, this workshop has been a fixture in the First Congressional District.

The workshop gives high school government and journalism students the opportunity to question representatives from all levels of state and federal government, as well as members of the Gulf Coast broadcast and print media. The workshop also helps to encourage the leaders of tomorrow to take an interest in events shaping the world around them today.

University of South Alabama President Gordon Moulton kicked off this year's workshop and welcomed the students. The superintendents of education for Mobile and Baldwin Counties, Dr. Roy Nichols and Dr. Faron Hollinger, led the students in a discussion on education in south Alabama.

WALA Fox 10's Bob Grip moderated a panel with Linda Swann of the Alabama Development Office, Ed Castille of the Alabama Industrial Development Training Office and Claudia Zimmermann of the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce on south Alabama's changing economy.

Finally, WKRG TV-5's Jennifer Abney, WPMI-TV 15's Varion Walton, *Lagniappe's* Rob Holbert, and the *Press-Register's* Kaija Wilkinson were part of a spirited exchange on the way the media reports the news.

Without question, our guests certainly helped to make this year's workshop one of the best. Plans are already underway for our next workshop; for more information, please contact Frazier Payne in my Mobile office at (251) 690-2811.

Congratulations to our 2008 Academy Nominees!

It was a pleasure to host a dinner at Ed's Seafood Shed in honor of the students I nominated to our nation's service academies.

In June, I had an opportunity to honor my nominees to the U.S. Service Academies with a dinner at Ed's Seafood Shed on the Causeway in Spanish Fort. By the time this newsletter goes to press, many of these young men and women will have left home to begin their path toward becoming members of the Class of 2012.

As you know, one of my greatest privileges as your congressman is the opportunity to nominate some of the best and brightest young men and women from Alabama's First District to attend one of our nation's outstanding service academies.

The education at these institutions — the U.S. Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, the U.S. Coast Guard Academy at New London, the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at King's Port, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis — is truly second to none.

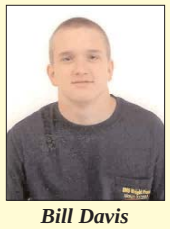
In fact, for students who are interested in attending one of the academies, it is never too early to express your interest and begin the nomination process, as gaining admission to one of these schools is not easy.

Students who are rising seniors in high school are eligible to apply for a nomination to the Class of 2013. In addition to the basic age requirements (at least 17 years of age but not yet 23), candidates for admission must also display significant degrees of academic achievement (displayed by school transcripts as well as SAT and/or ACT scores); demonstrate leadership in school, church, or community activities; be of good moral character; and successfully complete a medical review and physical aptitude examination. The complete application file must be in my office no later than December 1, 2008.

Naturally, we look forward to working with interested students and their families. For more information, please contact Brooks Chew in my Mobile office at (251) 690-2811 or (800) 288-8721. Additional information is available on my website at http://bonner.house.gov. You should also plan to attend our annual Academy Night, which will be held in October.

Loren Bowman
Robertsdale
Robertsdale High School

Chris Cotton
Foley
Foley High School

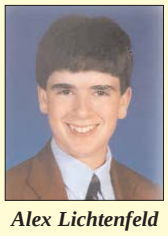


Bill Davis
Mobile
UMS-Wright Preparatory School

Shalela Dowdy
Mobile
Murphy High School

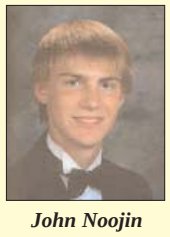
Jordan Englert
Jackson
Jackson High School

Ben Fisher
Mobile
UMS-Wright Preparatory School



Alex Lichtenfeld
Mobile
UMS-Wright Preparatory School

David Marston Chunchula
Mary G. Montgomery High School



John Noojin
Mobile
Baker High School

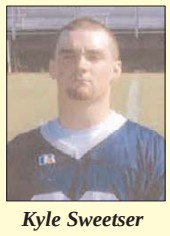
Jack O'Dowd
Mobile
McGill-Toolen Catholic High School

Jonathon Powell
Daphne
Marion Military Institute

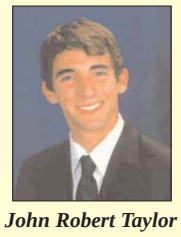
Chase Pritchard
Mobile
Marion Military Institute

William Semple Theodore
UMS-Wright Preparatory School

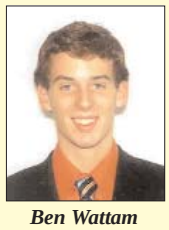
Austin Sidwell
Summerdale
Foley High School



Kyle Sweetser
Mobile
U.S. Military Academy Prep School



John Robert Taylor
Mobile
UMS-Wright Preparatory School



Ben Wattam
Mobile
McGill-Toolen Catholic High School

Interns Gain Valuable Experience

Our first group of summer interns (l-r) Jonathan Riley of Brewton, Katie Crow, Maggie Meacham, and Mark Johnson all of Mobile, worked with me in my Washington office.

Harper Lee Honored by the President

I was honored to join Miss Lee at the White House and see the president present her our nation's highest civilian award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Last fall, one of south Alabama's most famous daughters, Nelle Harper Lee of Monroeville, received the Presidential Medal of Freedom at a White House ceremony with President George W. Bush.

The Medal of Freedom, our nation's highest civilian award, is given to individuals who have made meritorious contributions to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public or private endeavors.

Miss Lee's masterpiece, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, is a model of literary achievement that has become one of the most beloved American classics of all time. Its pages speak a timeless message of honor and tolerance, even though it was penned almost 50 years ago during our nation's struggle for equality.

All south Alabamians can be proud that one of our most admired citizens has received this well-deserved honor.

Come visit us in our new Mobile office!

Late last fall, my staff and I moved into your new district office in the RSA Battle House Tower.

The new address is 11 North Water Street, Suite 15290, Mobile, Alabama, 36602. Our telephone number, (251) 690-2811, remains the same.

Naturally, we are proud to be part of an ever-changing, revitalized downtown Mobile. It did not hurt that we were able to move into our new space for less money than we were paying in rent at our old location.

Whether you need the services of my staff or simply would like to visit our district office in Alabama's newest, tallest building, please do not hesitate to call. Due to increased security for the entire building (certainly not just our office), you may want to call (251) 690-2811 to let us know you are coming, and we will be happy to get you checked in at the visitor's desk on the first floor of the tower. This will help expedite your visit.

Although our address in Mobile has changed, our locations in Baldwin County and Washington, D.C. remain the same. We hope to see you soon.

Workforce 2013:

Planning for the next five years

PRESS-REGISTER

MOODY'S ECONOMY.COM RATINGS

MOBILE NO. 1

County economy projected as nation's fastest-growing over the next five years

The February 1, 2008, Press-Register front page.

Developing a highly trained, reliable workforce to help fill upwards of 6,000 new jobs over the next few years is a challenge many parts of the country would love to have.

For instance, the state of Michigan is facing a 6.9 percent unemployment rate, one of the highest in the nation.

Compare this to Alabama's 3.5 percent unemployment rate — and the string of good news announcements we have been blessed with in recent months and years — and it becomes crystal clear that even with a national economic downturn, southwest Alabama has to keep looking forward, preparing for better times which are on the horizon.

To that end, I am pleased to announce plans are underway to host *Workforce 2013: A Movement to Put All the Pieces Together for the Next Five Years.*

Unlike other seminars and workshops, many which have been valuable, the goal of this daylong program is to tie all the pieces together for our region, making it clear that our "right hand knows what our left hand" is doing.

Governor Bob Riley has agreed to host this timely meeting in cooperation with me, and plans are already underway for an impressive line-up of national and regional speakers.

Perhaps the best news is *Workforce 2013* will be open to the general public.

Following on our highly acclaimed "Economic Development Leadership Summit" five years ago, *Workforce 2013* will be a must-attend event for local and state officials, economic development leaders, workforce training directors and human relations specialists for many of the leading companies that call south Alabama and the Gulf Coast home.

If you are interested in attending, mark your calendar for Thursday, December 4, 2008. Be sure to check our website at http://bonner.house.gov or with my office later this fall for additional details on this exciting day.

The entire conversation will focus on the future and the now.

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