

Jo Bonner



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ECONOMIC SUMMIT A SUCCESS!

The Southwest Alabama Economic Summit held in Mobile, Alabama, on November 17, 2003, proved to be a resounding success! I would like to take this opportunity to thank the nearly 400 delegates, business and community leaders, and elected officials who came together to make this such a productive meeting.

Those in attendance had the great privilege of hearing remarks delivered by the United States Secretary of Commerce, Donald Evans, on the state of the American economy and ways that we can direct some of the momentum result-



Secretary Evans and I had a chance to discuss his first visit to South Alabama, one he promised would not be his last.

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1ST DISTRICT BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT OF THE MONTH McNeil Nutritionals

McNeil Nutritionals manufactures Splenda, the only no-calorie sweetener made from raw sugar which is from 650 to 750 times sweeter than sugar. This product was introduced in 2001 and has now achieved the number one market share in low-calorie sweeteners in the world. As a result, Splenda saw more than 100 percent profit growth from 2001 to 2002. Also in that year, McNeil Nutritionals had a 110 percent sales growth from its base year and implemented "Six Sigma" quality projects that resulted in cost savings of \$15 million.

Diet soft drink makers are now experimenting with Splenda. One of its major advantages over the more commonly used sweetener, aspartame, is taste. Since Splenda is made of sugar, it does not have the aftertaste of many artificial sweeteners.

The McNeil plant in McIntosh, Alabama, has 160 employees, generates \$1.4 million in state and local taxes annually, and spends about \$20 million locally in various goods and services. For more information on Splenda, visit their website at www.splenda.com.

Congratulations, McNeil Nutritionals, for your outstanding product and commitment to South Alabama!



LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS FOR NOVEMBER 2003

➤ As Congress moves toward adjournment, there has been a great deal of legislative activity. As of this date, two very major policy initiatives are nearing final action — H.R. 6, the Energy Policy Act, and H.R. 1, the Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act. In addition, Congress is nearing a wrap-up of all annual appropriations bills to fund government operations.

➤ The House has given final passage to the Energy Policy Act and is awaiting the Senate to act and send the measure to the president. This comprehensive national energy policy will promote conservation, reduce our growing dependence on unstable Middle Eastern oil, improve our economy, and create new jobs. The bill addresses energy efficiency, renewable energy, clean coal technologies, vehicles and fuels, automobile efficiency, hydrogen fuels research and development, oil and gas exploration, nuclear energy, electricity reforms, and many other issues. It does not provide for drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

➤ Congress is in the final stages of approv-

ing the first voluntary prescription drug benefit for Medicare. In addition to prescription drug coverage, the agreement will mean an increase of approximately 100 million dollars in Medicare reimbursements for hospitals in our area and a slight increase for physician reimbursement. I am optimistic that as a result of this legislation, access to high quality health care will be preserved for all South Alabamians.

➤ Also prior to the end of the year, we cleared the annual defense authorization bill that includes two major initiatives. First, it enhances military personnel benefits by raising base pay, extends special bonuses and pay for personnel on active duty, continues the family separation allowance for service members with dependents worldwide, and extends a higher level of combat pay through next year. Second, the bill provides for concurrent receipt of retirement benefits and VA disability compensation for many disabled service members. While not a full solution, this was a significant new benefit that is of interest to many veterans in the First District.

Economic Summit (continued from page 1)

ing from these national trends into successes in Southwest Alabama. In addition to Secretary Evans, both Mobile Mayor Mike Dow and Alabama Development Office Director Neal Wade provided insightful remarks on how we can draw new opportunities and enterprise to the area by beginning to think as a region rather than as six individual counties.

The participants in the summit's four breakout sessions — Innovation and Strengthening Our Existing Businesses, Expanding Opportunities for Minority and Women-Owned Businesses, Workforce Development, and Attracting and Creating New Entrepreneurs and Businesses — developed a series of highly useful suggestions on ways to build on our current infrastructure and bring greater development to our area. A complete list of these suggestions and a full summary of the conference activities is now available on the Internet through the efforts of the conference's organizer, The Public Forum Institute of Washington. To access this information, please visit the Forum's website at www.publicforuminstitute.org.



Left: Secretary Evans was greeted at the bottom of the escalator by a group of our lovely Azalea Trail Maids.



Right: And four more greeted him at the top of the escalator!



Left: Secretary Evans was hit with a group of young ladies from Monroeville's Mockingbird Court.

Right: Neal Wade, Director of the Alabama Development Office gives the Opening Address at the Summit.



TOWN HALL MEETINGS SET FOR FIRST WEEK OF DECEMBER

It is a pleasure to announce my latest series of town meetings to be held throughout the First Congressional District. The times and locations for these meetings are as follows:

MONDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2003

8:00-9:00 a.m. West Mobile - John Archer Center
10:00-11:00 a.m. - Fruitdale Volunteer Fire Department
11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m. - Saint Stephens Historic Park
2:00-3:00 p.m. - Chickasaw City Hall

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2003

8:30-9:30 a.m. - Grove Hill City Hall
11:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. - Vredenburgh Senior Center
2:00-3:00 p.m. - Frisco City Town Hall
3:30-4:30 p.m. - Pollard Town Hall
5:00-6:00 p.m. - Riverview Town Hall

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2003

9:00-10:00 a.m. Magnolia Springs - Jesse's Restaurant
10:30-11:30 a.m. Summerdale - Baldwin County EMC
1:00-2:00 p.m. - Loxley Town Hall
3:00-4:00 p.m. Trinity Gardens - Trinity Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall
4:30-5:30 p.m. - Mount Vernon Town Hall

I look forward to having the opportunity to travel throughout South Alabama to meet with my constituents, and I certainly hope each of you will find the meeting closest to your home and take the opportunity to come out and discuss issues of concern to you, both here and in Washington.



Left: I was pleased to visit with Boy Scout Troop 121 of Mobile during their recent visit to Washington.

From the mailbox...

To: Jo Bonner

I just wanted to send this card to tell you guys that my wife and I can't thank you enough for all that you did during the past few months. Your help was very much appreciated and really made a big difference. Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule and helping out with this matter.

Sincerely, A U.S. Marine from Alabama stationed in Virginia Beach
September, 2003



