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HOUSE PASSES RESTORE AMENDMENT

The House of Representatives recently voted to support Gulf Coast efforts to seek a share of federal fine money levied against the companies responsible for the catastrophic 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

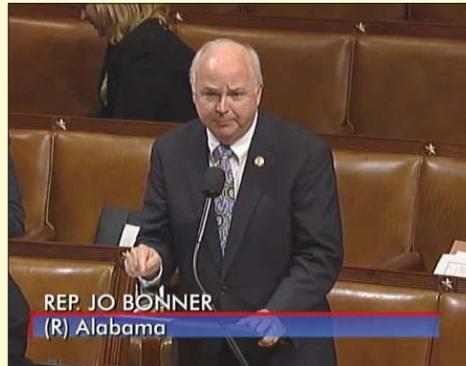
On February 16, the House passed an amendment that for the first time calls for the creation of a Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund and the mechanism to deposit into it 80 percent of all federal Clean Water Act fines paid by those responsible for the oil spill.

The House action represents the first vote in either the full House or Senate to advance the overall goal of returning the lion's share of oil spill fines to the Gulf Coast states which suffered direct and long-lasting damage nearly two years ago.

The RESTORE amendment was attached to the energy portion of the House's transportation reauthorization bill and passed by a simple voice vote. I was pleased to join with my fellow Gulf Coast lawmakers in drafting and supporting this very important amendment.

As I noted during my House floor remarks in support of the amendment, the federal government should not benefit from the tragedy that occurred in our back yard.

By going on record in passing the RESTORE amendment, the House sent a signal to the Justice and Treasury Departments that lawmakers agree that 80 percent of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill fines should be reserved in a trust fund for Gulf Coast restoration and



I was pleased to join other Gulf Coast lawmakers in voicing strong support for the RESTORE Amendment when it passed the House on February 16, 2012.

should not be funneled away for unrelated federal spending, or directed back, to the Gulf Coast at the administration's discretion.

While more extensive legislation has been introduced in the House and Senate to address the issue, neither bill has yet been scheduled for a vote. The amendment vote, however, provides a way for lawmakers to move the ball forward while still working to pass the broader Gulf RESTORE Act bills in both the House and Senate in the coming months.

The Gulf Coast region continues to recover from the unwelcomed upheaval that struck our shores in the spring of 2010. The longer term impact on our environment and economy has yet to be calculated. It is, therefore, essential that fines paid by BP and other responsible parties are set aside to address ongoing and future damage to our ecosystem and economy.

MEASURE PASSES TO HOLD CONGRESS TO A HIGHER STANDARD

For more than 50 years, it has been illegal for anyone in government service, including Congress, to financially benefit from non-public information received in the performance of their duties. The House recently voted to increase the scrutiny over Members of Congress and the Executive Branch to ensure that this law is properly enforced.

On February 9, the House voted 417 to 2 to pass the Stop Trading on Congressional Knowledge Act (STOCK Act).

In addition to underscoring that Members of Congress are legally barred from personally benefiting from confidential information accessed on the job, the STOCK Act also strengthens reporting requirements for Congress and the Executive Branch.

The bill amends the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 and the Ethics in Government Act, and would require the Senate and the House of Representatives to implement an electronic filing system for financial disclosure forms, as well as to provide the public with on-line access to that information in a searchable database.

The STOCK Act would require more timely reporting of certain financial transactions by Members of Congress, Congressional employees, and executive and judicial branch officials and employees.

OBAMACARE'S NEWEST CONTROVERSY

What many have described as President Obama's signature legislative accomplishment is also his most controversial. Two years after the final passage of Obamacare, it continues to draw fire and divide the country.

As part of its ongoing effort to implement Obamacare, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services recently announced that it would require faith-based employers – including charities, schools, universities, and hospitals – to provide birth control and related services; directly at odds with many of their institutional beliefs.

The ruling is an attack on religious freedom, a freedom explicitly and prominently protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution.

Response has been swift and loud. Speaker John Boehner took to the House floor announcing legislative action, pledging that if President Obama did not reverse his administration's ruling, then the House would do that for him.

I joined over 150 other Members of Congress in sending a letter to HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius voicing strong opposition to the ruling. Additionally, I cosponsored the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act, which permits a health plan to decline coverage of specific items and services that are contrary to the religious beliefs of the sponsor, issuer, or other entity offering the plan or the purchaser or beneficiary (in the case of individual coverage) without penalty.

Facing withering opposition from millions of Americans, the Obama administration has since revised its controversial new policy, backing away from forcing religious organizations to provide or pay for birth control services. It now says insurance companies would have to cover the cost. Nevertheless, questions remain over how this rule will be implemented without cost to those who do not support such services.

I opposed Obamacare's passage in 2010 and I voted for the full repeal of Obamacare in January 2011. There is a better way to provide medical care to Americans. I support market-based health care reforms that protect a person's right to choose their own doctor and coverage plan without government mandates.



During my recent visit with the Fairhope Rotary Club, I was honored to meet members of Fairhope High School's youth service club, Interact. With me are Jimmy Drummond, Sara Thomas, Milin Vira, and Mrs. Elyse Weeks, the class sponsor.

AMERICAN ENERGY SECURITY SHOULD COME FIRST



Gas prices are back up to \$3.57 per gallon on average and experts say this summer we may break into record highs. So what is our president saying about energy prices? He is blaming Americans' concerns on "media hysteria."

If the president will visit South Alabama he might get an earful from folks who have plenty of experience paying their fair share at the pump. Many people want to know why the president is standing in the way of new energy sources and jobs.

Last month, President Obama announced his opposition to granting a permit for the construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico.

The project would not cost the taxpayer *anything*. On the contrary, it would generate plenty of actual "shovel-ready jobs" and strengthen America's energy supply.

The new pipeline project would inject \$20 billion in private sector investment into the U.S. economy, create 20,000 direct jobs, spur the creation of 118,000 spin-off jobs, and pay out \$5 billion in taxes to local counties and states along the pipeline route over the lifetime of the project.

The pipeline has bipartisan support and wide backing including labor unions, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, energy policy and national security experts, in addition to local governments along the projected path of the pipeline.

Not everyone is upset with the president's decision to turn down access to energy from a friendly neighbor. There are likely plenty of smiles in Beijing, where state energy planners are desperate for new oil supplies to fuel that nation's economic growth. The Canadian prime minister has already expressed a willingness to build a pipeline to the Pacific Coast to accommodate the Chinese and others willing to buy if the U.S. will not.

If America wants to decrease its reliance upon energy controlled by unstable states and uneasy allies, then increasing energy agreements with Canada makes very good sense.

President Obama has repeatedly blasted Congress for supposedly standing in the way of job creation. What is his excuse?

I support efforts in the House to approve the Keystone Pipeline, even if it means going around the President.

On February 16, I voted for legislation to expand domestic energy production and create jobs. The American Energy and Infrastructure Jobs Act calls for the resumption of offshore lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico, off the east and west coasts and in Alaska. It also promotes the development of abundant American oil shale – an untapped resource with a potential of up to 1.5 trillion barrels of oil. The energy bill also requires the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to approve the Keystone XL Pipeline within 30 days of passage.

America needs jobs and access to reliable energy. It's time the president put our country's interests first.

AFTER THREE YEARS OF FAILED STIMULUS, OBAMA KEEPS ON SPENDING

February 17th marked the third anniversary of President Obama's failed stimulus being signed into law. This was a date that most of us would rather forget.

Just before the stimulus was passed by a Democrat-controlled Congress, we remember the president's promises that unemployment would not rise above eight percent, 3.5 million jobs would be saved or created, and he would cut the deficit in half.

In hindsight, the biggest impact of \$1.2 trillion in stimulus spending has been the sea of red ink it has added to the federal debt. Three years after the stimulus was signed, unemployment has never dipped below eight percent, averaging 9.3 percent for the period. The nation has lost 1.1 million jobs since Mr. Obama took office, and the number of people on food stamps has reached an all time high.

A February Gallup/Wells Fargo poll of small businesses revealed that most are still not hiring, citing concerns over the economy, new government regulations and the uncertainty regarding taxes. Big government is not the answer, yet the president continues to push for more spending on questionable stimulus programs.

I voted against the president's stimulus; supporting instead House efforts this Congress to create jobs and free the economy from burdensome federal regulations.

Sadly, without Senate and White House approval, conservatives in the House are unable to advance measures to help turn around our ailing economy. Over two dozen bills targeting job growth have already passed the House since January 2011, and each has been blocked in the Senate.

The president's new fiscal 2013 budget projects a federal deficit of \$1.3 trillion in 2012, marking the fourth consecutive year of federal budget deficits greater than \$1 trillion. Carried out over ten years, the president's new budget will grow the national debt to a colossal \$26 trillion. His appetite for new spending is also matched only by his continued calls for higher taxes totaling nearly \$2 trillion.

I remain opposed to President Obama's big spending agenda and support House Republican efforts to not only block the president's new \$3.8 trillion budget, but also to pass a responsible alternative conservative budget that reins in federal spending while cutting deficit spending.



At left: 4-H is the nation's largest youth development organization and plays a valuable role in preparing our young people for college and success in life. Recently I visited with local 4-H members ranging in age from 5 to 18 at the Museum of Mobile. It is encouraging to talk with so many young people who are interested in our country's future.



Above: Earlier this month students from Bayside Academy in Daphne traveled to Washington, DC to witness their government in action. I joined Senators Sessions and Shelby in welcoming the young scholars to the U.S. Capitol and talking to them about the role of Congress.

From the mailbox...

Dear Congressman Bonner,

Figuring out where the buck stops inside a giant federal agency like Social Security can be extremely frustrating. Your office in Mobile eased this frustration in less than 15 minutes.

Our long planned client luncheon featuring a speaker from the local Social Security office was cancelled the day before due to the federal budget crisis and the possibility of the government being shut down. We were left high and dry with no one to call but the office of Jo Bonner. They saved the day! Brooks Chew was able to get our problem solved in a matter of minutes and our event was a great success.

Kudos to you and the entire staff here in Mobile. Upon leaving the event many of our clients voiced their appreciation to you and your staff for helping us save the day.

Thank you for your hard work and the service you provide to the constituents here in the 1st District of Alabama.

Sincerely,

A Mobile businessman

