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DEDICATING ALABAMA STATE VETERANS MEMORIAL CEMETERY



I joined VA Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, Steve Muro; Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs, Retired Rear Admiral Clyde Marsh; and other officials in dedicating the long-awaited Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery on December 7.

On December 7, 2012, I was honored to join with local, state and federal officials in dedicating the long-awaited Alabama State Veterans Cemetery near Spanish Fort.

The first of its kind in our state, the grounds of this new cemetery are truly a magnificent and peaceful final resting place for Alabama veterans. Built to national veterans' cemetery standards, the 120-acre site will be state-owned and operated. Most importantly, the new cemetery is reserved for our South Alabama veterans' community.

The new cemetery was literally 50 years in the making. In 1962, the Mobile National Cemetery, which was established at end of the Civil War, ran out of space and was closed to interments. For a half century South Alabama veterans have had to seek burial arrangements in northern Alabama or out of state. This presented an undue burden to local veterans and their families.

In 2009, State Rep. Randy Davis, R-Daphne, with the support of the Mobile and Baldwin County delegations, was successful in getting the Alabama Legislature to approve a bill to create the new local veterans cemetery and former Governor Bob Riley signed the legislation into law. Equally

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HOUSE PASSES NO BUDGET, NO PAY ACT

This month, the House passed the "No Budget, No Pay Act" to force Senate Democrats to finally pass a budget. I supported this legislation which withholds the pay of Congress if it doesn't pass a budget by April 15.



Why is this important? The House and Senate are each required by law to pass a federal budget each year. Without a budget framework passing each chamber, there is less control over federal spending and the result is inefficient governing, which is just what we have witnessed over the last four years.

The last time the Senate fulfilled its statutory obligation to pass a federal budget a barrel of crude oil was \$51 and Barack Obama was just sworn in to his first term. While it has been 1,365 days since the Democrat Senate passed a budget, Republicans have passed budgets for each of the two years we have controlled the House, the most recent of which called for a \$4 trillion reduction in federal spending over a decade.

The Senate must show the American people it understands the seriousness of the debt crisis facing our nation and is willing to put a plan on paper for everyone to review.

The House has made clear that there will be no long-term increase in the federal ability to borrow money unless Congress (both the House and Senate) first agree to substantial cuts in federal spending.

The No Budget, No Pay Act also delays the House and Senate debate over the long-term debt ceiling by three months to allow both to chambers to pass their own budgets and go on record about future spending.

Before there is any decision over a long-term debt limit increase, budgets should first be passed that provide a framework to control reckless Washington spending. If hardworking American families and small businesses have to run on a budget, Washington should too.

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important, the cemetery site on Saluda Hill overlooking Mobile Bay was secured with the help of Dr. Barry Booth, his family, and the Baldwin County Commission.

With the land finally available, and armed with state backing, I worked alongside Senators Sessions and Shelby to obtain federal funding to construct the new cemetery. Final approval came in August 2011 when Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki announced the release of a \$7 million grant to the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs. In October 2011, I joined Governor Robert Bentley and VA Under Secretary Steve Muro and many other dignitaries for the groundbreaking. It was rewarding to see everyone's efforts come to fruition last month with the dedication of these stately grounds.

The new state cemetery will officially open to veteran burials this spring.

NEW BALDWIN COUNTY OFFICE ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBERS

My Baldwin County Office in Foley has officially moved to the Satellite Courthouse Building on 201 East Section Avenue, in Foley.

I look forward to continuing to serve you from this newer, more cost-efficient location, which has been made available through the assistance of the Baldwin County Commission.

In addition to a new address, my Baldwin office also has a new phone number: (251) 972-8545. The new fax number is (251) 972-8546.

For best service, you are encouraged to call ahead before visiting:

Congressman Jo Bonner
201 East Section Avenue
Foley, Alabama 36535
Phone: 251-972-8545, Fax: 251-972-8546

READING THE CONSTITUTION



On January 15, I was honored to join other House members in reading the U.S. Constitution on the floor of the House of Representatives. While each Member of Congress takes an oath to protect and defend the Constitution, it is important that the document be read aloud in the House chamber to remind lawmakers and the public that our government derives its power from the consent of the people.

RESTORE FUNDS TIED TO FINAL SETTLEMENT WITH BP



In late October Fox News interviewed me, Gulf Shores Mayor Robert Craft and Orange Beach Mayor Tony Kennon about the status of federal negotiations with BP.

In November, BP agreed to pay \$4.5 billion to settle criminal charges in connection with its role in the 2010 Gulf oil spill. BP's admission of responsibility in the deaths of 11 workers aboard the Deepwater Horizon as well as obstruction of Congress is the first phase in the ongoing negotiations with the federal government.

The Justice Department noted the settlement represented both the single largest criminal fine and the single largest total criminal resolution in the history of the United States. The announced criminal settlement between BP and the Justice Department represents but a down payment on the oil company's obligation to mitigate the environmental and economic damage it unleashed on the Gulf Coast more than two years ago.

With the criminal settlement behind us, the federal government continues to pursue damages from BP under the Clean Water Act, which includes levying additional fines, 80 percent of which will be directed to Gulf Coast Communities via the RESTORE Act. BP must not mistake the Justice Department's agreement to the criminal penalties from the 2010 spill as a signal that pending civil penalties under the Clean Water Act will be any less severe.

When Attorney General Holder personally informed me of the criminal settlement, he gave his assurances that the Justice Department would vigorously pursue further civil penalties under the Clean Water Act, which is subject to the RESTORE Act. I have made clear to the Attorney General that anything less would be unacceptable to our coastal communities. Justice must prevail.

Late last year media reports indicated that BP might actually be able to deduct some of the penalties it would be forced to pay in a final settlement. I introduced legislation last October to prohibit the deduction of penalties for tax purposes and will do so again this Congress.

GUN CONTROL WILL NOT MAKE US SAFER

President Obama recently called for sweeping gun control measures that he said would protect America's children and communities by reducing gun violence. However, had his gun control policy been federal law on December 14, 2012, it is unlikely that any lives would have been spared in Newtown, Connecticut.

A list of largely feel-good proposals that merely burden law-abiding citizens, the president's core strategy is to further limit gun ownership. I am opposed to the president's gun ban and am disappointed that he chose to pursue a political course rather than sitting down with Congress to work on a comprehensive solution to violence in our country. However, I remain committed to working to address the causes of such senseless crimes at their source – the individual.

The president, and others who support gun control, routinely justify their attempts to diminish the Second Amendment by claiming hunters' rights should not trump others' rights. They need to be reminded that James Madison and the other framers of the Bill of Rights were not thinking of hunters when they gave the right to bear arms special protection in the Constitution. Gun ownership was placed right after the rights of free speech and religion because our Founders knew well that freedoms can be taken away by a tyrannical government. The Second Amendment serves to protect the public and preserve our liberty.

No rush to pass politically-motivated gun control legislation can outweigh the supremacy of the U.S. Constitution and the Second Amendment. Nor can the government take away the public's right to protect itself. In 2008, the Supreme Court ruled in *District of Columbia vs. Heller* that "the inherent right of self-defense has been central to the Second Amendment right."

Statistics released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation show that more murders are committed each year by knives and blunt objects than rifles – the target of president's new gun ban. From 2007 to 2011, nearly three times as many homicides were reported from the use of one's hands, fists and feet than rifles.

Restricting the rights of the law-abiding public will not stop criminals from using guns to commit crimes, nor will it prevent evil attacks on the public. Congress and the president should pursue a comprehensive review of the causes of violence in society, ranging from mental illness to the entertainment industry. Doing so requires more work than simply passing a feel-good gun ban as the president prefers.

2013 MILITARY ACADEMY NOMINEES



This past May, it was an honor to have dinner with my 2012 academy nominees at Ed's Seafood Shed on the Mobile Causeway.

I am pleased to announce the following South Alabama young people have been nominated to one or more of the U.S. Service academies for the class entering summer, 2013:

Michael Anderson, Jackson High School, Jackson
Tres Bodet, St. Paul's Episcopal High School, Mobile
Quinn Brock, Baker High School, Mobile
Marlin Brutkiewicz, UMS-Wright Preparatory School, Mobile
Jackson Butler, Pensacola Christian Academy, Bay Minette
Paul Daniels, UMS-Wright Preparatory School, Mobile
Michael Daves, Bayside Academy, Fairhope
Zach Farni, Davidson High School, Mobile
Dillon Gnall, Gulf Shores High School, Gulf Shores
Leigh Higby, UMS-Wright Preparatory School, Semmes
Ben Hightower, Murphy High School, Mobile
Joseph Hii, Cottage Hill Christian Academy, Mobile
J. Matt Hill, Gulf Shores High School, Gulf Shores
Maliha Khan, Gulf Shores High School, Gulf Shores
Burke Langham, Foley High School, Foley
Crosby Latham, St. Paul's Episcopal High School, Mobile
Harrison Loudon, McGill-Toolen Catholic High School, Mobile
Keenan McDonald, Auburn University, Mobile
Lawton McGahey, Spanish Fort High School, Spanish Fort
Joseph Olmstead, Bayside Academy, Gulf Shores
D.J. Parten, Faith Academy, Mobile
Chris Pate, Marion Military Institute, Jackson
Kevin Pollard, Fairhope High School, Fairhope
Anna Ramsey, Daphne High School, Daphne
George Williams, UMS-Wright Preparatory School, Mobile
Ryan Wright, Marion Military Institute, Mobile



In December, SAFRAN Engineering announced plans to locate at Mobile's Brookley Aeroplex. It will employ 50 engineers in the Port City. I was pleased to join local officials in welcoming the first new industry to arrive in South Alabama to support Airbus.

FISCAL CLIFF DEAL FALLS SHORT

Decisions that are left to the last minute are rarely well conceived. Such was the case with the 11th hour passage of the so-called Senate fiscal cliff deal by Congress during the wee hours of New Year's Day.

I voted against the Senate fiscal cliff deal for many reasons, but chiefly because it was fundamentally flawed. Senate Democrats couldn't come up with a penny – not a single penny – of cuts to offset the \$4 trillion in new spending they proposed.

Even more insulting to America's taxpayers, the deal included \$70 billion in tax breaks for political friends and pet causes of President Obama and his allies in the Senate.

Meanwhile, they raised taxes on most working Americans and they are now calling for even more revenues to pay for their reckless spending.

While it is easy to sit back and criticize unpopular legislation, it is much tougher to offer alternative solutions. The House not only talked the talk but walked the walk during 2012. We passed legislation in May and again in August that respectively addressed devastating cuts to our military through sequestration, and extended expiring federal tax cuts for all taxpayers. In both cases, the Democratically-controlled Senate – backed by President Obama – refused to even bring them forward for debate, and forced an unnecessary, political, end-of-year showdown.

While the president may have avoided dealing with spending cuts, he cannot continue to do so. In the coming months, Congress will be forced to act on the hundreds of billions of dollars in automatic spending cuts which were delayed by the fiscal cliff bill, as well as whether to raise the federal debt ceiling.

No amount of class warfare diversion and political smoke and mirrors can escape the fact that America's credit cards are maxed out and it's time to start paying the bill.

SOUTH ALABAMA VETERANS CLINIC CLOSER TO REALITY

In October, the Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System announced that the long wait for a veteran outpatient clinic serving Southwest Alabama will soon be over. The VA has approved a contractor's bid to establish a 2,600-square-foot outpatient clinic at 156 Whetstone Street in Monroeville.

An opening date is not expected to be announced until completion of the outpatient facility and final approval by the VA. While more details are expected to be forthcoming, the new VA outpatient clinic will serve veterans in Clarke, Conecuh, Monroe, Washington and Wilcox counties.

The establishment of a VA outpatient clinic in Monroeville has been a priority of mine for a number of years as I have worked with the VA to make medical services more accessible to our veterans, many of whom are aging and unable to travel to distant cities for outpatient care.

From the mailbox...



Dear Representative Bonner:

Last May I wrote you requesting your assistance in obtaining a Veterans Administration Disability Letter to use in applying for a U.S. Coast Guard civilian position at the Aviation Training Center in Mobile. I wish to thank you for the success in that endeavor as it was provided by the VA and was accepted by the USCG. My goal was just to be in consideration and, with your assistance, I cleared that hurdle and went on to successfully compete. I will now start in that position later this month.

Of particular note, please pass along my appreciation and admiration of your Senior Caseworker, Ms. Elizabeth Roney. When I first visited your Mobile office, I was a bit apprehensive and harried as I was on a tight time line with the VA to get the letter secured. Ms. Roney immediately put me at ease, patiently listened to my circumstance and treated me with the utmost courtesy. Her professional and kind demeanor gave me the sense that if something could be done, she would work to make it happen. I fear that I was a "high maintenance" case over the following week as much coordination and communication took place between Ms. Roney, the VA and me. In the end, she successfully moved the VA to provide the letter given the available and convincing evidence, even though they were not fully complete with my overall claim evaluation.

Over my 30-year career as a commissioned officer in the Army and Coast Guard, I have had the privilege to serve with numerous outstanding professionals. I quickly got the impression that Ms. Roney would easily rank among some of the best such men and women. I was further impressed with the courtesy and professionalism of your entire staff from start to finish.

I thank you, Ms. Roney and your staff for handling my request in such a superb manner and thank you for your service.

*Best regards,
A South Alabama Veteran
October 3, 2012*