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HOUSE PASSES OBAMACARE REPEAL

On January 19, I joined a majority of the U.S. House of Representatives in voting 245 to 189 to repeal the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ObamaCare). The Obama administration vastly overreached in forcing all Americans to buy health insurance, while creating a new bureaucracy that will limit individual care choices and drive up health care costs.

The American people spoke powerfully last November that they want no part of the president's budget-busting, big government-knows-best takeover of the most personal aspect of their lives, their medical care.

Repeal is just the first step, of course, and I look forward to working with my colleagues here in the House to pass common sense reforms to improve America's health care system, not destroy it with stifling government overregulation.

The repeal legislation must also pass the U.S. Senate, where Senate Democrat Leader Harry Reid opposes having a vote at all. Republican Leader Senator Mitch McConnell has promised to use any means necessary to ensure that Americans get a repeal vote in the Senate. The president remains opposed to the repeal of his health care reform law.

ObamaCare Limits Choice, Raises Premiums

The administration has already admitted that up to 7 out of 10 Americans with employer-provided health coverage could lose their health care under ObamaCare. And that's not all. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has predicted that Americans who buy their own health insurance will see a \$2,100 premium increase in five years under ObamaCare.

ObamaCare Harms Seniors

Seniors – the most vulnerable of our population – would be harmed under the false promise of ObamaCare. The CBO projects as many as 11 million seniors currently enrolled in Medicare will see an average reduction of \$816 in benefits over the next five years. Some predictions within the administration itself say as many as 7 million seniors could be forced out of a Medicare health plan under ObamaCare.

ObamaCare is Job-Killing, Budget-Busting

ObamaCare is projected to cost \$2.6 trillion over ten years and add over \$700 billion to the federal budget deficit. To pay for the new ObamaCare bureaucracy, \$500 billion in new taxes would be passed on to individuals and small businesses. The National Federation of Independent Business estimates as many as 1.6 million jobs could be lost due to ObamaCare's taxes and mandates.

Repeal ObamaCare and Pass Targeted Health Care Reforms

Instead of a new government bureaucracy funded by job-killing taxes and more deficit spending, Republicans are working on an alternative that allows Americans to keep their own health care plan, protects access to health care coverage regardless of pre-existing conditions, stops abuse of medical malpractice lawsuits, prevents insurers from unjustly cancelling a policy or imposing annual or lifetime spending caps, permits Americans to buy health insurance across state lines, and allows small businesses to pool together to obtain health care at lower prices.

TK CELEBRATES OFFICIAL OPENING



Pictured with me at the event are (l-r) Dr. Ulrich Albrecht-Frueh, CEO of ThyssenKrupp Stainless USA, LLC; Dr. Ekkehard Schulz, immediate past Chairman of the Executive Board of ThyssenKrupp AG; Dr. Heinrich Hiesinger, Chairman of the Executive Board of ThyssenKrupp AG; and Christoph Lackinger, President and CEO of ThyssenKrupp Steel USA, LLC

On December 10, I was pleased to be among the large crowd on hand for the official ribbon cutting of ThyssenKrupp USA's new state-of-the-art \$5 billion carbon and stainless steel processing facility in Calvert.

The largest industrial development project in the state of Alabama and one of the biggest foreign investments in the United States, the ThyssenKrupp plant took three years and nearly 30,000 workers to complete.

The 3,700 acre plant already employs 1,700 workers and will add another 1,000 jobs once the facility is fully operational.

Dr. Ekkehard Schulz noted his company has made a major long-term investment in southwest Alabama that will grow: "ThyssenKrupp has enjoyed excellent support here from government and industry associations and a friendly reception from the people. We look forward to a long-term partnership with Alabama and the region of Mobile."

SOUTH ALABAMA GAINS VOICE ON DEFENSE AND FINANCIAL POLICY

For the new 112th Congress, I am pleased to be granted new seats on the House Appropriations subcommittees on Defense and Financial Services. I will continue to serve on the subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies.

I am deeply honored to have been selected to serve on these new subcommittees where I can give South Alabama a greater voice in matters relating to our national defense, federal treasury and banking legislation.

The appointment to the Defense Appropriations subcommittee is particularly significant in that it represents the first time an Alabama Republican has sat on the subcommittee since First District Congressman Jack Edwards of Mobile held a seat on the Defense Appropriations subcommittee in the 1970s and 1980s. Congressman Edwards served as the subcommittee's Ranking Member.

With an increasing emphasis on the growth of the defense industry in South Alabama, and given Alabama's substantial military infrastructure and defense-related employment state wide, I believe my new assignment on this subcommittee will provide significant benefit to our state and region in the coming years.

I'm also pleased to have been selected to serve on the Financial Services subcommittee which has jurisdiction over a number of federal agencies playing key roles in our economy, including the Treasury Department, Office of Management and Budget, Securities and Exchange Commission, Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Communications Commission, to name but a few. I will keep my seat on the Commerce, Justice, Science subcommittee which oversees a number of federal agencies important to our local and state economy, including the Department of Commerce, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which governs fisheries, and NASA.

For the 112th Congress, I have also been appointed to serve as chairman of the House Committee on Ethics. I was named chairman by Speaker John Boehner on December 29.



I was pleased to visit with the Thornton family in my District office recently to discuss issues of mutual concern. Pictured with me (l to r) are: Laheste, Adrian, Lehester, Jasmine, and Glenn Thornton.

AUSTAL RETURNS MOBILE AREA TO NAVY SHIPBUILDING GLORY



It was a decade in the making and well worth the wait. In December, Mobile shipbuilder Austal USA landed its most lucrative work since it located in the Port City.

The company's agreement to build up to 10 littoral combat ships (LCS) for the U.S. Navy is not only a milestone for the local shipbuilder, but signals a return to the area's former World War II Navy shipbuilding days.

Austal USA arrived in Mobile ten years ago, and in that short time has been a key player in the transformation and resurgence of our waterfront. Beginning with a handful of employees, the company has already captured a portion of the highly competitive military shipbuilding market with its innovative, high tech, joint high speed vessels.

Resembling a seagoing version of a stealth fighter, Austal's first LCS, the U.S.S. Independence, was commissioned last January before a large crowd of workers, citizens and Navy brass gathered along the Mobile River. A new type of warship - both fast and highly maneuverable - Austal's LCS is a fitting symbol of the rebirth of Navy shipbuilding in Alabama's port city. The Austal-built Independence has received very positive reviews from its sea trials, and a second LCS is currently in production at Austal's module manufacturing facility located on Pinto Island.

In the week leading up to Christmas, Congress gave special approval for the Navy to purchase the shallow water combat ships from both Austal USA and its rival Lockheed in Wisconsin. The Navy's decision to buy both competitors' ships (a dual buy), rather than award the contract to one company as originally planned, was made possible by lower than anticipated bids in the LCS contest. As a result, each shipbuilder will offer the Pentagon up to ten of their LCS vessels while the Navy will have the benefit of both LCS designs to enhance mission capability.

The impact on Austal and the Mobile area economy will be significant. The \$3.5 billion shipbuilding program is expected to double Austal's local workforce of 1,800 highly skilled jobs and also double the size of its local manufacturing facility. In short order Austal is poised to become one of Mobile's largest employers.

NEW CONGRESS GETS TO WORK

Last November, the American people sent Washington a clear message to stop the spending and the business as usual. Since January 5, Congress is under new leadership and changes are underway. Policies promoting bigger government and unsustainable deficit spending have been shelved with the departure of Speaker Pelosi.

After fulfilling our pledge to begin the 112th Congress with the reading of the Constitution, the House followed up on another promise, cutting our own operating budget by five percent.

Admittedly, a five percent reduction in Congress's budget is only a small step, but it sets in motion the House's plan to place all federal spending under a microscope – rolling back the overall federal budget to fiscal year 2008 levels by eliminating wasteful, duplicative and outdated programs.

Last year, the Democrat-controlled House failed to pass a budget, and, instead, temporarily funded the government through this March. Speaker Boehner has promised to lower federal spending to pre-stimulus levels while also beginning the process of reducing the size of government.

The new House has also begun to fulfill its promise to prohibit all Congressional "earmarks". No more bridges to nowhere.

Admittedly, the taxpayer savings from ending earmarks is rather small – about one percent of the overall federal budget – but the impact is significant in terms of demonstrating lawmakers' resolve in tackling the budget crisis.

During the first two weeks of the new Congress, lawmakers also voted to repeal ObamaCare – the fulfillment of another promise in our Pledge to America. We've already begun the process to write new legislation to make health care improvements that the public actually wants. No unconstitutional mandates, no one-size-fits-all health care, but rather needed reforms that will make care more accessible and affordable, and protect those with pre-existing conditions.

For sure, the 112th Congress has a very steep hill to climb in order to restore public confidence in Washington. Nevertheless, the new Congress comes to town with a level of energy and enthusiasm not seen since the 1990s when conservatives forced the White House to make real progress towards a balanced budget. Unlike then, today Republicans don't also control the Senate. But with public support, lawmakers can still have a positive impact for change.



Presiding over a new Republican House, Speaker John Boehner is taking the lead in directing a conservative agenda including real health care reform and responsible federal spending. (UPI photo)

TAKING THE OATH OF OFFICE

The historic 112th Congress met for the first time at noon on January 5, 2011. That same day, I was honored to be sworn in by our new speaker, Congressman John Boehner, R-Ohio.

I am deeply honored and humbled by the trust that has been placed in me by the people of Southwest Alabama, and fully mindful of the great responsibility and challenges that this Congress will face in the months ahead.

I am also committed to working alongside Speaker Boehner and my colleagues in the House to restore the public's trust in the Congress and follow the public's mandate to end the unsustainable growth of government spending. Principled leadership will be required and our new speaker and our leadership team are up to the task.

I congratulate Speaker Boehner for his election as leader of the House, and I also welcome the newest members from Alabama — Rep. Mo Brooks of Huntsville, Rep. Martha Roby of Montgomery, and Rep. Terri Sewell of Birmingham — to Washington. I look forward to working with them and all the members of the Alabama delegation over the next two years.



House Speaker John Boehner personally posed for swearing-in photos with new Members of the 112th Congress. I am joined by my wife, Janée, as I take the oath of office on our family bible during a January 5, 2011 ceremony in the U.S. Capitol.

From the mailbox...

Dear Congressman Bonner,

We would like to thank you very much for your quick response to a recent letter I wrote you. In the letter, we asked you for help paying for rent, utilities, other necessities and getting food for my family. I have been unemployed for the last 2 1/2 months. I was denied unemployment and we didn't qualify for food stamps because of my wife's small salary. We couldn't get help anywhere and were at the end of the road. We faxed you a letter on Monday and on Wednesday someone called us from Community Action. They helped us with our power bill and gas bill and paid some on our rent. We can not tell you how grateful we are for that help. It has kept us from being put out onto the street and kept us with utilities. The best news is I have found employment and because of the immediate help you provided, we will be able to survive this crisis. This was the first time we had written your office and we're pleased to say you were a lifesaver. Thank you and your entire staff so very much. May God bless you all for your compassion. It truly kept us from being homeless. I will always remember your kindness.

With kindest regards,

A south Alabama constituent

