

Alabama's First District

CONGRESSMAN JO BONNER

THE WASHINGTON REPORT



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Dear Friends,

No matter what the setting and no matter the age of the audience, the slow, steady drumbeat of the questions kept coming over and over again.

"What is happening to our country?" and "What are you guys up in Washington doing about it?"

Angst, heartburn

The worry was reflected in the tone of the questions at a recent visit to Live Oak Village, a retirement community in Foley, where dozens of yesterday's leaders now reside with their family and friends.

There was a Bronze Star winner in the room, as well as retired CEOs, teachers and bankers. There was even a very special "young lady" who joined the "few, the proud, the Marines," way back when most young women didn't even consider such options. She, too, had a few tough questions of her own.

Similar angst was expressed by tomorrow's leaders as well.

At the impressive new Dawes Intermediate School in west Mobile, 4th grade students who are studying Alabama History asked about the national debt and how much that burden might affect them individually.

The students' questions were heartfelt and pointed.

Finally, speaking to the entire student body at Central Christian School in Robertsdale, a bright young lady wanted to know what kind of future she could expect in a world of uncertainty.

Fair questions all; few — if any — came with easy answers.

A tough environment to reach agreement

In the years I have been working for you, some things have proven to be fairly predictable.

• Congress — as an institution — has never been very popular, although the new ratings are the lowest on record (and frankly, who are the 9 percent who approve of the House and Senate? I don't!).

• Washington — as a symbol of a bloated, dysfunc-

tional Federal government — is more broken now than ever before.

Enter the new reality

With that backdrop, along with our country facing record economic challenges and the age-old debate over how much — or how little — government we actually want and can really afford, 2011 is finally winding down. With its passing, so goes a laundry list of controversial votes, no-win decisions and missed opportunities.

A decades-long debate over adding a Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution shares the day with a robust discussion over the need for a new transportation and infrastructure bill with hopes of creating new jobs in the private sector.

And don't forget, no matter how much or how little the 12-person Deficit Reduction Committee eventually agrees to, there's still that \$15 trillion dark cloud of debt hanging over all our heads. Make no mistake; it won't just go away because we all wish it would.

A few givens in all the uncertainty

Without a doubt, the president came into office in January 2009 inheriting a whole host of challenges...a crumbling housing market, high unemployment, and financial institutions very much under stress.

Unfortunately, a strong case has been made that the policies pushed by his administration have made our problems worse, not better — and the facts pretty much confirm this:

• This is the 34th month where the unemployment rate has been at or above 8 percent, the longest period since the Great Depression.

• An August 2011 report by CBS News said the national debt has increased by \$4 trillion on President Obama's watch. "It is the most rapid increase in the debt under any U.S. president."

Even his signature Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is still viewed negatively by 51 percent of the American people.

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Earlier this year, our office conducted 14 congressional town hall meetings across Southwest Alabama, including in Saraland, pictured above. The topics of discussion included Congress' efforts to reduce the debt, and protecting the solvency of Social Security and Medicare. Our office has held over 230 such town meetings since 2003.

Remembering Our Fallen Heroes

Lance Corporal Travis Michael Nelson, age 19, of Pace, Florida, recently lost his life in the service of his country.



LCpl Travis Nelson

LCpl Nelson was assigned as a rifleman with the 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. He died during combat operations in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, on August 18, 2011, just one month after his unit's arrival.

Although he grew up and lived most of his life in nearby Pace, Florida, his mother's family has deep roots in Atmore, where both his funeral and his interment were held.

Over the past decade, Alabama has lost more than 130 military personnel in both Afghanistan and Iraq. We join their families in mourning their loss; we must never forget their service — or their sacrifice — for our freedom.

LCpl Nelson's congressman, Jeff Miller, R-Chumuckla, and I were honored to join a packed First Baptist Church of Atmore to celebrate this young man's life — and to mourn his passing.

In a recent tribute to LCpl Nelson published in *Atmore* magazine, Sherry Digmon observed, "Most of us didn't know LCpl Nelson, but we all knew him. He was the face of the young man who always wanted to be a Marine, who loved the flag and country, who enlisted to preserve our freedoms."

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Likewise, the administration's \$1.2 trillion stimulus bills — which promised to keep unemployment below 8 percent — have been a complete bust. Having voted against these measures, I continue to oppose additional stimulus spending and support the repeal of the health care law.

Where now?

Once again we find ourselves at the crossroad where America has been before.

When asked if you think millionaires and billionaires should pay higher taxes, the response is an overwhelming yes. But if the question is asked "do you, as a hard-working taxpayer, think your taxes are too low and you should pay more to Uncle Sam?" the response goes through the roof — *NO!*

With a starkly different view of where America is — and more importantly — where America is going, our job as your elected leaders must be to *listen* to what the people are saying, to *fight* for what we believe is right and to *work* — whenever there is an opportunity — for what we can agree is best for America.

Easier said than done? You bet.

Be assured of one thing...if the future of keeping America the last best hope for mankind is what is on the line — and I believe it is — then this is a battle where there must be no one on the sidelines. Everyone must be fully engaged.

Please know that as your representative, I fight every day to keep overreaching government out of our way so we can once again grow and prosper as a nation.

Working for you

Over the past nine years, our office has held over 230 town meetings throughout South Alabama, including 14 this year. We've worked over 18,000 cases for South Alabamians experiencing problems with their government — 3,333 of which were Social Security-related and 3,125 on behalf of veterans, and we have also responded to 154,643 letters regarding legislative issues.

It remains the highest honor to represent the people of South Alabama in Washington, and as always, please call if we can ever be of service.



In late October, my office conducted a town hall reaching 30,000 households in the First Congressional District. Assisting me as I respond to a constituent's question is intern LaSheryl Dotch of Mobile.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Recognition

Moore Hallmark recently presented me with the U.S. Chamber's 2011 Spirit of Enterprise award during the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce's Forum Alabama breakfast. The breakfast held in Mobile was attended by several hundred South Alabama business leaders. The award is based on rankings the U.S. Chamber gives to members of Congress determined by a series of key business votes.



New Agreements Mean New Jobs

Given the ideological divisions that separate the political parties in Washington, the recent passage of major legislation to open markets and boost job creation was proof it is still possible for the president and lawmakers of all stripes to reach a consensus for the good of the country.

As we have all come to realize, our livelihoods — even in South Alabama — are greatly affected by the global economy. What happens in other regions of the world affects business decisions, investments, prices and jobs here at home.

In recent decades, Alabama has not only embraced foreign trade, but we have welcomed many successful foreign-owned companies into our communities. Southwest Alabama is dotted with many such businesses, which provide good-paying jobs and tax revenues for the state and local communities. We hope to see more in the future.

Make no mistake, efforts to encourage such foreign investment and trade are good business for everyone, and the recent passage of the three new free trade agreements is a positive development for Alabama and the nation.

While America as a whole has benefitted from international trade, Alabama, in particular, has seen a significant increase in exports over the last four years, rising by 161 percent compared to an 85 percent growth nationally.

According to figures from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Alabama exported in excess of \$15 billion worth of goods in 2010, nearly evenly divided among the regions of the Americas, Europe and Asia. More than 35,000 jobs statewide were tied to these exports, and Southwest Alabama saw over \$1.9 billion in exports last year, supporting nearly 3,800 local jobs.

Before the new free trade agreements with Colombia, Panama and South Korea were officially approved by Congress in October, Alabama had already seen the direct benefit of trade with these three nations. Since 1997, state exports to all three have dramatically increased: 175 percent, 198 percent and 187 percent, respectively.

If history is any guide, we should see even more business occur as a result of the new trade pacts. For example, after the U.S. forged a free trade agreement with Chile in 2004, state exports to that South American country surged by 364 percent. Similarly, we saw a 111 percent rise in exports to Singapore after inking a free trade accord with that tiny island nation.

I was pleased to support the passage of these beneficial trade agreements which are expected to increase trade through the Alabama State Docks in Mobile.

Growth in Exports Since 1997:

- Alabama to Colombia exports - (+175%)
- Alabama to Panama exports - (+198%)
- Alabama to South Korea exports - (+187%)
- Alabama exports to all the world - (+161%)



Port of Mobile

Social Security Recipients to Receive 3.6 Percent Increase

In late October, the Social Security Administration announced that monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for more than 60 million Americans will increase 3.6 percent in 2012. This is the first cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) since 2009.

For the country's nearly 55 million Social Security beneficiaries, the 3.6 percent COLA couldn't come at a better time. The Social Security COLA takes effect in January 2012, while the eight million SSI beneficiaries will begin to receive their COLA on December 30, 2011.

Unfortunately, for some beneficiaries, their Social Security increase may be partially or completely offset by increases in Medicare Part B premiums, which will increase by \$22 in 2012. The Medicare premium increase is actually \$6.70 less than previously predicted.

Holding BP's Claims Payment Czar Accountable

Last August was the first anniversary of the establishment of the Gulf Coast Claims Facility (GCCF). Created by the Obama Administration and BP to streamline the processing of claims payments stemming from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the GCCF has come to symbolize just the opposite.

For many South Alabama businesses that filed claims with the GCCF, the past 15 months have been marked by excessive red tape, repeated requests for information already supplied and unexplained claims denials.

Unfortunately, their stories have largely been ignored by the national press, BP and even Ken Feinberg, the man President Obama tapped to be the government-appointed claims czar of the \$20 billion compensation fund. Indeed, several national newspapers have gone so far as to praise Mr. Feinberg's work, alleging that many denied claims were fraudulent.

In late October, Mr. Feinberg was called to defend the GCCF's performance before a House oversight committee hearing. During the hearing, he conceded to me that only one percent of the more than one million claims filed thus far had been deemed fraudulent. Nevertheless, the GCCF continues to slow-walk claims and push businesses beyond a reasonable point to accept low-ball offers. As of late October, Mr. Feinberg had made full payments on just 30 percent of claims filed.

Sadly, Ken Feinberg's approach to the people along the Gulf Coast reminds me of the old TV game show "Let's Make a Deal," where the host offered contestants their choice

of an unknown prize behind the curtain or a quick consolation prize. That is not acceptable, and frankly, it is an insult to the people and local communities in the affected states.

With BP calling for the GCCF to wind down payments, it is imperative that an accurate accounting of Mr. Feinberg's claims system be made public. In June, I met with U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder in Orange Beach and personally asked him to order an impartial audit of the GCCF. Months of similar direct requests to Mr. Feinberg were ignored.

In July, the House Appropriations Committee, at my request, approved legislation instructing the Justice Department to begin the process of an independent review of the claims process. A similar measure was also recently included by the Senate.

Over a year ago, the president stated the [GCCF] "will provide substantial assurance the claims people and businesses have will be honored. And at the end of the day, that's what every American wants and expects." Unfortunately, the GCCF has not yet fulfilled his pledge.



During an October 27 hearing of the House Natural Resources Committee, I pressed Ken Feinberg about his claims processing record.

RESTORE the Gulf Act Introduced in the House

We were all grateful to see tourists return to our beaches this summer, but Coastal Alabama's long-term recovery from last year's Deepwater Horizon explosion will depend on more than just an increase in vacation traffic.

The damage done to both our economy and ecology left scars all along the Gulf Coast that will take years to heal.

With most of the beach clean-up behind us, we've merely scratched the surface. The Gulf states, especially Alabama, were changed as surely as if struck by a catastrophic, category 5 hurricane, and as those of us who live along the coast know, you don't just rebound from the destruction of a Cat 5 in a single year. Moreover, the Gulf Coast states most directly impacted from the spill face an uphill climb to get back to where we once were. Thanks to the concerted effort of many Gulf Coast lawmakers, however, we now have an opportunity to build an even stronger coast than ever before.

This fall I was pleased to join with lawmakers from the five Gulf Coast states in introducing The Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economy of the Gulf Coast Act of 2011 (RESTORE Act).

This legislation will ensure that the majority of the fine monies levied against those responsible for the catastrophic 2010 Gulf oil spill are made available to Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas for environmental and economic restoration and to ensure our region has the ability to appropriately address future spills and to continue research on the impacts of the oil spill in our environment.

Currently, BP and the other responsible parties are in the midst of a civil lawsuit filed by the Department of Justice to determine the actual amount of the Clean Water Act (CWA) fines. The lawsuit asks the court for civil penalties under the CWA and to declare eight of the defendants liable without limitation under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 for all removal costs and damages caused by the oil spill. The penalty could range from billions to tens of billions of dollars.

The RESTORE Act would direct 80 percent of the total fines collected to the location where the injury occurred, the five Gulf Coast states — including Alabama — which were the ecological and economic ground zero for the spill.

As you know, each state was affected differently by last year's spill. Some states suffered more environmental damage while others, including Alabama, endured considerable economic pain as well. Alabama's beaches — Orange Beach, Gulf Shores, Fort Morgan and Dauphin Island — lost more than one million tourists during the 2010 season and the seafood community of Bayou La Batre took a direct hit with boats tied up and the doors to small businesses literally shuttered. Simply

put, the absence of revenue in all areas of our economy struck just as our local communities were trying to recover from the worst recession our country has experienced since the Great Depression.

Bringing the majority of the Clean Water Act fines assessed against BP, Transocean, Halliburton and others back to the Gulf Coast is only fitting as our region was uniquely affected by the worst man-made environmental disaster in U.S. history.

As those of us who live along the Gulf of Mexico already know, our backyard is vital to the economic health of the nation. It is home to 90 percent of America's offshore oil and gas production and 33 percent of the country's seafood and is a major tourist destination.

In fact, if the five Gulf Coast states were considered as an individual country, it would rank seventh globally in gross domestic product (GDP) at over \$2.5 trillion annually. It is therefore critical that the Gulf States — which bear so much risk — be given access to the majority of the Clean Water Act fines collected.

Of the total amount of CWA fine monies going to the Gulf region, The RESTORE Act would divide them in the following way:

- 35 % of the funds in equal shares to the five Gulf Coast States for economic and ecological recovery,
- 30% of the funds for the development and implementation of a comprehensive environmental restoration plan,
- 30% of the funds according to an impact driven formula and disbursed to the Gulf Coast States for economic and ecological recovery, and
- 5% of the funds to establish an endowment for long-term scientific research.

I am personally pleased to have assisted in bringing Members from the five Gulf States together to support this legislation and look forward to having this bill on the president's desk for his signature one day in the near future.



Rep. Pete Olson, R-TX, Rep. Steven Palazzo R-MS, Rep. Jeff Miller, R-FL, and Rep. Steve Scalise, R-LA, joined me at a press conference on the Capitol steps to announce the introduction of the RESTORE Act. The bill has broad bipartisan support in the House, including the entire Alabama delegation.

Working for a Balanced Budget Amendment

Our country has never before faced the amount of debt that currently rests on our shoulders. Just over the past two and a half years, the national debt has increased by \$3.7 trillion — an amount equal to all the debt accumulated from the year 1776 to 1992.

This unchecked spending has not been without negative consequences. At the same time of recent record debt spending, our economy has nosedived and job growth has stagnated. Businesses and investors have lost confidence as Washington borrows and spends with no inclination to stop.

Since January, the new Republican House of Representatives has single-handedly shown the way back to a more responsible government through the passage of legislation to repeal the unpopular and unaffordable national health care law and to pass a 2012 budget that cuts spending by \$6.2 trillion over ten years. Unfortunately, both of these bold measures were blocked by the U.S. Senate.

In July, we tried once again to restore fiscal sanity to Washington by passing the Cut, Cap and Balance Act which would have cut \$5.8 trillion in spending while tying any increase in the debt to passage of a Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution. Once again, the Senate blocked our efforts.

Doing nothing in the face of stiff opposition, however, is simply not an option. As such, the House regrouped and passed the Budget Control Act in early August, which immediately cut spending by \$917 billion over ten years and established a bipartisan Congressional committee to oversee not less than another \$1.2 trillion in cuts. The Act also mandated a vote on a Balanced Budget Amendment in the House and Senate this year.

While the House of Representatives is only one half of one third of the government's lawmaking process, the steadfast determination of conservatives in the House to keep pushing for cuts has forced both the administration and the Senate to scale back their addiction to overspending

Showing Washington How to Live within its Means

U.S. House Walked the Walk...

Just as Washington did not climb into \$14 trillion of debt overnight, this massive amount of red ink cannot be wiped away in a single year or two. The first step is to acknowledge that government is overspending and then begin the process of responsible spending cuts.

On April 14, 2011, the House took a bold and decisive step down this path by passing the "Paul Ryan Budget" (H. Con. Res. 34).

Named for the chairman of the House Budget Committee, Rep. Paul Ryan, R-WI., the House budget would cut \$6.2 trillion in government spending over a decade compared to the president's budget.

The House budget would also reduce federal budget deficits by \$4.4 trillion compared to the administration's budget over the next ten years.

Additionally, the House budget calls for a simple, less burdensome tax code for households and small businesses. It would lower tax rates for individuals and families and set top rates at 25 percent for individuals and businesses.

Rather than adopting the House's budget, the Senate rejected it in May and has offered no plan of its own to deal with the crippling federal debt. In fact, the Senate has not passed a budget of its own in over 900 days.

and, while admittedly modest in some ways, to begin the process of making some long-overdue cuts.

One of the most significant provisions of the Budget Control Act was the requirement that Congress vote on a Balanced Budget Amendment by the end of this year.

Currently, 49 of the 50 states have some legal requirement that their legislatures pass a balanced budget each year. The idea that Washington should be held to the same level of responsibility is a popular one with the American people. Recent polls show 65 percent of the people surveyed feel Congress and

the president should also live under a balanced budget requirement.

The idea of amending the Constitution to require a balanced budget is not new. In 1996, the House passed such an amendment, but it failed in the Senate by only one vote. As this newsletter goes to print, the House is preparing to vote on, and hopefully pass, a Balanced Budget Amendment by mid-November.

Even in the earliest days of the republic back in 1798, Thomas Jefferson advocated for the idea, saying, "I wish it were possible to obtain a single amendment to our Constitution. I would be willing to depend on that alone for the reduction of the administration of our government; I mean an additional article taking from the Federal Government the power of borrowing."

For years, I have cosponsored legislation calling for a Balanced Budget Amendment and believe such an amendment would help to avoid the kind of reckless overspending that has created the debt crisis we now face.

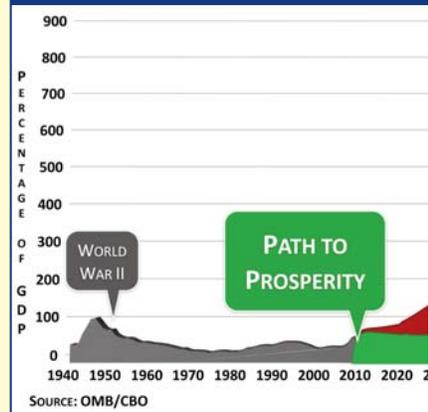
How much is the national debt?

For the last year, the public has been repeatedly reminded that our federal government is in serious debt to the tune of \$14.9 trillion and counting. Most of us cannot fathom just how much money \$14 trillion really is. *The Associated Press* recently put the sum of federal government red ink into perspective:

- "The national debt is now over \$14 trillion dollars, around \$46,560 per person.
- That's \$102,218 per worker.
- That's \$129,877 per person who pays income tax.
- That's \$174,038 per family.
- That's 4.34 trillion Big Macs.
- That's 58 million new 2011 Rolls-Royce Ghosts.
- That's 1.47 billion years of an average person's monthly rent.
- That's 287 million years of an average household's income.
- That's 1 billion years of an average family's health coverage."

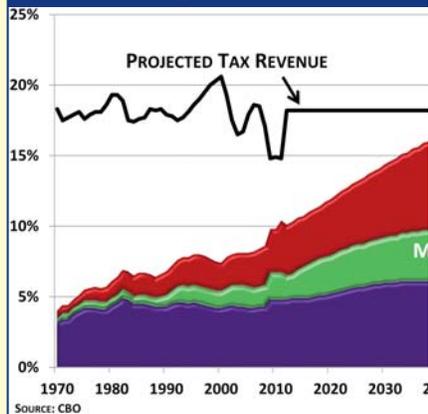
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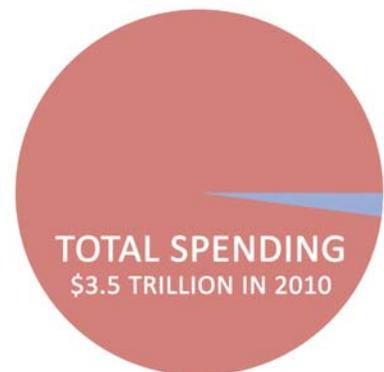


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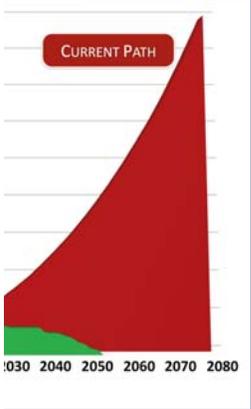


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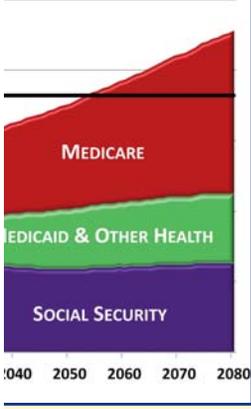


Source: Congressional Budget Office, Taxpayers for Common S

FUTURES
(ECONOMY)



DEBT?
70-201)



EARMARKS
AND?

Earmarks & Foreign Aid
2.11 % of all spending

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Key Votes in the House

- My Vote: Prohibiting Congressional Pay Raise for 2011 (HR 5146)**
 YES
 Passed House on 4/27/10 – (402 to 15)
 Passed Senate on 4/28/10 – (voice vote)
 Signed by president on 5/14/10
- Prohibiting Congressional Pay Raise for 2012 (HR 3082)**
 YES
 Passed House on 12/21/10 – (193 to 165)
 Passed Senate on 12/21/10 – (79 to 16)
 Signed by president on 12/22/10
- Cutting House of Representatives Budget (H Res 22)**
 YES
 Resolution to cut House 2011 operating budget by 5%
 Passed House on 1/6/11 – (410 to 13)
 No Senate action required
- Health Care Law Repeal (HR 2)**
 YES
 Repeal of Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
 Passed House on 1/19/11 – (245 to 189)
 No Senate action
- \$61 Billion Cut in Federal Spending (HR 1)**
 YES
 Cuts FY11 spending by \$61 billion
 Passed House on 2/19/11 – (235 to 189)
 Senate agreed to only \$40 billion in cuts (PL 112-10)
- Paul Ryan Budget (H CON Res 34)**
 YES
 Cuts \$6.2 trillion over next decade compared to president's budget, reduces deficits by \$4.4 trillion over 10 years compared to president's budget
 Passed House on 4/15/11 – (235 to 193)
 Failed to pass Senate 5/25/11 – (40 to 57)
- Cut, Cap and Balance Act (HR 2560)**
 YES
 Cuts \$5.8 trillion over ten years and by capping government spending to gradually reduce overall spending to less than 20 percent of the GDP over the next decade. Allows an increase in the debt limit only after the passage of a Balanced Budget Amendment.
 Passed House on 7/17/11 – (234 to 190)
 Failed to pass Senate (motion to table bill) on 7/22/11 – (46 to 51)
- Budget Control Act (S 365)**
 YES
 Cuts spending by \$917 billion over ten years, requires House and Senate to vote on a Balanced Budget Amendment by the end of 2011, creates 12-member committee to reduce deficit by not less than \$1.2 trillion over ten years
 Passed House on 8/1/11 – (269 to 161)
 Passed Senate on 8/2/11 – (74 to 26)
 Signed by president on 8/2/11

House Busy Passing Jobs Bills

With the longest period of record high unemployment since the Great Depression — more than 34 consecutive months of an unemployment rate exceeding 8 percent — the American people have every reason to wonder why Congress has not acted to help create jobs.

What many may not know, however, is that the House of Representatives has approved more than 15 bills that, if enacted, would immediately help to foster economic growth without more failed stimulus spending. A partial list of these bills appears below.

I voted for each of these bills. Regretfully, they are but a portion of too much legislation passed by the House this year that has been ignored by the Senate.

- H.R. 872 - Reducing Regulatory Burdens Act:** By removing duplicative requirements, the bill would reduce overlapping and unnecessary regulation on pesticides that are already regulated, thereby reducing costs to both farmers and small business owners.
- H.R. 910 - Energy Tax Prevention Act of 2011:** The bill would prevent a needless increase in energy prices for American households and businesses.
- H.R. 1230 - Restarting American Offshore Leasing Now Act:** The bill would help to reduce energy prices and promote job creation by expediting offshore oil and natural gas exploration in the Gulf of Mexico and the Virginia coast.
- H.R. 1231 - Reversing President Obama's Offshore Moratorium Act:** The bill would essentially lift the President's ban on new offshore drilling by requiring the Administration to move forward on American energy production in areas estimated to contain the most oil and natural gas resources.
- H.R. 2021 - The Jobs and Energy Permitting Act of 2011:** The bill would eliminate needless permitting delays that have stalled important energy production opportunities off the coast of Alaska.
- H.R. 2018 - Clean Water Cooperative Federalism Act of 2011:** The bill would prevent unilateral actions by the EPA that second-guess the decisions of a state regulatory agency.
- H.R. 1315 - Consumer Financial Protection & Soundness Improvement Act:** The bill would improve consumer protection and provide greater economic stability by allowing the Financial Stability Oversight Council to vote to set aside any harmful federal regulation.
- H.R. 1938 - North American-Made Energy Security Act:** The bill would promote job creation and energy security by ending the needless delay of the construction and operation of the Keystone XL pipeline.
- H.R. 2587 - Protecting Jobs From Government Interference Act:** The bill would prohibit the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) from ordering any employer to close, relocate, or transfer employment under any circumstance.
- H.R. 2401 - Transparency In Regulatory Analysis Of Impacts On The Nation:** The bill would establish an interagency committee to evaluate the economic impacts of EPA regulations and delay the final dates for both the maximum achievable control technology standards and the cross-state air pollution rule until the full impact has been studied. Both regulations would cost consumers and businesses \$184 billion from 2011-2030 and would cause electrical prices to skyrocket.
- H.R. 2250 - EPA Regulatory Relief Act:** The bill would remove an excessive regulatory burden placed on employers by the EPA's Boiler MACT rules, potentially costing companies \$14 billion and 224,000 American jobs, according to an IHS Global Insight study, and replace them with sensible, achievable rules that do not destroy jobs.
- H.R. 2433 - Veterans Opportunity to Work Act:** The bill would provide up to 12 months of Veterans Retraining Assistance to 100,000 unemployed veterans that enter education or training programs at community colleges or technical schools to prepare them for employment in an occupational field that is determined by Department of Labor to have significant employment opportunities.

THE HOUSE REPUBLICAN PLAN FOR
**AMERICA'S
 JOB CREATORS**
Empowering Families, Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs
 JOBS.GOP.GOV

Burdensome Regulations Slow Down the Economy



During a recent tour of South Alabama businesses to learn the challenges they face in the current economy, I had an opportunity to visit with employees of Cintas located in south Mobile County.

A growing number of Americans — in fact, more than three-quarters of the country according to a recent Tarrance Group survey — believe that businesses and consumers are over-regulated.

In fact, last year the Small Business Administration released a report which said federal regulations cost businesses \$1.75 trillion each year.

Clearly, small businesses bear a disproportionate share of these costs - averaging over \$10,000 for each employee.

Along the Gulf Coast, the administration's de facto moratorium on new oil drilling has cost the region tens of thousands of jobs.

On a recent tour of several small and large manufacturers in South Alabama, I had the opportunity to hear first-hand how stifling some of these federal regulations can be.

In one case, a small manufacturer with 28 employees related how they could not expand their production due to new federal regulations, and in fact, are now being forced to downsize.

When EPA visits their company to perform an audit, for instance, they have taken away whole filing cabinets worth of records. The small business owners tell me they pay taxes on their company's profits from their personal income and have to keep a consultant on retainer just to stay in compliance with all the regulations.

A medium size manufacturer, which also has facilities in other states, told me about several proposed new regulations that would cost the company in excess of \$100 million in compliance costs.

Unfortunately, when bureaucracy collides with common sense, the losers are all-too-often the taxpayers. A prime example is construction delays along a major highway in Monroe County due to potential risks the road work might pose to an endangered salamander. Changes to the construction site to accommodate the tiny creatures have added millions of dollars to the cost of the project.

Clearly, federal laws have contributed greatly to maintaining our clean air and water as well as the safety of our transportation system, our food and consumer products, to name but a few.

But for all the good that a responsible government provides through reasonable oversight, overzealous regulation can stifle our economy and contribute to a reduced quality of life for Americans.

This is why House Republicans are working to pass legislation to rein in out-of-control federal regulations that stifle job creation.

The House passed the Transparency in Regulatory Analysis on Impacts on the Nation (TRAIN) Act in September. If enacted, it would prevent the administration from imposing some of its most controversial new EPA rules, which further threaten job creation and the economy. It would also force the administration to review the impact of new regulations before they could be applied.

The House is also scheduled to vote on measures to check the growth of federal regulation, including a bill requiring an up or down vote in Congress on every major regulatory program before it is imposed. Regrettably, these bills have not even been scheduled for a hearing in the U.S. Senate.

Austal Continues Rolling Out Cutting-Edge Ships



The USS Spearhead, the high tech future of ocean-going military transport craft, was christened on September 17, 2011, along the Mobile waterfront.

Last Spring, Mobile's fastest growing employer made waves by hosting the Secretary of the Navy for a ceremony to unveil the names of two of its newest Littoral Combat Ships (LCS), the *USS Jackson* and the *USS Montgomery*. This fall, Austal rolled out the first of its Joint High Speed Vessels (JHSV), the *USS Spearhead*, before Navy brass and a crowd of several hundred.

The JHSV has been described as the sea-faring equivalent of a cargo aircraft and is capable of transporting 600 tons of equipment over thousands of miles. Austal says the mission bay of one of its JHSVs is big enough to hold more than 280 cars, and its flight deck can support heavy-lift helicopters. Even to the non-military minded, the utility of such a vessel to the Navy and Marine Corps seems readily apparent.

Austal's shipyard is certainly one of a kind. Their state-of-the-art modular manufacturing process represents a new, more efficient direction in Navy shipbuilding, and it is exciting to see these amazing vessels transition from start to finish right here in Mobile.

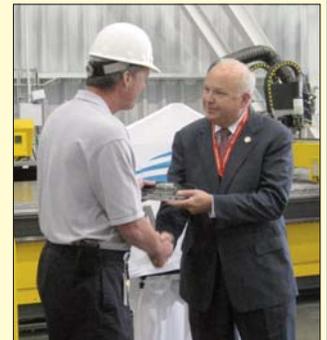
On October 7, I was pleased to attend the official start of construction for Austal's third Joint High Speed Vessel (JHSV 3). In all, Austal is under contract to build seven 103-meter JHSV's for the Navy.

JHSV 3 is the fourth U.S. Navy vessel to be constructed at Austal using the new procedures and processes developed in conjunction with Austal's Module Manufacturing Facility (MMF). The MMF provides Austal with assembly line efficiency, which has resulted in significant cost savings and reduced lead times for both Navy programs.

Austal was selected as prime contractor in November 2008 to design and build the first JHSV, with options for nine additional vessels expected to be exercised between FY09 and FY13 as part of a program potentially worth over \$1.6 billion.

Austal USA is also currently preparing to launch a second Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) for the Navy, *USS Coronado* (LCS 4). *USS Independence* (LCS 2) is currently being put through sea trials by her crew. As prime contractor for the next LCS 10-ship contract, awarded by the Navy at the end of 2010, Austal has also begun work on the first ship of that contract, the *USS Jackson* (LCS 6), with the *USS Montgomery* (LCS 8) under contract.

After slightly over a decade on the Mobile waterfront, Austal has catapulted its once-modest shipbuilding facility into one of the nation's most modern. With a current workforce of over 2,300 employees, Austal expects to employ over 4,000 Americans by the end of 2013.



Austal VP Tim Mahoney presents me with a plaque after I spoke at the ceremony marking the official launch of construction of JHSV3 on October 7, 2011.

South Alabama WWII Veterans Visit Their Memorial

This past September, some 90 South Alabama veterans traveled on the sixth "Honor Flight" in the past few years from Mobile to Washington, DC, to spend the day visiting the national monuments, including the World War II Memorial. For many, it was their first visit to our nation's capital and the Memorial.



Naturally, I was proud to present flags flown over the U.S. Capitol to the South Alabama veterans at the Alabama column of the National World War II Memorial.

Once again, I was pleased to greet some of our heroes from Atmore, Jackson, Millry, Eight Mile, Chunchula, Theodore, Spanish Fort and all throughout South Alabama upon their arrival on the National Mall, escorting them into the World War II Memorial that was built to honor their service. When they returned home, I sent each a U.S. flag flown over the Capitol in their honor as well as copies of a tribute about their journey that I had inserted in the *Congressional Record*.

These humble veterans — our fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers — literally saved the world and deserve the highest acclaim and recognition for their remarkable efforts. Until the dedication of our nation's official World War II Memorial just seven years ago, the heroes of America's "Greatest Generation" were never properly honored for their valor and their sacrifice.

Once again, it was a moving experience to witness the faces of our veterans as they viewed their grand memorial for the first time. The smiles, the silence — even the tears on some of their faces — was an obvious reminder of that challenging time in American history and the unique role each of these men and women played in helping to secure our country's great victory.

Eight South Alabama Students Accepted by Service Academies

One of the honors of being your congressman is the opportunity each year of nominating some of South Alabama's brightest young men and women for an outstanding service academy education and a potential career in the United States armed forces.

Eight young men from across South Alabama were selected this summer to enter the Air Force, Military and Naval Academies as part of the Class of 2015. Congratulations to these fine young people:



Michael Bentley
Mobile
U.S. Air Force Academy



Blaize Dunn
Chunchula
U.S. Air Force Academy



Kendall Gibson
Mobile
U.S. Naval Academy



Quintin Howard
Mobile
U.S. Military Academy



John Jarreau
Theodore
U.S. Military Academy



Tyler Martenstein
Fairhope
U.S. Naval Academy



Chris Pierce
Daphne
U.S. Air Force Academy



Clayton Stanley
Theodore
U.S. Military Academy



Above right: In September, my office held our annual Academy Night at St. Paul's Episcopal School in Mobile to allow students from South Alabama to meet with service academy representatives as they begin their applications process for next year's Class of 2016.

Veterans Cemetery: A Half-Century-Old Dream Come True

Recently, I was honored to participate in the official groundbreaking of the Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Saluda Hill overlooking Mobile Bay near Spanish Fort.

To say the groundbreaking was long-awaited really doesn't do it justice. For some 49 years, South Alabama veterans have been without a final resting place befitting their service to our nation.

The Mobile National Cemetery, the official military burial grounds in our region, served the area well from its establishment at the end of the Civil War until it ran out of space in 1962 and was closed to interments, forcing South Alabama veterans to look far from home for an appropriate burial site.

In 1992, local officials and leaders in the veteran's community took up the cause, pressing for an expansion of the Mobile National Cemetery using land at Hartwell Field. After that proved unsuccessful, my predecessor, former Congressman Sonny Callahan, sought to designate property at Brookley Field for the expanded cemetery. However, growth at Brookley prevented this effort.

In 2006, I convened a meeting of South Alabama veterans, local officials and officials from the VA Cemetery Administration to chart a solution. Ultimately, land was located near Spanish Fort and the process of securing the rights to the new cemetery began.

At the same time, working with Senators Sessions and Shelby, an agreement was reached with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to provide a federal grant to build the new cemetery. Under the terms of the agreement, the State of Alabama will own and maintain the site, which will meet the same standards as national veterans cemeteries.

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 Alabama's first state-run veterans cemetery and former Governor Bob Riley signed the bill into law in 2009.

With the release of more than \$7 million in grant monies in August, the last hurdle in the process to begin construction of the new Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Spanish Fort had finally been cleared.

The project is expected to take some 18 months to complete.



On October 7, I joined Governor Robert Bentley, Under Secretary of VA Memorial Affairs, Steve Muro, Dr. Barry Booth, Baldwin County Commissioner Frank Burt and other local dignitaries in a groundbreaking for the beautiful new Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery near Spanish Fort. Dr. Booth and his family helped secure the land after almost 20 years of searching for an acceptable site.

(Photo: Tad Denson)

Effort to Repeal and Replace National Health Care Continues

More than a year after the passage of the administration's Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, the government health care law continues to lose support among the American people.

A Kimberly Family Foundation poll released just over a month ago found that only 34 percent of Americans view the health care law favorably. Meanwhile, 51 percent have an unfavorable opinion.

It seems that business is also taking a dim view of the costly mandates in the new health care law. More than 1,800 have already been granted waivers from participating due to the heavy burden the new law would place on them to meet new federal guidelines. Even the administration recently admitted that a portion of the new health care law — the long-term care program — is unsustainable and will have to be shelved.

In 2010, I voted against the overreaching and costly health care law and supported a bill passed by the House on January 19, 2011, to repeal it outright. Regrettably, there are currently not enough votes in the U.S. Senate to repeal it, and President Obama has vowed to veto any such bill that comes to his desk.

While health care reform is a major concern for Americans, most want it to be done right. The House continues to work on developing a replacement health care bill that addresses the concerns of all Americans, including cost, availability and personal care choice.

Some of the goals of the House Repeal and Replace effort include

- Enacting Medical Liability Reform
- Allowing the Purchase of Health Insurance across State Lines
- Expanding Health Savings Accounts
- Ensuring Access for Patients with Pre-Existing Conditions
- Permanently Prohibiting Taxpayer Funding of Abortion

While there is no agreement between Congress and the administration on a different way to fix what is broken about health care, the U.S. Supreme Court is expected to rule — sometime in 2012 — on the constitutionality of the so-called individual mandate. We'll be sure to keep you updated as this case comes closer to a decision.

University of Mobile Students Visit Capitol, Other DC Sites



In October, I visited with 20 students from the University of Mobile who traveled to Capitol Hill to meet with their elected officials. Each year, our office assists many schools in securing a tour of the Capitol and other points of interest in Washington. The recently opened Capitol Visitor's Center, shown here, features a statue of Alabama's Helen Keller and many exhibits highlighting the history of this grand old building. If you are planning a trip to Washington in the new year and would like information on securing a tour of the Capitol or other sites, please contact the office at 1-800-288-8721.

Trip to Afghanistan to Visit Troops



South Alabama continues to make our entire country proud with the participation of our active duty, guard and reservists. On a November visit to Afghanistan, I had the pleasure of having lunch with several members of the 1165th Military Police Unit. Prior to the meeting, General John R. Allen, Commander of the NATO International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, told the six-member delegation from Congress that the men and women of the 1165th were doing "exceptional work that was critical to the overall success of the U.S./NATO mission in Afghanistan." These soldiers hail from Atmore, Spanish Fort, Mobile, Brewton, Demopolis and Satsuma, among other communities. Previously, I had the opportunity to visit with the 1165th on their first deployment to Iraq several years ago.

Finding Congress Online

In the age of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, Congress has been slow to keep pace with the private sector in tapping into the ever-expanding virtual world.

That said, legislative activity is getting easier to monitor online and information about the workings of Congress, including committee schedules and voting records, is now accessible to everyone.

These days, people prefer to email their congressperson or post a message on his or her social media site rather than write a letter, and like many of you, most Members of Congress now have Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accounts, allowing you to follow their activities. For most, you can sign up by visiting the website of the congressperson or committee.

The best place to start your journey is the revamped House of Representatives site, <http://www.house.gov>. Here you will find a window with menu choices of current House floor activity, votes and bills. [House.gov](http://www.house.gov) also offers live video of the House floor and a searchable index of all House members, House leadership and House committees. A similar site worth bookmarking is that of the House Clerk, <http://clerk.house.gov>.

The House Rules Committee web site posts advance information about all bills to be voted on by the House. You can find the Rules Committee at <http://www.rules.house.gov>.

Finally, my congressional web site is <http://bonner.house.gov>.

When you visit the website, look under "Contact Jo" in the overhead menu bar to send an email. You can also access our latest press releases, newsletters, and radio shows and find links to our social media sites. One new feature recently added to the site is my voting record. It is searchable back to the beginning of the current 112th Congress.

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