

Last January, the nation began the New Year with high hopes. Some three million came to Washington to watch the swearing in of a new president who pledged to bring change. Instead of better times, Americans have suffered through a troubled economy and the highest unemployment in a generation. It has been a year of missed legislative opportunities.

One should expect some controversial ideas to flow from any new presidency. However, the Obama administration has forced through four years worth of such initiatives in only its first year, while also setting a record for federal deficit spending. In most cases, the administration has deliberately shut out the conservative minority.

Barely a month in office, the new president wasted no time in passing a \$787 billion economic stimulus bill. He said it would deliver three million new jobs and revive the economy. I opposed the stimulus which was rushed to a vote without proper scrutiny. And a year later, with national unemployment 2 percent higher than before the stimulus was enacted, it's still unclear whether this mammoth spending program has done anything other than add to the record federal budget deficit.

It wasn't long before the administration served up another promised panacea for the floundering American economy – a mammoth energy bill dubbed “Cap and Trade”. We were told it would help meet our energy needs while growing green jobs. However, the restrictions it would impose on American industry would not only drive up energy costs, but place manufacturers at a competitive disadvantage – costing jobs.

I voted against this misguided energy bill and instead supported the Republican alternative which would increase production of domestic and alternative energy, including nuclear power and clean coal - without costly government mandates. Fortunately, the Cap and Trade bill has not yet passed the Senate.

Undeniably the most controversial action of the administration and the liberal-dominated House during 2009 was the passage of the big government health care legislation in early November. The Senate followed with its version on December 24.

I voted against this flawed legislation which will raise taxes by hundreds of billions of dollars and take even greater control over our nation's economy. The House health care bill also piles crushing mandates on small businesses and decimates the popular Medicare Advantage program, on which millions of seniors depend.

I supported the Republican alternative to this health care bill which would lower health care premiums for families and small businesses. It would help more Americans gain access to health care regardless of pre-existing conditions, take on costly Medical malpractice lawsuits, and prevent insurers from unjustly cancelling a policy or imposing annual or lifetime spending caps. It would also permit Americans to buy health insurance across state lines, and allow small businesses to pool together to obtain health care at lower prices.

Having passed separate health care bills, the Democrat leadership is now negotiating a final version in secret – away from Republicans and the American public. C-SPAN recently made a

formal request to Congress to open up these health care negotiations to the media. In open defiance of the Obama administration's promise to provide a more transparent government, the Democrat leadership has refused C-SPAN's request.

One of the final disappointments of 2009 was the passage of a second stimulus bill which will effectively add another \$150 billion to the already questionable \$787 billion original stimulus package. I also voted against this wasteful expense and, instead, supported applying the funds toward paying down the federal debt.

With the arrival of 2010, Congress and the administration would do well to finally listen to the American people. They know jobs don't come from government regulation, taxation, and massive federal red ink. Better health care doesn't come from fewer choices. And American energy independence doesn't come from costly government mandates.

Opening up affordable domestic energy supplies and removing barriers to health care access, as Congressional conservatives have proposed, would go a long way toward reinvigorating the American economy.

Letters Prompt Renewed Vigilance:

Last week, my Mobile and Foley Congressional offices received threatening letters containing a white powder. Prompt action was taken to guarantee the safety of the public. Fortunately, the letters' contents proved to be harmless. But the inconvenience posed by these threatening letters to local businesses, the public and law enforcement was significant. This cowardly act is a reminder that we must all remain vigilant against such criminal activity.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.