

Last Wednesday, February 17th, marked the first anniversary of the enactment of President Obama's economic stimulus – officially known as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Of the three most controversial pieces of legislation to have thus far been advanced by this administration, only the \$787 billion stimulus has made it to the president's desk and been signed into law. The other two, health care reform and the "Cap and Trade" climate bill, are stalled in Congress, struggling against a strong headwind of national opposition.

The stimulus was crafted and passed within an extraordinarily brief amount of time – less than one month after the new president took office. The new administration sold the fast-tracked stimulus bill as a way to create three million new jobs and shore up a national economy facing unemployment levels not seen in more than a generation.

Whether conservative or liberal, most Americans felt action needed to be taken to address rising joblessness. But rather than working with conservatives in Congress to engineer a strategy of targeted tax cuts and job growth incentives, the new administration chose to go it alone – a tactic they have employed with other major legislation – shutting out Republicans and using the huge spending bill as an opportunity to robustly fund a seemingly endless list of liberal priorities.

While some of the funding programs within the stimulus were beneficial, the vast majority lacked sufficient oversight to ensure that the hundreds of billions would be responsibly spent to reinvigorate the economy.

A full year after the implementation of the stimulus there is still no determination of whether the stimulus truly saved the economy from a deeper recession. To date, less than a third of the stimulus money has been spent, and

the president's earlier claims that three million jobs would be created have since been recast as jobs "saved."

It's nearly impossible to prove millions of existing jobs were saved due to government spending.

Indeed, the employment trends since the stimulus took effect are not encouraging.

After the stimulus passed, we saw national unemployment rise by nearly two percent and it has only modestly retreated in the last two months. In Alabama, unemployment has rapidly shot up, topping 20 percent in some areas, including Monroe County. As a jobs maker, clearly, the stimulus has fallen flat in much of America and, without a doubt, in South Alabama.

For most Americans, the anniversary of the stimulus is no cause for celebration. Many feel that our economy will reemerge from this "great recession" only when the federal government demonstrates a true focus on job creation and abandons plans to levy taxes on businesses to pay for its overspending.

I agree.

Mobile Astronaut:

Also last week the crew of the Space Shuttle Endeavour was scheduled to return to Earth after a 14-day mission to the International Space Station. On board STS-130 was a Mobile native making her second journey into space.

Astronaut Kathryn "Kay" Hire joined the six member crew of the Endeavour for what signified the beginning of the last year of planned space shuttle launches for NASA. The Endeavour was launched into orbit on February 8th with a scheduled landing at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida set for February 21st.

Endeavour delivered and installed a 23-foot module known as "Tranquility" which included a seven window observation area. The three-foot by six-foot "sun room in space" provides the space station not only with stunning views of our home planet, but also a better look at station operations, including spacewalks and robotic arm maneuvers.

The Tranquility module represented the final major construction project for the space station.

In addition to sporting a one-of-a-kind view, the new module will also provide room for the station's life support systems.

Mission Specialist Kay Hire is a 1977 graduate of Mobile's Murphy High School and holds degrees from the U.S. Naval Academy and the Florida Institute of Technology. Earning her Naval Flight Officer wings in 1982, Hire has served in a wide range of missions from oceanographic research to naval flight instructor, and is the first female in the U.S. military to be assigned to a combat aircrew.

She went from active duty to the Navy Reserve before transferring her duties to NASA in 1989.

In 1998, she first entered space aboard the Space Shuttle Columbia on mission STS-90, logging over 381 hours above the Earth.

We salute Astronaut Kay Hire for her service to America and for the inspiration she provides to our young people to pursue careers in the defense of our nation and in the exploration of space.

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.