

Scarcely two weeks after Americans gave the ruling party in Congress the biggest thrashing in over 70 years, a new House majority, which hasn't yet been sworn in, is already making major changes.

Speaker Pelosi may still hold power for another month, but the incoming Republican majority is selecting its leaders and adopting a slate of reforms that were forged with the input of millions of Americans over the last year.

The most significant reform approved thus far is the agreement by both House and Senate Republicans to ban all congressional earmarks during the new Congress. Earmarks – funding designated by Members of Congress for programs in their districts – have unfortunately become a symbol of Washington waste. Despite the fact that earmarks constitute less than two percent of discretionary spending, they nevertheless represent a culture of business-as-usual most Americans resent – particularly during record budget deficits.

So, it was not surprising that one of the first votes by the new Republican majority last week was to extend our current earmark ban. It's important to note, however, that the new ban will not apply to the incoming Democrat Senate majority. Consequently, we have called on President Obama to persuade Senate Democrats to follow our lead in order to restore public trust in our government.

Our new blueprint for reforming the House is based upon the principles of the Pledge to America which make Congress more accountable and transparent; call for reduced federal spending; and, permanently extend the current 2001 and 2003 tax cuts. The incoming conservative majority has also selected John Boehner of Ohio to be our speaker come January.

Just as the Pledge to America was drafted with the input of millions of Americans through the America Speaking Out and You Cut web sites, the governing agenda of the new Congress is being shaped with your ideas. Visit <http://gopleader.gov/NewMajority/> submit your suggestions to improve the House as well as to reform the government.

I'll continue to keep you informed of the progress of the new House as we approach the January 5, 2011 swearing-in date.

### **Overzealous Airport Security Screening Merits Review:**

The recent implementation of dramatically more invasive airport security screening has raised concerns from many travelers as well as lawmakers. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has reportedly given fliers the choice of subjecting themselves to what has been called a "virtual strip search" or undergo an invasive pat-down that many have described as groping.

These extreme measures have understandably alarmed many Americans who are concerned about violations of their Constitutional protections against unreasonable searches.

While few would question the need for airport security screening given the threat posed by terrorists who wish to do us harm, there must be a reasonable balance struck between effective searches and protection of personal privacy.

To this end, I have cosigned a letter to the chairman and ranking member of the House Homeland Security Committee – which has jurisdiction over the TSA – calling for an investigation into the new screening measures. There must be an assurance that TSA's new methods are truly warranted in order to provide the most effective protection for airline passenger safety.

### **Thanksgiving Reminds Us of Overcoming Past Hardships:**

This week our nation pauses to celebrate Thanksgiving. However, for many Americans struggling in this weak economy, the effects of the oil spill, or other challenges, this past year has not been an easy one.

I think it's fitting that we look back to that first Thanksgiving for a perspective of the trials our forebears faced and overcame with courage.

The Oxford History of the American People notes: "On 16 December (1620) the Mayflower arrived there (Plymouth Harbor) and began landing her passengers. The English had no sooner landed and built crude shelters than the 'great sickness' bore in on them as it had on the Englishmen at Jamestown; and only 50 of the 102 immigrants survived. Hope returned with the spring when 'the birds sang in the woods most pleasantly'...with the help of a friendly Indian they were able to plant and cultivate corn..."

We all know of the joyful thanksgiving the pilgrims enjoyed once they rebounded from the ordeal of settling into a strange and sometimes hostile new land. Their struggles did not end there, but their strength of will and unending faith led to the establishment of our great nation. Working together, Americans will always prosper.

I wish you all a very happy Thanksgiving.

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.