

This Week in Washington



WITH CONGRESSMAN
JO BONNER

Pivotal Time in our Nation's History

Earlier this month, the House adjourned for two weeks in observance of the Passover and Easter holidays. This two week break from Washington, which afforded me the opportunity to travel to all six counties of Alabama's First District, comes during a pivotal time in our nation's history.

For certain, the coming weeks and months will set the course for future generations.

I had the opportunity to meet with community leaders in Clarke, Escambia, Monroe and Washington counties where they shared stories of hard-working families in their communities losing jobs and small businesses struggling to keep their doors open.

With 663,000 jobs lost nationwide in March, the national unemployment rate jumped to 8.5%.

While these statistics are dismal, promising signs are beginning to emerge.

According to CNN, “Orders placed with U.S. factories actually rose in February, ending six straight months of declines.”

“[Late last month], there was better-than-expected reports on construction spending and pending home sales. And [in March] a report showed that consumer spending – an engine of the economy – rose in February for the second month in a row – after a half-year of declines.”

Although Alabama’s February unemployment rate jumped to 8.4 percent in February, the state’s rate remains better than our neighbors, Mississippi, Georgia, Florida and Tennessee all posting above 9.1 percent.

In fact, a February CNN newscast named Alabama as the Best Southeastern State in Keeping People Employed during Economic Crisis.

While there may be better times on the horizon, for so many the damage has been done. Families have watched their 401(k)s, college savings plans, and others savings disappear.

This week, my Republican colleagues and I will join Republican Leader John Boehner (R-OH) in pushing the Savings Recovery Act, which will help Americans protect and rebuild their hard-earned savings as quickly as possible.

Sadly, what we have seen so far from this new Congress is not very encouraging.

The truth of the matter is that the Democratic Party has the majority in Congress, and they are working hard to see their priorities become reality – empowering a government that controls virtually every aspect of our lives, from the education our children receive to the doctor you visit and the retirement you enjoy.

I am hopeful that protecting and rebuilding the savings of so many Americans will rank as high on the priority list of the Democratic House leadership well.

First District Congressional Art Competition Winners Announced

On a lighter note, each spring, the United States House of Representatives hosts an art competition spotlighting the talented young artists from across the nation.

Mobile artist, Eugenia Foster, judged this year's entries, which were evaluated "blind" with no contestant information attached.

The winner of this year's First Congressional District High School Art Competition: An Artistic Discovery is Sarah Chambers of St. Paul's Episcopal School.

Sarah Chambers is a student of art instructor Beth Compton, and she was awarded first-place honors for her entry, "So Much for So Long, Heaven Knows."

In addition to this award, Chambers is also eligible to receive a \$5,000 annual art and design scholarship. She will receive roundtrip airfare for herself and a guardian in support of her attendance at the opening of the exhibition in Washington, D.C. Her artwork, along with the other winning entries, will be displayed for one year in the United States Capitol building.

This year's competition attracted some very talented young artists from southwest Alabama. Each year, I am so pleased to participate in a competition that encourages students to develop their creativity and share their gifts with the community.

For those talented students to have their work showcased in the Capitol is truly an honor. I would encourage any young artist of high school age in Alabama's First District to consider submitting an entry for next year's competition.

If you would like to participate next year, you can find additional information regarding the competition on my website.

I would also like to thank the Mobile Museum of Art for their continued support of this competition.

Other winners from this year's competition are:

Second Place:

Kari Elgin, St. Paul's Episcopal School, Title of Work: Untitled

Third Place:

Thomas Kinsey, Fairhope High School, Title of Work: "Self Portrait"

Honorable Mention:

(1) Ann-Marie Babington, St. Paul's Episcopal School, Title of Work: "Altered Perspective"

(2) Justin Vigor, Satsuma High School, Title of Work: "Barton-Past, Present, Future?"

(3) Alan Hockaday, McIntosh High School, Title of Work: "Martin Luther King Jr."

(4) Tory Rogers, Theodore High School, Title of Work: "Auf dem Fluss"

(5) Brandi Musgrove, Theodore High School, Title of Work: "Memorable"

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.

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For release the week of Monday, April 20, 2009. For more information please contact Mike Lewis at (202)225-4931.