

This Week in Washington



WITH CONGRESSMAN
JO BONNER

Federal Spending Spree Continues

The reality of today's tough economy has struck Americans throughout the country. From big cities to small towns, no area of the country has been immune to the downward spiral our economy has taken.

The stock market continues to fall while jobless rates across the country are rising. In fact, Alabama local and state unemployment rates jumped above the national average in January reaching levels we have not seen in over two decades.

And just last week, the Federal Reserve announced that the net worth of U.S. households plunged by \$11.2 trillion – or 18% - in 2008.

The ramifications of these difficult times have become a hard reality for many Americans and

small businesses.

To cope, many American families have been making sacrifices and finding ways to cut back on their spending, whether it's not having dinner out at a restaurant or forgoing automobile or home repairs – Americans are making sacrifices and not spending what they do not have to.

While so many Americans have tightened their belts and found ways to cut back on their spending, the Democratic-controlled Congress and the president seemed to be locked in a nonstop spending spree, spending money we simply do not have.

Over the first 50 days of the new Administration, Democrats spent approximately \$24 billion per day – approximately \$1 billion per hour, most of which is borrowed money.

And, the spending just continues!

Late last month, an outline of the Democrats' budget was released – a troubling budget that calls for record spending. The budget increases spending to \$3.9 trillion in 2009, or 27% of the GDP, the highest level since World War II.

The spending in this budget is so massive that independent estimates suggest roughly 250,000 new federal bureaucrats may be needed to spend it all.

With a seemingly endless number of bailouts, a \$1 trillion stimulus bill, and a \$410 billion omnibus spending bill, you have to wonder when Washington will stop hemorrhaging money.

The American people and small businesses are making sacrifices when it comes to their own budgets, yet the White House and leaders in Congress want to spend and spend some more.

Clearly, the spending has not helped our economy, and raising taxes, increasing the size of the federal government, and borrowing from our children and grandchildren is not the solution.

Friends, this is the most serious crisis our economy has faced in most of our lifetimes. It is past time for Congress to follow the lead of the American people and focus on fixing the problems that will help get our economy going again

We simply can't spend our way back to prosperity.

Dogwood Trail Maids Going to Washington

The Dogwood Trail Maids will be traveling from Baldwin County to Washington next month to take part in the National Cherry Blossom Festival.

Held annually, the Cherry Blossom festival commemorates the 1912 gift of 3,000 cherry trees from the mayor of Tokyo to the city of Washington and honors the lasting friendship between the United States and Japan.

Today, more than a million people travel to Washington each year to see the blossoming cherry trees and attend events that signal the beginning of spring in our nation's capital.

For 49 years, the Dogwood Trail Pageant and Scholarship Program – comprised of six high school girls from Baldwin County – complete nearly 200 hours of community service and make

more than 50 appearances, including festivals, charity runs and ceremonies. The trail maids were even invited to both of Governor Bob Riley's Inaugural parades.

Both the 2008 and 2009 Dogwood Trail Courts will be participating in this year's Cherry Blossom Parade.

I know Baldwin County and indeed, the state of Alabama are so proud for these young ladies to travel to Washington and participate in the organization's first Cherry Blossom parade.

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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