

*This Week in Washington*



WITH CONGRESSMAN  
JO BONNER

### Economic Fears Worsen

Every time you turn on the news, it seems as though the economy continues to worsen.

On Friday, the Bureau of Labor Statistics announced the jobless rate had risen from 7.6 percent in January to 8.1 percent in February, the highest unemployment rate in 25 years.

In fact, an estimated 12.5 million Americans were unemployed in February, an increase of 851,000 since January. Even more staggering, the data showed that 1.99 million jobs were lost in the last three months.

These new job numbers capped off a week when the stock market fell to a 12 year low and when it was reported that a record number of Americans are receiving food stamps. In one month, the number of people receiving food stamps grew by 700,000 people to 31.8 million

people.

At home, family budgets are tightening, nest eggs are disappearing, and job security is weakening for many.

Congress was right to take swift action to get this economy moving, but the proposals of late – a Big Government, taxing-and-borrowing-and-spending spree – is not the solution.

Since the beginning of the year the House has spent a breathtaking amount of money: the trillion-dollar “stimulus” spending plan, a \$410 billion omnibus spending bill to complete the fiscal year 2009 appropriations process, and another \$350 billion for Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP).

Late last month, President Obama released an outline for the fiscal year 2010 budget with unprecedented spending that will be paid for by every American – including families, small businesses, and seniors.

On NBC's Today Show last week, market analyst Jim Cramer underscored the anxiety the president's budget outline has created in investors and American families across the country.

He said, "We have an agenda in this country now that I would regard as being a radical agenda.

I think we had a budget that came out that basically put a level of fear in this country that I have not seen ever in my life, and I think that that changed everything."

Higher taxes and massive federal spending are not the policies for economic recovery; they will not get our economy moving, and they will not create jobs.

Raising taxes on small businesses – who create jobs and where a majority of Americans go to work every day – will not put American families back to work.

When the president's final budget blueprint is presented to Congress later this spring, I am hopeful that Republicans and Democrats can work toward a bipartisan solution – for the problems facing our economy are certainly affecting us all.

### “Timeout” at the White House

On a side note, last Wednesday night, the president and first lady invited me to join House and Senate committee chairmen and ranking members as well as members of the president’s cabinet for dinner at the White House.

Calling it a “timeout” before we “dive back into the game,” the president was gracious and warm as he used the opportunity to try and build bipartisanship.

In his few short weeks in office, President Obama has begun opening the White House for social events on Wednesday evenings, and last Wednesday night was no exception.

He told those of us in attendance that “we’re not always going to agree on everything. But given how hard so many of you are working on both sides of the aisle day in and day out, I thought it was important for us to be able to step back for a moment and remind ourselves that we have things in common.”

I wholeheartedly agree and remain hopeful the Democratic leadership in Congress will follow his lead.

### In Our Thoughts

Last Friday, news spread that Mobile Mayor Sam Jones is being treated for multiple myeloma, a rare form of blood cancer. The mayor has been receiving treatment at a specialized facility in Arkansas.

He and his family are in our thoughts and prayers during this difficult time, and we wish him a full and speedy recovery.

Radio legend, Paul Harvey passed away last week. For more than 70 years, he brought Americans “the rest of the story.” His passing marks the loss of one of America’s best-known voices.

He will certainly be missed.

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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