

This Week in Washington



WITH CONGRESSMAN
JO BONNER

Mobile ranked #1

Out of all the metropolitan areas in America, Mobile County will have the fastest growing economy over the next five years according to Moody's Economy.com.

Crediting ThyssenKrupp's decision to build a \$3.7 billion steel plant here, Austal USA's continued growth, and the potential Northrop Grumman/EADS aircraft assembly plant in Mobile, Moody's projected Mobile to have the greatest change in "gross metropolitan product (GMP)," 34% between 2007 and 2012.

Mobile was not the only metropolitan area in Alabama to make the list. Huntsville, a military and space research hub, has a projected GMP growth of 15% by 2012.

The Auburn-Opelika metropolitan area was also named among the fastest growing areas in the country.

This recognition can be added to an impressive list of accomplishments for the state of Alabama and its economy. For two consecutive years, the Alabama Development Office was selected as the winner of the Competitiveness Award by Site Selection magazine. The magazine also ranked Alabama's 2007 business climate as Number 5 in the nation.

Neal Wade and the Alabama Development Office were chosen based on the success of recruiting new investments and jobs to Alabama.

Their efforts, on behalf of Alabama Governor Bob Riley, certainly paid dividends in 2007. ThyssenKrupp, one of Germany's leading steel producers, announced it will build its \$3.7 billion steel manufacturing and processing plant in Alabama.

ThyssenKrupp's new steel mill will create at least 2,700 new permanent jobs and the construction of the mill will require the service of over 30,000 workers.

Over \$6 billion in industrial projects was announced for Alabama during 2007, a record-setting amount. Obviously, ThyssenKrupp was the largest announcement last year; however, a \$350 million Canadian rail car manufacturer and a host of auto suppliers tied to the new \$1 billion Kia plant just across the state line in Georgia, added to the record breaking year.

Closer to home, the Alabama Port Authority saw record cargo volume in 2007. Preliminary numbers indicate that 27 million tons of cargo, including 21 million tons of coal – passed

through the port in 2007.

From the Gulf Coast to Huntsville – Alabama's economy is on a roll. The secret is out!

Economic Stimulus Package Passes Congress

Unfortunately, our national economy is not experiencing the same boom we in Alabama are enjoying. In response to the national economic downturn, and after considerable procedural maneuvering, the Senate passed an economic stimulus package late last week. Adding senior citizens, disabled veterans, and the widows of those veterans to the House-passed bill, the amended bill was sent back to the House where it passed overwhelmingly with a vote of 380-34.

The \$168 billion package will now be sent to the president for his signature. As I mentioned here last month, the IRS will begin processing the checks in mid-March, and they should be sent out in mid-May.

The details of the plan include:

- Workers who earned at least \$3,000 in qualifying income (which includes wages, Social Security benefits and payments to disabled veterans or their survivors) during 2007, but paid little or no income tax, would qualify for checks of \$300 for individuals or \$600 for couples.

- Those workers who earned enough to pay federal income taxes would receive checks of up to \$600 for individuals, \$1,200 for couples. Payments would phase out beginning with individuals earning more than \$75,000 and couples with more than \$150,000.

- A children's bonus is also included. Anyone qualifying for a check would receive an additional \$300 for each dependent child under age 17.

- Small businesses will also receive tax breaks for investments in plants or equipment.

I was encouraged by the quick bipartisan action taken by Congress to pass this stimulus package on behalf of hard working Americans.

President's Final Budget Sent to Congress

Last Monday, President Bush sent his FY2009 budget proposal to Capitol Hill. The president's budget is only a proposal that outlines his fiscal goals for the upcoming year.

Members of Congress will now begin drafting their own version of the budget, which may or may not mesh with the president's priorities.

I commend the president for once again sending Congress a plan to balance the budget by keeping federal spending under control and helping to strengthen the economy.

I too am concerned about the deficit but believe raising taxes while refusing to address entitlement spending – as is often the solution of the majority party – is not the answer.

The president's budget focuses taxpayers' dollars on national priorities including the war on terror and homeland security, while at the same time promoting diplomacy and democracy

throughout the world.

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, February 11, 2008. For more information please contact Mike Lewis at (202)225-4931.