

Legislative Updates

Troop Funding, Spending Bill Passed

After much delay, Congress has passed additional funding for our troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. These men and women are performing with skill and distinction and deserve the full support of their representatives in Washington. In Iraq, our troops have been implementing a comprehensive security plan that has improved security considerably. General David Petraeus, the top commander in Iraq, has reported that al Qaeda has been weakened significantly and that overall violence is down by over sixty percent. In Afghanistan, our servicemembers are continuing to combat remnants of the former Taliban regime and al Qaeda jihadists. Significant challenges remain in these newly democratic nations, but I strongly believe Congress has taken the appropriate action by funding our troops and allowing their missions to continue without delay and with no strings attached.

Additionally, Congress has finally approved fiscal year 2008 (FY 08) funding for all U.S. departments and agencies, albeit through a massive "omnibus" spending bill instead of passing each of the twelve appropriations bills separately. Fiscal year 2008 began nearly three months ago, so this action is long overdue. I am concerned that the measure includes some wasteful spending and contains a number of pork projects and policy provisions that did not receive thorough review and debate, and therefore I voted against it. I was pleased, however, that fiscal conservatives in Congress were able to stand with the President and force House leadership to back away from their plans to spend more than \$20 billion above the budget. While Congress still has a long way to go to restore fiscal responsibility, I believe the outcome of the FY 08 appropriations process was at least a small victory for American taxpayers. [Share your thoughts](#)

Energy Bill Wouldn't Lower Gas Prices

Congress recently approved H.R. 6, [energy legislation](#) that proponents suggest will make America more energy independent and lower gas prices. I couldn't disagree more. At the time of America's first "energy crisis" in the 1970s, approximately 30 percent of our petroleum needs were met by imported oil and a gallon of gas sold for just under \$1.50 (adjusted price).

Today we import over 62 percent of our petroleum and gasoline is selling for well over \$3 per gallon.

Allowing American companies to increase environmentally-safe energy exploration here at home is the most significant step we can take to address this disturbing trend. Yet in 800-plus pages not a word addresses this fundamental issue.

Instead, the law we passed focuses on a higher mandate for the use of "biofuels" and higher fuel efficiency standards for cars and trucks. Fuel diversity and efficiency are important goals and something I support, but the way this law is written will likely result in higher gasoline prices for Northern California. Corn ethanol is the number-one biofuel used in America today. But ethanol is expensive, requires a great deal of energy to produce, and generates fewer miles per gallon. Additionally, the fuel is processed in the Midwest and must be trucked to California for use in our gasoline. All of these factors contribute to the price of ethanol and are ultimately passed on to California's motorists.

Rather than heading down this path, I supported the American Made Energy and Good Jobs Act earlier this year, which would have taken truly meaningful steps to address the serious problem of record gas prices and dependence on foreign energy, and would have created the incentives needed to unleash the power of American inventiveness in order to develop the next generation of energy technology and supplies. Unfortunately, H.R. 6 does none of these things and could very well take us down the road to even higher energy prices.

E-Prescribing Can Improve Health Care

In early December, I joined a bipartisan group of members of the House of Representatives as a cosponsor of [H.R. 4296](#), the Medicare Electronic Medication and Safety Protection (E-MEDS) Act of 2007. This legislation provides incentives for physicians who participate in Medicare to purchase systems that allow them to fill out prescriptions electronically.

E-prescribing has enormous potential to improve the quality of health care by reducing errors in the transfer of prescription information from the doctor's office to the pharmacy. A well designed e-prescribing device, particularly when coupled with a broader system of electronic medical records, can also help physicians avoid prescribing multiple drugs that can have dangerous side effects when taken together. Increased use of e-prescribing is projected not only to lead to better health outcomes, but also to generate cost savings for Medicare. As Congress considers how to rein in rising health care costs, innovative technologies such as

e-prescribing will undoubtedly play an important role. [Share your thoughts](#)

Pending Legislation and Issues Important to Northern CA

New Report Shows Iran Still a Threat

As you may have heard, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence recently released an unclassified [report](#) regarding Iran's nuclear program. It indicated that Iran halted their nuclear weapons program in the fall of 2003. This is welcoming news. However, the report also assessed that Iran embarked on a "considerable effort" to develop nuclear weapons from the late 1980s to 2003, and that Iran "has the scientific, technical, and industrial capacity to produce nuclear weapons if it decided to do so." Further, it stated that Iran made "significant progress in 2007" in enriching uranium, a capability that "could be applied to producing nuclear weapons." Considering their growing capabilities, the report concluded that Iran could develop a nuclear weapon sometime between 2009 and 2015, if their nuclear weapons program was resumed. For these reasons, I believe Iran continues to pose a serious threat to U.S. and regional security.

Meanwhile, others in the international community reportedly believe that Iran may have already resumed their nuclear weapons program. This only strengthens the argument that strong international pressure against the Iranian regime must continue. For this reason, I strongly support our nation's current efforts with Britain, Germany, and France to develop potent multilateral sanctions aimed at limiting Iran's ability to enhance their nuclear capabilities. It is my deepest hope that economic and diplomatic actions cause Iran to truly terminate their nuclear program without delay and for good. At the same time, I continue to believe that every option for dealing with this serious threat needs to be on the table. [Share your thoughts](#)

U.S. Hosts Middle East Peace Conference

In late November, our nation hosted a major Middle East Peace Conference at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. The purpose of the conference was to jumpstart peace talks between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian National Authority. Representatives from over forty nations participated. Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas issued a [joint statement](#) at the beginning of the conference in which they expressed their "determination to bring an end to bloodshed, suffering and decades of conflict between our peoples," and to establish two states, Israel and Palestine, "living side by side in peace and security."

Israel's enduring peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan demonstrate that it is possible for nations long at odds in the Middle East to move beyond hostility and develop stable relations. With that said, it will certainly be a major challenge for Israeli and Palestinian leaders to achieve the goals outlined in Annapolis. A critical action that must occur is for Hamas--the terrorist group that now controls the Gaza Strip and did not come to Annapolis--to recognize Israel's fundamental right to exist. Indeed, it is virtually impossible for the peace process to move forward so long as Hamas commits or condones violence against Israel. Beyond that challenge, reaching an agreement on the status of Jerusalem and the return of Palestinian refugees may be especially difficult. Still, I believe it is appropriate that the United States is redoubling efforts to advance the Middle East Peace Process. It is my deep hope that all Israelis and Palestinians will break with the past and embrace a path that fosters peace and security. [Share your thoughts](#)

Bipartisan Support for Colombia Free Trade Agreement

The U.S. has signed a market-opening trade agreement with Colombia. As the third largest economy in South America, the [Colombia agreement](#) would be very beneficial to the U.S. economy. The agreement would immediately open the door to 80 percent of U.S. exports. Further, the U.S. International Trade Commission estimates that our exports to Colombia would increase by more than \$1 billion, and the agreement would add \$2.5 billion per year to our economy.

However, congressional consideration of the agreement remains stalled, despite support from members on both sides of the aisle. Colombia is a strong, pro-free market ally of the United States, and increased two-way trade between our nations would mean more consumers of U.S. goods, new markets for America's farm produce, and more jobs for U.S. workers. Colombia has

made terrific progress in recent years thanks to the leadership of President Uribe. I fear that if Congress fails to implement this agreement soon, it will underscore the anti-U.S. rhetoric of Marxists like Venezuela's dictator Hugo Chavez as he tries to expand his influence in Latin America.

Trade should not be a partisan issue. Trade benefits the lives and livelihoods of everyone. It helps expand our options as consumers while lowering prices; it creates markets for our manufactured goods and agricultural produce abroad; and it helps add new and attractive jobs for workers in our economy. I look forward to continuing to work with Republicans and Democrats to move the trade agreement with Colombia through Congress soon. [Share your thoughts](#)

Stem Cell Breakthrough Alters Debate

Over the past several years, there has been a great deal of controversy over embryonic stem cell research and whether it should be federally funded. Proponents of this research have argued that it could lead to cures for a variety of debilitating diseases, such as paralysis and Alzheimer's disease. But embryonic stem cell research has raised moral questions, because extracting the stem cell requires the destruction of a living human embryo.

Several weeks ago, two teams of scientists reported that they had discovered a new way to create stem cells by adding four genes to a human skin cell. The resulting stem cells share the most important characteristic of embryonic stem cells, pluripotency -- the ability to transform into any of the more than 200 types of cells in the human body. Dr. Robert Lanza, a leading stem cell researcher, has described this discovery as "the biological equivalent of the Wright brothers' first airplane." This major breakthrough will allow America's scientists to proceed with life-saving medical research without compromising ethical principles. I believe Congress should take this opportunity to get beyond the contentious and emotional debate over embryonic stem cell research and express united support for these exciting new discoveries. [Share your thoughts](#)

District News

Honoring Our Veterans



This past Veterans Day I had the opportunity to spend some time with veterans throughout the Second Congressional District. It is so important that we take time, not just on Veterans Day, but every day to remember the sacrifice our veterans and their families have made for our nation. I was honored to be able to thank our veterans first hand for their service, and I truly enjoy listening to them talk about their service to our nation. I will continue to do everything I can in our nation's capital to ensure that our veterans receive the honor and rewards they have earned.

California Lawmakers Promote Beale AFB

I recently joined Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein in leading the entire California Congressional Delegation (a total of fifty-five members of Congress) to [urge the Secretary of the Air Force](#) to consider to Northern California's Beale AFB as the home for new Cyber Command. As I [reported](#)

in October, Beale is one of a few bases in the running for becoming headquarters of this command. The delegation's unanimous, bipartisan support for Beale AFB demonstrates that California stands ready and able to partner with the Air Force in performing critically important cyber operations. I strongly believe that Beale is an ideal home for the Cyber Command, and will be requesting a meeting with Air Force Secretary Michael Wynne in the very near future to further promote the base's strong assets.

Sutter County Taxpayers Event



As a strong supporter of lowering the tax burden on American families, I was pleased to honor the Sutter County Taxpayers Association's 40th Anniversary. In Washington, Congress recently averted a major tax increase. As I [reported](#) last month, the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) threatened to ensnare 23 million middle-income taxpayers with an average tax increase of \$2,000 this year alone. This tax was never intended to affect the middle class.

The House originally passed a [measure](#) that would provide a one-year reprieve from the AMT but raise taxes on other Americans to offset the "costs." Fortunately, this bill was defeated by the Senate. In response, the House finally passed an AMT relief bill that did not include tax increases. I strongly supported this measure, and will continue to work to lower the tax burden on American families and small businesses.

California Cattleman Honored



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