

Legislative Updates

Congress Kicks Off New Session

The House of Representatives has reconvened for its 2008 session, and there are several important issues that Congress should address this year.

First, Americans across our nation are dealing with rising health care costs, record gas prices, and a struggling housing market. I believe Congress should act responsibly and in a timely manner as it considers proposals to help ensure that our economy remains strong. I'm pleased by the bipartisan spirit that Congress and the President are showing in their pursuit of meaningful tax relief that can help boost the economy. Although a tentative agreement between key House leaders and the President has been reached, the House and the Senate have not come to a final agreement. In the coming days and weeks, I will be actively involved in strengthening the proposal and advocating policies that can help middle-income Americans and lay the foundation for strong economic growth and job creation in the future.

In addition, I believe Congress must support our troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan and reauthorize legislation that allows our nation's intelligence community to monitor the activities of terrorist suspects abroad in a timely and effective manner. Congress will also be working to reach a strong, bipartisan agreement on a new Farm Bill, which is very important to agriculture-rich Northern California. Further, Congress will likely consider the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind, a federal education law that I believe needs to be modified to increase local control of our schools. I believe Congress should also take decisive action to secure our borders and enforce our nation's immigration laws. And I strongly believe Congress needs to begin to responsibly address the out-of-control growth in mandatory spending for Social Security and Medicare, which threatens our future economic security.

As the legislative session moves ahead, I look forward to working on behalf of the citizens of Northern California in our nation's capital, and invite you to [offer your feedback](#) about these or any other issue important to you.

Earmark Reform Badly Needed

The massive bill passed by Congress late last year to fund the federal government contained almost 9000 "earmarks"--provisions directing federal funds for specific local projects. Of these, about 300 were added to the final version of the bill without having been considered previously by the House or Senate. Although some earmarks do benefit the public by providing funds for needed roads or flood control projects, too many of them waste taxpayer money on unnecessary pork like the infamous "Bridge to Nowhere" in Alaska or the "Woodstock Museum" in New York.

I believe the best way to curb these abuses is to allow as much public scrutiny as possible at all stages of the earmarking process. Although the new earmark disclosure rules adopted at the beginning of the 110th Congress were a step in the right direction, it has become clear that members of Congress are still finding ways to abuse the system. I am convinced that more drastic action is needed to restore integrity to the appropriations process and put a stop to wasteful and corrupt earmarks. Last December, I became a cosponsor of [House Concurrent Resolution 263](#),

which would place a moratorium on all earmarks until genuine reforms are made. The American people deserve a Congress that spends their tax dollars responsibly.

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District News



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