



CONGRESSMAN JIM SENSENBRENNER NEWS FROM CONGRESS

NUMBER 156 -- SEPTEMBER 2001

Returning What's Yours - Excess Taxes

A year ago, tax relief was supposed to be a bureaucratic impossibility. Six months ago, it was supposed to be a liability. Today, tax relief is a reality. The Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001, H.R. 1836, signed into law by the President on June 7, is a major victory for the American people.

As many of you know by now, Americans who paid federal income taxes for Fiscal Year 2000 will receive, or have already received, rebate checks. Beginning July 20, many rebate checks were mailed, and continue to be mailed, with the first ones going to taxpayers whose social security numbers end in 00 to 09. This check represents the excess taxes collected by the government being returned to people who worked hard to help create this surplus. Depending on one's tax status, many taxpayers could receive checks of up to \$600.

In addition to these tax rebates, taxpayers will also see relief from the marriage tax, the elimination of the death tax and across-the-board income tax relief. Congress and the White House have doubled the per-child tax credit and have also expanded education savings accounts so families can save tax-free dollars for their children's education.

This tax package includes the largest tax cut approved by Congress in twenty years - yet it only represents about \$1.35 trillion of the approximately \$5.6 trillion (as determined by the Congressional Budget Office) projected budget surplus. Considering that our economic growth began declining almost a year ago, it is possible that future surplus estimates may turn out to be lower than the \$5.6 trillion figure. However, there will still be enough of a surplus to fund priorities like Education, Defense, Medicare, Social Security and the Environment. The tax bill will give our economy a boost when it needs it most and will ensure future surpluses. Economists agree that tax relief is exactly what our slumping economy needs to get moving again. Returning part of the surplus to the American people will help

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Patients' Bill of Rights, Not Lawyers' Right to Bill

On August 2, 2001, with my support, the House passed H.R. 2563, the Bipartisan Patient Protection Act, which is a modified, compromise version of the Patients' Bill of Rights originally introduced by Representatives Greg Ganske and John Dingell.

In the earlier version of the Ganske-Dingell bill, patients did not need to commence or complete any kind of an internal or external review of a health plan's coverage determination before going to court. These faulty litigation provisions were my primary concern. The earlier version of H.R. 2563 made the appeals process obsolete and would have provided for a litigation boom. Worse, it would have allowed individuals to sue their

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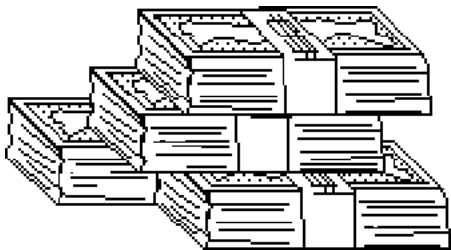
employers for the decisions of their health plans. Moreover, many small employers stated they would likely stop offering health benefits altogether if these costly provisions were to take effect. Therefore, those Americans who presently receive health benefits from employers could easily join the 43 million people who are currently uninsured.

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Returning What's Yours - Excess Taxes

stimulate our economy, increase consumer spending, and grow consumer confidence.

In addition, we are also committed to protecting the Social Security surplus and preserving every penny of Medicare for Medicare alone. We have many seniors depending on Congress and the Administration to protect them from the biggest threat to Medicare and Social Security - out of control spending! After all, discretionary government spending in the past 3 years has increased at more than twice the rate of inflation. This is one of the reasons why earlier this year, I voted in favor of H.R. 2, the Social Security and Medicare Lock-Box Act of 2001. This bill

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commits the entire Social Security surplus, payroll taxes, and interest, to a "safe deposit box" to prevent Social Security surpluses from being used to finance other programs. If H.R. 2 is signed into law, it will ensure that every dime of the Social Security surplus will be saved and it will provide retirement security, including Medicare coverage, for three generations of Americans. However, this bill has not yet been acted upon by the Democrat-controlled Senate.

As long as Congress is able to check itself and curtail the wanton spending habits of a vocal minority of Members and special interests, it is possible to save - and perhaps even increase - our budget surplus. As we return to Washington in September, you can expect to see continuing funding battles over the many government programs that receive federal funds. I will also continue to work to protect American taxpayers against wasteful government spending by trying to prevent Congress from going on a spending spree.

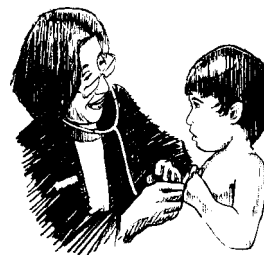
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Patients' Bill of Rights, Not Lawyers' Right to Bill

If this legislation had not been changed, the bill would have resulted in state and federal courts being jammed with lawsuits. Costly liability lawsuits hurt Americans who have health benefits. The earlier version of the bill would have increased insurance-related lawsuits. To offset the costs associated with lawsuits, insurance companies would have raised health insurance premiums - resulting in many people not being able to afford the higher costing health insurance. For those who could afford it, potential downsides would have also included a lower quality of health service and delayed quality care for those locked in lengthy lawsuits.

I have always supported patients' protections and believe in timely access to high quality health care for the millions of Americans with private health insurance. As amended, H.R. 2563 is a good bill that I believe President Bush will sign. H.R. 2563 protects every American with private insurance. I voted for this Patients' Bill of Rights because it gives you, the patient, a stronger voice in healthcare decisions and strengthens your rights as a patient. The bill also establishes an independent, speedy external review process for patients dissatisfied with the results of an internal review. It gets rid of HMO "gag clauses" that prevent doctors from discussing certain healthcare options with their patients. It has consumer choice provisions that give patients more choice of doctors. It also contains the continuity of care protections that allow patients to continue to see their doctor if they are terminally ill, pregnant, or awaiting scheduled surgery - even if their doctor leaves the HMO.

Although this is still not a perfect bill, I am hopeful that a House-Senate Conference, which is the next step in the consideration of this bill, will further limit the liability provisions before sending the bill to President Bush for his signature. The House has passed a good compromise that puts patients first, holds HMOs accountable while preventing unlimited lawsuits, and that the President will sign. I hope the Democrat-controlled Senate will not play games to score points against the House and the Administration. It would be a travesty if yet again, Congress failed to pass a true patients' bill of rights.



TOWN HALL MEETINGS

Saturday, September 8

9:00 a.m. Juneau Community Center
1:00 p.m. Jefferson City Hall

Saturday, September 15

9:00 a.m. Hartland Village Hall

Sunday, September 16

3:00 p.m. Oconomowoc City Hall

Monday, September 17

7:00 p.m. Cedarburg City Hall

Saturday, October 13

9:00 a.m. Mayville Senior Center
1:00 p.m. Germantown Village Hall

Sunday, October 14

3:00 p.m. Beaver Dam City Hall

Saturday, October 20

9:00 a.m. Sheboygan Mead Library
1:00 p.m. West Bend City Hall

Sunday, October 21

12:00 p.m. Fort Atkinson City Hall

OFFICE HOURS

Monday, September 17

8:00 a.m. Burnett Town Hall
8:45 a.m. Waupun Library
9:30 a.m. Brownsville Village Hall
10:15 a.m. Kekoskee Village Hall
11:00 a.m. Lomira Village Hall
12:30 p.m. Theresa Village Hall
1:15 p.m. Kewaskum Village Hall
2:15 p.m. Addison Town Hall
3:00 p.m. Rubicon Town Hall
3:45 p.m. Ashippun Town Hall

Tuesday, September 18

8:30 a.m. Howards Grove Village Hall
9:15 a.m. Kohler Village Hall
10:00 a.m. Oostburg State Bank
10:45 a.m. Adell Senior Center
11:30 a.m. Random Lake Village Hall
1:00 p.m. Cedar Grove Library
1:45 p.m. Belgium Village Hall
2:30 p.m. Fredonia Village Hall
3:15 p.m. Saukville Village Hall

Town Hall Meetings and Office Hours provide me the chance to hear your views on the issues before Congress or to help you with problems you may be experiencing in dealing with a federal agency. I look forward to seeing you at the next meeting nearest your home. Please contact my district office if you require special accommodations to attend.

Working for Wisconsin and the Nation

When it comes to legislation, there is often a lot of gridlock in Washington. But not on my turf. As Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, the House has worked its will on several bills under the Committee's jurisdiction.

Notably, the Judiciary Committee has worked on bankruptcy issues to provide additional bankruptcy relief to farmers. We also considered H.R. 1542, the widely advertised Tauzin-Dingell bill. In its present form, the bill would allow the local phone companies to compete in the high-speed Internet and data transmission market without first having to open up to competitors the local telephone market. The Judiciary Committee feels that this would give the local phone companies an unfair advantage over their competitors and would hurt consumers in the long run because the lack of competition would mean higher costs for this service. The Committee marked up the Charitable Choice Act of 2001, which will allow religious groups to obtain federal grants to provide social services. This was a cornerstone of the President's campaign. It passed the House on July 19, and is currently awaiting action in the Senate. The Committee also marked up a bill to ban the cloning of human embryos. The ethical, moral and social issues raised by this subject were evident in the speech the President made to the nation on August 9, when he announced that the federal government will begin to pay for a limited amount of research on stem cells from human embryos.

Yet, with a busy and hectic legislative schedule, I still make time for frequent visits to the district. So far this year, I will have held

138 office hours and 55 town hall meetings including those listed in this newsletter. It is important to set aside time to meet with constituents, and I have always made every effort to be available to everyone in the Ninth District.

Meeting with constituents is one of the best ways for a Member of Congress to learn what he or she can do for his or her district. For example, last fall, teachers, members of the Wisconsin school boards, and members from teachers' unions, came to me to express their frustration with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The EEOC had decreed that early voluntary retirement plans worked out between Wisconsin school boards and Wisconsin teachers violated the Age Discrimination in Employment Act. After meeting with everyone involved in the dispute, including representatives of the EEOC and other members of the Wisconsin delegation, I became an original cosponsor of a bill introduced by Representative Tom Petri to protect Wisconsin's early retirement plan that had been worked out amicably by all sides. The intrusion by a federal agency such as the EEOC was inappropriate and uncalled-for. Although the EEOC recently announced that it would back off, it's important to remember that had it not done so, Wisconsinites could have seen their property taxes skyrocket as schools' budgets would have increased in order to comply with the EEOC's edict. This is one of the reasons why many people in Wisconsin believe that local control is the best control - especially when the state already had a fair plan.

This is why it is important for me to hear the views and concerns of my constituents so that they can be better represented in Washington.

House Energy Bill Provides Light at the End of the Tunnel

Just a few months ago, Wisconsin and much of the country faced gas prices that topped \$2.00 a gallon at the pump, and parts of the nation faced either energy shortages or potential blackouts. While the banner headlines about an energy crisis may have gone away, the underlying problems confronting our nation and our economy remain. In order to avoid volatile gas prices in the future, we need a balanced energy policy to increase conservation and production while protecting the environment. That's why after eight years without a coherent energy policy, on August 1, 2001, the House passed - with my support - H.R. 4, the Securing America's Future Energy (SAFE) Act, which is the legislative portion of the President's comprehensive energy policy.

For too long the U.S. has lacked a coherent energy policy, making our economy increasingly vulnerable to the whims of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Companies (OPEC). High gas and home heating prices in Wisconsin earlier this year were evidence of this fact. H.R. 4 will help promote new technologies and new domestic sources of energy. The bill includes \$33.5 billion in tax cuts and incentives over ten years to encourage the harnessing of cleaner sources of energy like solar, wind, landfill gas, and other renewables. This will encourage domestic production while being environmentally prudent.

America has become increasingly dependent on foreign oil. Sixty percent of our oil comes from other countries, which is bad for our economy and our national security. By relying on OPEC countries that see us as a needy customer, we leave our national security vulnerable to foreign nations. Vice President Cheney, appointed by President Bush to lead a national energy task force, said that just meeting the demand for electricity over the next twenty years will require between 1,300 and 1,900 new power plants. Since the energy crisis of the 1970s, U.S. energy use has increased by 30% - more than double the increase in domestic energy production over the same period.

Conservation also plays a major part in the SAFE Act. The bill features moderately increased fuel standards for sport utility vehicles that will save at least 5 billion gallons of fuel when fully implemented. Additionally, the SAFE Act requires the federal government to lead by example on conservation by setting stricter standards for energy use in federal buildings.

H.R. 4 is a good bill for the nation, for Wisconsin, and for the environment. Our current energy problems are the result of numerous factors and demand a multi-faceted solution. There is no simple one-size-fits-all solution to these problems, but this energy bill, by taking a balanced and comprehensive approach, offers us all the opportunity to consider a national energy strategy for the first time.

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