



*Congressman*

**SHERROD BROWN**

**WORKING FOR YOU**

Summer 2006

## *Moving Our Health Care Forward*



One of my priorities in Congress is to make sure the nation's health care system moves forward, not back. That means fighting for policies that close health care gaps and against policies that create them.

Over the past 13 years, I helped write a number of health care bills that were ultimately signed into law, including bills to sustain health coverage for millions of unemployed families during the last economic downturn, increase health coverage for children, reduce deadly medical errors, increase access to affordable generic medicines, and fill gaps in research on such childhood diseases as juvenile diabetes and muscular dystrophy.

I've fought repeated attempts to dismantle Medicare, starve Medicaid, under-invest in medical research, and short-change veterans health care. And I've fought to improve the competitiveness of American businesses and strengthen the economic security of American families by containing skyrocketing health care costs.

Health care is more than a simple service: It affects both quality and duration of life, and it fuels Ohio's economy. When the federal government invests wisely in health care, our investment pays for itself and then some. When the government recklessly cuts successful health care programs, we suffer for it.

I am privileged to continue fighting on behalf of my constituents and every American for a health care system that consistently moves forward.

### **A Note from Congressman Brown:**

*This summer marks my fourteenth year representing you in Congress. I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience and wanted to take this opportunity to write you a short note about a few of the important things you and I have accomplished together. I also want to remind you of several things that still need to be addressed. Thank you for the opportunity to have served you this past decade and a half.*

## *Protecting the Great Lakes*

Lake Erie is Ohio's single greatest natural resource, and Great Lakes conservation should be a priority for every Ohioan.



When I came to Congress, federal law permitted oil and gas drilling in the Great Lakes, bulk diversions of Great Lakes water were allowed, and the nation had no consolidated planning process for Great Lakes restoration. I worked with colleagues on both sides of the aisle for action on these key issues. Today, federal law bans oil and gas drilling in the Great Lakes and severely restricts bulk sales of Great Lakes water. A comprehensive Great Lakes restoration plan has been completed.

But the next few years will bring difficult debates over funding to implement the restoration plan. The continued activism of concerned Ohioans is key to protecting this great resource for future generations.

**See recent updates on my Website at:**

[www.house.gov/sherrodbrown](http://www.house.gov/sherrodbrown)

## *Working for Fair Trade*

**R**eform of America's trade policy has been a major focus for me in Congress.

We have made important strides in educating policymakers, newsmakers, and the American people about the dangers of irresponsible trade policies. Americans today can see these dangers for themselves—in weakened environmental protections, lower labor standards for workers, increased illegal immigration, new homeland security vulnerabilities, and lost jobs.

This greater awareness has produced results in Congress. Last year's Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) passed the House by just two votes.

But there is more work to do. Next year's debate over extension of the administration's fast-track trade negotiation authority offers a real opportunity for reform that makes workers, the environment, and national security key priorities of America's trade agenda.

## *Answers for Our Troops*

**I** believe that those serving in the military deserve a basic assurance—America's leaders will always use our military forces wisely. To me, that means the use of force will be considered carefully and explained to the American people honestly. Our troops must always have clear benchmarks for success and the tools they need to complete their missions.

During my first term in Congress, I was one of the first legislators to question President Clinton's commitment of U.S. forces to Somalia. I was concerned that the peacekeeping operation was being mishandled, putting American soldiers in harm's way without a clearly defined mission.



Sadly, those concerns are as real today as they were a decade ago.

Before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, I introduced legisla-

tion requiring the President to provide a long-term plan for Iraq. This plan would have included an adequate budget, a blueprint for success, and an exit strategy in Iraq. Unfortunately, the administration failed to produce such a plan.

Our troops in Iraq are serving honorably. They have done everything we have asked of them, and they deserve an exit strategy.

## *Shining a Light on Congress*

**I**n recent years, Republican leadership in Congress has scheduled debate on major legislation in the middle of the night, holding votes open until members change their votes. They have also restricted the time allowed for members to review legislation, forcing Congress to vote on legislation sight-unseen.

Under the cover of darkness, Congressional Republicans cut veterans benefits, education and health care funding, passed the Leave No Millionaire Behind tax cut, passed the confusing Medicare prescription drug bill, and eviscerated Head Start.

I introduced the Congressional Accountability Rule (CAR) to shine a light on these activities and increase transparency in the legislative process. The new rule provides Representatives seven days to review major legislation. It prevents votes from concluding after 10 pm, and limits votes to 30 minutes. CAR would instill accountability, responsibility, and fairness in the House of Representatives, and put government back in the hands of the American people.

We must shine a light on Congress—too much damage is done under the cover of darkness.



# Balancing the Nation's Books

When I came to Congress, the federal budget deficit had reached an alarming \$290 billion.

I backed legislation to cut spending and reform corporate tax rules and cosponsored the balanced budget constitutional amendment. With sound fiscal policies in the 1990s, Congress produced the first balanced federal budget in a generation.

But fiscal policies advanced by the White House and Congress in recent years turned record surpluses into record deficits. And America's national debt has grown by more than \$1.2 trillion since 2001.

The cost to taxpayers has been astonishing. In 2005, the federal government spent more than \$350 billion on

interest on the national debt. That is more than was spent for the Departments of Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Education, Agriculture, State, Veterans Affairs, and Labor combined.

In the coming years, concerned Ohioans must renew the fight to return our nation's fiscal house to order.



*Congressman Brown speaks to students in Ohio's 13th District about his job in Congress.*

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or to share your views  
on issues important to you,  
please visit  
[www.house.gov/sherrodbrown/](http://www.house.gov/sherrodbrown/)**

## A Fair Wage for Ohio Workers

When I began serving in the House of Representatives in 1993, the federal minimum wage was just \$4.25 an hour. I worked hard during the 1990s to secure a raise for Ohio workers and helped pass a responsible law in 1996 that increased the minimum wage to \$5.15.

But we must continue the fight, because the minimum wage has remained stagnant since then. Over the same period of time, corporate profits have increased 70% and CEO compensation has increased 50%. And the cost of basic commodities has increased dramatically. A gallon of gasoline averaged \$1.20 in 1996. This spring, a gallon of gas cost around \$2.85—an increase of more than 130%. But while ExxonMobil's CEO made more than \$18,000 an hour, a minimum-wage worker made the same \$5.15 he made in 1997.

I have pushed congressional leadership for action this year on the federal minimum wage. Ohioans are also working to raise the minimum wage through a 2006 ballot initiative.

## Protecting Veterans from ID Theft

Recently, the Pentagon announced that the names, Social Security numbers, and other personal information of 26.5 million veterans and their spouses across the country, including every living veteran



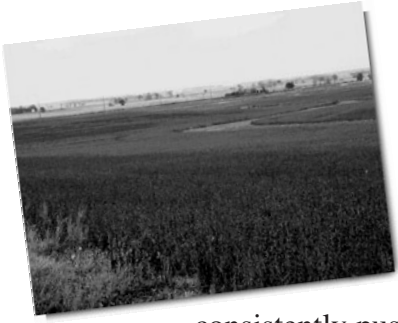
discharged since 1975, had been stolen from the home of a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data analyst. The Defense Department also revealed that the stolen data may have included information on as many as 2.2 million active-duty service members, National Guardsmen, and Reservists.

To learn more about how this may affect you and what you can do to protect yourself from identity theft, visit [www.va.gov/opa](http://www.va.gov/opa). Additionally, the VA has set up a manned call center where veterans can get information about this situation and learn more about consumer identity protections. That toll-free number is **1-800-FED INFO (333-4636)**. The call center will operate from 8 am to 9 pm (EDT), Monday-Saturday as long as it is needed.

We should be willing to reimburse veterans for costs caused by identity theft resulting from this scandal. As one of the first members to call on the Administration to guard veterans against identity theft, I am pleased that the VA recently announced that they will offer free credit reports to veterans. I am also working to ensure that personal information entrusted to the federal government is better protected in the future.

# Putting Brownfields Back to Work

America has an estimated 400,000 “brownfield” properties that are vacant or underdeveloped because they are or may be environmentally contaminated. Cuyahoga County alone has an estimated 4,500 acres of brownfields—an area the size of Barberton. Each of these properties may pose a public health threat, and all of them are a drag on our economy.



In 1995, I introduced one of the first brownfields cleanup bills in Congress and have since worked with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to make the federal government a partner in the effort to put this land back to productive use. Congress passed a similar bill with bipartisan support, and President Bush signed it into law in 2002.

But we must continue the fight to help Ohio’s economy. Though I have consistently pushed for full funding for brownfields cleanup, it has fallen well short of what we need—and what the 2002 law intended. Ohioans on both sides of the aisle must make this a priority if the promise of brownfields restoration is to be fulfilled.

## Fighting for Our Vets

Every American is indebted to our troops for the sacrifices they make for our country. As we honor and remember these courageous men and women, we must do so with our actions, not just our words.

In May 2003, the administration announced its final decision to consolidate the Brecksville VA Hospital with the facility at Wade Park. I fought alongside Ohio’s veterans to keep the hospital open, but unfortunately, it remains on the closure list. Since then, I have worked with veterans organizations to develop legislation that

ensures veterans with service-connected disabilities traveling farther for treatment due to the closure will be able to afford their increased travel costs.

More than 1 million American troops have served in Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. For these new veterans, I support legislation to create a New GI Bill of Rights for the 21st Century—a comprehensive benefits package designed to honor the contributions of those who have served in the Armed Forces.

A strong America begins at home. We must show our support for those who keep our country safe, strong, and free.

## Academy Appointments

One of the rewards of serving as a Member of Congress is the opportunity to nominate young men and women to the U.S. Military Service Academies. Nominees are outstanding young Ohioans with the potential to become leaders at the highest levels of military service and the maritime industry.

Service academies include the U.S. Military Academy (West Point), U.S. Naval Academy (Annapolis), U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, U.S. Air Force Academy, and U.S. Coast Guard Academy. Students between the ages of 17 and 23 (25 for the Merchant

Marine Academy) who will graduate from high school by June 2007 are eligible to be considered for nomination this year. All academies, with the exception of the Coast Guard, require a nomination from the Vice President, a U.S. Senator, or Congressman for admission.

I am currently accepting nomination applications for students entering the academies in the summer of 2007. The deadline to apply for a nomination is November 15, 2006.

Please contact my Summit County office for more information and an application packet.

Congressman  
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