

U.S. Senator Barack Obama

Legislative Update



Dear Friends,

I hope this newsletter finds you well. I wanted to briefly update you on the important issues that I've been working on in the Senate this summer.

Since Memorial Day, the Senate has considered legislation relating to the troubled housing market and skyrocketing energy costs. These are serious problems affecting all Americans, and I am committed to working with my colleagues to get these critical bills signed into law.

As many of you are recovering from June's devastating downstate floods, you remain in my thoughts and prayers. I traveled to Quincy recently to help with flood preparations and get a first-hand look at the efforts. I was humbled by Illinoisans' steadfast resolve and commitment to save their homes and those of their neighbors. It is the long-term recovery that will be the most challenging and will require the most support. I am working with Senator Durbin and our congressional colleagues to ensure that our state has the resources it needs. We have also been working with the Governor, the White House, and federal agencies to mobilize all necessary programs to assist Illinoisans during this difficult time.

If you need assistance due to the flooding, or are concerned about any issues relating to the federal government, my offices in Illinois and Washington are ready to assist you. Please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Barack Obama

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In an effort to provide more information to our constituents regarding current issues and legislation in Congress, we are sending you a Legislative Update from Senator Obama. We hope that this update will be informative to you, your organization, as well as others you may know. Please feel free to forward this information on to others.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT OUR D.C. OFFICE AT (202) 224-2854 OR ANY OF OUR OFFICES IN ILLINOIS.

Pursuant to Senate policy, newsletters, petitions, opinion polls, and issue alerts and other electronic communications cannot be initiated by this office for the 60 day period immediately before the date of a primary or general election.

Stay up to date with Barack's work in the Senate and on issues of importance to Illinois at: <http://www.obama.senate.gov/newsletter/>

July 2008

HOLDING OUR GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABLE

We should do everything we can to ensure that the American public can easily access and track how the federal government does its business. Our government took an important step last year by launching USASpending.gov, giving ordinary citizens an important tool to hold Washington accountable. While USASpending.gov has had tremendous success, I was proud to join with Senator Coburn (R-OK) to introduce the Strengthening Transparency and Accountability in Federal Spending Act of 2008, which would expand the public information available on the website and improve the quality of government financial data. USASpending.gov (also known as "Google for Government"), created by the Coburn-Obama Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 and launched in December 2007, makes public information about nearly all federal grants, contracts, loans and other financial assistance available in a regularly updated, user-friendly, and searchable format.

It is unacceptable that lobbyists can exploit a loophole to hide their lobbying contacts on behalf of foreign businesses and governments, and that is why I joined with Senators Schumer (D-NY) and McCaskill (D-MO) to introduce the Closing the Foreign Lobbying Loophole Act, which would close loopholes that allow American lobbyists, representing foreign clients, to lobby U.S. government officials without disclosing these activities. The American people have a right to know who these individuals are representing and which American officials they're lobbying. Abusing the law to hide access and special treatment is exactly the kind of Washington culture that working Americans are tired of and the culture that I've been fighting against.

PROTECTING AMERICA'S VETERANS

As thousands of service members return home from Iraq and Afghanistan, we must ensure these men and women have the opportunity to attend college. I am proud to have joined with Senator Jim Webb (D-VA) to support a new GI Bill to give these service members the same chance to affordable education that the Greatest Generation had after World War II. Although the President originally opposed this bill, he eventually signed it into law. America's heroes risked their lives in battle for us, and now it's our responsibility to stand up for them.

A disturbing report in the media indicated that 143 veterans suffering from Post-

Traumatic Stress Disorder, who participated in a study to examine ways to end smoking, were not notified about the dangers of the drug they were testing. The most serious symptom of the drug, Chantix, was suicidal behavior and thoughts. As a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I called on Secretary of Veterans Affairs James Peake to immediately investigate reports that the VA failed to promptly notify veterans about these severe side effects after the Food and Drug Administration had issued a warning. I also asked Peake to take immediate corrective action to address the problems that were first identified eight years ago.

ADVANCING SCIENCE AND MEDICINE

Every year, too many American families experience the heartbreak of stillbirth and sudden unexpected infant death, and I believe we must do everything we can to work to prevent these tragedies. I introduced the Preventing Stillbirth and Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Act of 2008, which would enhance public health activities related to understanding and preventing the nearly 25,000 stillbirths and 4,500 sudden unexpected infant deaths (SUID) experienced each year by American families.

This important legislation would launch a national registry for both stillbirth and SUID to help facilitate understanding of the root causes, rates, and trends of these deaths. It will also provide every American family with access to information about ways to prevent them.



The Senate also took a major step forward in addressing the health care needs of America's military families and seniors by passing the Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act of 2008. This critical legislation prevents a significant cut to physician Medicare reimbursements, and allows doctors to keep costs low for senior citizens. I was proud to stand alongside my friend, Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA), to vote for this bill.

STANDING UP FOR WORKING FAMILIES

The Senate voted to stand up for working families in Illinois and throughout the nation by moving our country back on track to fiscal discipline by passing the Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Resolution in June. It will provide middle class tax relief while making critical investments in education, energy independence, veterans assistance, and job-creating infrastructure. I am particularly pleased that the budget included an amendment I offered to help service members who have may have been erroneously discharged as a result of a Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or Traumatic Brain Injury. Our country needs change, and this budget is an important step in the right direction.



Serving our Constituents

Ensuring Illinoisans receive the help they need from the federal government has always been one of my top priorities as a U.S. Senator. Since 2006, my offices throughout the state have held office hours for constituents to provide them with opportunities to meet with staff about a broad range of issues. This summer, my staff and I have organized mobile office hours in all 94 counties in downstate Illinois. These office hours will allow constituents to seek specific and personal assistance relating to veterans' issues, Social Security or similar benefits, or express personal opinions about a wide range of issues. If you would like more information about these offices, please call my office at (312) 886-3506 or visit my website at <http://obama.senate.gov/> for a full schedule of downstate office hours.

If you have questions or ideas, please feel free to contact me through any of my offices in Illinois or Washington D.C.

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