

HOUSE REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE

Chairman Adam Putnam

APRIL RECESS RESOURCE KIT



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House Republican Conference

Dear Republican Colleagues:

Republicans head into the April district work period with the wind at our backs. We have shown a united front on the House floor and are communicating a clear and compelling message to the American people. I believe they are beginning to hear us again. It is critical for us to utilize the recess to go on the offensive and drive our message home in the district.

We are winning debate after debate in the House and in America's living rooms – on issues from supporting our troops to secret union ballots to a balanced budget. Because of the hard work of each and every member of our Conference, the American people can see clear and fundamental differences between our two parties. We cannot slow down now when we have the chance outside of D.C. to speak directly to our constituents.

Our job is only getting started. The April work period provides the opportunity to continue communicating to your constituents about the issues we tackle every day in Washington. In this booklet, the House Republican Conference is pleased to provide talking points, vote justifications, Op-Eds, and a draft recess speech to help you highlight Republican values and accomplishments in your district. We would be happy to provide you with any additional information you may need.

Thank you again for all of your hard work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Adam H. Putnam".

Adam H. Putnam

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April Recess Remarks

Introduction / Wounded Warriors

This holiday season, our thoughts turn to the many families who will break bread on Easter Sunday and bless the seder plate at Passover without their loved ones - our sons, daughters, nieces, and nephews who are currently serving in harm's way or, more tragically, have made the ultimate sacrifice in the defense of our freedom.

I wanted to start by talking about our service members because I am sure you have read with both shock and deep concern reports of substandard conditions at some of our military hospitals - in particular, an outpatient facility at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

I had the opportunity to visit a local VA hospital recently, and I want to assure you that the medical care our returning soldiers injured in combat receive is state-of-the-art and first-rate.

Nationwide, more than 90 percent of veterans receive primary care within 30 days of their desired date. In addition, core funding for veterans care' has gone up nearly 90 percent since 1995.

At the same time, no amount of federal dollars can overcome the problems caused by bloated bureaucracy and insufficient leadership - that's what happened at Walter Reed, and that is a travesty, plain and simple.

The officials responsible are no longer in charge, and the Secretary of Defense has assured the Congress and the American people that he will continue to be vigilant in this matter.

The brave men and women of our Armed Forces don't just deserve better - they deserve our best.

Challenges in Iraq

Considering the nature of the enemy they face, they certainly deserve better than to have their leaders slowly but surely bleed off funds for their mission in Iraq.

This may be hard to believe, but that is exactly what Democrats in Washington would have us do with the emergency troop funding bill they have rammed through the House of Representatives.

Because their intent is to end the war from their Congressional perch, the Democrat authors of this bill had to come up with a bill that essentially appoints them as war managers - or micromanagers, better yet.

This prompted the editors of the *Los Angeles Times* to ask, "Do we really need a General Pelosi?"

Now that's a funny line, but the threat congressional micromanagement poses to a successful

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mission is very real. Congress has no place undermining the work of our commanders in the field.

But even if you struck every if, and, or but from this proposal, there is one dangerous provision that would remain -- one that sets a date certain for withdrawal of our forces from Iraq.

By lacing an emergency war funding bill with such a poisonous provision, Democrats are trying to ensure that our troops meet defeat on the battlefield in the Middle East.

If our enemies can pull a calendar out of their back pocket and point to a date when American forces will leave Iraq, then they can simply lay in wait for that timeline to unfold, and we all know this is an enemy that specializes in hiding in the shadows.

This is an enemy who uses children in the backseat to make it easier to get through checkpoints, only to go on and take cover from the cars they are about to blow up - with the children still inside.

Yes, we have paid too steep a price in American blood in Iraq, but whatever concerns we have about the challenges we face there, we all want to make sure our troops have the resources and reinforcements they need to succeed in their mission. And that is to defeat a militant Islamist threat that is very real.

Of course, I do not mean to lump all Democrats together. There were some who would not support this legislation based solely on its anti-troop provisions, in some cases because of how it essentially cuts off funds for our troops in the months to come, and in other, more galling cases, because it does not withdraw that support right this very minute.

In order to win support for their reckless plan, Democrats went back to doing what they do best - spending your taxpayer dollars to fund government handouts.

Now, I have a list here, and you can tell me whether any of this has anything to do with troop funding:

- **\$500 MILLION** to put out fires;
- **\$120 MILLION** for the shrimp industry;
- **\$74 MILLION** to store peanuts;
- **\$50 MILLION** to abate asbestos;
- **\$25 MILLION** for growing spinach;
- **\$20 MILLION** for the restoration for farmland that has been damaged by freezing temperatures - so much for global warming - and,

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➤ **\$5 MILLION** for "aquaculture," or put in its less fancy term, tropical fish.

The editors of the USA Today put it best when they wrote: *"It's hard to say which is worse: leaders offering peanuts for a vote of this magnitude, or members allowing their votes to be bought for peanuts."*

As if the sheer lunacy of passing a war funding bill replete with provisions meant to ensure its defeat isn't enough, it is appalling that Democrats would go so far as to use our troops as bargaining chips to win support for their reckless plan.

But I'm sorry to say that it worked - the bill got just enough votes to pass, and I am proud to stand before you and say that I was not one of them.

As your representative, there are no votes I take more seriously than the ones I cast to send our troops the resources they urgently need, but war is a matter of conscience, not expedience - and I cannot in good conscience support a plan to send them the money they need with a strings attached and a pink slip to follow.

At the end of the day, it may be of some comfort that this bill will never become law in its current form as the President has made clear he will veto it, and that veto is sure to stand.

But the fact that Washington Democrats would work so hard to implement a strategy so dangerous to our national security is just shameful and disgraceful.

Another item that will almost certainly give you pause, and this is something that you're probably not aware of, is that this Democrat plan was hatched after meetings and conference calls with some of this country's most rabid antiwar groups and labor unions.

Card Check

Now, I'm not entirely sure what Big Labor has to do with a war to defeat militant Islam. I do know that House Democrats would not be in the majority today if not for their union boss benefactors.

In the last election, Big Labor dedicated unprecedented resources and manpower to picking up seats in the House and Senate - and now the time for payback has arrived.

That became crystal clear on the first day of March when Washington Democrats pushed through the House a bill they call the Employee Free Choice Act, but could more accurately be referred to as the Employee Intimidation Act.

Because after helping Democrats win a majority in the House and Senate by secret ballot, Big Labor wants to strip our country's employees of their long-held right to cast a secret ballot on the question of whether they wish to join a union.

Instead, this proposal puts forward a public check-card system, where employees can simply sign a card to signify their intent to unionize.

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Forcing Americans to publicly state their preference to organize will almost certainly enable illegitimate strong-arming tactics from both union bosses and employers who will know who does - and more importantly, who does not - stand with them.

The National President of the Fraternal Order of Police - this country's largest law enforcement union - wrote to Members of Congress, "The only way to guarantee worker protection from coercion and intimidation is through the continued use of a federally supervised private ballot election so that personal decisions about whether to join a union remain private."

To be sure, there's nothing wrong with federally supervised secret ballot elections. After all, they have been a part of labor law for over 70 years, and unions win them nearly 60 percent of the time.

But today in America, unions are in decline. Each year, Big Labor loses about 500,000 members. Private-sector union membership fell to a record low 7.4 percent in 2006.

So it's no surprise that the Employee Free Choice Act was legislative priority number one for our country's union bosses. It was the *San Francisco Examiner* - Speaker Pelosi's hometown paper - that called the Employee Intimidation Act a "Big Labor Payoff."

But for America's taxpayers, it was just another demonstration of how Washington Democrats have done much to appease their left-wing allies, while failing to implement the common-sense reforms that you have come to expect from your leaders.

The Coming Tax Hike

As for what the government expects from you, those who haven't already will soon need to gather your receipts and earning statements to file your taxes in time to meet the government's April 17 deadline.

I was talking at the beginning about how this was a holiday season - it's also Spring Recess at our local schools, which I know gives us some more time to see our children and grandchildren.

And in a lot of cases, you'll have buses full of students of all ages using their recesses to come and visit the nation's capital. And their teachers will show them the sights - roll down Constitution Avenue, there's the Vietnam Wall on your right, then the Einstein statue on your left, the White House over here, the Washington Monument over there, and they'll nod, maybe take a picture or two, but no matter what the age - elementary, middle, or high school - when the teacher points out the Internal Revenue Service building on their left, the bus just vibrates with booning.

Well, we've worked as hard as we can to make this time of year less rewarding for the folks at the IRS - historic tax relief passed by Republican Congresses has already put back over \$1.1 trillion in the pockets of the American people.

Democrats in Washington, however, are of a different mind on tax relief - after all, someone

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has to pay for their plans to manage wars, store peanuts, grow spinach, and fly the Speaker cross-country nonstop so she doesn't have to re-fuel in the heartland.

The budget Washington Democrats have written would put the tax cuts you deserve on the chopping block, paving the way for the largest tax increase in American history.

Let me make clear what that means in real numbers. If Washington Democrats get their way, a family of four that today makes \$50,000 would see a tax hike of \$2,092. And a family of four that is currently making \$60,000 a year would see their tax bill go up by nearly as much.

Hardest hit would be 26 million business owners -- who would see their tax bill go up \$3,637.

The Washington Democrat tax hike is coming.

Now, some of you might remember what it was like before we passed those tax cuts - the financial uncertainty brought on by a relentless series of body blows to our economy, from the dot-com bubble bursting and the Sept. 11 attacks, to corporate scandals and two wars.

But in a time of national testing, we chose to renew the principle that Americans are better stewards of their money than their government is.

So we gave some of it back to you.

And, believe it or not, what actually ended up happening was the government got more back in return, because as the economy did better, and working families did better, and small businesses did better, the government reaped record tax revenues and cut the federal deficit in half three years ahead of schedule.

We invested in your innovation, and what happened?

How about over 7.6 million new jobs in less than four years?

How about 42 straight months of uninterrupted economic growth?

How about real wages rising nearly 3 percent in the last year?

How about a Dow that is up over 40 percent since the tax cuts took effect?

How's that for a return on our investment?

But apparently that's not good enough for Washington Democrats, who believe that you should be punished for your success, that you should be punished for doing well and providing for your family.

Yes, we need to pass a budget that balances the books, and one that's free of pork and gimmickry, but more importantly, we should have a budget that honors our values.

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And that means a budget that keeps the Declaration of Independence's pledge that you can pursue your happiness without undue government intrusion - after all, isn't that the premise of the American Dream?

And if anyone tells you that Americans aren't paying their fair share for a civilized society these days, just remind them that Americans pay more in taxes than they do for housing, clothing, and heating combined.

Or remind them that Americans this year will have to work until the last week of April in order to pay for their taxes - that's over 114 days, just to cover your tax bills.

We can have a balanced budget in short order and still keep your taxes low if we address government's spending problem.

As some of you can attest to, 77 million baby boomers are set to begin retiring next year. Today, what the federal government spends on Medicare and Medicaid exceeds that which we spend on Social Security.

The reality is, if we do not act to address runaway entitlement spending, we would have a unbearable choice to make: either raise taxes on every American taxpayer for every year until they are nearly 60 percent higher than they are today or eliminate all government programs except Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security by 2045.

We need entitlement reform, and we need it now, but in this budget Washington Democrats have written, you won't find any meaningful entitlement reform, you won't find government on a tight purse.

It's funny, Washington Democrats are always talking about how government can do more to solve problems.

But here they've taken the easy way out, passing the buck - and the bucket - to you. It just defies common sense to make America's taxpayers assume the cost for their leaders' inability to make tough choices.

That's not good government, that's lazy government.

A government that cannot find the will to ask itself to do more with less is a government that is failing its citizenry - and that is what we are seeing from Washington Democrats right now.

Look no further than the six supposedly major pieces of legislation Washington Democrats passed in their first 100 hours in office.

Nearly 100 days on, not a single one of those pieces of legislation has become law.

Why? Because they don't make tough, sensible choices.

- Washington Democrats tried to pass a minimum wage increase without providing

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- protections for those small business owners who will have to pay for it, and now it's stalled.
- Washington Democrats thought the answer to your rising college tuition costs was to throw money at the problem, instead of addressing its root cause.
 - Washington Democrats' response to rising energy costs was to raise taxes on domestic oil companies, who would just end up opening up shop abroad, leaving the millions of Americans they employ in the lurch.
 - And last but not least, Washington Democrats aren't happy with the way in which 38 million of America's seniors are now receiving prescription drug coverage through Medicare, so they want the government to take over for the free market that has been making the program work.

Medicare Part D, by the way, at first, it was a little tough to figure out, and Democrats at this time last year were sending their Members home to attack the program from soup to nuts. Well, a year later, it enjoys an 80 percent satisfaction rate - only Disneyworld gets those kind of rave reviews - and, more importantly, it will save seniors even more money this year than it did last year.

Good governance requires patience and determination - success in Iraq requires patience and determination - protecting the vitality of freedom at home and abroad requires patience and determination.

Jamestown and Closing

Speaking of freedom: next month, America will celebrate its 400th anniversary as a beacon of self-governance.

On May 14, 1607, a group of explorers from London landed on Jamestown Island to establish the Virginia Colony on the banks of the James River.

There, they encountered an unfamiliar climate, disease, famine, and some very, very unhappy natives. It was Captain John Smith who kept the colony from surviving. With little reinforcements coming in from the motherland, he put in place a leadership structure and established a "no work, no food" policy. Colonists would have to do their fair share to earn their keep and provide for their families. Out of those initial settlers, many lost their lives, but those who stayed moved on and promoted North America as a source of colonization, and the rest is the rest.

Good governance requires patience and determination - that is the lesson of Jamestown - and that lesson endures today.

Thank you for having me - I look forward to taking your questions.

Earned Media Opportunities for Tax Season

The days leading up to the tax filing deadline – Tuesday, April 17 -- present a great opportunity to generate earned media in your district.

- Constituent Education.** If you haven't already, you can put out a mail piece reminding your constituents that the tax deadline this year falls two days later than usual, on Tuesday, April 17. You can also use this opportunity to remind your constituents what tax provisions they can benefit from when filing (e.g., the earned income tax credit.)
- Budget and Tax Cuts.** The budget vote tentatively scheduled for the week before the recess presents an opportunity to put out tax-related op-eds and releases that dovetail with your tax cut message.
- Small Business Press Conference.** You could also call a press conference with small business representatives to talk about your fiscal priorities and highlight your record on small business tax relief.
- Last-Minute Questions.** You can host tax seminars with local IRS representatives for filers with last-minute questions.
- At the Deadline.** Going to a local post office and serving coffee and donuts to last-minute filers provides you with the opportunity to discuss the need for a better tax system. This is almost certain to guarantee evening news coverage in the process. In lieu of this, you could hold a media availability earlier on in the evening.

There are other opportunities to talk taxes in the weeks after the deadline passes:

- Tax Freedom Day.** Every year, usually in late April or early May, the Tax Foundation designates a "[Tax Freedom Day](http://www.taxfoundation.org/taxfreedomday/)". This day marks the day Americans have earned enough to pay their federal, state and local taxes and begin earning money to be spent on their priorities. Tax Freedom Day fell on April 26 last year.
- Cost of Government Day.** Americans for Tax Reform each year celebrate "[Cost of Government Day](http://www.atr.org/national/cogd/index.html)" which falls on the day when the average American has earned enough to pay for his or her share of government spending (total federal, state, and local) *plus* the cost of regulation. Cost of Government Day fell on July 12 last year.

TALKING POINTS: The Coming Democrat Tax Hike

“Assuming tax cuts go away is a key to House plan for boosting domestic spending”

-- Associated Press, 3/21/07

OUR PRINCIPLE: American families already face rising energy prices and college tuition costs. Saddling families with **the largest tax increase in American history** would be more than unfair – it would be punitive. Republicans are committed to making tax relief permanent and balancing the federal budget without raising taxes on American families.

The Democrats’ budget this year assumes Republican-passed tax relief in 2001 and 2003 expires starting in 2011. This will mean devastating income tax hikes for middle-class families.

- A family of four making \$50,000 a year today (or \$56,300 in 2011) would see a \$2,092 tax hike under the Democrat plan (and a tax bill that increases from \$1,583 to \$3,675).
- A family of four making \$60,000 a year today (or \$67,600 in 2011) would see a \$1,848 tax hike under the Democrat plan (and a tax bill that increases from \$3,207 to \$5,065).
- The child tax credit would be reduced from \$1,000 to \$500 a year.
- The new, low 10 percent tax bracket would disappear. Americans would now start paying taxes at the 15 percent rate.

The Democrat budget hurts families and seniors who are saving for college or retirement. Their plan taxes investment income from dividends and capital gains at 30 percent in 2011, instead of the lower 15 and 0 percent rates Republicans enacted.

- In 2005, 28 million American families saved an average \$1,000 and 8.5 million seniors saved \$1,100 as a result of lower rates on dividends and capital gains.

Believe Democrats when they tell you they will raise taxes on the middle class. Just listen to the Democrats’ top tax man, Congressman Charlie Rangel:

- “Rep. Charles B. Rangel, D-N.Y., who would likely become Ways and Means Committee chairman if Democrats recapture the House, vowed to put all of President Bush’s 2001 and 2003 tax cuts – which expire in 2010 – on the chopping block.” (CQ Today, 9/26/06)
- “Asked whether tax increases across the income spectrum would be considered, [Rangel] replied, ‘No question about it.’” (National Journal’s CongressDaily, 9/26/06)

A Solid Month for Republicans on the March...

"Why Republicans Are Smiling"



(3/2/07)

"House Republicans Regain Their Footing"



(3/20/07)

National
Journal

"It's a bit curious and unexpected that House Republicans are suddenly voicing confidence in their political handling of the issue. Congressional Democrats have been struggling with high-profile divisions over how strongly to push back at President Bush over the war, particularly during consideration of his Iraq supplemental spending request. **But while the Democrats are stalemated, House Republicans see an improving political climate.** They are encouraged by the Pentagon's new military strategy on the ground and by the hands-on message coordination led by Minority Leader John Boehner, R-Ohio." (Richard Cohen, 3/10/07)



the weekly
Standard

"As the saying goes in Washington, when you're not on offense, you're on defense. This isn't so bad if you play good defense, as congressional Republicans and the White House have been doing. As a result the outlook for Republicans and conservatives isn't as bleak as it seemed right after last November's midterm election." (Fred Barnes, 3/12/07)

The Washington Times



"House Republicans are wielding the power of parliamentary procedure to score floor victories unlikely for a minority party. The Republicans have employed a tactic to alter a handful of bills in the Democratic-controlled chamber, and yesterday their patience paid off when they caught the new majority in a pickle and blocked a vote on D.C. voting rights. **Republicans said it's the culmination of a parliamentary strategy they've been plotting for weeks.**" (3/23/07)

MARCH MADNESS: Road to Democrat Broken Promises

Issue		
<p>Clock Runs Out on Democrats' "First 100 Hours"</p>	<p>"Jobs, healthcare, education, energy independence, a safer America, a dignified retirement – that's what the Democrats are all about and we're going to do that in the first 100 hours, Mrs. Pelosi said on the campaign trail."</p>	<p>"Whether it is minimum wage, energy independence or health care, Democrats haven't gotten the job done and have failed to meet voters' high expectations for change." <i>(Roll Call, 3/20/07)</i></p>
<p>Democrats' "6 for 06" Airballs</p>	<p>"House Democrats promised to take our country in a New Direction, to change the way Congress does business, and to get to work addressing the real challenges facing the American people. All within the first 100 hours. Today, Democrats stood united to say that we have kept our promise to the American people." -- Speaker Nancy Pelosi, 1/18/07</p>	<p>"None of the elements of the newly minted Democrats' congressional agenda have made it to President Bush's desk, and the prospects of signature bills such as federal funding for stem-cell research or homeland-security improvements becoming law any time soon are doubtful." <i>(Washington Times, 3/21/07)</i></p>
<p>Democrats Turn the Ball Over on "Governing"</p>	<p>"We're ready to lead, prepared to govern..." -- Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), CNN's Late Edition, 11/12/06</p>	<p>"Democratic and Republican lawmakers say Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) seems content to have the Senate take the lead on some of the more daunting issues this year." <i>(Roll Call newspaper, 3/21/07)</i></p>
<p>Personal Foul: Democrats Backtrack on Allowing Amendments</p>	<p>"When it comes to being speaker of the House, if that were ever to happen, I view that title as speaker of the House, not speaker of the Democrats... Everyone's views can be heard' she says. 'Republicans can bring bills to the floor... Hash it out and that's the policy.' <i>(Wall Street Journal, 7/13/06)</i></p>	<p>"Democratic leaders, meanwhile, have yet to decide whether to allow amendments to the [Supplemental], but it is <u>looking far less likely</u>. "<u>My sense is you are going to have this vote, and this vote alone,</u>' Democratic Caucus Chairman Rahm Emanuel, D-Ill., said." <i>(CQ, 3/21/07)</i></p>



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<p style="text-align: center;">Issue</p>		
<p>Hiding Democrat Earmarks from the Referees</p>	<p>“There will be no Congressional earmarks in the joint funding resolution that we will pass. We will place a moratorium on all earmarks until a reformed process is put in place.”</p> <p>(Byrd-Obey Press Release, 12/11/06)</p>	<p>“Members – and the lobbyists who push for funding of specific projects – have turned their attention to the executive branch agencies doling out chunks of money that otherwise would have gone for earmarks. Members, especially those on the Appropriations and authorizing committees, can wield considerable behind-the-scenes power to make sure their favored projects get funded by executive-branch agencies.”</p> <p>(Roll Call newspaper, 2/07/07)</p>
<p>Democrats Bench Ethics Reform</p>	<p>“So our first order of business is passing the toughest congressional ethics reform in history...”</p> <p>-- Speaker Nancy Pelosi, 1/4/07</p>	<p>“House Democratic leaders opened the year with a much-touted [lobbying] reform drive they hoped to wrap up by late February or early March. But after passing sweeping new ethics rules in the opening days of the 110th Congress ... <u>House leaders have put aside work on the measure to focus on more politically pressing business.</u>”</p> <p>(Roll Call newspaper, 3/14/07)</p>
<p>Technical Foul: Democrats Break Promise to “Break the Link” with Lobbyists</p>	<p>“We will help bring integrity back to the House by breaking the link between lobbyists and lawmakers.”</p> <p>-- Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, 1/09/07</p>	<p>“Instead of prowling around the Capitol's marble hallways, the labor lobbyists got to set up shop in an office in the Capitol suite of House Majority Whip James Clyburn (D-S.C.)... ‘They made available some phones and a TV so we could follow the debate,’ said one labor lobbyist. ‘It was nice of them to make it available, so we could stay out of the cold.’”</p> <p>(Roll Call newspaper, 3/05/07)</p>

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Issue		
<p>Democrats’ Double Dribble on Having the “Most Open and Honest Congress in History”</p>	<p>“Democrats are leading the effort to turn the most closed, corrupt Congress in history into the most open and honest Congress in history.”</p> <p>-- Speaker Nancy Pelosi, 2/01/06</p>	<p>“In the next 10 days alone, Democratic fundraisers will feature the chairmen of the House's financial services panel and the House and Senate tax-writing committees. Senate Democrats also plan a fundraising reception during a major gathering of Native Americans in the capital Tuesday evening, an event hosted by lobbyists and the political action committee for tribal casinos, including those Jack Abramoff was paid to represent.”</p> <p><i>(Washington Post, 2/24/07)</i></p>
<p>Technical Foul: Democrats Disrespect Their Own “Principle of Civility”</p>	<p>“The principle of civility and respect for minority participation in this House is something we promised the American people. It's the right thing to do.”</p> <p>-- Rep. Nancy Pelosi, AP, 11/20/06</p>	<p>“House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer said Republican leaders would be allowed to offer their alternative [non-binding Iraq war] resolution, but on Sunday said that is ‘not necessarily our plan.’”</p> <p><i>(USA Today, 2/12/07)</i></p>

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PROGRESS REPORT: The First 100 Hours, 100 Days Later

Remember when: "House Democrats met the goals of their 100-hour legislative offensive with plenty of time to spare on Thursday, claiming that their successes proved they could govern."

(New York Times, 1/18/07)

"Dems' Domestic Agenda Stalls"

(The Politico, 3/14/07)

"Democrats 0 for 6 in Congress"

(The Washington Times, 3/21/07)

Bill Number and Title	Date of House Passage	Bill Status
HR 1: Implementing the 9/11 Commission Recommendations Act of 2007	1/9/07	<i>Still stalled. House and Senate yet to convene a conference on the bill; President has threatened a veto.</i>
HR 2: Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007	1/10/07	<i>Still stalled. Two houses still need to reconcile competing small business tax break packages. House Dems tried to attach minimum wage to supplemental.</i>
HR 3: Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2007	1/11/07	<i>Still stalled. President has threatened a veto that is sure to be sustained.</i>
HR 4: Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 2007	1/12/07	<i>Still stalled. President has threatened a veto that is sure to be sustained.</i>
HR 5: College Student Relief Act of 2007	1/17/07	<i>Still stalled.</i>
HR 6: CLEAN Energy Act of 2007	1/18/07	<i>Still stalled.</i>

The Washington Times

Democrats 0 for 6 in Congress; agenda sidetracked by Iraq war

By Christina Bellantoni

March 21, 2007

None of the elements of the newly minted Democrats' congressional agenda have made it to President Bush's desk, and the prospects of signature bills such as federal funding for stem-cell research or homeland-security improvements becoming law any time soon are doubtful.

Much of the Democratic agenda -- dubbed "Six for '06" -- sailed out of the House with bipartisan support, but all of it has stalled in the Senate as leaders scramble to deal with the Iraq war.

"I don't think they've gotten anything done," House Minority Leader John A. Boehner of Ohio said of the Democrats. "How many bills have they sent to the president? None? Somewhere around there."

A minimum-wage increase, which seems the most likely of the Democratic plans to get Mr. Bush's signature, has not yet been sent to the president because House and Senate leaders are still bickering over its specifics.

House Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer of Maryland last week grumbled over what he called a "slowdown" in the senate, while acknowledging his counterpart in that chamber has an uphill battle to pass legislation in a closely divided body.

"I would like to have passed them all by now," he said. "I'm frustrated by it, yes."

Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada responded later that day: "Steny is my friend, and he hasn't spent much time in the Senate. They [the House] have expedited procedures on everything."

Mr. Reid noted Democratic successes in his chamber, adding, "I think we've done really, really well."

Yesterday, the Senate leader said his chamber will consider a bill to federally fund stem-cell research the second week of April, which is "as soon as we can," given all the other items on the agenda.

"We're moving down the road on what we've set out to do," he said.

However, Mr. Bush has promised to veto the stem-cell bill, identical to one passed by both chambers last year under the Republican Congress.

A bill that has passed both chambers -- implementing the remaining recommendations of the September 11 commission -- also has drawn the president's ire. The measure that overwhelmingly passed the House triggered a veto threat from Mr. Bush when the Senate attached a provision allowing airport screeners to collectively bargain. Republicans say they will back the president, making it impossible for either chamber to override a veto.

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Mr. Hoyer seemed especially irritated that his signature issue, increasing the minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour, has been bogged down as the House and Senate negotiate a possible tax break for small businesses to offset the cost of raising the wage.

"I cannot understand why anybody would want to trap hardworking people in the richest country on the face of the earth working 40 hours a week in a framework of 1997 wages," he said.

Senate Republicans have attached the tax package to their chamber's version of the bill. The House passed a \$1.3 billion tax cut for small businesses as a compromise, but the two chambers must still come up with a final conference report before the bill can be sent to Mr. Bush.

The sluggish Senate is nothing new on Capitol Hill, but the speed of the House's initial actions -- leaders there passed their 100 hours agenda in less than 50 hours -- highlights the stalled agenda.

What's more, Iraq has dominated everything lawmakers are trying to do.

Senators spent weeks negotiating resolutions on Mr. Bush's troop surge to Iraq, and House actions slowed to a crawl as Democrats offer smaller bills while huddling to come up with an Iraq plan.

Now House leaders are building support among Democrats for the strategy, in the form of a troop-withdrawal timetable attached to a \$124 billion war supplemental spending bill.

Any spirit of compromise the Democrats and Mr. Bush felt in January has further eroded as the president sends down veto threats and as the new majority party challenges his administration's every move.

Mr. Hoyer noted the difficulty Mr. Reid faces in a body where 60 is the magic number to pass any legislation and he controls only 51 members, but he made sure to add that "on almost every one" of the elements of the Democratic agenda passed the House with 60 percent of the vote or more.

"We averaged 62 Republicans," he said.

The remaining "Six for '06" bills cut the interest rate on student loans, make changes to the Medicare prescription-drug plan and roll back the subsidies for big oil companies.

"I think the student-loan bill has overwhelming votes I'm sure in the Senate as it did here," Mr. Hoyer said. "We'd like to see it move."

Democrats are also quick to quell any discontent at the lack of action, and point to what they label the "Do Nothing Congress" run by Republicans in recent years.

Both Democratic leaders assailed their Republican predecessors for failing to pass the appropriations bills last year, and applauded themselves for passing a continuing resolution to fund the government in both chambers.

TALKING POINTS: Democrat Supplemental Legislates Defeat, Funds Favors at Troops' Expense

OUR PRINCIPLE: *Our troops in combat deserve to be sent the resources and reinforcements they need to succeed in their mission in Iraq without strings and without delay.*

Putting in place an inflexible timeline that culminates with a date certain for withdrawal micromanages our commanders in the field and undermines the efforts of our troops on the ground.

- **The Washington Post** described the Democrat plan as “an attempt to impose detailed management on a war without regard for the war itself.” (Editorial, 3/13/07)
- The bipartisan **Iraq Study Group** opposed a date certain for withdrawal in its December 2006 report. One of the panel’s co-chairmen, Former Secretary of State James A. Baker, said earlier this year: “... [T]he Study Group set no timetables and we set no deadlines. We believe that military commanders must have the flexibility to respond to events on the ground.” (Committee On Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, Hearing, 1/30/07)
- The **Los Angeles Times** called for the bill to be vetoed: “It’s absurd for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to try to micromanage the conflict, and the evolution of Iraqi society, with arbitrary timetables and benchmarks.” (Editorial, 3/12/07)
- The **National Intelligence Estimate** released in January warned of the perils of an early troop withdrawal: “If Coalition forces were withdrawn rapidly during the term of this Estimate, we judge that this almost certainly would lead to a significant increase in the scale and scope of sectarian conflict in Iraq.”

An emergency troop funding bill is not the appropriate vehicle for unrelated domestic spending.

- **Our troops are not bargaining chips.** “Democratic leaders also see this emerging strategy as a way to encourage their liberal members to vote for the supplemental budget bill.” (*The Politico*, 3/1/07)
- **Democrats have willfully abandoned their pledge of fiscal responsibility.** Not too long ago, Democrats pledged to follow pay-as-you-go budget rules and spending restraint to curb the deficit.
- Last year, House Republicans rejected the \$14 billion in non-emergency spending the Senate tried to attach to the emergency troop funding bill.

Our troops deserve these resources now, not after the Democrats carry out the political charade of voting on a bill that will never become law in its current form.

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- **This proposal would be dead on arrival in the Senate**, which has already rejected a Democrat proposal for a troop withdrawal timeline. In addition, the President has issued a veto threat.
- **Democrat leaders concede that their own bill is flawed.** Democrat Whip James Clyburn has described his party's proposal as a "bitter pill to swallow." (*The Politico*, 3/19/07)
- **Democrats have already had the opportunity to send a political message on this issue.** It was an effort that failed miserably after Democrats lost a 45-hour floor debate on a non-binding resolution that decries the military strategy currently being carried out successfully in Iraq.

The Washington Times

Throwing the fight in Iraq

By Roy Blunt
March 14, 2007

House Democrats had an opportunity last week to send an unambiguous message of strength and resolve to our troops in harm's way in Iraq, to our allies and enemies around the world and to Americans here at home.

Instead, they used the occasion to announce a timetable for wholesale retreat, declare their intention to hand over command-and-control authority in Iraq to 535 commanders in chief on Capitol Hill and, already on a roll, float the bizarre idea to close the terrorist detention facility at Guantanamo Bay and import hundreds of the most insidious elements of the worldwide terrorist network to the United States to process like common criminals. Quite a week, I would say.

Tomorrow Democrats will attempt to follow up that performance by bringing their plan to committee for executing their slow-bleed strategy in Iraq. But what we understand of the product now is enough to tell me their plan would yield disastrous results.

Here's what we know for sure: In the next few weeks, Democrats will bring an "emergency" funding measure to the House floor, weighed down with billions in nonemergency spending and loaded up with reams of rules and restrictions on how and when vital resources may be spent for our men and women in uniform.

Of course, those limitations will not apply to the \$735 million included for health insurance programs or the \$500 million for the wildfire suppression activities or, for that matter, the \$400 million for energy assistance accounts.

But on issues relevant to war and peace -- on matters of basic operational authority in Iraq -- Democrats insist that bureaucratic reporting requirements for commanders on the ground be ratcheted up. But don't worry: If Gen. David Petraeus crosses all his t's and makes sure to initial every page, Democrats assure him that he may be allowed to conduct his mission until 2008. Of course, if the reports don't pass bureaucratic muster, he may have to pack his forces up as early as June.

Does anyone think that demoting our military generals to administrative assistants represents our best chance to achieve our goals in the region? Does anyone believe our commanders in the field have at their disposal too much authority and too much flexibility to get the job done?

Of course, a plan to fail may be precisely what the "Out of Iraq" crowd hopes to achieve. In fact, it fits nicely within their larger strategy to certify defeat, assert congressional control over something Congress is ill-suited to handle, and execute a precipitous

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withdrawal of on-the-ground support -- as early as three months from now, by their own accounts.

Only hours after proving how hard it is for their caucus to come up with a resolution on emergency military spending, House Democratic leaders want to micromanage an active military engagement being fought on an ever-shifting landscape of sand, soil and public opinion 6,000 miles from our shores. Or, just maybe, they don't want anyone to win a war that some of them no longer want to fight.

This willingness to accept defeat unites Republicans and divides Democrats -- both on Capitol Hill and around the country. But not only is their plan fundamentally wrong on its merits, it is exceedingly cynical in its design. After all, if Democrats thought this latest strategy represented the best way forward in Iraq, perhaps they wouldn't have needed to attach the amount of pork they did; money that will be needed to influence their growing chorus of dissenters into supporting the final product.

Congress has an important role in debating the merits and execution of the Global War on Terror in general, and the conflict in Iraq in particular. But using the emergency funding package for our soldiers in uniform as a platform to attach operational strings and nonemergency spending doesn't meet the standard of common sense -- whether you're trying to command an army unit, or win a war.

Just to Recap ... Editorials Across America Blast Iraq Bill

Washington Post editorial: “House Democrats are pressing a bill that has the endorsement of MoveOn.org but excludes the judgment of the U.S. commanders who would have to execute the retreat the bill mandates. It would heap money on unneeded dairy farmers while provoking **a constitutional fight with the White House that could block the funding to equip troops in the field.**” (3/23/07)

Atlanta Journal-Constitution editorial: “By adding **billions of dollars for special projects to the military appropriations bill**, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and her colleagues have chosen to cloud what ought to be a stark moral and strategic choice.” (3/23/07)

USA Today editorial: “It's hard to say which is worse: leaders offering peanuts for a vote of this magnitude, or members allowing their votes to be bought for peanuts ... Even so, an emergency war funding bill — especially one that would set a hard exit date of Aug. 31, 2008, for U.S. troops in Iraq and impose strict readiness standards for deploying combat forces — is no place for extraneous issues. **And certainly no place for bribes.**” (3/22/07)

The Washington Times editorial: “Democratic leaders and appropriators responded by adding \$21 billion to the bill. The vast majority of the additions comprised pork projects or spending utterly unrelated to the wars. **The extra spending was designed for a single purpose: to purchase support from Democrats who otherwise would have voted against the bill.**” (3/22/07)

The Palm Beach (FL) Post editorial: “**Pork-Laden Iraq Bill Worse Than No Bill At All.**” (3/22/07)

The Fort Wayne (IN) Journal-Gazette editorial: “Democrats do no favor to their country or themselves with an **ill-considered move to curry anti-war votes with blatant pork-barrel spending.**” (3/21/07)

Rocky Mountain News editorial: “The best thing that can be said of the House Democratic leadership's bill funding the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is that it **is unlikely to pass the Senate**, and in the improbable event that it does, President Bush will veto it.” (3/21/07)

The Oklahoman editorial: “Emergency' Spending Bill **A Political Tool.**” (3/21/07)

The Journal Times (WI) editorial: “But the future commitment of our American men and women in service halfway around the globe should not be based on browbeating a handful of congressmen by putting them in the position of voting against millions in dollars of home-state plums. **This is a vote of conscience and national policy, not a pig trough.** Leave the menhaden out of it.” (3/20/07)

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Washington Post editorial: In short, the Democratic proposal to be taken up this week is an attempt to **impose detailed management on a war without regard for the war itself** ... Ms. Pelosi's strategy leads not toward a responsible withdrawal from Iraq but to a constitutional power struggle with Mr. Bush, who has already said he will veto the legislation. (3/13/07)

Los Angeles Times editorial: “The plan is **an unruly mess: bad public policy, bad precedent and bad politics**. If the legislation passes, Bush says he'll veto it, as well he should ... By interfering with the discretion of the commander in chief and military leaders in order to fulfill domestic political needs, Congress undermines whatever prospects remain of a successful outcome. It's absurd for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco) to try to micromanage the conflict, and the evolution of Iraqi society, with arbitrary timetables and benchmarks.” (3/12/07)

The Washington Times editorial: “Rep. David Obey, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, **dazzled reporters with his incoherence**, stating that ‘our troops must be out of a combat role by October -- I mean by August of 19 -- of 2007.’ Mrs. Pelosi then reminded him that the correct date was actually 2008. Rep. John Murtha, chairman of the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, and committee staffers were unable to say precisely how much money was in the Iraq supplemental bill the panel was considering.” (3/12/07)

National Review editorial: “The bill does succeed in showing the emptiness of Pelosi’s claim that her Democrats support U.S. troops even as they oppose the war. The message is: We don’t believe you should be there; we don’t believe you can win (even as the surge shows early signs of progress); so be warned that **we mean to pull the rug out from under you as soon as we can get away with it.**” (3/12/07)

TALKING POINTS: Democrat Spendthrifts Put Hurt on Taxpayers, Go Easy on Entitlements

"In a private conference call on Monday, Pelosi told her colleagues that three words would define their new majority: 'civility, honesty and fiscal responsibility.'" (*The Washington Post*, 11/8/06)

OUR PRINCIPLE: *Pro-growth economic policies have facilitated a robust economy that has generated record tax revenues, created millions of new jobs, and put a balanced federal budget within reach.*

Balancing the people's books, however, will require tough choices – from serious spending discipline and meaningful entitlement reform. The budget proposal unveiled by House Democrats does not sufficiently address these issues and, what's worse, calls for the largest tax increase in American history.

Largest tax increase in American history. If the Bush tax cuts are allowed to expire, millions of Americans will see their taxes go up by billions of dollars.

- On average, 115 million taxpayers would see an average tax increase of \$1,716. Other groups and their average tax increases include: 84 million women -- \$1,970 increase; 42 million families with children -- \$2,084 increase; and 26 million small business owners -- \$3,637 increase.

Budgeting that defies common sense. Government has a spending problem that, like any family on a tight purse, will require serious fiscal discipline to solve, and yet Democrats have recklessly proposed tens of billions of dollars in new spending.

- Last month, Democrats passed an omnibus spending bill for this fiscal year that limited discretionary spending to the President's cap of \$873 billion. In this budget outline, however, Democrats are proposing an increase of **more than \$22.5 billion in non-defense, non-emergency annual appropriations** for fiscal year 2008.

No new entitlement reform. The Democrat budget proposal fails to adequately address runaway entitlement spending, which presents a critical obstacle to a balanced budget.

- **77 million baby boomers are set to begin retiring next year.** According to the CBO, the federal budget cannot be balanced in the next five years unless the growth of entitlement spending is adequately addressed.
- Without any reform, the only way lawmakers could sustain Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security spending is to either raise taxes each year until they are nearly 60 percent higher than they are today or eliminate every federal program except the aforementioned three by 2045.

The Cincinnati Enquirer

Tuesday, March 20, 2007

We Can Balance Budget Without Raising Taxes

BY JOHN BOEHNER | GUEST COLUMNIST

Over the last 12 years of a Republican majority in Congress, we provided tax relief every year. It is one of my proudest accomplishments as a member representing the 8th district of Ohio. But with Democrats in control for the first time in more than a decade, your tax burden - and our economic security - are at stake in the upcoming budget battle in Washington.

The U.S. economy has enjoyed an uninterrupted string of monthly employment gains since August 2003, creating nearly 8 million jobs in the process. One of the main reasons is the tax relief provided to working families in 2001 and 2003. Lowering personal income taxes, cutting dividend taxes, doubling the child tax credit, ending the marriage penalty, and easing the burden on small business have fueled five straight years of overall growth and have led to enormous capital investment.

We've helped keep the miracle of America's modern, sophisticated economy humming along through pro-growth, low-tax policies. And it's benefiting working families every day by allowing them to keep more of their paycheck, keeping interest rates low for home buyers, and putting us on the path to a balanced budget.

But for the first time in 12 years, Democrats are responsible for putting together a federal budget, and their strategy is far from secret: They plan to spend more and tax more. Incredibly, on the first day of the new congressional session House Democrats voted to make it easier to raise the family tax burden.

Where the GOP puts faith in individuals and markets, the majority party prefers tax increases, onerous mandates, and old-style Washington programs. They tend to measure "compassion" only by how much money can be thrown at a problem, rarely considering its effectiveness or whether it produces results for taxpayers.

It's important to keep this in mind as Congress heads into the new budget season. Our economy is strong now, but there are significant challenges on the horizon that pose a serious threat to the financial future of our children and grandchildren. Since 1965, the federal government's spending on "entitlement" programs outside normal annual review - chiefly Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid - increased 600 percent. By comparison, "discretionary" spending subject to yearly budget scrutiny increased 112 percent.

With the retirement of the baby boom generation, the entitlement system represents a looming tsunami that, if left unaddressed, will have devastating consequences on every American. By 2050, the federal budget will have no money for anything other than entitlement spending - no military, no homeland security, no highways, no environmental protection, no education and no court system. Our current course is unsustainable.

APRIL RECESS RESOURCE KIT

House Republican Conference

With that in mind, every American should ask several important questions. Will Democrats raise taxes in their proposed budget? Will they put forth a credible plan to reform entitlement programs for future generations? Will their policies jeopardize our strong economy and continued job creation? Republicans want to work with Democrats on the budget, but every family has the right to be concerned about the answers to those questions.

To encourage more economic growth as opposed to government growth, Republicans believe the budget can be balanced in five years, without raising taxes. Congress has a clear choice: use the increasing revenue from a thriving economy to balance the budget and address the long-term fiscal challenge of runaway entitlement spending that threatens our children's future. Or, blow it on pork, unnecessary and duplicative new programs, and bigger government.

In his book, "An Empire of Wealth," John Steel Gordon notes that while America is only 6 percent of the world population, we are 30 percent of the world's gross domestic product. The reason is our dynamic, innovative economy. "In virtually every field of economic endeavor, from mining, to telecommunications, and by almost every measure, from agricultural production per capita to annual number of books published to number of Nobel Prizes (more than 42 percent of them), the United States leads the world," he writes.

Congress' new budget season promises to show the American people there are two distinct visions on Capitol Hill. One says keep taxes low, restrain government and encourage greater freedom. The other vision says raise taxes and grow government. But I remain convinced Americans will ultimately reject that vision. What Americans want, and what Republicans are working toward, is to protect America's strong economy, keep taxes low and ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.

Rep. John Boehner of West Chester is House Republican leader.

Americans Deserve a Budget That Is Fair, Disciplined and Balanced

By Rep. Adam Putnam
Chairman, House Republican Conference

In the weeks ahead, Floridians who haven't already will gather their receipts and earning statements in order to file their taxes in time to meet the government's April 17 filing deadline.

Despite the fact that Americans spend more on taxes than they do on food, clothing and housing combined, doing our taxes is certainly a more rewarding process than it used to be: on average this year, Floridians will receive a tax cut of \$1,511, nearly four times what we got back six years ago.

This all stands to change in just a few short years when, if Congress does not act, these tax cuts are due to expire, which would create the largest tax increase in American history.

That is no exaggeration. A family of four making \$50,000 a year today would see a \$2,092 tax increase, while a family of four making \$60,000 a year today would see their taxes go up by \$1,848. The child tax credit would be reduced by half, and the new, low 10-percent tax bracket would disappear.

This frightening scenario is forecasted in the budget resolution written by House Democrats, who intend to ram through the House a proposal that recklessly spends taxpayer dollars with abandon while failing to make the tough choices that are critical to addressing government's serious spending problem.

Front and center in any honest budget discussion should be **balancing the people's books**.

It is no coincidence that Republican policies have put us in position to achieve this goal in the next five years.

After all, the GOP's pro-growth tax relief policies have not just put hard-earned money back in your pockets – they have facilitated an economy robust enough to withstand corporate scandals, natural disasters, two wars, and the September 11 attacks.

Record tax revenues have helped us cut the deficit by over \$150 billion and reach our goal of cutting the deficit in half three years ahead of schedule.

Still, there are obstacles to a balanced budget: first and foremost among them, a government spending problem that will require **serious fiscal discipline** to fix.

Spending each and every one of your tax dollars wisely is critical to making government smarter, sharper, and ultimately, smaller. The more government can do with less, the better.

APRIL RECESS RESOURCE KIT

House Republican Conference

The Democrat budget proposal, however, adds tens of billions of dollars in new spending on more government bureaucracy that will, in the end, require higher taxes to sustain.

While Democrats act to grow government, they have failed to address the critical issue of runaway entitlement spending.

Keeping the promises our government made is our highest priority, but right now, combined Medicare and Medicaid spending now exceeds those outlays dedicated to Social Security.

Add in the fact that 77 million baby boomers are set to begin retiring next year, and you arrive at a spending problem that is quickly approaching critical mass.

In fact, the Congressional Budget office has told us that balancing the federal budget in the next five years will be nothing more than a pipe dream unless we address this pressing issue.

Finally, we must continue to **fully fund our troops' efforts** to defeat terror. Providing the resources the brave men and women need is paramount to protecting our national security.

Much is at stake in this budget debate. Democrats share our goal of a balanced budget, but they envision a very different – and dangerous -- way to try and make it happen: they want taxpayers to send to Washington more of their hard earned money to reduce the deficit that government spending created.

The pitfalls of raising taxes on working families and small business owners are many – for instance, allowing the tax cuts to expire would not be enough to balance the budget -- but one that keeps coming back to me is that it just defies common sense to make taxpayers assume the cost for their leaders' inability to make tough choices.

If we continue to pursue well-timed pro-growth policies that unleash the innovation of our entrepreneurs, we can keep our economy growing and balance the people's books without having to raise taxes.

Americans should expect nothing less from the stewards of their hard-earned money.

TALKING POINTS: Addressing the Critical Needs of America's Wounded

OUR PRINCIPLE: *Reports of substandard conditions at an outpatient facility at Walter Reed Army Medical Center are deeply disturbing. Republicans are committed to caring for our veterans and seeing that any shortcomings in the VA and military health care systems are swiftly addressed.*

Wounded Warriors Assistance Act of 2007. In response to reports of substandard conditions at an outpatient facility at Walter Reed, House Republicans and Democrats worked in bipartisan fashion to draft the Wounded Warriors Assistance Act of 2007, H.R. 1538, which is expected to receive floor consideration in the next several weeks. The legislation institutes much-needed reforms to ensure that America's wounded soldiers receive the finest healthcare through the military health system.

Overall Veterans Spending. Under Republican Leadership, the Veterans' budget increased \$23.5 billion in 6 years – from \$48 billion in FY2001 to approximately \$71.5 billion in FY 2006, a 49% increase. Republicans have also consistently protected the VA budget from across-the-board 1% deductions in discretionary spending.

Spending Per Veteran. The Republican-led Congress provided approximately \$3,000 per veteran and nearly \$6,000 for health care per patient in fiscal year 2006.

Veterans' Healthcare Spending. In our 12 years in the majority, House Republicans wrote budgets that boosted funding for veterans' medical care budget by nearly 90 percent.

Veterans' Education Benefits. Under Republican leadership, GI Bill benefits have increased by 65 percent over the last six years, greatly enhancing higher education opportunities for our nation's veterans.

Veterans' Mental Health Care. Responding to the needs of personnel returning from OIF and OEF missions, Congress appropriated nearly \$3 billion for mental health care in 2007, a 6.3 percent increase.

First-Rate Care. The VA leads the health care industry in computerized records, patient safety and standards for high-quality care. More than 90 percent of veterans receive primary care within 30 days of their desired date, and more than 90 percent of veterans seeking specialty care receive it within 30 days.

A Failure of Leadership. No amount of government dollars can overcome insufficient leadership, and that is exactly what happened at Walter Reed. The Army has relieved Maj. Gen. George Weightman of his command there. The new commander is Maj. Gen. Eric Schoomaker, who currently serves as commander of the Army's Medical Research and Materiel Command at Fort Detrick, MD.

In addition, the Secretary of Defense accepted the resignation of Army Secretary Francis Harvey while the Army Surgeon General, Kevin Kiley, recently announced his early retirement.

TALKING POINTS: Rising Gas Prices

Whether they are driving to work or school or taking the family on the summer vacation, it's working families who feel the pinch of high gas prices. After falling late last year, gas prices are creeping up again, and Americans are asking why. Here are some answers.

Currently, gas companies are in the process of switching from winter to summer blends of gasoline, and this generally causes a price spike at this time of year.

- Federal law requires many areas of the country to use a special summer fuel that burns cleaner in warm weather. Switching from the winter to summer fuel blend at the refinery stage reduces production and supply, putting upward pressure on prices at the pump.

Demand for gasoline continues to grow, adding further upward pressure on pump prices.

- “Putting further strain on prices, Americans also appear to be driving more this year. Last week, the Department of Energy said gasoline demand grew 4.1 percent in January and 3.3 percent in February. The numbers meant U.S. drivers cut into gas inventories more than had been expected for the typically slower winter months.”
(*Houston Chronicle*, 3/8/07)

Prepare your constituents for gas prices to continue rising over the next couple of months.

- A federal report released last week suggests that prices will peak in June. We have provided a sheet of earned media opportunities to help you address this issue.

Crude oil prices have risen since January, driving retail prices higher.

- “Having fought back from a 2007 low of \$50.48 on Jan. 18, crude prices have been hovering near \$60 a barrel since early February.” (Houston Chronicle, 3/8/07)

Republicans acted to reduce gas prices and make gas-efficient hybrid cars more affordable.

- Republican-passed tax incentives have helped make hybrid cars that use far less gasoline more affordable and available. Today more than 300,000 hybrid cars are sold in America each year. By 2012 more than a half million hybrids will be sold annually. (J.D. Power and Associates)
- In the last Congress, the House passed legislation to promote new refinery and pipeline capacity and criminalize gas price gouging. (H.R. 5253, 2006; H.R. 3839, 2005)

Ideas for Earned Media Events on Rising Gas Prices

- **Talk radio** is bound to be abuzz with this issue as prices continue to rise. Don't be afraid to get booked on a local show to talk about this – and to help in educating your constituents about why it's happening and ways to conserve.
- Host a **press availability** at a local gas station with constituents affected by rising prices to identify your priorities on this issue.
- Participate in events such as **Bike to Work Day** or take public transportation to your office to demonstrate for constituents some fun and easy ways to conserve gasoline.
- Start a “**letters to the editor**” campaign. Have constituents submit letters from the perspectives of a carpool mom, a truck driver, a young driver, a senior or a small business owner on how gas prices are affecting them on a day to day basis.
- Draft an **op-ed** on energy and shop it to one local paper—be sure they have the “exclusive” as they're more likely to run it if they do.
- Add an “**Energy and Gas Prices**” page to your Web site. On that page, lay out your positions on key energy issues and provide useful links for users to visit and read about the energy problem. Resourceful links include the Energy Department, www.doe.eia.gov and the Committee on Natural Resources: <http://republicans.resourcescommittee.house.gov/>
- Hold an event at a **car dealership**, or a manufacturer – if you have one in your district – about the importance of hybrid cars. The Republican-passed Energy Policy Act of 2005 included consumer tax credits for hybrid vehicles to promote energy efficiency and conservation. Democrats should work with Republicans to extend and expand these tax credits.
- Hold **events highlighting renewable, alternative energy sources**, like wind and solar power. Visit solar or wind fields, or a business that produces the equipment to harness these forms of energy, like solar panels. Talk about your support for tax credits for use of these energy sources and the need for us all to explore options for using them in our homes and businesses. Find out what is available in your district by visiting www.seia.org or www.awea.org.

TALKING POINTS: D.C. Bill Fraught With Constitutional Peril

OUR PRINCIPLE: *D.C. residents deserve the opportunity to pursue a greater voice in the federal government. A bill granting them full representation in the House, however, is not feasible.*

Nonpartisan experts have held that a bill granting D.C. full representation in the House is unconstitutional.

- In a Jan. 24 report, the **Congressional Research Service** concluded: "Although not beyond question, it would appear likely that the Congress does not have authority to grant voting representation in the House of Representatives to the District."
- **GW law professor Jonathan Turley** testified before the Judiciary committee last week that the bill is "the most premeditated unconstitutional act of Congress in decades." (*Washington Post*, 3/15/07)

Making Utah's additional member an at-large seat raises serious logistical and constitutional questions.

- Adding an at-large Utah seat would create an imbalance where **Utah residents would vote for two representatives while citizens of every other state would vote for just one.**
- Utah taxpayers would have to bear the cost of a special election for an at-large seat that may be deemed irrelevant in just a few years, when Utah is likely to gain a seat through the 2010 Census.

Legislative chaos could result from this bill becoming law.

- Votes cast by the two new Members could be called into question if this legislation goes on to be found unconstitutional. In a closely divided House, this could throw the validity of many pieces of future legislation into question.

The D.C. government has embraced its non-state status when it suits its purpose.

- The District tried to justify its recently overturned gun ban by arguing "that it is not subject to the restraints of the Second Amendment because it is a purely federal entity." (US Court of Appeals opinion, *Parker v. District of Columbia*)

Note: The White House has declared its opposition to the measure.

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

TOM DAVIS, RANKING MEMBER

[HTTP://REPUBLICANS.OVERSIGHT.HOUSE.GOV](http://REPUBLICANS.OVERSIGHT.HOUSE.GOV)

Explaining the District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act of 2007

- The District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act of 2007 is a compromise bill designed to give the District of Columbia a fully vested Member of the House of Representatives in a partisan neutral way that protects Congressional authority over District matters.
- The bill treats the District of Columbia like a congressional district for the purposes of allowing direct representation within the House of Representatives.
- The bill also permanently increases the size of Congress by two to 437. That means that no state will lose a seat to the District and that every state will have an extra chance to pick up a seat after the 2010 Census.
- These two actions, taken together, will have the effect of granting representation to the Federal District in a politically neutral way. Since Utah will get the extra seat for the next three terms.
- The bill has no effect on the Senate in any way whatsoever.
- Furthermore, this bill does not provide a road map for representation for the territories since the territories are not governed under the plenary authority granted Congress in the District Clause of the Constitution.
- This bill neither encourages nor discourages “statehood.”
- The Citizens of the District have sought some sort of representation for over 200 years. These efforts have included lawsuits and constitutional amendments.
- Most of these efforts have failed because they have in some way done damage to the founding fathers notion that it was important to have some piece of land solely controlled by the Federal government.
- This bi-partisan legislation does nothing to hinder that idea. It merely grants the citizens of the District what every other American considers an inalienable right, direct representation in the People’s House.

TALKING POINTS: The Employee Free Choice Act

OUR PRINCIPLE: *Today in America, unions are in decline. That is why their leaders seek passage of the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), a political payoff from Democrat leaders to union bosses that overturns over 70 years of sound labor law. It does so by allowing union bosses to employ a shortcut to unionize that eliminates the traditional secret ballot election process. The Democrat proposal strips employees of their rights to privately express their preferences while doing nothing to better protect them from illegal intimidation.*

Union bosses are responding to the overall decline their organizations have seen in membership by stripping employees of their long-held right to cast a secret ballot on the question of whether they wish to join a union.

- Private-sector union membership fell to 7.4 percent in 2006, a record low. (Bureau of Labor Statistics) “Labor loses about 500,000 members a year, said labor historian David Brody, a professor emeritus at UC Davis.” (*Los Angeles Times*, 2/26/07)
- **The secret ballot process – passed in the National Labor Relations Act of 1935 – is by no means broken.** According to the National Labor Relations Board, unions win three out of five such elections.

The EFCA is a political payoff by Democrat leaders to union bosses.

- “**This is payback to labor,**” said Gary Chaison, a labor specialist at Clark University in Worcester, Mass., who noted that Democrats took over Congress in 2006 with heavy support from organized labor. “This has been on labor’s agenda for a long time.” (AP, 2/26/07)
- “Organized labor is pushing legislation that would allow a business to be unionized through a process called ‘card check.’ ... **The move is clearly a payoff for big labor’s help in the election.**” (*The Detroit News* editorial, 12/26/06)

The EFCA leaves employees more vulnerable to strong-arming by union bosses.

- A more public voting tally will make it easier for union bosses to determine which employees should be targeted for undue harassment. **The EFCA does nothing to better protect employees from illegal intimidation by union bosses.**
- Earlier this month in testimony before a House labor subcommittee, Karen M. (to protect her identity, she chose not to provide her full last name), described tactics used in a card check campaign at her company in Oregon. During that card check drive, she said that she and her colleagues were “subjected to badgering and immense peer pressure” and that she “exercised [her] free choice not to be in the union and [her] work life became miserable because of it.”

Americans and union members support secret ballot elections.

- According to a January 2007 McLaughlin & Associates poll, 87 percent of Americans agree that “every worker should continue to have the right to a federally supervised secret ballot election when deciding whether to organize a union.” **79 percent explicitly oppose the so-called “Employee Free Choice Act.”**
- In a Zogby International survey conducted in 2004, 71 percent of union members agreed that the current secret ballot process is fair. That survey also found that 78 percent of union members said that Congress should keep the existing secret ballot election process in place.

Vote Justification

HR 800 – The Employee Free Choice Act

Today in America, unions are in decline, which is why their leaders sought passage of the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA). The EFCA is a political payoff from Democrat leaders to union bosses that overturns 70 years of sound labor law. It does so by allowing union bosses to employ a shortcut to unionize that eliminates the traditional secret ballot election process. The Democrat proposal strips employees of their rights to privately express their preferences while doing nothing to better protect them from illegal intimidation.

	AYES	NOES	PRES	NV
REPUBLICAN	13	183		5
DEMOCRATIC	228	2		3
INDEPENDENT				
TOTALS	241	185		8

“Nor have card-check proponents said anything to convince us that government-supervised, secret-ballot elections are somehow less free than union-run card check programs. In fact, 10 House sponsors of the current bill, including the lead sponsor, Rep. George Miller of California, wrote to Mexican officials in 2001 urging them to protect secret-ballot elections. "We understand that the secret ballot is allowed for, but not required by Mexican labor law," they wrote. "However, we feel that the secret ballot is absolutely necessary in order to ensure workers are not intimidated into voting for a union they may otherwise not choose. **So apparently, in a Democratic-controlled Congress, American workers aren't entitled to the same protections as Mexican workers.**" (Washington Times, Editorial, "Not-so-secret ballots," 2/8/07)

Lawrence Lindsey: "The final proof that this bill is about union power, and not worker choice, is revealed by its treatment of the flip side of unionization: decertification elections. These are secret ballot elections in which workers get to decide that they have had enough of the union. **So under the Employee Free Choice Act can a majority of workers decertify the union by signing a card? *Not on your life.*** Here unions want the chance to engage in a campaign to give workers both sides of the story -- and maybe do a better job of representing them -- before the union's fate is decided, by a secret-ballot vote." (The Wall Street Journal, Op-Ed, "Abrogating Workers' Rights," 2/2/07)

Vote Justification

HR 1591 – The War Funding Supplemental

The supplemental spending bill includes a date certain for withdrawal from Iraq in addition to unjustified timelines. Our Generals on the ground in Iraq do not need to be micromanaged by Congress. These policies are unfair to our troops and completely undermine the mission our brave soldiers have fought for. Withdrawal from Iraq would be devastating to the entire region and the mission of our brave men and women in uniform.

Beyond the egregious withdrawal policies, this spending bill adds an additional \$21 billion above the President's request. Much of the additional spending in the bill is not related to the Global War on Terrorism and is not needed in any emergency capacity. Unfortunately, Democrats have used the troops to pull the pork of tax-and-spend liberals.

	<u>YEAS</u>	<u>NAYS</u>	<u>PRES</u>	<u>NV</u>
REPUBLICAN	2	198		1
DEMOCRATIC	216	14	1	2
INDEPENDENT				
TOTALS	218	212	1	3

Washington Post editorial: “House Democrats are pressing a bill that has the endorsement of MoveOn.org but excludes the judgment of the U.S. commanders who would have to execute the retreat the bill mandates. It would heap money on unneeded dairy farmers while provoking a **constitutional fight with the White House that could block the funding to equip troops in the field.**” (3/23/07)

USA Today editorial: “It's hard to say which is worse: leaders offering peanuts for a vote of this magnitude, or members allowing their votes to be bought for peanuts ... Even so, an emergency war funding bill — especially one that would set a hard exit date of Aug. 31, 2008, for U.S. troops in Iraq and impose strict readiness standards for deploying combat forces — is no place for extraneous issues. **And certainly no place for bribes.**” (3/22/07)

Vote Justification

The FY2008 Budget

The Democrat Budget proposes \$392.5 billion in tax increases (the largest tax increase in history), an increase of more than \$22.5 billion in non-defense appropriations for Fiscal Year 2008 and almost entirely ignores needed entitlement reform. Balancing the people's books, however, will require tough choices – from serious spending discipline and meaningful entitlement reform. The budget proposal unveiled by House Democrats does not sufficiently address these issues and, what's worse, calls for the largest tax increase in American history.

This irresponsible budget will hurt the American taxpayer, allow entitlement burdens to grow out of control, and increase spending without any justification. This is a budget that reflects the values of the Democrat leadership, not the American taxpayer.

Vote Justification

H.R. 1433, District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act

This legislation provides the District of Columbia with a Congressional seat and adds an additional at-large seat to Utah until the completion of the next Census. Nonpartisan experts have held that a bill granting D.C. full representation in the House is unconstitutional.

Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution states that the "House of Representatives shall be composed of members chosen every second year by the people of the several states..." The District of Columbia is not a state, which makes this legislation unconstitutional. Additionally, making Utah's additional member an at-large seat raises serious logistical and constitutional questions. Legislative chaos could result from this bill becoming law.

Democrats postponed consideration of the bill after Republicans offered a motion to recommit that called for repeal of much of the District's gun ban.

Upcoming Dates to Remember

April:

April is...

Alcohol Awareness Month

National Child Abuse Prevention Month

- April 1, 1789: The U.S. House of Representatives convened for the first time
- April 1: April Fools' Day
- April 1: Palm Sunday
- April 1: Major League Baseball Opening Day
- April 2-8: National Public Health Week
- April 3: Passover
- April 4, 1968: Martin Luther King, Jr. assassinated
- April 6: Good Friday
- April 7: World Health Day
- April 8: Easter
- April 9: White House Easter Egg Roll
- April 9, 2003: Saddam Hussein statue toppled in Baghdad
- April 13: Thomas Jefferson Day
- April 14-21: National Volunteer Week
- April 14-21: National Library Week
- April 15: FEC Quarterly Report Due
- April 15: Budget Conference Report Due (by statute)
- April 17: Tax Day
- April 19, 1995: Oklahoma City Bombing
- April 20: FEC Monthly Report Due
- April 21: White House Correspondents' Association dinner in DC
- April 22-28: National Park Week
- April 24-25: FEC Conference for Corporations and their PACs in DC
- April 27: New Earmark Submission Deadline

Upcoming Dates to Remember

May:

May is...

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month
National Mental Health Month
National Military Appreciate Month
Women's Health Care Month

May 1: Labor Day
May 1: May Day
May 3: National Day of Prayer
May 5: Cinco de Mayo
May 6: Nurses Day
May 6-12: Teacher Appreciation Week
May 8: National Teachers Day
May 8: World Red Cross Day
May 8, 1945: Victory in Europe Day, WWII
May 10: First Lady's Lunch
May 10-11: FEC Conference for House/Senate campaigns & political party committees in DC
May 13: Mother's Day
May 13-19: National Police Week
May 13-19: National Women's Health Week
May 15: Beginning of Appropriations Season (even if Budget is not adopted)
May 15: Financial Disclosure Filings Due
May 17, 1954: Brown v. Board of Education decision announced
May 19: South Carolina GOP State Convention and possible 2008 straw poll
May 19: Armed Forces Day
May 20: FEC Monthly Report Due
May 20-21, 1927: Charles A. Lindbergh flies nonstop solo across the Atlantic
May 23-25: US Chamber of Commerce Small Business Summit in DC
May 25: National Missing Children's Day
May 28: Memorial Day

HOUSE REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE

Chairman Adam Putnam

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