



YEAR IN REVIEW 2007

HOUSE REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE | CHAIRMAN ADAM PUTNAM

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MEMO

To: GOP Members
From: Chairman Adam Putnam
Date: December 19, 2007
Re: Year in Review 2007

In January, House Democrats took the gavel for the first time in 12 years with incredible momentum. They came to Washington with promises to enact a vast agenda, one the public did not support and did not endorse. The prognosticators expected Republicans to face a long session of irrelevancy in the minority.

A year later, House Republicans have proven those expectations flat-out wrong.

As our troops risked all to implement a new strategy in Iraq, we successfully fought for their funding and stopped Democrat attempts

to surrender their mission. Anxious taxpayers know that Republicans successfully fought to protect them from massive tax hikes and tens of billions in wasteful government spending. Republicans worked through the night to ensure earmarks face the sunshine of public scrutiny. At our insistence, out-of-touch liberal policy prescriptions ended up on the cutting-room floor.

And because Republican intelligence reform became law, somewhere in the world last night, an officer did not have to consult a lawyer before eavesdropping on a foreign terrorist.

Indeed, House Republicans have driven the agenda like no minority in history. Gavel or no gavel, your hard work has made an enormous difference in the lives of American families this year. I believe this record stands as one piece of our commitment to earning back the public's trust, and with it, the House majority.

Fiscal Responsibility. Earning back the trust of the American people on fiscal responsibility has been the first priority of this Conference from the outset. Fortunately for taxpayers, we head home with several hard-fought victories for the principle of fiscal restraint in hand.

This week, we completed work on a budget that is \$22 billion lighter than Democrats would have preferred. All year long, Republicans advocated for a budget that met the President's top-line request of \$933 billion. Try as they did to foist this new and unnecessary spending on the American people – which translates to at least \$204 billion in permanent government spending – Democrats were forced to give in and reduce spending to our number.

It wasn't the first time our unity scored one for fiscal responsibility. In June, Democrats sought to prevent the taxpayers and

their representatives in Congress from challenging wasteful earmarks in public and debating them on the House floor, instead leaving all the closed-door earmarking decisions to just one man – the Democrat Appropriations Committee chairman. Because House Republicans stood firm and put in long hours on the floor to stop their secret slush fund plans, Democrats were forced to capitulate.

There is still more to do, especially when it comes to earmarks in tax and policy bills that Democrats still keep beyond the reach of public scrutiny. But this much is clear: making appropriations earmarks transparent and accountable was a Republican accomplishment in 2006; keeping them transparent and accountable is a Republican accomplishment in 2007.

The aftershocks of this year's battle surrounding the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) will also be felt months on, especially when American families get their

THE REVIEWS ARE IN...

Associated Press

"Bush, GOP Prevail on Host of Hill Issues"
Dec. 13, 2007

Christian Science Monitor

"Republicans Score Key Wins on Spending"
Dec. 18, 2007

Washington Post

"Democrats Blaming Each Other for Failures"
Dec. 13, 2007

The Wall Street Journal

"Intraparty Feuds Dog Democrats, Stall Congress"
Dec. 13, 2007

The Hill

"Dems Cave on Spending"
Dec. 13, 2007

The Politico

"Liberals Lose Big Time in the Budget"
Dec. 17, 2007

USA Today

"Democrats Are Lost in Time"
Dec. 17, 2007

National Review

"Pelosi's Omni-Defeat; The Democratic Legislative Rout"
Dec. 18, 2007

tax refund checks late because Democrats dithered on what on its face appears to be a no-brainer issue.

At the end of the day, what matters is that 23 million Americans have been spared an average \$2,000 tax increase because we stood up for the common-sense notion that middle class families should not have to foot the bill for a pernicious tax that was never intended to affect them.

For far too long, House Democrats clung to the bizarre notion that a permanent tax increase was needed to pay for this

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one-year tax cut, only to cave-in at the end and waive their supposedly sacrosanct PAYGO budget rules (rules we always said, correctly, were designed to force tax increases, not spending curbs.)

Even though the majority came to its senses on this common-sense fiscal fix, it did so at a heavy price. As columnist Michael Barone wrote earlier this week, "it's ... embarrassing for Democrats to renounce a rule they adopted as a guarantee of their fiscal responsibility."

Iraq. A year ago, the situation on the ground in Iraq was decidedly grim as sectarian violence threatened to tear the country apart at its seams. Democrats were elected with what they declared was a mandate to bring our troops home from Iraq.

Momentum began to turn in our direction during the three-day debate on the Democrats' non-binding resolution opposing the President's new security strategy for Iraq. It was right before the February recess, after Democrats had passed their "Six for '06" agenda and put the finishing touches on the first version of their severely misguided plan to slow bleed our troops in harm's way.

At the time, we did not have a single chart, editorial, or testimonial pointing to the successes of Gen. David Petraeus' counterinsurgency plan. We had only our resolve and the heartfelt convictions of heroes like Rep. Sam Johnson who took to the floor on the last day of the debate, nearly 34 years to the day after completing a seven-year stay at the Hanoi Hilton. After receiving a standing ovation, Sam said:

"Today, let my body serve as a brutal reminder that we must not repeat the mistakes of the past... instead learn from them. We must not cut funding for our troops. We must stick by them. We must support them all the way...To our troops we must remain...always faithful."

We won that debate, and have not let up since. When Democrats introduced iteration after iteration of their slow bleed plan in the spring, not a single Republican switched his or her vote. All told, Democrats held no fewer than 63 futile votes trying to cut off funds for our troops or micromanage their commanders on the ground or both.

Another flash point in the Iraq debate came shortly after Labor Day, when General Petraeus came to Washington to report to Congress on the progress of our security

strategy. The very same day, the anti-war fringe organization MoveOn.org put a full-page ad in *The New York Times* – at a discount rate, no less – calling the General a traitor to his country.

That scurrilous rhetoric emboldened Republicans and deeply divided Democrats, who, desperate to shore up their anti-war bona fides, did not take any pains whatsoever to distance themselves from MoveOn. Because Democrats would not act, later that month the House passed a Republican resolution condemning the ad.

Since then, we have seen the spirit of the radical left wane even further. Last week, an AP poll showed that for the first time a majority of the public believes we are making progress in Iraq. This week, the Congress passed funding for our fighting men and women in harm's way without strings attached.

Rejecting Big Government. Another top priority of ours in 2007 was ensuring that Democrats were not successful in their efforts to put the failed liberal domestic policies of the past back on the books.

For starters, we sought and won the removal of the most troubling Democrat policy provisions from the omnibus spending bill – including riders overturning the pro-life Mexico City policy, easing Cuba trade and travel restrictions, mandating Davis-Bacon government wages, and effectively killing the IRS' private debt-collection program.

Of course, the domestic cause to which Democrats dedicated most of their time and energy this year was expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). Democrats sought to expand this taxpayer-funded safety nets' purview to

THE REVIEWS ARE IN...

National Journal's CongressDaily

"Democrats appear to have found virtually every way to lose to Republicans in the endgame of this session's chief issues."

Dec. 14, 2007

The Politico

"This much is clear: Democrats in Congress buckled under pressure from the White House to hold spending near the administration's specified limit, and they're poised to give the president more war money with no strings attached. But the buckling didn't stop there. Democratic policy priorities that liberals hoped would be included in the omnibus spending legislation were also left on the cutting-room floor."

Dec. 17, 2007

After a shift in strategy that included a surge in troops, U.S. forces are on the verge of completing our most successful year in Iraq since the invasion of 2003. Real progress has been made and our troops have begun coming home on success, not failure.



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cover adults, illegal immigrants, and those who already have private health insurance.

This was a battle that many in the media painted as played and won long before the final outcome was known – Democrat demagoguery, however, was not enough to overcome Republican resolve and the good sense of the American people, a majority of whom agreed that money set aside for low-income children should go towards serving that population first.

Despite the best efforts of Congressional Democrats, SCHIP will not become a delivery device for government-run health care any time soon. This week's passage of a Republican proposal extending SCHIP through 2009 is a victory for the children of the working poor, who will continue to gain access to the high-quality, affordable health care they need and deserve.

Republican Hustle. When you're in a congressional minority and the gavel is in someone else's hand, it can be an uphill battle to remedy an immediate wrong done to the American people. That has not stopped House Republicans from taking up the fight on several occasions to ensure that the common good wins the day.

Before the 9/11 Commission bill became law, there were no common-sense legal protections in place for Americans who perform the simple but critical civic duty of reporting suspicious and potentially terrorist-related activity. Rep. Pete King stepped in, alerted the public to this outrage, and worked with Sen. Joe Lieberman and others to get a provision granting terrorism tipsters immunity inserted into the conference report for the bill. That vital citizens' protection is now law.

This summer, we learned that Members were told they could no longer invoke God on the certificates that accompany flags flown over the Capitol. Thanks to the persistence of Rep. Mike Turner, the policy

was reversed in short order and the notion that we are indeed One Nation Under God was affirmed.

And who could forget when Homeland Security Chairman Bennie Thompson sought refuge from – of all people – NASCAR fans and had staffers receive immunization shots before visiting race tracks in the south. It wasn't long after that Rep. Robin Hayes got himself to the site of that week's race in his hometown in North Carolina; there, he appeared on just about every TV station to give House Democrats the 'all clear' and let them know it was okay to come down and visit.

What we did as a team on the floor this year was also quite remarkable. In March, legislation unconstitutionally granting the District of Columbia a House seat was sailing through the House when Republicans took advantage of a loophole in the new rules the majority passed in January by bringing forward a motion to recommit repealing the District's gun ban. If adopted, the motion would have killed the underlying bill, and Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) was forced to pull the measure.

There were many times this year when Democrats simply did not have their act together. To put it in perspective: in the dozen years House Democrats last spent in the minority, they succeeded in passing 11 motions to recommit bills on initial passage, and 3 motions to recommit conference reports, for a total of 14. By contrast, in just one year, Republicans successfully passed 21.

We have been so successful in our efforts that when I opened last Sunday's *New York Times*, I read the following paragraph:

"Now Republicans are in the minority, and they have been using skills honed while they were in charge, throwing up procedural roadblocks, forcing vulnerable Democrats to take difficult votes and just gener-

ally harrying members of the majority as it tries to nail down a few prizes, some of them sought since the Democrats took over in January."

In heading home for the holidays, we should count foremost among our blessings the loved ones who have supported us throughout the year that's passed. We should also keep close to our hearts the men and women who have volunteered to put themselves in harm's way to defend this great nation and will not be able to spend Christmas with their families.

We also take a moment to reflect upon the memory of those dear friends we lost this year – Charlie Norwood, Paul Gillmor, Jo Ann Davis, and Henry Hyde – all of them proud members of the House Republican tradition, fine lawmakers, and great Americans.

In their shadow, we now humbly forge ahead into the new year, ready to roll up our sleeves and do the hard work that the American people sent us here to do.

Finally, I don't have any reading assignments for you this recess, but I'd like to leave you with a line or two from remarks our Speaker, Denny Hastert, made before he bid us farewell last month:

"Our founders dreamed of a nation – a nation empowered by freedom – where citizens would find justice, and where hard working men and women would find economic opportunity. Each of us who comes to this place has different ideas of how to persevere and enhance that dream. It is on this floor where those ideas clash – peacefully – and through that struggle our democracy is renewed."

Let's continue the battle of ideas – and let's win it.



APPENDIX: YEAR IN REVIEW TALKING POINTS

STRENGTHENING OUR NATIONAL SECURITY

OUR PRINCIPLE: *House Republicans are committed to doing whatever is necessary to defend the security of this nation and protect the lives of Americans at home and abroad. That means providing for a strong national defense and staying on offense in the war against radical militant Islam.*

Victory after victory for our troops in harm's way. House Republicans stood together four-square and blocked attempts by the anti-war fringe in the Democrat party to slow bleed our troops and micromanage our commanders on the ground. This was no small task: according to [The Wall Street Journal](#), Democrat leaders held “no fewer than 63 votes trying to impose withdrawal deadlines, strategy changes, and other war-fighting micromanagement” measures, only to be thwarted by Republican resolve. At the end of the session, the Congress passed funding for our fighting men and women in Iraq without strings attached.

21st-century intelligence collection to protect our citizens. House Republicans led the way in pushing to close a dangerous loop-hole in our laws that allows our enemies to elude our intelligence network. As a result of our efforts, spearheaded by Rep. Pete Hoekstra (R-MI), the law of the land now gives law enforcement the tools and flexibility needed to quickly respond to terrorist threats by closing a dangerous loophole that allowed our enemies to elude our intelligence network. The Protect America Act is a Republican proposal that passed over the strenuous objection of House Democrats.

Keeping our promises to our veterans and servicemembers. In mid-June, the House passed the largest increase in funding in the 77-year history of the Veterans' Affairs Department. This money was held in limbo for months as Democrat leaders pondered ways to use our veterans as oxen to carry their misguided and bloated spending bills across the President's desk. Only after a sustained, months-long effort by House Republicans was this critical funding freed up, first as part of a continuing resolution, and then, in the omnibus spending bill.

Protection from frivolous lawsuits for Americans who report suspicious and potentially terrorist-related activity. Leaving our citizens susceptible to legal retribution for performing this simple civic duty would have weakened not only our security, but the vigilance Americans are known for around the world. Rep. Pete King stepped in, alerted to the public to this outrage, and secured inclusion of a provision protecting terrorism tipsters in the conference report for the 9/11 Commission legislation.

21ST-CENTURY FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

OUR PRINCIPLE: *American taxpayers deserve a government that is prepared to face the tough choices and economic challenges of the years ahead. Republicans are committed to restoring common sense fiscal restraint to Washington and fostering sound pro-growth policies that put more money back in the pockets of the risk-takers and innovators who keep our economy growing.*

Saving taxpayers money by holding the line on government spending. Republican unity and resolve has translated into major victories for taxpayers, marking critical progress in our efforts to address Washington's spending problem. Democrats shed all \$22 billion in proposed new spending above the President's top-line request, and at least \$4.3 billion in pork inserted into the supplemental.

- On top of that, we sought and won removal of the most troubling Democrat policy provisions from the omnibus spending bill – including riders overturning the pro-life Mexico City policy, easing Cuba trade and travel restrictions, mandating Davis-Bacon government wages, and effectively killing the IRS' private debt-collection program.

Through sunshine, a more open spending process. In June, Democrats sought to prevent the taxpayers and their representatives in Congress from challenging wasteful earmarks in public and debating them on the House floor, instead leaving all the closed-door earmarking decisions to just one man – the Democrat Appropriations Committee chairman. Because House Republicans stood firm and put in long hours on the floor to stop their secret slush fund plans, Democrats were forced to capitulate. Making appropriations



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earmarks transparent and accountable was a Republican accomplishment in 2006; keeping them transparent and accountable is a Republican accomplishment in 2007.

Protecting middle class taxpayers from a massive tax hike. 23 million Americans have been spared from getting hit with an average \$2,000 tax increase after we stood up for the common-sense notion that middle class families should not have to foot the bill for the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT), a pernicious levy that was never intended to affect them.

Exposing Democrats' phony budget rules. For months, House Democrats clung to the bizarre notion that a permanent tax increase was needed to pay for a one-year AMT fix, only to cave-in at the end and waive their supposedly sacrosanct PAYGO budget rules (rules we always said, correctly, were designed to force tax increases, not spending curbs.)

Nearly \$5 billion in tax relief for small business owners to help them offset the cost of the minimum wage. Small businesses provide most of the new jobs for our growing economy and as such, House Republicans believe that these risk-takers deserve every protection from the burden of an increase in the federally mandated minimum wage.

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE THROUGH RESPONSIBLE EXPLORATION

OUR PRINCIPLE: *Americans expect and deserve a comprehensive plan that increases the supply, security and diversity of American energy and puts real alternative and renewable fuels in the hands of consumers to lower costs. At the same time, America cannot tax and bureaucratize its way to energy independence.*

No price spikes for energy consumers. Government mandates on renewable energy would only end up forcing utility companies to shift costs to consumers, who would feel the pinch coast-to-coast, especially in the Southeast and Midwest states where they simply do not have the energy sources to meet these requirements. Republican unity forced Democrats to strip these burdensome measures from the energy bill that the President signed into law this week.

No tax hikes for energy producers. Republicans beat back Democrat efforts to levy approximately \$21 billion in new taxes in the energy bill. Under the majority's proposal, oil and gas companies would have faced \$13 billion in additional taxes, including denial of manufacturing deductions for certain oil companies, which was enacted in 2004 to encourage the preservation and expansion of U.S. manufacturing jobs.

ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, HIGH-QUALITY HEALTH CARE FOR WORKING FAMILIES

OUR PRINCIPLE: *Working families – especially those who are part of the growing small business population – continue to face considerable challenges in finding affordable health care options; they will only have a harder time of it if government does not empower them with choices that help provide access to affordable, high-quality health care.*

Poor Kids First: ensuring the children of the working poor get access to affordable, high-quality health care. Democrats have been defeated three times now in their attempt to turn the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) into a delivery device for government-run health care. Republicans believe – and a majority of the American people agree – that money put aside for low-income children should be used to cover low-income children. This week, the Democrat Congress passed a Republican proposal to extend the program through 2009 with the funding needed ensure that the program can meet its original mission: to cover poor kids first.

Protecting 3.2 million seniors from cuts to their Medicare Advantage coverage. Medicare Advantage is an innovative program created by Republicans to empower seniors to choose among various private health plans that offer specialized services to 8.3 million seniors. Democrats attempted to pay for their first misguided SCHIP bill in part by slashing \$200 billion in funding for this and other critical Medicare programs. Republicans successfully fought these senseless cuts tooth and nail, which would have cleared the Medicare Advantage rolls in 21 states and the District of Columbia.