



Congressman Paul E. Kanjorski



Report to the 11th District Winter 2005

Dear Friends:

As 2005 draws to a close, it is a very good time to reflect upon where we are going as a nation.

In recent months, the tone of political debate in Washington has unfortunately become increasingly combative and divisive. We must alter our direction.

We need to return to a civil dialogue that respects the ideas of others and seeks a broad-based consensus. We

also should focus on the issues that concern Americans the most: concluding the Iraq war, lowering energy prices, and balancing the federal budget, among others.

“The Iraq war... has placed a serious burden on our troops and their families. We must... develop... a clear strategy to bring our men and women home as soon as practicable.”

Questions about our ongoing military involvement in Iraq weigh heavy on the minds of many Pennsylvanians. When will it end? How much will it cost? What are our

objectives? How did we develop and use the intelligence to justify our involvement in Iraq?

On Veterans Day, I spoke with President Bush before his speech at Tobyhanna Army Depot about Iraq. While on Air Force One, we discussed the real need to work together — across partisan divides — to identify a plan to bring peace to Iraq. Such dialogues will hopefully continue among all of our country’s leaders in the year ahead.

The Iraq war has additionally placed a serious burden on our troops and their families. We must therefore engage in a substantive debate in Washington in order to develop a national consensus about a clear strategy to bring our men and women home as soon as practicable. This plan must include realistic, measurable goals.

During my recent discussions with President Bush, I did not back down in raising my concerns about the events that led to our current involvement in Iraq. The Congress provided the President with the authority to go to war based, in part, on the intelligence communities’ estimate of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction capacity. If we had known in 2002 what we know now in 2005, we might have pursued a different course.

Because that pre-war intelligence has proven to be flawed, the Congress has a constitutional responsibility to thoroughly investigate these matters. Such reviews will help us to identify where we need to improve our intelligence and decisions in the future.



Congressman Kanjorski (second from right) arrives at Tobyhanna Army Depot with Colonel Tracy Ellis (right), Commander of the Depot, and Frank Zardecki (left), Deputy Commander.

Energy prices have also soared in recent months. We already have in place some programs to help working families and fixed-income retirees cope with these growing expenses. We, however, need to do more in Washington to promote energy efficiency, decrease our dependence on foreign oil, and lower energy prices.

Balancing the federal budget has returned to the forefront of our national debates, as well. We have regrettably returned to an era of deficit spending.

Our national debt, which has grown by more than \$1 trillion in less than two years, surpassed \$8 trillion in October. Just as a household must regularly balance its budget, the U.S. government must now put its long-term finances back in order.

When speaking with Pennsylvanians, I also often hear concerns about retirement security and health care coverage. The material inside this newsletter contains more information about each of these important issues, including some resources that you can use to protect your financial future and your health.

In sum, as 2006 begins, we all need to work together across party lines to focus on the issues that really matter. After reading this newsletter, I hope that you will write, call, or e-mail me about your ideas on these concerns. You may additionally want to regularly visit my Web site at <http://kanjorski.house.gov> to learn more about the latest developments on these issues.

Sincerely,

**Paul E. Kanjorski
Member of Congress**

CONCLUDING THE IRAQ WAR

The continued presence of U.S. forces in Iraq is one of the most important issues facing our country. Americans urgently want clear answers from their leaders about how the war is going and where it is leading. Congressman Kanjorski believes that now is the time to reach a bipartisan consensus on an effective and viable strategy for defining success in Iraq, with realistic benchmarks to measure our progress.

These deliberations must focus on the difficult question of what constitutes a stable Iraq, a necessary precursor to bringing our troops home. On the one hand, some contend that the U.S. military presence in Iraq is needed to prevent the competing factions of Iraqis from engaging in an all-out civil war, which would make the world less stable. On the other hand, some maintain that it is the open-ended American military presence that is contributing to the destabilization in Iraq and that a reduction of American forces will compel the Iraqis to take responsibility for their country's security.

As 2006 begins, leaders in Washington must engage in an open, honest and interactive dialogue about how to effectively move forward in Iraq. Until we face the realities of our current situation, we cannot develop an effective plan to bring peace to this troubled country and region.

LOWERING ENERGY BILLS

In recent months, the price of energy, including gasoline, heating oil, and natural gas, has spiked. These added expenses have burdened all Pennsylvanians.

Utility companies provide assistance to partially help some families to heat their homes. The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) also provides critical aid to those households experiencing difficulty in paying their home heating bills. Participating households must meet the program's eligibility requirements. A household of four, for example, qualifies for assistance if annual income is less than \$26,123.

To learn if this program can help, call the state LIHEAP office toll-free at **866-857-7095**. Seniors can also call the Pennsylvania Department of Aging for assistance in filling out LIHEAP forms at **717-783-1550**.

Government experts have additionally compiled useful advice about how to lower home energy costs and get more from a gallon of gas. Some useful ideas include lowering the thermostat on a water heater to 115° Fahrenheit, sealing cracks around windows, following the speed limit, and removing excess weight from a car. To learn more ways to reduce your energy costs, visit <http://www.staywarmpa.com> and <http://www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/drive.shtml>.

Many Pennsylvanians also want more done in Washington to promote energy efficiency, decrease our dependence on foreign sources of oil, and lower energy prices. Moreover, they want additional steps taken to ensure that oil companies do not take advantage of consumers by inflating prices or earning outrageous profits. Congressman Kanjorski agrees. He has urged the U.S. Attorney General and the Federal Trade Commission to conduct an immediate investigation into surging gas prices and charges of price gouging. He has also introduced H.R. 3664, the Consumer Reasonable Energy Price Protection Act. This bill would allow the federal government to tax windfall oil and gas profits and use that money to help qualified families to pay their home heating bills.

ENHANCING RETIREMENT SECURITY

Many Americans are becoming increasingly anxious about their retirement security. Recent bankruptcies at Enron, United Airlines, and other companies have resulted in the loss of some or all of the pension and healthcare benefits promised to workers and retirees. The 2004 bankruptcy of Techneglas also unfortunately directly affected many families living in our region.

Congressman Kanjorski believes that the worsening condition of many private pensions has reached a crisis state. American workers deserve to receive the benefits they earned and relied upon in planning for their retirement, and Congress needs to enact strong laws that protect workers' benefits ahead of owners and creditors.

Moreover, while the federal government's Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation was established to protect the pensions of participants and beneficiaries covered by private sector plans, the agency's deficit now exceeds more than \$23 billion and continues to grow. Congress needs to reform and improve the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

The Congress also needs to act to protect the well-earned healthcare benefits of America's retired workforce. Because of skyrocketing healthcare costs, many corporations have discontinued or scaled back health insurance coverage for retirees.

Regardless of age, it is important for everyone to plan for retirement. Among other things, experts advise individuals to contribute to IRAs and tax-sheltered savings plans. They also encourage people to start saving early and diversify investments. To learn more about retirement planning, visit http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/publications/10_ways_to_prepare.html.



Congressman Kanjorski (right) discusses alternative fuel sources for automobiles at the hydrogen refueling station in Washington, D.C., after driving the hydrogen-fueled prototype HydroGen3 vehicle.

PROTECTING HEALTH CARE

The availability and cost of health care is of increasing concern to many Pennsylvanians. This year, the availability of flu vaccines in particular has occupied the minds of many.

Although government health officials initially estimated that the United States would have ample vaccines available during the current flu season, a distribution delay has occurred. As a result, some healthcare providers have not received a full supply of flu shots. The short-term vaccine shortage has also led to the cancellation of many flu shot clinics.

In the coming weeks, public health experts expect the flu vaccine supply to increase. Although individuals should get a flu shot as early as possible, flu season usually peaks in February. Thus, receiving a flu shot as late as January can still provide protection when you need it most. In order to learn more about the availability of flu shots, contact the Pennsylvania Health Department at **877-724-3258** or visit <http://www.dsf.health.state.pa.us>.

There has also been a great deal of discussion about the potential for a worldwide outbreak of bird flu. As one of the world's leading vaccine manufacturers, Sanofi Pasteur — based in Northeastern Pennsylvania's Monroe County — is integrally involved in helping to prepare against this threat.

In addition to the government's role in helping to prevent a pandemic, Congressman Kanjorski also believes that we should work in Washington to ensure that quality health care is affordable and available for everyone in the long term. He has backed several bills that focus on these goals including the Pharmaceutical Market Access Act, the Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care Act, and the Preserving Patient Access to Inpatient Rehabilitation Hospitals Act.



Congressman Kanjorski (second from left) looks over expansion plans for Sanofi Pasteur with officials from the flu vaccine supplier in Monroe County.

RESTORING BUDGET DISCIPLINE

Republican and Democratic administrations worked in the 1990s with Congress to reduce a federal budget deficit that had reached historic proportions. Had they been maintained, these fiscal reforms could have resulted in multi-trillion dollar surpluses that could have ensured fiscal stability and protected Social Security for generations to come.

In the current decade, however, the federal government is again spending beyond its means. In fact, the national debt has grown by more than \$1 trillion in the last two years alone and now totals more than \$8 trillion.

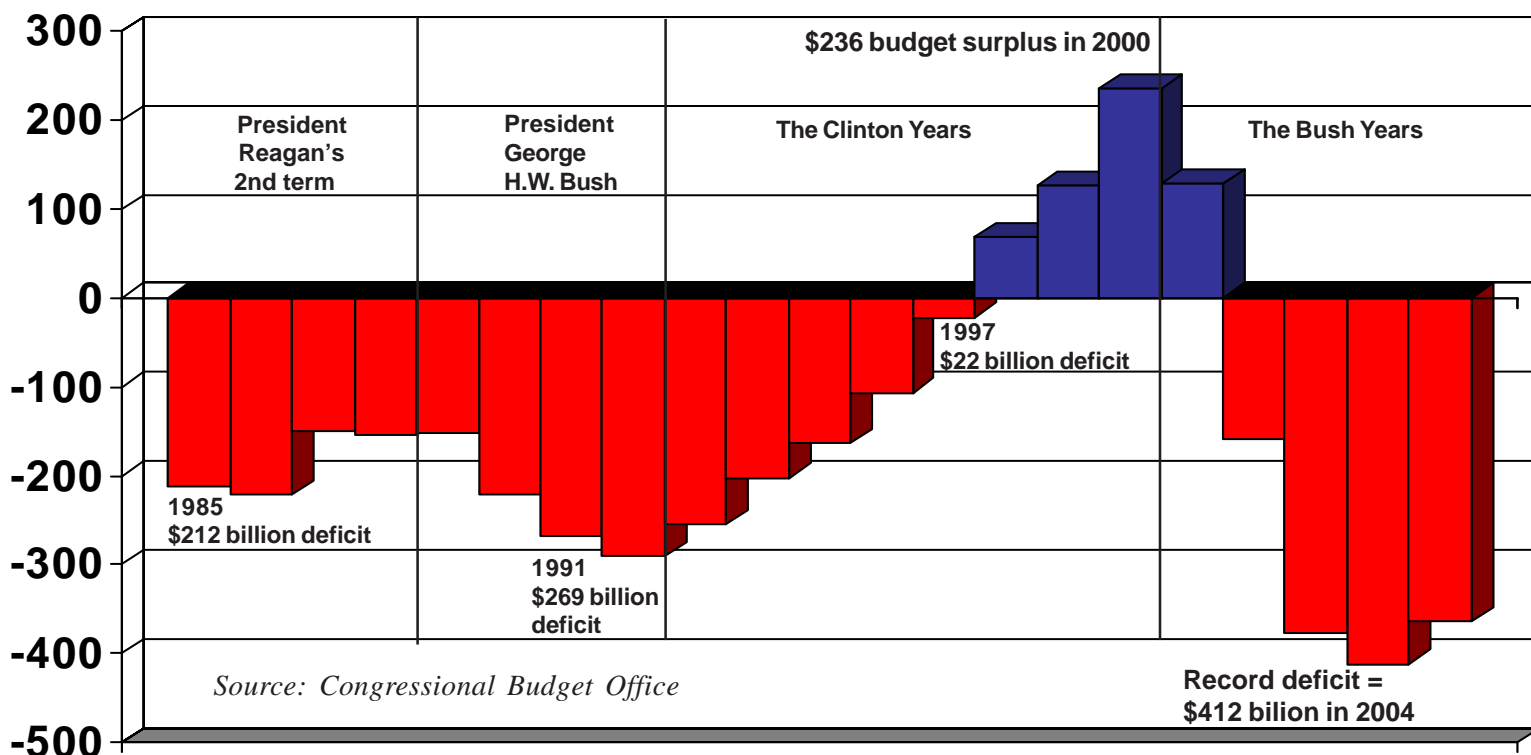
By comparison, the U.S. government had less than \$1 trillion in debt when Ronald Reagan became President in 1981. Visiting <http://www.publicdebt.treas.gov/opd/opd.htm> will allow you to learn more facts about the federal debt.

Investments in national defense and domestic security have caused some of the current budget imbalance. Tax cuts coupled with increases in spending on non-essential matters have also contributed to the fiscal difficulties facing Washington today.

To reverse this trend, Congressman Kanjorski wants leaders in both parties to hold an economic summit to set priorities, as was done during the first Bush Administration in the early 1990s. Just as a family must work together to balance its budget regularly, U.S. leaders must also put the nation's long-term finances back in order by making some difficult decisions together.

The U.S. Congress has a responsibility to budget effectively and use taxpayer dollars wisely. Our nation's long-term economic stability depends on controlled spending, sustainable revenues, and less debt.

Federal Budget Deficits and Surpluses in **Billions** of Dollars: 1985-2005



“Call Your Congressman” Nights

Constituents will have the opportunity to call in to Congressman Kanjorski to discuss their concerns directly with him. Call **570-825-2200** or toll-free **1-800-222-2346**.

Monday, Jan. 9, 2006 – 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2006 – 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 17, 2006 – 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Thursday, Jan. 19, 2006 – 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Want to know more?

Please fill out this form and mail it to:
Congressman Paul E. Kanjorski
The Stegmaier Building, Suite 400M
7 North Wilkes-Barre Blvd.
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702

- Concluding the Iraq War
 Lowering Energy Bills
 Enhancing Retirement Security
 Protecting Health Care
 Restoring Budget Discipline
 Protecting Your Family
 Understanding Medicare Drug Plans
 Safeguarding Social Security
 Other :

Name: _____

Address:

Phone Number: _____

E-mail address: _____

Please sign me up for e-mail updates.

Helpful Guides Available

Congressman Kanjorski has developed the following guides that are available on his Web site. Visit the Resources Page of <http://kanjorski.house.gov> and you can download them or call one of his offices for a copy. Available guides include:

Deciphering Medicare Drug Plans
Assistance to Firefighters
Starting a Small Business
Aid in Financing Your Education
Guide to Buying a Home
Community Development Guide
Non-Profit Assistance Guide

Free Credit Reports

Every American is now eligible to receive one free credit report annually from each of the three national credit bureaus as a result of Congressman Kanjorski's hard work in passing the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act of 2003. Lenders, insurers, employers, and other businesses use credit reports to make decisions regarding your ability to borrow for a home, qualify for insurance, or obtain a job, so you should review your credit report regularly in order to ensure its accuracy.

To obtain your free annual credit report, Equifax, TransUnion and Experian have set up one central Web site, <http://www.annualcreditreport.com>. This Web site is the **ONLY** authorized online source for you to get a free credit report under federal law.

You can also call **1-877-322-8228** or write to: Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281. You will have to provide your name, Social Security number, date of birth, and address (and prior addresses if you have moved in the past two years).

The Stegmaier Building, Suite 400M
7 North Wilkes-Barre Blvd.
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702
(570) 825-2200 / (570) 825-8685 (fax)

The Scranton Life Building
546 Spruce St., Scranton, PA 18503
(570) 496-1011 / (570) 496-6439 (fax)

102 Pocono Blvd., Mount Pocono, PA 18344
(570) 895-4176 (by appointment only)

2188 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
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