

An Update from Washington

The Passage of H.R. 1, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

Congress recently passed and the President signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, or better known as the stimulus. While the American people expected Congress to act, they also expected us to make smart, sound, and deliberate decisions that would reflect the tremendous responsibility that Americans place in lawmakers' hands. With this in mind, I could not vote for final passage of the stimulus.

This bill was rushed through Congress with little debate or opportunity to offer meaningful changes. As a result, I was not convinced that a nearly \$800 billion bill was the right - and necessary - action to take for the future of America.

There are certainly good provisions in the bill, such as tax relief for families and small businesses and investments in infrastructure and schools. Taken as a whole, however, I lack faith that it will stimulate the economy by saving jobs or helping Americans get back to work. If the recovery act fails to achieve its intended goals, then the only thing the American people are left with is more debt and an increased deficit. While I hope and pray that the stimulus works, I cannot in good conscience support a bill about which I have fundamental concerns and doubts.

Though I did not vote for this bill, it is still my responsibility to ensure that Alabama receives its fair share of funding and projects and that taxpayer money is used for its intended purposes. My office has reached out to local leaders to let them know how their communities can best access and use recovery dollars and we will continue to do so in the coming months.

Congressional Delegation Visit to Iraq and Afghanistan

Last week, I traveled with a bi-partisan delegation of Members of Congress to Iraq and Afghanistan. The trip gave me an opportunity to visit with our soldiers, commanders, Iraqi and Afghani leaders, and ordinary citizens. It was a truly eye-opening experience, and it only strengthened my deep respect and gratitude for the men and women who serve in our military.

Based on my observations, it is clear that our troops have made progress in Iraq, but it remains a fragile country. I fear that if we leave Iraq now, it will return to chaos. However, I stressed to Iraqi leaders that our commitment is not indefinite, and that we must work with them to ensure that Iraqis are able to peacefully govern their own country.

Though the visit to Iraq gave me confidence in the future of the Middle East, my time in Afghanistan reminded me there is still much work to be done. The streets of Kabul were war-torn, and the country cannot adequately provide basic services to its people, pushing many into the drug trade and increasing the likelihood of terrorist activity.

While we were overseas, President Obama announced that military will be sending an additional 17,000 troops to Afghanistan. I believe this is the right decision because we must secure the country that many terrorists call home and where the war on terror began. However, there should be a clear sense of mission and measurable goals in Afghanistan in order to give our troops the best possible chance for success. I will continue to monitor the situation in these two countries as a member the Armed Services Committee.

As always, if you have any questions or if there is something I can do to help you, please do not hesitate to call our offices in Montgomery at (334) 277-9113 or Dothan at (334) 794-9680. We are also online at www.bright.house.gov to answer your questions and assist you in any way we can. You can also visit my website to sign up for my e-newsletter. It is my great pleasure to serve you and the entire Second District of Alabama.