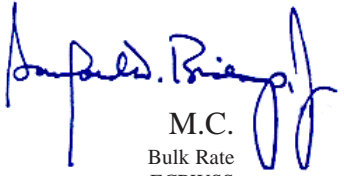
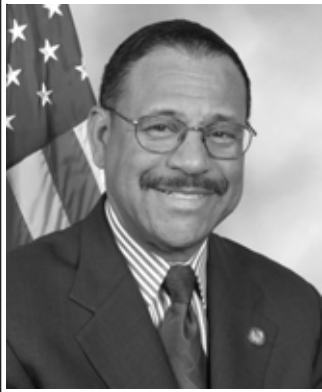


Postal Patron
2nd Congressional District
Georgia


M.C.
Bulk Rate
ECRWSS

This mailing was prepared, published and mailed at taxpayer expense.



Congressman **Sanford Bishop** *Reports*

2nd Congressional District, Georgia

2429 Rayburn HOB, Washington, DC 20515

Winter 2006

Dear Friends,

As we move into the second session of the 109th Congress, I believe that we can and must do better for the American people. Issues of war, security, education, disaster response and even fiscal policy should not be decided on party lines, but rather in the best interest of the American people. This is unfortunately not the case today in Washington, D.C.

Our seniors, our children, our men and women in uniform deserve a government that is accountable to them and not special interests. Now is not the time to cut education, health care and housing programs to pay for revenue tax cuts for corporations and the wealthiest of Americans. Yet this is what is happening in the Republican-backed budget reconciliation bill.

Now is the time to focus on winning the war in Iraq and bringing our troops home. It is the time to improve our nation's failing health care system, to support our farmers, to protect our borders and to make certain that no child is left behind. In the coming year, Congress must put partisanship aside and regain focus on what is important to the people of our country.

This edition of the newsletter that we periodically prepare for the residents of Georgia's Second Congressional District provides a brief overview of issues that we faced in 2005 and that will challenge us in the year ahead.

I feel that it is important that you be kept informed of what we are working on in Washington, D.C., but it is even more important for me to hear your views on the issues that matter to you. I look forward to hearing from you (see addresses and telephone numbers on page 4) and seeing you in person as I travel throughout the Second District.

Sincerely,

Sanford Bishop
Member of Congress

Finding Relief

Seniors Look for Answers on Medicare Prescription Drug Plans

As prescription drug costs continue to grow at nearly twice the rate of inflation, many Americans are looking for relief. Choices are being made between purchasing life saving medications and groceries, while some are cutting pills in half or taking their prescribed dosages every other day in order to make ends meet.

These are only a few examples of the many tragic stories that I heard while traveling the 2nd Congressional District with the Medicare Bus, for a series of eight Information and Sign-Up Sessions designed to help Seniors navigate the new Medicare Prescription Drug Plans. The benefit went into effect January 1, 2006.

While the new plans are not the ideal solution to skyrocketing prescription costs, they could mean significant savings for some Medicare beneficiaries. This is why I held the information sessions and continue to urge Medicare beneficiaries and their families to get the facts and learn what, if any, plan might work for them.

There are currently 18 insurance companies in Georgia offering supplemental prescription drug plans. Yet each of those 18 companies offers multiple plans, with varying levels of service that cover different prescription medications. This means that a Medicare beneficiary could have anywhere from 60 to 80 different plans to choose from

(Continued on page four)

Energy Crisis

Rising Fuel Costs Hurt Georgians

Few of us will forget the increase in gasoline and diesel prices that followed Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The sudden and dramatic shock to energy prices demonstrated our economy's dependence on oil and the need for us to take immediate steps to protect hard working Americans from rising energy costs.

Even without the impact of a natural disaster, energy prices have been climbing. A gallon of gasoline today, costs roughly \$1.00 more than it did four years ago. According to the Department of Energy, Americans will spend over \$200 billion more on energy this year than they did last year. Yet, Exxon Mobile's third quarter profits were up by more than 75 percent this year.

According to calculations made by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Federal Reserve Board, every time oil prices go up by 10 percent, 150,000 Americans lose their jobs. At the same time, economic growth is declining by \$80 billion to \$160 billion..

(Continued on page three)



During the week of November 28, 2005, I teamed up with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to hold a series of eight information and sign-up sessions throughout southwest Georgia. We were able to answer many questions about the new Medicare Prescription Drug Plans, which could mean savings for some Medicare beneficiaries with substantial prescription drug costs.

Appropriations Bills Fund Second District Projects

As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, I have worked diligently to obtain federal support for worthy projects and activities in the Second Congressional District. I am currently a member of both the Homeland Security Subcommittee and the Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee.

This year we received literally hundreds of proposals and requests for funding for many worthy and important efforts. While we were not successful in securing funding for all of these requests, we are very pleased that this year's Appropriations bills included support for many projects in our district. The following is a complete list of projects approved for FY06:

AGRICULTURE: \$7,576,000

- \$494,000—Tifton—Water Use Efficiency
- \$256,000—Tifton—Fruit and Vegetable Research
- \$891,000—Albany State—Agricultural Water Policy
- \$258,000—Phytophthora Research
- \$494,000—Tifton—Cotton Insect Management
- \$3,700,000—GA Soil and Water Conservation Commission
- \$350,000—Community Nutrient Management Facilities
- \$625,000—Game Bird Predation
- \$508,000—Baylor University/Peanut Institute—Study of Chronic Diseases of Children/Obesity

SCIENCE, COMMERCE, JUSTICE: \$1,330,000

- \$50,000—SOWEGA - CASA, Inc.; Americus, GA—Court Appointed Special Advocates
- \$50,000—Columbus—Building Towards Wellness
- \$25,000—Clay County Improvement Association; Ft. Gaines, GA - Teen center
- \$50,000—Columbus—Urban League—Youth Advocacy Program
- \$15,000—Miller County—Upgrade 911 Communications System
- \$25,000—Dawson—James Barnes Community Development Corporation—Teen drug prevention and mentoring
- \$50,000—Albany—Communities in Schools—Albany—After school; performance learning center
- \$25,000—South Georgia Olympic Youth
- \$25,000—Americus—Communities in Schools—Sumter County—After school; performance learning center
- \$25,000—Bainbridge—Friends with Jesus, Inc.—Teen after school program
- Albany International Association—Prisoner Reentry Program
- \$25,000—Thomasville—Reaching You [Resource Ctr.]—After school
- \$50,000—Valdosta—Camp Relitso—Teen and Adult Literacy
- \$25,000—Columbus—Junior Marshal's Program

Healthcare For Our Troops

Excellence in Albany

Albany, Georgia is an emerging leader in the battle against Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), particularly in the Southeast. My colleagues joined me, this year, in voting to expand existing capabilities at the Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital to treat PTSD and related mental health challenges. The instructions, which were included in the FY'06 Defense Appropriations bill, open the door for Phoebe potentially to become a "Regional Center of Excellence" for the treatment of PTSD in active duty and retired service members.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) affects individuals that have experienced or witnessed life-threatening events such as military combat, natural disaster, serious accidents and assaults. It is estimated that one in five of the brave men and women serving their country in Iraq and Afghanistan will at some point suffer the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which can range from nightmares and flashbacks to dangerous biological conditions. This number may be even greater as many fail to report symptoms or seek help because of the stigma that is traditionally associated with mental illness.

Federal Money at Work for Southwest Georgia

The Second Congressional District had another banner year in federal grants, securing nearly \$275 million for projects throughout southwest Georgia. During a time when the overall pool of federal funds is shrinking, these dollars have never been more welcome or more critical to our community.

For example, this year, I was proud to help the Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe receive \$357,010 from the U.S. Department of Education to start a vocational rehabilitation program for American Indians living with disabilities. At the same time, Quitman, Terrell, and Americus have received nearly \$750,000 in total Homeland Security funds for fire safety equipment and services.

One of my office's most important jobs is working with localities, first responders, schools, businesses, and individuals to help coordinate and navigate the grants process. In addition to hosting one of the most comprehensive grants webpages in Congress, we assist constituents in the grants process by providing up-to-date information on how and where to apply for funds and by tracking and supporting grant applications. During my thirteen years in office, we have helped secure more than \$1.2 billion in total grants funding. To learn more visit <http://bishop.house.gov> or contact my Washington, DC office.

- \$25,000—Columbus—Office of the Sheriff—A Child Is Missing
- \$30,000—Colquitt County, Sheriff's Dept.—Automated Fingerprint ID
- \$45,000—City of Moultrie—Police Wireless Mapping
- \$40,000—City of Poulan (Worth County)—Police Communications
- \$25,000—Georgetown—Quitman County Board of Education
- \$50,000—Crisp County—At risk teens
- \$100,000—Albany Technical College for Technology, Math and Science
- \$150,000—Muscogee County Schools, Math and Science
- \$250,000—Albany State University—"JUMP START," Math and Science
- \$150,000—Andrew College—Rural Math and Science

TRANSPORTATION/HUD: \$3,600,000

- \$250,000—Columbus—Columbus Train Depot
- \$1,000,000—Hwy 133—Valdosta to Moultrie
- \$500,000—Sylvester streetscape
- \$500,000—Columbus/Albany—GA Bus/Bus Facilities
- \$175,000—Albany—SOWEGA Council on Aging
- \$225,000—Columbus—Infantry Museum and Heritage Park
- \$200,000—Moultrie economic development
- \$750,000—SW GA Regional Airport

INTERIOR: \$1,350,000

- \$1,000,000—Ox Bow/City of Columbus

- \$350,000—City of Moultrie—waste water treatment facility upgrades

ENERGY AND WATER: \$2,500,000

- \$2,500,000—Dredging and maintenance of the Apalachicola, Chattahoochee, and Flint Rivers

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION: \$36,101,000

- \$20.961M - Ft. Benning - Combined Arms Collective Training Facility
- \$4.3M - Ft. Benning - Infantry Platoon Battle Course
- \$1.25M - Ft. Benning - Light Infantry Shoot House
- \$1.7M - Ft. Benning Special Ops Command Shoot House
- \$2.05M - Ft. Benning - Squad Defense Range
- \$4.0M - MCLB/Albany - Combat Vehicle Maintenance and Preservation Facility
- \$1.84M - MCLB/Albany - Satellite Fire Station

DEFENSE: \$252,000,000

- \$1,400,000—Robbins AFB—Center for Parts Configuration
- \$10,000,000—Objective Individual Combat Weapon
- \$174,000,000—MCLB/Albany and Barstow—USMC Depot Maintenance
- \$1,500,000—Lithium Ion Battery (Saft/Valdosta)
- \$59,700,000—MCLB/Albany—Land Assault Vehicles
- \$5,000,000—TECT Corporation (Thomasville)

Investing in Our Future

After School Programs Get Funding

Even more children will be reached in the coming years by the Friendship House in Bainbridge, Georgia, thanks to \$25,000 in this year's Science, Commerce and Justice Appropriations bill. The funds will go toward the construction of a new community resource center that will house after school programs for area youth.

After school programs--in the form of classes, sports and arts--can not only help students succeed academically, they can provide constructive alternatives to the

negative influences of crime and poverty.

The Friendship House is only one of the many outstanding youth outreach efforts that we were able to get funded in this year's Science, Justice and Commerce Appropriations bill. The Clay County Improvement Association was allocated \$25,000 to implement a day camp program in Fort Gaines, Georgia. Programs in Columbus, Americus, Albany, Dawson, Thomasville and Valdosta were also awarded funding.

Fort Benning

Infantry Museum Moves Ahead

The dream of a state of the art museum to honor the nation's infantry moved closer to reality this year when \$225,000 was included in the Transportation/HUD Appropriation's bill for construction of the facility.

The National Infantry Museum, which is expected to mean 400 new jobs and an overall annual economic impact of \$38 million for the Columbus/Fort Benning

region, is a source of pride for the legendary warriors who have earned and protected our nation's liberties for 230 years.

The site, located at the "Home of the Infantry" will not only commemorate the history of the infantry, but it will serve also as an active part of soldier training and host ceremonial graduations for the 30,000 soldiers who join the ranks of the infantry at Fort Benning each year.

A Plan for Success

Supporting Our Troops

Each of us must be proud of the job that our Armed Forces are doing in Iraq. Their exemplary courage has not only defeated an evil dictator and his army, but continues to make democracy a reality for the Iraqi people.

We owe these brave men and women and their families a debt of gratitude. We owe them the weapons, ground equipment and body armor that they need to keep them safe and get the job done. We owe them quality health care, both during their deployments and when they come home as veterans. But most importantly, we owe our service men and women an exit strategy that will bring them home.

Most Americans have serious concerns about the reasons that we were given for going to war, but the reality is that we are at war and we must do everything in our power to support our troops and the successful completion of their mission. However, a successful mission is not marked by an indefinite deployment. To be successful, we must define our goals and a means to achieve them and bring our troops home.

For more than two years, my colleagues and I have asked the Administration for such a plan. We included specific language in the Supplemental Defense Appropriations bill, passed in May 2005, which urged the Administration to provide better information about its plans for exiting Iraq. The Administration has yet to respond.

150,000 brave Americans are currently serving their country in harms way. They deserve a country that has their best interests at heart, that has a plan for their success and a strategy for bringing them home. This is the least that we can do.

Honoring Our Veterans

Benefits Increase for Survivors

Survivors of America's veterans should see increases in death benefits, pending final passage of the Conference Report to the FY'06 Defense Authorization. While current law provides survivors with only \$12,000, the new House legislation substantially increases benefits to \$100,000. The measure also eliminates the onerous requirement that survivors must deduct those payments from the total they can receive from a similar program at the Veterans Affairs Department. In addition, while most federal programs and agencies were subject to a one percent across-the-board funding cut this year, veterans programs were exempted from these cuts.



Recently active duty Sgt. Zavian Simpson (USMC) and his wife, Debra, both graduates of Dougherty High School in Albany, visited our D.C. office and joined me and staff for tours of the White House and Capitol. Sgt. Simpson was recovering at Walter Reed Hospital from wounds received while serving in Iraq.

False effort to reconcile budget

Budget Betrays Americans

This year's debate over the federal budget represents not only the worst fiscal crisis in our nation's history, it represents a moral crisis where programs such as Medicaid and Child Support Enforcement are being slashed to fund tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans.

This fall our national debt reached a record high of more than \$8 trillion. The debt only grows as we continue to run record budget deficits and pay more than \$50 billion each year in interest. That is \$50 billion that could be dedicated to education, health care and national security.

The Blue Dog Coalition, a group of moderate, fiscally-responsible Democrats, of which I am a member, has repeatedly introduced common-sense legislation that would require a balanced budget and get us back on the track to fiscal health. We have repeatedly invited our Republican colleagues to work with us to resolve our nation's budget crisis and we have repeatedly been ignored.

However, the Republican led House recently approved legislation which helps to finance more tax cuts for our wealthiest citizens by cutting funding for a number of key services by \$40 billion, including student loans, child support enforcement, Medicare, and Medicaid. Although the impact of these cuts on the budget's bottom line will be relatively small – given more than \$100 billion in new tax cuts and annual budget deficits of more than \$300 billion – the cuts will have a harmful impact on many people.

In times of crisis—of war and natural disaster—sacrifices need to be made, but those sacrifices should be made by everyone. Our budget must not only find a responsible way to meet our domestic and international needs, it must honor our nation's values and our commitment to opportunity and fairness.

Are you eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit?

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a refundable federal income tax credit for low income working individuals and families. This year it is worth more than ever as some families can qualify for as much as \$4,400. To learn more visit: www.irs.gov or call your taxpayer advocate at **1-877-777-4778**.

Looking Ahead

Congress to Consider Farm Bill

The 2002 Farm bill was designed as a safety net for our nation's farmers and a means of support for our rural communities. Lauded by farmers and agri-business, it has opened the door for many of our farms to flourish.

As the Congress begins to consider the 2007 Farm bill, I continue to press upon my colleagues the importance of maintaining the structure and funding that we achieved in 2002, particularly the cotton and peanut related provisions. Congress and the Administration must understand the issues facing our farm families, such as the need to expand foreign agricultural markets, to increase the quality of the food and fiber being produced and to maintain the vitality of our rural communities.

These are just a few of the issues that will be debated in the coming year and I look forward to working with members of the Georgia delegation as well as our agricultural community to ensure the continued strength of Georgia's farming communities.

Gas Prices

(Continued from page one)

We should be taking steps to increase the domestic production of oil and to ensure supply in the event of an emergency, but we should not be rewarding oil companies for taking advantage of Americans. Instead we must increase penalties for price gouging. We must increase funding for energy assistance programs, explore alternative domestic sources of oil and put pressure on countries such as Saudi Arabia to increase their oil production. But most importantly, we must increase investment in fuel alternatives, so that we can decrease our dependence on oil.

These steps are not what is best for the oil industry, but they are what is best for the U.S. economy and for hard-working Americans.



Last summer, four talented Georgians served as interns in my Washington, D.C. Office. Pictured left to right: Christopher Coes, Lewis Singletary, Allison Barnes and Rivers Odom

Georgia Students Make a Difference in Nation's Capitol

Georgia students continue to play an important role not only in my offices in Washington, Albany, Columbus and Valdosta, but in the U.S. Congress as a whole.

The Congressional Page Program brings sixty-six high school juniors from across the country to work and study in the nation's capital. Their service as messengers on the floor of the House of Representatives, as well as within the House complex, is invaluable to the daily operations of Congress. This past summer, we were proud to have Nigel Williams, who is currently a senior at Carver High School in Columbus, represent the Second Congressional District in this prestigious program. We were told that he did an extraordinary job.

I have also been fortunate to have some of Southwest Georgia's best and brightest young men and women work in my offices as interns. Often taking on the responsibilities of full-time staff members, these students learn the ins and outs of the legislative process, while providing invaluable services to the people of Georgia's Second Congressional District.

Interns are generally college juniors and seniors with an interest in government and

an eagerness to both work and learn. For information on becoming an intern, visit <http://bishop.house.gov> or call one of my offices listed at the bottom of the page.

Student Artist Honored

Stephanie Shopp, a senior at Deerfield-Windsor School was the Second Congressional District's 2005 winner of the Congressional Art Competition. Her winning entry, entitled "Hands" is currently on display in the U.S. Capitol, along with the winning entries from other Congressional districts across the country. An effort to encourage young people to develop their artistic talents, the annual contest is open to all Second District students.

Medicare

(Continued from page one)

and not every plan will include all or any of the medications he or she is taking.

In selecting a plan, beneficiaries should list the prescription drugs that they are taking and their preferred pharmacies. They should also consider their current level of coverage.

"If your coverage is as good as Medicare's, you don't have to make a decision, because you have coverage," explained Gaetana Marshall, the Georgia state lead for the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services. "But if you don't [have coverage as good as Medicare's] that is when we start to look at people and say 'this is the time frame you have to make a decision.' And there is plenty of time."

For those who enrolled in a plan before December 31st, coverage began January 1, 2006; however, Medicare beneficiaries can continue to enroll until May 15 without penalty.

For more information or to find help selecting a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan visit: www.medicare.gov or www.cms.hhs.gov or call Georgia Cares at 1-800-669-8387.

Emergency Preparedness

Remembering the Victims of Hurricane Katrina

In the wake of one of the most devastating natural disasters in American History, Hurricane Katrina, we must not forget our fellow citizens whose loss of homes, lives and loved ones has been immeasurable.

Southwest Georgia's response to the disaster was nothing short of extraordinary. Defining what it means to be good neighbors, the people of the Second Congressional District donated their homes, their time and their money to the many in need. It is because of this welcoming spirit that we are now home to so many of the Gulf Coast's displaced.

As we learned in September, natural disasters do not discriminate against their victims; however, disadvantaged communities often have the most difficult time responding to disaster. As we saw in the devastating aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the lack of resources to plan and to evacuate can mean the difference between life and death for so many.

After Tropical Storm Alberto flooded much of our district in 1994, I have led an effort in Congress to address the specific emergency needs of disadvantaged communities. Four times since 2002, we have gotten language included in first the VA/ HUD Appropriations bill and now the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations bill, which has directed the Federal Emergency Management Agency to study and address disaster preparedness in these communities. Unfortunately the study did not begin until April 2005, which proved too late to make a difference for victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

I continue to remind my colleagues of the importance of this study which is slated to conclude in May 2007 and of addressing emergency preparedness in our most disadvantaged communities. The best way to honor the victims of Hurricane Katrina is to learn from our mistakes and work to make sure that such a tragedy never happens again.

Need Help?

Working for the People of Georgia's Second Congressional District

My most important job as a Member of Congress is serving my constituents. Whether we are helping our young people start their military career at one of the U.S. Service Academies, making plans for your family to tour the U.S. Capitol or working with the Social Security Administration to locate your lost Social Security check, my staff members and I are always available to assist you.

Additionally, our office has recently launched a new website, with one of the most comprehensive constituent services sections on Capitol Hill. Designed to help you navigate federal resources and bureaucracy, the site provides on-line answers to many of your most frequently asked questions, as well as information on how the federal government can help you.

Contact Congressman Sanford Bishop...<http://bishop.house.gov>

WASHINGTON, DC: 2429 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515-1002 Phone: (202) 225-3631 Fax: (202) 225-2203

ALBANY: 235 Roosevelt Avenue Albany Towers, Suite 114 Albany GA 31701 Phone: (229) 439-8067 Fax: (229) 436-2099

COLUMBUS: 18 Ninth Street, Suite 201 Columbus, GA 31901 Phone: (706) 320-9477 Fax: (706) 320-9479

VALDOSTA: Federal Building, Rm. 225 401 North Patterson Street Valdosta, GA 31601 Phone: (229) 247-9705 Fax: (229) 241-1035

E-Mail: bishop.email@mail.house.gov