



**Representative**  
**Tom Petri**  
**Reports**  
*to The Sixth District*

**6TH DISTRICT OFFICES**

**WASHINGTON**  
 2462 Rayburn Building  
 Washington, D.C. 20515  
 (202) 225-2476

**FOND DU LAC**  
 490 West Rolling Meadows Dr  
 Suite B  
 Fond du Lac, WI 54937  
 (920) 922-1180  
 Toll-free 1-800-242-4883

**OSHKOSH**  
 2390 State Road 44, Suite B  
 Oshkosh, WI 54904  
 (920) 231-6333

**Congressional Accomplishments**

BY REPRESENTATIVE TOM PETRI

Congress gets the most attention when there's conflict and scandal. Certainly, the institution hosts its share of big egos, pettiness and self-serving behavior, but most of my colleagues are hardworking people trying to do their best for their country and home districts.

Newspapers, television and radio give the barest hints about the many complicated issues addressed on the House and Senate floors. However, as we go to print halfway through the 109th Congress I can report that Congress has completed the details of federal spending for 2006, which we anticipate to total \$2.55 trillion passing through thousands of federal programs and activities, each requiring congressional oversight and often policy reforms.

Of this spending, approximately \$1.6 trillion will go to "mandatory" spending, largely to fund entitlement programs such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, Food Stamps and Student Loans.

This leaves \$843 billion for discretionary spending on activities which Congress reconsiders annually, including the FBI, the Coast Guard, education, space exploration, housing, defense and foreign aid.

As part of considering 10 different mammoth spending bills, we address thousands of issues big and small. Among the "small" issues are projects of great importance to local communities.

For instance, I was able to obtain \$500,000 for a program at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh which will help improve our local manufacturers' competitiveness. My efforts also paid off in getting \$782,000 for dredging near Manitowoc and Two Rivers necessary to keep local employers strong, and in obtain-

ing \$2 million each for improvements at the Manitowoc and Sheboygan airports.

Here are a few of the major issues we have considered over the past year:

▲ **The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU):**

This bill has passed both the House and Senate and is now public law. *See the related story on page 3.*

▲ **Class Action Fairness Act:** Approved by Congress, this new law amends the procedures that apply to interstate class action suits to assure fairer outcomes for class members and defendants.

▲ **Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act:** This new law amends federal bankruptcy law to revamp guidelines governing bankruptcy.

▲ **The Job Training Improvement Act:** Passed by the House but not yet the Senate, this bill would help workers by strengthen-

▲ **The Children's Safety Act:** Passed by the House, this bill addresses violence against children by enhancing the protection of children from convicted sex offenders through coordinated state sex offender registration and notification programs.

▲ **Water Resources Development Act:** Passed by the House, this bill authorizes and provides for projects for navigation, environmental restoration, ecosystem restoration, hurricane and storm damage reduction, and flood damage reduction. It directs the Army Corps of Engineers to conduct studies and carry out projects for emergency streambank protection, navigation, improvement of the quality of the environment, aquatic ecosystem restoration, and shoreline protection.

▲ **Gasoline for America's Security Act:** In the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, this House passed bill would increase refinery capacity for gasoline, heating oil, diesel fuel, and jet fuel and coordinate permitting requirements affecting refineries.

▲ **Small Business Health Fairness Act:** This House-passed bill would allow small businesses to join together through association health plans to purchase health insurance for their workers at a lower cost.



**On Nov. 3, 2005, Rep. Petri test-drove a General Motors prototype hydrogen car. The automaker hopes to develop the technology for an affordable production hydrogen car by 2010, a development which can go a long way toward restoring America's energy independence.**

ing one-stop career centers, promoting access to a more comprehensive array of employment, training and related services, establishing a targeted approach to serving youth, and improving performance accountability.

# Recent Legislative Initiatives

*Here are some of the issues I've been working on*

**Fraudulent Household Movers:** It happened to a couple from Thiensville: They contracted to move their household goods from Maine to Wisconsin for \$1,725 - but once their furniture, family heirlooms and keepsakes were out of their possession, the company demanded an additional \$2,000.

When the movers arrived in Thiensville they again demanded extra cash. The family refused, and the movers drove off with their property.

Fortunately, there's a happy ending to this story. The Thiensville police were on hand and intervened, charging the movers with theft by intimidation.

Happy endings are unusual with this scam, however. Because movers engage in interstate commerce, courts have ruled that state and local authorities cannot get involved, so victims are advised to contact the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), hire a lawyer and take the movers to court. Rogue companies correctly assume that most

victims will choose to pay the ransom rather than go through a drawn-out, expensive legal process while their property is who-knows-where.

The vast majority of moving companies operate in a fair, open and honest way, but the muddled regulatory situation has provided a large opening for thugs. A few years ago the Transportation Department estimated that it was receiving 4,000 complaints a year

about scam movers - cries for help which mostly went unanswered because the department simply lacked the staffing and resources necessary to respond adequately.

As Chairman of the House Highways, Transit and Pipelines Subcommittee, I held hearings in 1998 and 2001 on the problem

guage expires on September 30, 2006, so the battle to protect consumers will continue.

**Student Loans:** This is a true story about massive government waste, the opportunity to increase government aid while actually saving taxpayers' money, and the special interests which stand in the way. To explain:

The federal government has had two student loan programs since 1993. Each program provides loans to college, graduate and technical school students on exactly the same terms. They are managed in very different ways, however.

The **Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL)** Program was created in 1965 in a way designed to make student loans inexpensive and widely available. Through FFEL, private banks make loans at federally-mandated rates. If the borrower fails to repay, the government covers the losses. So, in order to ensure that lenders will make the loans on

the government's terms, we essentially eliminate the banks' risk and guarantee a profit.

The **Direct Loan Program** was created in 1993, largely because I and others had realized that there was a better way to do things and campaigned for loans made directly from the U.S. Treasury.

The FFEL program made sense in the '60s when we needed experienced institutions across the country to provide student loans. But by the '80s, it became clear that modern technology had made direct loans more cost-effective and that we could eliminate the government-hired bureaucracy (the banks) which manages FFEL. We created direct loans in order to test our case.

The results are in: Both the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the Administration's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) agree that direct loans are far more cost-effective than FFEL loans. The CBO estimates that government subsidies to the banks end up paying for 12% of FFEL loans, but the subsidy for direct loans is less than one percent.

Nevertheless, today 75% of student loans are made through FFEL even though the terms for students are identical under both programs. Why? Educational institutions generally participate in either one program or the other. The banks are able to "wine and dine" college administrators to get

*continued on next page*



*On Sept. 7, 2005, Rep. Petri took part in a ribbon cutting event in Random Lake marking the preservation of rail service in western Sheboygan County by the Wisconsin Southern Railroad. Rep. Petri played an important role in preserving service on the 37 miles of rail line by helping to arrange for its acquisition by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and its operation by the Wisconsin Southern Railroad.*

and found enforcement by the DOT's Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration ineffective. With limited resources, that agency understandably puts saving lives ahead of consumer protection.

In response, I tried to craft an approach to provide simple justice without mobilizing opposition from the moving industry. I found that even the honest movers fear regulations, frivolous lawsuits and legal actions more than they fear the damage done to their reputations by the crooks in their midst.

I understand and sympathize with those concerns, but something had to be done, so I introduced the **Securing Consumers' Assurance in Moving (SCAM) Act** to strengthen consumer laws in this area.

Household movers continued to be strongly opposed to my proposal, but I was ultimately able to get important consumer protections included in the major transportation bill which Congress approved and the President signed into law last summer.

Among other provisions, in order to put more cops on the beat in policing this industry, the new law made it clear that the states would be authorized to intervene to enforce federal consumer protection rules.

This was a major victory for consumers, but unfortunately, in a later bill a senior Senator forced through a loophole big enough for household movers to drive an 18-wheeler through. This weakening lan-

## Internships for College Students

Would you like to learn more about our federal government - especially how Congress really works? If so, you might consider an internship in my Washington office. Interns in my office are unpaid, but I cooperate with schools that are willing to offer credit for the experience.

The work required is not complicated, but it is important and provides a chance to get a first-hand look at Congress and government service.

For further information, check my Web site at

[www.house.gov/petri/intern.htm](http://www.house.gov/petri/intern.htm)

# Highway Bill a Big Deal for U.S., Wisconsin

After years of effort, this past summer Congress was finally able to come to agreement on a new six-year \$286.45 billion highway bill, which President Bush promptly signed into law. As Chairman of the Highways, Transit and Pipelines Subcommittee, I was privileged to play a key role.

The new law includes a 30 percent increase in highway funding for Wisconsin. This will mean 10,000 new jobs for our state.

As passed, Wisconsin will receive an average of \$711.9 million per year in highway funding due to the formula we've worked out. We will get back \$1.06 for every dollar our drivers send to the Highway Trust Fund through federal gasoline taxes.

Clearly, transportation projects are expensive, but modern highways and efficient transportation are essential to maintaining America's competitive edge. They are also essential to Wisconsin's economy and quality of life.

It was a struggle to craft the new transportation program in a way that was fair to every region, but its importance would be hard to exaggerate.

The law designates Highway 41 as a future interstate, to be known as I-41, and dedicates at least \$72 million for improvements along the corridor, including reconstruction of the Lake Butte des Morts Bridge.

I was able to include Sheboygan County as one of four locations to participate in

a new pilot program to demonstrate the value of non-motorized transportation facilities. The county will receive \$25 million over five years to carry out plans for bike and pedestrian trails. With its participation in the program, the county has joined an exclusive group whose other members are Marin County in California, Columbia in Missouri, and the Minneapolis-St. Paul area in Minnesota.

The bike trails will enhance our area's reputation as a great place to live, work and visit.

Also included are \$8 million to replace the 17th Street Lift Bridge in Two Rivers and \$6 million for grade separation between railroad tracks and Pioneer Rd. in Fond du Lac. Sen. Herb Kohl also deserves credit for his help with these projects.

I also secured a total of over \$18 million for Wisconsin for the purchase of buses and the construction of intermodal facilities. The state transit formula funds will increase to a total of \$364.8 million over six years.

The new law also includes my initiative to crack down on fraudulent household goods movers.



*On Aug. 10, 2005, President Bush signed the Highway Bill into law. Rep. Petri, who helped craft the bill as Chairman of the House Highways, Transit and Pipelines Subcommittee, was on hand for the signing (behind the President to the left in a dark jacket).*

## Recent Legislative Initiatives *continued from page 2*

them to choose FFEL.

To encourage the use of direct loans, I have introduced legislation which would reward schools which use the most efficient system by giving them part of the government's savings in the form of increased Pell Grants for low-income students. A CBO estimate of my proposal shows that a moderate increase in direct loan use would boost student grant aid by \$17 billion over 10 years at no cost to the taxpayers!

**Animal Rights Extremists:** It's fine to advocate humane treatment of animals, and people have the constitutional right to object to the "exploitation" of animals in agriculture, exhibitions and drug testing.

But a rising tide of animal rights extremists use what they call "direct action," which includes death threats, vandalism, animal releases and bombings. Their actions are calculated to aggressively intimidate and harass those identified as targets, including research and biomedical laboratories, fur farms and restaurants. Among their targets have been three different mink farms in the 6th Congressional District.

The mindset of these people is exemplified by Dr. Jerry Vlasak, spokesman for the

North American Animal Liberation Office, who has said, "I think for five lives, 10 lives, 15 human lives, we could save a million, two million, 10 million non-human lives." That's incitement to murder.

Current federal law, including the Animal Enterprises Protection Act, is inadequate to address the threat posed by violent acts committed by animal rights activists. These people have recognized the limits and ambiguities in the statute and have tailored their campaigns to exploit them.

My **Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act of 2005** would address gaps in the law that keep authorities from using it effectively. Drafted with technical assistance from

counter-terrorism experts at the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the bill provides for penalties for intentional economic disruption or damage and for intentionally causing bodily harm or placing a person in reasonable fear of death or bodily harm.

The bill also specifically addresses the "tertiary targeting" tactic employed by extremists by prohibiting intentional damage of property belonging to a person or organization with ties to an animal enterprise. The legislation will provide federal authorities with the necessary tools to help prevent and better investigate and prosecute terrorism in support of animal rights.

## The New Prescription Drug Benefit

Many senior citizens have questions about the new Medicare prescription drug benefit. Because this is a major addition to Medicare, it's important for seniors to get the information they need as the May 15 deadline approaches.

Information is available at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) on the Web or by calling **1-800-MEDICARE** (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call **1-877-486-2048**. For more information on who can get extra help with prescription drug costs and how to apply, call the Social Security

Administration at **1-800-772-1213** or visit [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov) on the Web.






# Reports Tom Petri Representative to The Sixth District

Postal Customer  
Sixth Congressional District  
Wisconsin

M.C.  
ECRWSS  
PRSRT STD



Congress of the United States  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
Official Business  
This mailing was prepared, published  
and mailed at taxpayer expense.

## Representative Tom Petri's January 2006 TOWN MEETING SCHEDULE

*Town Meetings provide opportunities to discuss national issues in a group setting.  
My latest round of Town Meetings will take place from January 4 through January 18.  
Please come and express your opinions!*

### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 4th

**1:30 - 2:30 p.m.—MANITOWOC**

City Hall, 900 Quay Street  
City Council Chambers

### 4:00 - 5:00 p.m.—BRILLION

Brillion Community Center  
120 Center Street  
Conference Room

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 5th

**10:00 - 11:00 a.m.—ADAMS**

Municipal Building  
101 North Main Street  
Council Chambers

### 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.—MONTELLO

Marquette County Courthouse  
77 West Park Street, County Board Room

### 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.—GREEN LAKE

Caestecker Public Library, 518 Hill Street  
Conference Room

### TUESDAY, JANUARY 10th

**4:00 - 5:00 p.m.—OSHKOSH**

City Hall, 215 Church Avenue  
Room 406

### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11th

**11:00 - 12:00 Noon—WAUTOMA**

CAPsell Center, 205 East Main Street  
Conference Rooms A & B

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 12th

**9:30 - 10:30 a.m.—WATERTOWN**

Municipal Building, 101 North Main Street  
City Council Chambers

### MONDAY, JANUARY 16th

**3:30 - 4:30 p.m.—NEENAH**

City Hall, 211 Walnut Street  
City Council Chambers

### TUESDAY, JANUARY 17th

**9:30 - 10:30 a.m.—FOND DU LAC**

City-County Government Center  
160 South Macy Street, Legislative Chambers

### 3:30 - 4:30 p.m.—BEAVER DAM

Beaver Dam Community Library  
311 North Spring Street, Welsh Meeting Room

### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18th

**9:30 - 10:30 a.m.—SHEBOYGAN**

Mead Public Library, 710 North 8th Street  
Rocca Meeting Room