

# **Rep. Petri's E-Newsletter**

## **January 7, 2009**

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### **Welcome to the 111th Congress**

The new congress started yesterday with the election of the Speaker of the House, the swearing in of the members, and work on the rules under which the House will operate.

Traditionally, Congress takes the weeks between our first day and the presidential inauguration to meet with constituents in home districts and prepare for the session ahead. This year, however, we expect to be on the floor and in the committees developing emergency economic stimulus legislation.

Under normal circumstances, I have always championed tight budgets. The current global economic crisis, however, requires an enormous level of federal spending to avoid dire consequences.

I am encouraged that President-elect Obama's stimulus plan appears likely to include a significant private sector component designed to boost economic activity through tax cuts and credits to individuals and businesses. But considerable federal spending will necessarily play the leading role to make sure that jobs are created and people have incomes which, in turn, will help support the purchase of private sectors goods and services.

This is not the time to nickel-and-dime the problem. A "shock and awe" approach is needed to give people confidence that the government is taking the massive steps required. It is better to have a big program up front which can later be cut back rather than risk being too timid and having to come back repeatedly to keep things moving.

I realize that many who have yet to be hurt by the recession will think this is an overreaction, but the risks of doing too little are greater than they have been in many decades. Once we have regained our economic balance, it will be time to get back to budgetary balance as well.

### **Coming Up In Congress**

**Stimulus** - Proposals for the stimulus package include tax cuts for individuals and businesses, aid to state and local governments for school construction, Medicaid, expansion of unemployment benefits eligibility, investments in clean energy, broadband availability, medical records technology and more.

As a senior member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I am particularly aware of the benefits we can expect from anticipated additional funding for highways, transit, airports and water infrastructure. Past budget constraints have left us with many billions of dollars worth of delayed projects and postponed maintenance and repair. If we have to spend money to energize the economy, at least we can use it to do things that really need doing and that will provide economic benefits for decades ahead.

**Aviation Bill** - As the ranking Republican on the Aviation Subcommittee, I have been closely involved with the effort to reauthorize legislation to provide grants for airport improvements, modernize the air traffic control system, and fund safety and environmental programs, Federal Aviation Administration facilities, administration and operations. The previous multi-year authorization expired in September 2007, being replaced with short-term extensions. The House approved a reauthorization bill in September 2007, but the Senate failed to act. With the new Congress, we have to start over again.

**Highway Bill** - The current authorization for the federal highway and transit program expires at the end of September. It will be difficult to craft a reauthorization bill in time to avoid short-term extensions, but as a senior member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee I will be involved in the effort and will do all I can to protect the gains we have made since the early '80s in getting Wisconsin's fair share of federal highway funding.

**Education** - As a senior member of the Education and Labor Committee, I expect to spend a lot of time over the months ahead working to renew and improve the No Child Left Behind Act, which needs to be reauthorized.

## **Personal Initiatives**

During the last Congress I had significant legislative successes dealing with student loans. I plan to continue my efforts to improve the Direct Loan program, especially the income-contingent option which allows students to tie their repayment rates to their post-school incomes.

My plans also include working to strengthen the Troops to Teachers Program, which helps retiring military personnel to qualify as public school teachers, and continuing my initiative to make computerized "adaptive" testing acceptable when schools seek to fulfill their federal testing mandates.

Also planned: the reintroduction of two campaign reform bills - one designed to encourage small contributions in order to dilute the influence of large contributors, the other to require public disclosure when campaigns use phony telephone polls in order to spread rumors about opponents.

And I intend to continue pushing for legislation to provide better tax treatment for volunteers who get reimbursement for using personal vehicles while doing charity work.

### **Legislative Update**

On December 10, the House voted to loan \$14 billion to the auto industry. I voted against the proposal because I thought there were insufficient safeguards to make sure that the companies would use the funds in ways which would enable them to survive without further bailouts. The bill did not make it through the Senate, but President Bush ultimately used previous authority to fund a few more months of automaker operations.

### **Town Meetings Scheduled**

I will be holding Town Meetings throughout the 6th Congressional District in late January and early February. This is an opportunity to meet with me to discuss federal issues in a group setting. Please join me if you can. The schedule follows:

#### **THURSDAY, JANUARY 29**

10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

WATERTOWN  
Municipal Building  
106 Jones St., City Council Chambers

2:00 - 3:00 p.m.

BEAVER DAM  
City Hall, 205 South Lincoln Ave.  
City Council Chambers

#### **FRIDAY, JANUARY 30**

1:00 - 2:00 p.m.

FOND DU LAC  
City-County Government Center  
160 South Macy St., Legislative Chambers

3:30 - 4:30 p.m.

KIEL  
City Hall, 621 Sixth St.  
City Council Chambers

#### **SATURDAY, JANUARY 31**

10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

SHEBOYGAN  
Mead Public Library, 710 North 8th St.  
Rocca Meeting Room

1:00 - 2:00 p.m.

MANITOWOC  
Manitowoc Public Library, 707 Quay St.,  
Balkansky Community Room

## **THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5**

1:00 - 2:00 p.m.                      PRINCETON  
City Hall, 438 West Main St.  
City Council Chambers

3:30 - 4:30 p.m.                      OSHKOSH  
City Hall, 215 Church Ave.  
Room 406

## **FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6**

9:00 - 10:00 a.m.                      ADAMS  
Municipal Building, 101 North Main St.  
Council Chambers

11:00 - 12:00 Noon                      WAUTOMA  
CAPsell Center, 205 East Main St.  
Conference Room D

2:00 - 3:00 p.m.                      MONTELLO  
Marquette County Courthouse, 77 West Park St.  
Public Safety Training Room

## **SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7**

9:00-10:00 a.m.                      MENASHA  
Elisha D. Smith Public Library  
440 First St., Company E Room

## **Digital TV Transition**

People have a lot on their minds and may not realize that standard over-the-air TV broadcast signals from full-power stations will cease Feb. 17. If you or someone you know watches TV using an antenna and a standard analog television, you will need to add a digital converter box to translate the new digital signal for your set. Those with cable or satellite service should be okay since those services will continue to provide analog signals to older sets.

The federal government is making a major effort to get the word out and has been offering \$40 coupons to help defray the cost of the converter boxes. Full details are available online at <https://www.dtv2009.gov/>. Because of the high demand, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration is currently putting applicants on a waiting list, and it is important to get on the list quickly due to limited funds for the program.

Converter boxes are available at stores which sell electronics. If you, or anyone you know, will need a converter box, I encourage you to act quickly to avoid the inconvenience of a lost TV signal.

More information on the digital transition can be found at my Web site:  
<http://petri.house.gov>.

**Keep Current With Issue Updates!**

Would you like to be notified about key votes and activities in the House of Representatives? If you would like to receive periodic updates on issues of interest to you, such as agriculture, health care or energy, please sign up at:

<http://petri.house.gov/subscribe.shtml>