

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

### **February 4, 2010**

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### **Deficits As Far As The Eye Can See**

President Obama released his proposed budget this past Monday for the 2011 fiscal year which begins Oct. 1, 2010. The dire news in the budget wasn't unexpected, but it's alarming nevertheless.

The President is proposing \$3.8 trillion in spending for FY2011. Of this, \$1.3 trillion - one-third of the budget, equaling 8.3 percent of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) - would be paid for with borrowed money.

Under the President's plan, for 2011 alone the federal government will borrow \$4,122 on behalf of each Wisconsin resident - adults and children alike.

For the long term, the President predicts that deficits will decline to 3.7 percent of GDP in 2017, but then will start rising again. Deficits of this size are not sustainable.

### **On Congressional Pay**

In town meetings, Internet discussions, and constituent e-mail messages, I am hearing a consistent theme: Members of Congress should not vote themselves a pay raise when so many are struggling without work and federal deficits are growing. I agree, and have cosponsored H.R. 4255, the Stop the Automatic Pay Raise for Members of Congress in 2011 Act.

Under current law, Members of Congress receive an automatic cost-of-living-adjustment based on the average wage increase of private sector employees unless both the House and the Senate vote to disallow the increase. I oppose these automatic increases and object to congressional leaders' frequent practice of blocking straight up-or-down votes to disallow them.

Last year, I cosponsored a bill to cancel the 2010 pay increase, and we were successful in stopping it. I am hopeful that we will be able to repeat that success.

Our nation faces a challenging economy. We must confront double-digit unemployment and persistent and unsustainable federal budget deficits so that we can restore growth. Allowing

the automatic congressional pay raise to go forward sends the wrong message, and it's bad policy.

## **The Health Care Debacle**

Health care reform has come to a standstill in Congress. At last, the Administration and congressional leaders are waking up to the fact that the people back home do not support the bloated reform bills that have been approved by the House and Senate.

Still, supporters of the House and Senate bills continue to look for ways to pass comprehensive reform, no matter how unpopular. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has said she is willing to "climb fences," "pole vault," and "parachute in" to force a bill through. She resorts to such analogies because it has become quite difficult to suggest a plausible path to actual legislative success.

Even though the big government approach to health care reform seems about to give up the ghost, most people agree that we still need reform - as long as it's sensible. I think there are a number of positive changes we can make in health care policy, but we have to keep on the alert for efforts to get an overblown bill passed through fancy legislative maneuvering.

## **New On Facebook**

To expand my connection with constituents, I have created a page on the popular social networking site, Facebook. My Facebook page will serve as another channel to post material included on my congressional website (<http://petri.house.gov>), such as press releases, videos, photos, statements, columns, articles, newsletter information, and upcoming events.

I hope this page will be convenient for Facebook users, notifying those of you who choose to become "fans" when new material is posted.

Visit my new page at: [www.facebook.com/ThomasPetri](http://www.facebook.com/ThomasPetri) and click to become a "fan."

## **Coming Up In Congress**

Today the House is taking up **Senate amendments to H.J. Res. 45**. This bill would provide a \$1.9 trillion increase in the government's borrowing authority.

Next week it is likely that the House will consider legislation to repeal the health insurance companies' anti-trust exemption. The Democrats may offer other individual health bills while determining how to move forward on comprehensive care.

Farther out, the Senate is likely to pass a stimulus/jobs bill. The House and Senate leaderships will then likely negotiate and win approval of a final version.

## **What I've Been Up To**

In early January I held town meetings in 12 cities and towns around the 6th Congressional District. Attendance was generally high, and concerns about the House and Senate health care bills dominated the discussion, although other issues were raised.

On January 8, I participated in a government class at Fond du Lac High School and was the featured speaker at the Sheboygan Chamber of Commerce monthly First Friday Forum.

On January 18, I had lunch with Dodge County officials and visited the Clearview Long Term Care and Rehabilitation Facility in Juneau. I was the featured speaker that evening in Appleton at the Northeast Wisconsin Chapter of Financial Executives International.

On January 21, the Congressional Dairy Farmers Caucus held a meeting where we discussed the health of the dairy industry in our districts and planned responses, including a joint letter to our trade representative, Ron Kirk, expressing our concerns about upcoming trade negotiations in the Pacific, especially as relates to New Zealand and its low-cost dairy products.

Today, Feb. 4, the Aviation Subcommittee, where I serve as Ranking Republican, is holding a hearing to receive an update on the FAA's "Call to Action" to strengthen regional airlines and pilot training.

## **Legislative Update**

The following item should have been in the last newsletter but was left out:

***December 16, 2009:***

**The House considered H.R. 4314, legislation to raise the federal debt limit to \$12.4 trillion, an increase of \$290 billion.**

The House approved this debt limit increase by a vote of 218 - 214. I voted "no." I recognize that raising the debt limit is necessary to provide the Treasury with the authority to sell bonds, but the bill did not include any meaningful spending reform provisions, so I chose to object. The increase was signed into law by the President on Dec. 28, 2009.

The House was out of session for most of January. The first substantive vote for the year was today:

***February 4, 2010***

By a vote of 422 - 5, with my support, the House approved **H.R. 4061, the Cybersecurity Enhancement Act**. This bill would reauthorize several cybersecurity initiatives.

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