

Rep. Petri's E-Newsletter

June 11, 2010

- * Breakdown of the Budget Process**
- * Troops to Teachers Success**
- * Coming Up In Congress**
- * On My Schedule**
- * What I've Been Up To**
- * Questionnaire Results**
- * America Speaking Out**
- * Legislative Update**

Breakdown of the Budget Process

How excessive is congressional spending right now? Think of the video we've all seen of the oil spewing out of BP's pipe at the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico. It's that out of control.

Case in point: The breakdown of the budget process in Congress.

President Obama's 2011 budget proposal forecasts a record deficit of \$1.6 trillion, or 10.6% of gross domestic product - the highest level since World War II. The President's plan is only a proposal, however, as Congress is supposed to produce the actual budget.

Under the Budget Reform Act of 1974, around April of each year the House and Senate are each supposed to approve separate budget resolutions which are then negotiated into a single outline which tells the various congressional committees how much they are allowed to spend. On four occasions over the years, the House and Senate have failed to negotiate agreements successfully, but we can say this much: Every year since the 1974 budget reforms, the House has managed to approve its own outline for the budget.

Until this year, that is.

What's the problem? In addition to outlining spending for the year ahead, budget resolutions include plans for multiple years, laying out anticipated spending and revenues, and calculating anticipated deficits and surpluses.

If the House were to pass a 2011 budget resolution, it would establish as official House policy that we will run enormous deficits for as far as the eye can see. But several Democrats in the House are reluctant to associate themselves with such a document - which is understandable since such a document is bound to be ridiculously irresponsible.

Of course, it's theoretically possible that the current House majority could propose a budget resolution mapping a path back to balanced budgets - but no. Substantial numbers of House Democrats think we should be spending *more* than currently planned in order to fund

government jobs and stimulate the economy. With members of her own party pulling in opposite directions, Speaker Pelosi appears to have given up on finding a majority that would vote in favor of any official budget, whether big spending or moderate.

Instead, the House seems likely to approve budget targets for next year alone, allowing the majority to avoid admitting and addressing how out of control our financial situation has become for the indefinite future. Meanwhile, the total federal debt will top \$13.6 trillion this year and climb to an estimated \$19.6 trillion by 2015. Put another way, the debt currently equals 93 percent of our gross domestic product, and is estimated to equal 102 percent in five years.

Troops to Teachers Success

In a May 28 vote, the House approved an amendment to a defense authorization bill which I coauthored to strengthen the successful Troops to Teachers (TTT) Program. TTT helps retiring members of the military to become teachers. I have supported TTT since its authorization in 1994, and since that time the program has helped to place over 12,000 veterans in the nation's classrooms.

Last month's amendment would open the program up to more veterans and make other improvements. This legislation is pending in the Senate.

Coming Up In Congress

For the weeks prior to the July 4 break, the House may consider:

- * An **"Extender and Extensions" package**. This is a catch-all bill to extend various expiring tax cuts, unemployment benefits and stimulus spending. The House and Senate have already passed differing versions;

- * A **war supplemental** - additional funds for U.S. operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Other unrelated spending may be included;

- * **The DISCLOSE Act** - a campaign reform bill in response to the Supreme Court's recent Citizens United decision on corporate and union campaign spending activities;

- * **Financial Regulation Reform Conference Report** (resulting from House-Senate negotiations);

- * A **"Green Jobs" bill**;

- * A **911 First Responder Victims Fund**

- * A **Conference Report on Iran sanctions**.

- * A final version of the **FAA reauthorization bill**.

On My Schedule

I have various events scheduled around the 6th District, but I am especially looking forward to attending the "welcome home" event for **Wisconsin National Guard troops** in Stevens Point on Saturday, June 19.

My latest round of **Town Meetings** will take place from July 6 through July 12 at 12 locations throughout Wisconsin. Town Meetings provide opportunities to discuss national issues in a group setting. The dates and locations follow:

<p>TUESDAY, JULY 6th 9:30 – 10:30 a.m.—Town of Ixonia Ixonia Town Hall W1195 Marietta Ave. 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.—Mayville City Hall 15 South School St. City Council Chambers</p>	<p>WEDNESDAY, JULY 7th 9:30 – 10:30 a.m.—North Fond du Lac Community Center 280 Garfield St. Combined Hall 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.—Howards Grove Village Hall 913 South Wisconsin Dr. Community Center 3:30 – 4:30 p.m.—Hilbert Hilbert Community Center 45 North 5th St.</p>	<p>THURSDAY, JULY 8th 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.—Darboy Buchanan Town Hall N178 County Road N 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.—Mishicot Vets Club 314 West Main St.</p>
<p>FRIDAY, JULY 9th 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.—Omro City Hall, 205 S. Webster Ave. Council Chambers 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.—Wild Rose Community Center 500 Division St.</p>		<p>MONDAY, JULY 12th 11:00 – 12:00 Noon—Friendship Village Hall, 507 West Lake St. 2:30 – 3:30 p.m.—Endeavor Community Center, 400 Church St. 4:30 – 5:30 p.m.—Princeton City Council Chambers 431 West Main St. (Back of Fire Station)</p>

On August 12, I am hosting a **Government Grants and Programs** conference at Lakeshore Technical College in Cleveland.

On August 16, I will hold a conference on **Small Business Assistance**, to be held at Moraine Park and Technical College in Fond du Lac.

Information on each program and registration materials are available at <http://petri.house.gov>.

What I've Been Up To

On May 8, I participated in an All-Class Reunion at **Fond du Lac High School** and presented a Congressional Record Statement honoring the school on its 150th anniversary to high school principal Jon Wiltzius.

On May 10, I took part in the monthly **Sheboygan County Legislative Breakfast**, meeting with Sheboygan County board members, department heads and other elected officials who represent the county.

Later the same day I spoke at a **Peace Officer Memorial Service** in Manitowoc, and presented a House Resolution Certificate at **Silver Lake College**, honoring its 75th anniversary.

On May 17, I hosted House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Jim Oberstar as he visited various projects of the **Sheboygan County Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program**.

On May 23, I spoke and presented a flag at the dedication ceremony for the new Veterans Memorial in **Marytown**. Later that day, I attended the **Eagle Scout ceremony** for Kerstin Gorsuch of Neshkoro, and presented him with a Certificate of Congressional Recognition.

On June 1, I toured the **Fisher-Barton Group's** main Watertown facility and took time to address and answer questions from employees. Then I toured **Thermal Spray Technologies** of Sun Prairie (a Division of Fisher-Barton) and visited the **Bethesda Lutheran Communities Corporate Center** in Watertown.

On June 2, I visited **Mercury Marine** in Fond du Lac for a review of their new Hybrid Propulsion Development Program and a ride on their hybrid prototype boat. Later that day, I toured the **Regional U.S. Postal Facility in Oshkosh**.

On June 3, I attended a breakfast held to honor the **Brillion Nature Center and Calumet County Bank** for their 10-year partnership. I later toured **TIDI Products** in Neenah and heard concerns about how the new health care law could have adverse affects on their medical devices business. I also attended the **St. Lawrence Seminary Sesquicentennial Celebration** in Mt. Calvary.

On June 4, I visited **Lakeside Foods** in Manitowoc and toured the company's Manitowoc Distribution center, which serves as its primary frozen packaging facility. I also attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony in Elkhart Lake for the new energy-efficient Road America Orion Tech Center, which will be used as a staging area for race vehicles. Then I toured Eclipse Manufacturing in Sheboygan, and attended a grand opening ceremony for the new **Manitowoc Family Aquatic Center**.

On June 5, I attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony and grand opening for the new **Fond du Lac YMCA**. Later that day, I attended the **Wisconsin Hmong Refugees 35th Anniversary Celebration and Healing Banquet** in Sheboygan, and offered remarks.

On June 7, I participated in a **bicycle tour** in Washington with the Crown Prince of Denmark, NBA star Caron Butler (whose foundation has donated 2,500 bicycles to underprivileged children in Racine and Washington, D.C.) and others.

Questionnaire Results

In my newsletter mailed in March, I asked 6th district residents to respond to my 2010 questionnaire. You will find the survey results at: <http://petri.house.gov/2010Questionnaire.pdf>

America Speaking Out

The House Republican Conference in Congress is asking all Americans to take part in building a new governing agenda through an "America Speaking Out" initiative.

This project allows individuals to suggest ideas and weigh in on suggestions offered by others. To learn more, please visit my website at: <http://petri.house.gov> and click on "America Speaking Out."

Legislative Update

April 27, 2010:

The House considered **H.R. 5146**, a bill to provide that Members of Congress shall not receive a cost of living adjustment in pay during fiscal year 2011.

I voted with the majority of the House in passing this legislation by a vote of 402 - 15. The Senate passed the bill the next day, and President Obama signed H.R. 5146 into law on May 14, 2010.

April 28, 2010:

The House considered **H.R. 5013, the IMPROVE Acquisition Act of 2010**. H.R. 5013 implemented a number of improvements to the defense acquisition process for procurement of goods and services other than weapon systems (information technology, for example).

H.R. 5013 passed the House by a vote of 417-3. I voted in favor of this legislation. The bill is now pending in the Senate.

Thursday, April 29, 2010:

The House considered **H.R. 2499, the Puerto Rico Democracy Act**. This legislation authorizes a federally sanctioned plebiscite to determine the political status of the island, which is broken up into a two-ballot process. The results would then be transmitted to the President and Congress, though no action by Congress is required in response.

The House passed this bill by a vote of 223-169, 1 Present. I voted against this legislation because Puerto Rico has always had the right to hold a national referendum to determine its political status and has done so, without any interference from Congress. Additionally, this process allows for one political status to win the plebiscite with only a plurality rather than a majority, which can then be unfairly used as a mandate for Puerto Rico to adopt that status.

The bill is now pending in the Senate.

May 6, 2010:

The House considered **H.R. 5019, the Home Star Energy Retrofit Act of 2010**. The bill would create several programs to provide rebates to consumers who retrofit their homes to achieve energy savings.

H.R. 5019 passed the House by a vote of 246 - 161. I voted against this legislation because it would authorize over \$6 billion in new spending at a time when the federal government is facing significant budget deficits. The bill is now pending in the Senate.

May 28, 2010

There were several votes on May 28, including the following:

* The House considered the Senate amendment to **H.R. 4213, the American Jobs and Closing Tax Loopholes Act of 2010**. In the first of two votes on this amendment, the House adopted the bulk of the bill's provisions, including an extension of unemployment benefits, extensions of various expired tax benefits, a summer jobs program, funds to settle two class action lawsuits against the federal government, reauthorizing provisions to provide for government subsidies for a variety of private-activity bonds, as well as permanent tax increases for certain business groups.

The House voted 215 - 204 to approve these provisions. I voted against adoption because the spending, much of it over the next 12 - 18 months, would add tens of billions of dollars to the federal deficit.

* The House considered the second of its two votes on **H.R. 4213, the American Jobs and Closing Tax Loopholes Act of 2010**, on postponing a reduction in Medicare reimbursements for physicians until 2012 and increasing these reimbursements 2.2 percent for the remainder of 2010 and 1 percent for 2011.

The House voted to support these increases by a vote of 245 - 171. I voted against the increases because these spending provisions were not accompanied by offsets to reduce the impact on the deficit.

* The House considered **H.R. 5116, the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act**. This legislation authorizes \$48 billion over three years for the National Science Foundation, Department of Energy's Office of Science, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology to provide for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) educational programs.

The House passed this bill by a vote of 262—150. While I strongly support basic research and development and STEM education programs, I voted against this legislation because, at a time when we have high federal deficits, it roughly doubles the authorization funding level from the 2007 version of COMPETES, while failing to take into account the \$5

billion these agencies received in the Stimulus bill. It also creates numerous new and unnecessary or duplicate programs.

The bill is now pending in the Senate.

* The House considered **H.R. 5136, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011**. This legislation would authorize \$567 billion for the Department of Defense and the national security programs of the Department of Energy.

H.R. 5136 passed the House by a vote of 229 - 186. I voted against this legislation because it contained unnecessary spending opposed by the Defense Department and premature policy changes (see below). This bill is now pending in the Senate.

Several amendments to H.R. 5136 were considered before passage of the bill, including the following:

* The House considered an **amendment to H.R. 5136**, which would repeal the 1993 law known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

This amendment passed the House by a vote of 234 - 194. I voted against it as I believe it is premature to change the policy before the Department of Defense concludes its report on how it would be implemented.

* The House considered an **amendment to H.R. 5136** which would strike funding for the Joint Strike Fighter's Alternate Engine Program.

This amendment failed in the House by a vote of 193 - 231. I voted in support of it because, given our large federal deficits, we should not be spending \$3 billion on an additional engine that the Department of Defense has deemed unnecessary.

* The House considered an **amendment to H.R. 5136** regarding the KC-X aerial refueling aircraft (tanker) program or any successor program. The amendment would require the Secretary of Defense to consider any "unfair competitive advantage" bidders possess on contract bids.

This amendment passed the House by a vote of 410 - 8. I voted in favor of it so that European subsidies to Airbus will be considered when tanker bids are evaluated by the Defense Department.

* The House considered a block of **amendments to H.R. 5136** including an amendment I cosponsored to transfer the successful Troops to Teachers (TTT) Program from the Education Department to the Defense Department and make important changes to ensure it will continue to provide opportunities for veterans transitioning into second careers as educators.

The block of amendments passed the House by a vote of 423 - 1. I voted in favor of the amendments.

June 10, 2010:

The House considered **H.R. 5072, the Federal Housing Administration Reform Act of 2010**. This legislation is intended to address financial and structural concerns about HUD's Federal Housing Administration's mortgage guarantee program that have arisen as the agency has taken a greater role in mortgage finance.

H.R. 5072 passed the House by a vote of 406 - 4. I voted with the majority in favor of approving this legislation.

The bill is now pending in the Senate.

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>

Also, I invite you to visit my website at:

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

And follow me on Facebook at:

<http://www.facebook.com/thomaspetri>

To unsubscribe from this newsletter, follow this link:

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