



Congressman Tom Petri

News from Congress



MARCH 2008

LISTENING TO YOU

BY REP. TOM PETRI

When Congress is out of session, I spend much of my time attending community meetings, visiting businesses to keep up-to-date on our local economy, and stopping by schools to discuss “The Job of a Congressman” with younger students and national issues with high schoolers. In mid-January, I had a week of Citizen Hours in 12 locations from Manitowoc to Adams, and from Kimberly to Watertown. Despite the winter weather, there were large turnouts at almost every meeting.

Citizen Hours provide an opportunity for me to meet one-on-one with 6th District residents who need help with Social Security or veterans benefits, who want to discuss privately problems with farm programs, with the Internal Revenue Service and the like, or who simply want to express opinions about issues of national concern.

In late March, I am holding Town Meetings across east-central Wisconsin. These meetings will be forums for group discussions of national issues. The schedule is on page 2. Please come as I look forward to exchanging views with everybody who drops by.

Also, my annual questionnaire is on page 3. If you would like to share your views, please complete it and mail it back. Alternatively, you can fill out the questionnaire online at <http://petri.house.gov/2008questionnaire>

At my January Citizen Hours, some came with concerns about access to affordable health insurance. I noted that I have voted repeatedly in favor of legislation which funds an essential portion of Wisconsin’s **BadgerCare** program for low-income residents, particularly children, and I’m supporting approaches to help small businesses provide insurance. Clearly, we have to do more.

In discussions about policy issues, the

turmoil in the Middle East came up frequently. I’ve found that we have a broad range of views in our communities, but of those who came to see me, most were fed up with our involvement in **Iraq**. “This has gone on longer than World War II and is costing a lot of money,” was a typical comment.

I responded that we are working as quickly as possible to turn things over to the Iraqis and that the new approach Gen. Petraeus is taking of dealing directly with the different communities in Iraq is helping to bring stability to a number of areas. I said that some progress is being made toward our being able to withdraw without creating a situation in which we might be drawn right back in due to chaos in this strategically vital region.

Many were concerned about **the economy**—and with good reason. In fact, fear of a recession has actually caused both parties in Congress and President

Bush to tone down the partisanship and approve an urgent “stimulus package.”

The amounts will vary, but the law will provide \$600 tax rebates for most adults—\$1,200 for couples—plus \$300 for each child younger than 17. Social Security recipients, disabled veterans and low-income workers who pay little income tax will receive a minimum of \$300. The checks should start arriving around May. If more efforts are needed, I’m sure Congress will respond.

Some expressed apprehensions about the safety of **Chinese imports** and worried that foreigners are buying up our industries. Largely in response to concerns about Chinese products, late last year the House approved a bill to expand and modernize the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Hopefully the Senate will act on it soon.

The issue of **foreigners buying up American companies** has been with us

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★ Petri Victories on Higher Education Bill ★

House Votes for Two Petri Amendments

On February 7, the House passed the Higher Education Reauthorization bill.

Some highlights:

- ▲ The House voted to approve two student loan amendments offered by Rep. Petri—to study the feasibility of conducting a loan auction to reduce costs and to strengthen the audit requirements for the direct loan and the guaranteed loan programs.
- ▲ Before being sent to the full House for amendments and passage, the Committee bill already contained various Petri initiatives, including:
 - ❖ a study on allowing students to repay loans along with their taxes,
 - ❖ greater transparency in government settlements with student loan lenders who bilk the government,
 - ❖ making textbooks more accessible for the visually impaired, and
 - ❖ promoting the teaching of civics and history.

For more information, see article at http://petri.house.gov/apps/list/press/wi06_petri/edu_amendment.shtml

LISTENING TO YOU *continued from page 1*

for a long time. We benefit when capital comes into the country, creating jobs and tax revenue. We don't want our businesses to be sold for fire-sale prices, however. If we succeed in strengthening the economy generally, I believe we will restore the proper balance.

Others said that **deficits** are out of control and that the President and Congress aren't doing their jobs when it comes to balancing the budget. I pointed out that, despite the war and the major tax cuts earlier this decade, the deficit in 2007 was manageable at 1.2 percent of the country's

Gross Domestic Product. It would be better to have run a surplus as we did in the late '90s, but a deficit totaling 1.2 percent of GDP is a big improvement over the '80s when, for instance, the 1985 deficit was truly alarming at 5.1 percent.

The deficit is growing again because of the slowing economy and the need to provide economic stimulus, but if the stimulus works, the energized economy will produce enough tax revenue to limit the damage. That said, I still believe the deficit is a serious problem which Congress needs to address to restore fiscal stability.

Have I missed a topic of concern to you? Do you differ with me on the issues? Please come to my Town Meetings to discuss things (and if you think I'm on the right track, I hope you'll come as well!). And, once again, please consider filling out my questionnaire.

I enjoy the back-and-forth of these discussions. I try to be a faithful representative and work to be able to say to individual constituents, "We may not always agree, but I pay attention to what you have to say."



Staying in Touch

Rep. Petri wants to know what the people of the 6th District are thinking about federal policy. In 2007, he held 24 Town Meetings and 12 Citizen Hours. In addition to his duties in Washington, he had nearly 200 scheduled visits to schools and colleges to learn about education issues, to businesses to hear the concerns of employers and employees, to newspapers and radio stations to discuss public policy, to service clubs and community organizations, with local public officials, and more.

On January 21st, he was in Oshkosh at Marvel Manufacturing visiting with Vice President of Sales and Marketing Robert Beach (left), President John Petek (center) and company employees to discuss policies affecting Wisconsin manufacturing, trade and employment.

Town Meetings With Representative Tom Petri

Town Meetings provide opportunities to discuss national issues in a group setting. My latest round of Town Meetings will take place from March 24th through March 29th at 12 locations throughout central Wisconsin. Please come and express your opinions!

Monday, March 24th

9:30 - 10:30 a.m.
KOHLER

Village Hall
319 Highland Drive
Kirkpatrick Center

2:00 - 3:00 p.m.
TWO RIVERS

City Hall, 1717 East Park Street
City Council Chambers

Tuesday, March 25th

2:00 - 3:00 p.m.
MAYVILLE

City Hall
15 South School Street
City Council Chambers

4:00 - 5:00 p.m.
WATERTOWN

Municipal Building
106 Jones Street
City Council Chambers

Wednesday, March 26th

9:00 - 10:00 a.m.
ADAMS

Municipal Building
101 North Main Street
Council Chambers

11:00 - 12:00 Noon
WAUTOMA

Wautoma Public Library
410 West Main Street
Meeting Room

1:30 - 2:30 p.m.
MONTELLO

Marquette County Courthouse
77 West Park Street
Public Safety Training Room

3:30 - 4:30 p.m.
MARKESAN

Municipal Building
150 South Bridge Street
Community Room

Thursday, March 27th

3:30 - 4:30 p.m.
OSHKOSH

City Hall, 215 Church Avenue, Rm 406

Friday, March 28th

2:00 - 3:00 p.m.
NEENAH

City Hall, 211 Walnut Street
City Council Chambers

4:00 - 5:00 p.m.
BRILLION

Brillion Public Library
326 North Main Street
Lower Level Meeting Room

Saturday, March 29th

10:00 - 11:00 a.m.
RIPON

Ripon College, Harwood Union Bldg.
Martin Luther King Lounge
Seward Street

What Are Your Views?

Your views, opinions and feelings are of vital concern to me. Please take a few minutes to answer the important questions listed below.

Please mark your responses below or online at: <http://petri.house.gov/2008questionnaire>

1. On balance, do you think the country is on the right track or the wrong track?

A Right Track **B** Wrong Track

2. With a decrease in violence in Iraq, but with continued difficulties there, which policy most closely matches your views?

A Remain in Iraq until the Iraqi government is strong enough to handle the country's security

B Set a deadline for withdrawal of U.S. troops

C Other

3. There appears to be widespread agreement that our borders need to be secured. Most believe our next step would be to deal with the approximately 12 million illegal aliens already residing in our country. Which approach is closest to your position on this issue?

A Deport all illegal aliens

B Reduce the incentive to come or stay in the U.S. illegally through strict enforcement of sanctions on employers who hire illegal aliens

C Create a "pathway to citizenship" for some based on considerations such as length of stay, gainful employment, lack of criminal record other than the immigration itself, ability to speak English, payment of fines and other considerations

D Other

4. As a young industry which can benefit the environment and promote energy independence, corn ethanol currently receives government subsidies as well as favorable tax treatment. Some have raised concerns that subsidizing ethanol raises food prices and encourages the farming of

ecologically sensitive land. Which approach do you most favor?

A Maintain subsidies **B** Cut subsidies

5. Rising energy prices, concern for the environment, and national security are all arguments made for reducing our reliance on foreign oil. However, any policy change to encourage more domestic production or renewable energy will require commitments from individuals. Which best describes the measures you are willing to take to reduce our dependence on foreign oil?

A Reduce your energy consumption through such actions as installing energy efficient lighting, lowering the thermostat in winter, buying energy efficient appliances and the like

B Pay higher taxes to fund energy research

C Allow increased oil and natural gas drilling offshore and/or in protected wilderness areas

D Support renewable energy measures such as solar, ethanol and wind in your community

E Other

6. Critics of the U.S. health care system point to the limited availability of affordable health insurance as a reason reform is needed. Because the government is sure to be involved in any solution, which do you believe is the government's most appropriate role?

A Taxpayer-funded health insurance for all

B Government-mandated private health insurance coverage, with subsidies for low-income individuals

C Tax incentives to help individuals obtain private, market-based insurance

D Other

7. Some argue that presidential candidates, in raising hundreds of millions of dollars in private contributions, have become subject to excessive influence by wealthy special interests. Others contend that private fundraising allows individual contributors to express their political views and is an important aspect of free speech.

Would you support a mandatory, taxpayer-funded public financing system for Presidential elections?

A Yes **B** No

8. After many years of steady growth, the U.S. appears to be headed for an economic slowdown. Which of the following policies would have the greatest impact on long-term economic growth?

A Federal involvement in responding to the subprime mortgage crisis

B Balancing the federal budget

C Fundamental tax reform, such as a flat tax or a national sales tax

D Reassessment of the value of international trade (exports and imports)

E Other

9. Congressional earmarks, federal financing of local projects identified by individual members of Congress, have become increasingly controversial. For Fiscal Year 2008, these earmarks total \$15 billion, or one-half of one percent of total federal spending of \$2.9 trillion. Do you think Congress should abolish earmarks?

A Yes **B** No

Respondent #1

- 1.** A B
- 2.** A B C
- 3.** A B C D
- 4.** A B
- 5.** A B C D E
- 6.** A B C D
- 7.** A B
- 8.** A B C D E
- 9.** A B

Please indicate your age range 18-34 35-50 50+

Respondent #2

- 1.** A B
- 2.** A B C
- 3.** A B C D
- 4.** A B
- 5.** A B C D E
- 6.** A B C D
- 7.** A B
- 8.** A B C D E
- 9.** A B

Please indicate your age range 18-34 35-50 50+



Questionnaire, Town Meeting Schedule Inside

Reports

Tom Petri
Representative

Postal Customer
Sixth Congressional District
Wisconsin

M.C.
EGRWSS
PRSRT STD



Official Business
U.S. House of Representatives
Congress of the United States
Washington, D.C. 20515

UPCOMING EVENTS IN THE 6TH DISTRICT

► **Congressional Art Competition for High School Students**

Entries from individual high school artists from school districts throughout the 6th District will be displayed and judged this spring in Fond du Lac, with the winning submission to be exhibited for ten months in the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C.

► **Government Business/Grant Opportunities**

Interested in learning how to do business with the federal government or how small businesses and local governments can apply for federal programs? A 6th District conference on these topics will be held on May 29th at Moraine Park Technical College in Fond du Lac.

► **Academy Day**

Representatives from all of the U.S. service academies will be available to discuss application procedures and answer questions from interested students, parents and guidance counselors at this annual event to be held September 20th at the EAA in Oshkosh.

For more information on any of these events, please visit my Web site or contact me via email or by calling one of my district offices.

6th District Offices

Washington

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Visit Congressman Petri on the Web! <http://petri.house.gov/>

Email: Follow the link on the front page of the Web site above.

To receive Rep. Petri's periodic electronic newsletter, go to <http://petri.house.gov/subscribe.shtml>



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Congressman Tom Petri

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Questionnaire Responses