



Congressman Tom Petri

News from Congress



JUNE 2008

THE SIXTH DISTRICT SPEAKS OUT!

BY REP. TOM PETRI

In August, I will be holding **Citizen Hours** in 12 communities across east-central Wisconsin. The schedule is on page four. Please come to share your concerns.

Thank you to all those who responded to the **questionnaire** in my last newsletter. The results are available online at: <http://petri.house.gov> or by calling my toll-free number at 1-800-242-4883.

In late March, I held **Town Meetings** in communities throughout the 6th District. Participants came with a range of issues, and I thought I'd touch on a few of them.

Surprisingly, there was relatively little discussion of the war in **Iraq**. Perhaps people have concluded that we have a partisan stalemate currently on this issue which isn't likely to change until next year.

I am eager to bring our troops home but think that the situation must be stabilized first. We have vital interests in the region, and if we leave chaos behind us, we will end up having to go back in again at tremendous additional cost.

Fortunately, most analysts seem to think that we and our Iraqi allies are finally making progress, however fragile. No one can doubt the tremendous sacrifices our troops and their loved ones are making, and asking them to continue is a painful choice.

The shocking increase in the **cost of energy** was a topic which came up everywhere I went. See "Why Are Energy Prices So High?" on page three for my comments on this issue.

Illegal immigration continues to be an issue, and was raised most often by those who want tougher enforcement, but also by some who favor a welcoming

attitude toward those who come here seeking a better life.

We are a nation of immigrants, but it's clear to me that we must regain control of our borders. That's why I support improving border security in numerous ways. Once we have stopped large-scale illegal border crossings, we will be ready to discuss the most sensible way to respond to the issue of aliens already living here without legal status.

Some in our district express concern about a project called the "**NAFTA Superhighway**." Constituents worry that this will lead to a common currency with our neighbors, and eventually a loss of sovereignty to a North American super-state made up of the U.S. and our two closest neighbors.

There is no project for anything actually named the "NAFTA Superhighway," but we do need improved roads for normal commerce and travel.

I have heard nobody in government circles advocate a single currency or a political union. I think we need various treaties with our neighbors, but a common currency or political union is out of the question.

Concerning **trade** itself, over 17 per-

cent of all manufacturing workers in Wisconsin depend on exports for their jobs. Rising exports have been a bright spot lessening the impact of the economic slowdown in many communities.

Many have concerns about imports from China, but the other side of the coin is that Wisconsin's **exports** to that country have grown 564 percent from 2000 to 2007, totaling \$1.18 billion last year.

The high cost of **health care** is also a major concern of 6th District residents, with some calling for health care through a government-run system like the one in Canada.

It's clear that our current health care system has to change. It's a terrific system for those who can afford it, but it's simply too expensive for most people, and far too many are trying to get by without any coverage at all.

But, every system has its problems. Canadians find that their approach works satisfactorily for routine care, but that costs are kept down by making people wait for weeks or months for the diagnosis and treatment of expensive

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Keep Current With Electronic Newsletters

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>

If you would like to receive my monthly e-newsletter, you can sign up on the same Web page.

The Sixth District Speaks Out! *continued from page 1*

illnesses such as cancer and heart disease. Canadians who want prompt and innovative treatment end up coming to the United States, when they can afford to.

It's time to make use of our federal system of government to find better solutions, which is why I have cosponsored the Health Partnership Act to create a commission comprised of local, state and federal appointees to work in conjunction with the 50 states to develop creative health care solutions. If we make it easier for the states to try out different approaches, we will learn a lot about what works and what should be avoided.

While we search for comprehensive solutions, I have been working to help those in greatest need by supporting legislation to:

- ▲ Strengthen the state's BadgerCare program through the federal State Children's Health Insurance (SCHIP) program;
- ▲ Require the government to negotiate Part D drug prices on behalf of Medicare beneficiaries (this has been approved by the House);
- ▲ Allow Americans to legally import prescription drugs from developed countries where the prices may be lower;
- ▲ Allow trade associations to offer health insurance to members; and,
- ▲ Make tax changes which would reduce the average cost of health care for the self-employed by more than \$1,700 annually.



affordable student loans, and for his close attention to the need to prepare local students for highly technical, well-paying local jobs. "One of the things we are truly honoring today is how much the Congressman is connected to the businesses and industries that make Wisconsin work across the 6th District and statewide," said Gabriel. "His work on behalf of student loans is really legendary with us."

Aviation Delays Are a Petri Priority

If you have taken a commercial flight recently, you have probably experienced first-hand monumental frustrations with delays. As the ranking Republican on the Aviation Subcommittee, I am working with Subcommittee Chairman Jerry Costello to keep the pressure on to address this issue.

The major problem is that we have a capacity crunch — both in the skies and on the ground. We simply need more runways at many airports.

We have an effort underway to modernize our antiquated air traffic control system to improve efficiency in the skies, but that is a 15 to 20 year, \$20 billion project.

Fully 20 percent of delays throughout the system are caused by delays in the New York/New Jersey area (the most congested in the U.S.), so much attention is focused there and benefits will be seen by travelers across the country.

We can't legislate or regulate the weather, which is a major cause

of delays, but here are some recent developments in other areas.

- ▲ The House-passed FAA reauthorization bill includes a "passenger bill of rights" to respond to passenger needs when facing long delays in the airport or on the tarmac.
- ▲ The FAA has increased the compensation rate for those involuntarily bumped from a flight (to \$400 on average).
- ▲ The FAA has given greater flexibility for aircraft to utilize alternative routes to avoid bad weather. An agreement allowing flights through Canadian airspace is now in place.
- ▲ An "airspace redesign" (changed approaches, etc.) is being implemented in the New York/New Jersey area to improve efficiency in the air, and the number of flights has been capped.
- ▲ The Department of Transportation has established stronger reporting requirements for chronically delayed flights, improved access to its complaints system, and is launching a series of consumer forums.

Protecting the Great Lakes

We need to understand and take seriously the potential benefits of restoring the Great Lakes ecosystem. That's why I participated in an April field hearing in Green Bay of the Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee to hear testimony on low water levels.

The Great Lakes offer a tremendous opportunity for reinvigorating the economy of our region and boosting the competitiveness of the nation as a whole by extending the prospect of environmentally and financially sustainable commercial and population growth.

Restoration of the Great Lakes is a top priority of the Subcommittee. While commercial navigation is damaged by low water levels, many other sectors of our economy are also hurt, including recreation, hydropower production, and water supply.

Also, Coast Guard legislation approved in the House in late April advanced the cause of a healthy Great Lakes ecosystem by requiring the treatment of ballast water to minimize the introduction of invasive species into the lakes and included other measures.

Why Are Energy Prices So High?

People are rightly shocked that gasoline and heating fuel have become so expensive so quickly, and the cost of energy is driving up prices in supermarkets and everywhere else. The results are devastating for many already hard-pressed household budgets.

Many factors have combined to raise energy prices, including surging demand from China and India, which are undergoing phenomenal growth. Ten years ago, many streets in China were clogged with bicycles, but today they are filled with cars. Partly as a result, a quarter of all the petroleum ever produced in the history of the world was consumed in the last 10 years.

The supply of crude oil around the world is not keeping pace with the demand. New sources of oil are being developed, including Canada's massive tar sands deposits which, with higher prices, are now worth processing and bringing to market. But the effort takes time.

Instability in the Middle East and in crucial oil exporting countries such as Nigeria and Venezuela and production problems in Russia have all conspired to limit availability. In addition, analysts say that speculators have bid the price higher with the hope that when they sell the oil, it will be even more expensive.

Some market experts say that oil is overpriced relative to the actual supply and demand for oil, and that soon investors will lose a

great deal of money when the speculative bubble breaks and prices drop to a more realistic level. Others say that prices will continue to rise rapidly.

No matter who is right, we need to take strong steps to use energy more wisely and to develop alternatives which will make us less reliant on volatile markets and foreign sources.

Last year, with my support, Congress approved the Energy Independence and Security Act. This new law mandates higher gas mileage standards for new cars and light trucks, requires an increase in the production of renewable motor fuels and provides incentives to boost the production of biofuels and vehicles that can run on alternative fuels.

In May, I joined my colleagues in voting to temporarily suspend purchases for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which stores oil in case of major supply disruptions. The Reserve is almost full, and this is the wrong time for the government to bid up prices through unnecessary stockpiling.

I have also supported a bill to require the Federal Trade Commission to conduct investigations into price gouging, I have supported legislation to promote responsible domestic oil production, and am in favor of careful regulatory reform to increase the nation's refining capacity. I have cosponsored bills to reduce the number of special blends of fuels which the government requires refineries to produce at different times of the year. This is a particular problem for Wisconsin.

But much more needs to be done.

The United States possesses about one quarter of the world's coal supplies and is frequently called the "Saudi Arabia for coal." Coal pollution is a major stumbling block, but if "clean coal" technology proves successful along with advances in the conversion of coal to motor fuel, prospects for affordable energy will brighten. Considerable progress developing solar, wind, hydrogen, ethanol-from-cellulose and other alternatives offers reason for cautious optimism over the long run.



Earlier this year, Rep. Petri visited an assisted living facility in North Fond du Lac to keep informed about seniors' issues.

Petri Education Bill Gains Support

The influential National Education Association has announced its support for my proposal, H.R. 3979, the Assessment Accuracy and Improvement Act, aimed at providing more accurate and more useful tests for elementary and middle school students.

Currently, under the federal No Child Left Behind law, each state is required to test students in grades three through eight. Each state has its own tests, which must be approved by the U.S. Department of Education. The tests are often done on paper and are identical for every student within the same grade in any given state.

My plan would allow states to fulfill their federal testing requirement by using "adaptive" testing.

An adaptive test, taken with a computer, is one that changes in response to previously asked questions. If a student answers questions correctly, the test presents a question of increased difficulty. If the student starts making mistakes, the computer shifts to easier questions. As a result, teachers can quickly determine precisely where an individual student needs extra help.

Several states would like to use adaptive tests to satisfy federal testing requirements. In Wisconsin, one-third of the school districts in our 6th Congressional District think the tests are valuable enough to use them for their own purposes in addition to the paper testing the Education Department requires.

What's the problem? Education Department officials don't want to deal with a different approach. Adaptive tests would, admittedly, require more effort to review. But that's because they are better and will give us much more useful information.

The value of adaptive tests quickly became obvious during my many meetings with students, parents and educators to discuss problems with the No Child Left Behind Act.

Citizen Hour Schedule Included

Postal Customer
Sixth Congressional District
Wisconsin

- ★ Inside this issue: The Sixth District Speaks Out!
- ★ Why Are Energy Prices So High?
- ★ Petri Education Bill Gains Support
- ★ Protecting the Great Lakes
- ★ Aviation Delays Are a Petri Priority

Tom Petri

Representative

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.

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Citizen Hours With Representative Tom Petri—August 2008

Citizen Hours provide an opportunity for Rep. Petri to meet one-on-one with individuals who need help with Social Security or veterans benefits, who want to ask for help getting into the U.S. Service Academies, who want privately to discuss problems with farm programs, with the Internal Revenue Service and the like, or who simply want to express opinions about issues of national concern. Please come to share your concerns.

MONDAY, AUGUST 4th

9:00-10:00 a.m.—WATERTOWN

Municipal Building
106 Jones St., City Council Chambers

3:30 - 4:30 p.m.—JUNEAU

Dodge County Administration Building
127 East Oak St., Room 1-F

TUESDAY, AUGUST 5th

10:30 - 12:00 Noon—TWO RIVERS

City Hall, 1717 East Park St.
City Council Chambers

2:30 - 4:00 p.m.—SHEBOYGAN

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

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6th

9:30 - 10:30 a.m.—ADAMS

Municipal Building, 101 North Main St.
Council Chambers

3:30 - 4:30 p.m.—WILD ROSE

Wild Rose Community Center
500 Division St.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 7th

9:30 - 10:30 a.m.—CHILTON

City Hall, 42 School St.
City Council Chambers

1:30 - 2:45 p.m.—NEENAH

City Hall, 211 Walnut St.
City Council Chambers

3:30 - 5:00 p.m.—OSHKOSH

City Hall, 215 Church Ave.
Room 406

FRIDAY, AUGUST 8th

9:00 - 10:00 a.m.—MONTELLO

Marquette County Courthouse
77 West Park St.
Public Safety Training Room

11:00 - 12:00 Noon—GREEN LAKE

Green Lake County Courthouse
492 Hill St., County Board Room

2:00 - 3:30 p.m.—CAMPBELLSPORT

Campbellsport Public Library
220 North Helena St., Meeting Room

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