



Congressman Tom Petri

News from Congress



DECEMBER 2009

COME TO TOWN MEETINGS AND DISCUSS THE ISSUES

BY REP. TOM PETRI

We are facing many urgent problems. Every day I am reminded about the danger our troops are confronting in Afghanistan and Iraq, about the need for sensible and affordable health care for every American who wants it, about the importance of protecting our environment, and more.

However, it's amazing to me that so little attention has been given to the gut-wrenching crisis of joblessness. Following passage of the stimulus bill in February, it was only with the November announcement of 10.2 percent unemployment that the President

and the congressional leadership started to consider that perhaps promoting job creation should be put back on the front burner.

Instead, the leadership has devoted the lion's share of our efforts over the past year to measures likely to make the economy worse, such as the unnecessarily massive, intrusive and costly health care package designed to radically alter much of our economy. We need to do better, so I voted "no."

A separate leadership high-priority bill already approved by the House would, if the Senate goes along, sharply escalate energy costs for

homeowners and businesses. Causing economic disruption, higher prices and also higher taxes are strange ways to respond to joblessness. I voted "no."

Whether you agree or not, I hope you will consider attending my next round of town meetings which have been scheduled for early January and are listed on page 2.

My town meetings last August drew record crowds. Participants were passionate and engaged, and we had many useful discussions, focused primarily on health care. I'm sure my January meetings will also be interesting and well worth attending.



Rep. Petri spends considerable time visiting businesses both big and small to hear the concerns of employees, management, farmers and others, and then takes their views back to Congress. At successful green business Compost Joe's in Van Dyne (at left), Kirk and Sarah Everson discuss compost and mulch made from 100% recycled organics.

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Email: Follow the link on the front page of the website above.

What's Coming Up In 2010

As we go to press, it seems unlikely that Congress will have resolved the health care issue by the time you receive this newsletter. The House has passed a **health care** reform bill, but the Senate is expected to take a very different approach. Assuming the Senate succeeds in approving its version, the two bills will have to be negotiated into a single bill in a House-Senate conference. Then the final bill will have to be approved by each chamber and signed by the President to become law.

But, what else is on Congress' plate for 2010?

- * The wars in **Afghanistan** and **Iraq** will continue to need congressional attention as we wind down the latter and carry on the former.
- * With unemployment having risen to 10.2 percent since President Obama's economic stimulus bill was approved in February, the President and congressional leaders are considering the need for **jobs**. Congress may have taken some high profile action on this issue before you receive this newsletter.
- * Education Secretary Arne Duncan has announced that the Administration plans to propose revisions of the **No Child Left Behind** law, which governs federal programs impacting K-12 education.
- * Congress is expected to consider broad legislation to overhaul the regulation of **financial services** companies.
- * **Trade agreements** have been negotiated with Panama, Colombia and Korea. Congress will consider these agreements if and when the Administration submits them for ratification.
- * The House has already approved extensive **climate change** legislation, but it is moving slowly through the Senate.
- * Labor unions are determined to win passage of **card check** legislation which would allow them to organize workplaces by getting a majority of workers to indicate approval by checking a card instead of voting by secret ballot.
- * The major 2001 **tax cuts** were written to "sunset" at the end of next year. This means that if Congress fails to act, changes from 2001 and also 2003 such as a higher child tax credit, marriage penalty relief, the 10 percent tax bracket and reduced capital gains and dividend taxes will expire. In accordance with the 2001 legislation, estate taxes have been reduced each year and are set to be eliminated in 2010—only to be restored to their full 2001 levels in 2011.

While some of these provisions are broadly popular, others generate controversy. Some are certain to be retained, but for others, the future is less clear.

- * Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano has indicated that **immigration reform** will be a top priority in 2010. This will raise several controversial issues including legalization, guest workers, improved border enforcement and deportation policies.
- * Congress needs to reach overdue decisions regarding **Federal Aviation Administration** reauthorization and **surface transportation** legislation.

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 here:

<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.

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 January 4th through January 9th at 12 locations throughout central Wisconsin. Please come and express your opinions!

MONDAY, JANUARY 4th

WATERTOWN—2:30 – 3:30 p.m.
Watertown Senior & Community Center
514 S. First Street

TUESDAY, JANUARY 5th

GREEN LAKE—9:30 – 10:30 a.m.
County Court House, 492 Hill Street
Demonstration Room

JUNEAU—2:30 – 3:30 p.m.
Dodge County Administration Building
127 E. Oak Street, Room 1-F

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6th

OSHKOSH—10:00 – 11:00 a.m.
City Hall, 215 Church Avenue
Rooms 404 & 406

KIMBERLY—2:00 – 3:00 p.m.
Municipal Complex
515 W. Kimberly Avenue, Evergreen Room

BRILLION—4:00 – 5:00 p.m.
Brillion Public Library, 326 N. Main Street
Lower Level Meeting Room

THURSDAY, JANUARY 7th

FRIENDSHIP—10:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Village Hall, 507 W. Lake Street

WAUTOMA—1:00 – 2:00 p.m.
World War II Memorial Building
440 W. Main Street

MONTELLO—3:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Marquette County Service Center

460 Underwood Avenue
Demonstration Room

FRIDAY, JANUARY 8th

SHEBOYGAN—2:00 – 3:00 p.m.
Mead Public Library, 710 N. 8th Street
Rocca Meeting Room

MANITOWOC—4:00 – 5:00 p.m.
Manitowoc Public Library
707 Quay Street
Balkansky Community Room

SATURDAY, JANUARY 9th

FOND DU LAC—9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
Fond du Lac Public Library
32 Sheboygan Street
Eugene G. McLane Meeting Room

Congress This Past Year—The Good and the Not So Good

Congress had a busy year in 2009—for better or worse. Most public attention has gone to health care reform. And it is clear to me that we have an urgent need to make affordable health care more widely available in various ways, including those which I have advocated in the past.

However, due to the \$1.2 trillion price tag of the bill approved by the House in November and the complicated, ill-considered structure of that plan, I am concerned that, as of this writing, the majority in Congress seems intent on bringing about drastic changes which will result in radical government intrusions in every sector of health care in ways which will harm the economy, send insurance premiums through the roof (especially for young and middle-aged adults), and fail to significantly slow health care inflation.

But Congress has been busy in other areas as well.

Child Health: In February, I joined with the majority of the House to approve the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Reauthorization Act. This legislation, now signed into law, provides health coverage to more than four million children who qualified for coverage but who couldn't be enrolled due to a lack of funds.

Stimulus Bill: Also in February, Congress approved the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which was intended to boost the economy and keep the national unemployment rate below 8.5 percent. I opposed the bill because I believed it was poorly targeted for prompt job creation as it included too little short-term spending and too much topping-off of government programs in ways which will likely inflate budgets permanently.

Credit Cards: With my support, the House approved the Credit Cardholder's Bill of Rights in May. This bill included provisions which I originally introduced along with Rep. Patrick Murphy to govern credit card solicitations made to students.

FAA Reauthorization: Also in May, the House approved legislation to reauthorize Federal Aviation Administration funding and safety oversight programs. I helped to write the bill and do support most of it, but voted against it because of a few specific provisions which hopefully can be resolved as the process moves forward. The Senate has not yet acted on it.

Climate Change: The House approved legislation in June which would require businesses to obtain permits if they release carbon dioxide (CO₂) through the burning of coal or other operations. As the legislation is written, the expense would be passed on to consumers and businesses, potentially costing millions of jobs. Wisconsin would be especially hard hit due to our reliance on coal-generated power.

Environmental legislation is important, but it should also be affordable and equitable. This bill received my "no" vote because we can't afford skyrocketing electricity rates, especially in this fragile economy. The Senate has not yet acted on this bill.

Cash for Clunkers: In June, the House approved legislation commonly known as the "Cash for Clunkers" bill, which promptly passed the Congress as a whole.

While some question the concept of subsidizing car purchases, the bill succeeded in quickly injecting \$3 billion of consumer demand into the economy, so I supported the second installment of funds to replenish the account. The money was "reprogrammed"

Census Is Important!



Every household should receive census forms through the mail in March. This year's census form is short and should be easy to

fill out. It is important to do so! The results of the census will impact our state and communities in terms of federal funding and the placement of legislative district boundaries.

from previously-approved stimulus funds which would have been spent much later, so I thought this was a better use of already-appropriated funds. I worked with federal regulators to make sure that Wisconsin residents were able to participate fully in the program, despite a legal technicality regarding the way our state handled auto insurance.

Student Aid: With my support, in September the House voted to eliminate the Federal Family Education Loan Program and move the origination of all federal student loans to the Direct Loan program. You will find more information on this initiative on page 4.

Unemployment: In November, with my support, Congress approved an extension of unemployment benefits and of the home buyer tax credit.

High School Art Competition 2010

I am inviting high school students in the 6th District to participate in the 2010 Congressional Art Competition. Winning artwork from high school students across the country will be displayed for 11 months in the Capitol complex. Locally, the Windhover Art Center in Fond du Lac will exhibit 6th District high school student artwork starting April 17th through the end of the month. Information on the competition will be posted on the 6th District's website which can be found at: <http://petri.house.gov>



Rep. Petri participated in a press conference on October 27, 2009, to announce the introduction of legislation to improve the Troops to Teachers program, which helps retiring members of the military to transition to jobs as teachers. This legislation is discussed in the Initiatives section on page 4.

Town Meeting Schedule Inside

Wisconsin
Sixth Congressional District
Postal Customer

M.C.
EGRWSS
PRSRST STD



Tom Petri

Representative

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

Petri Initiatives in Congress

Student Loan Reform

The high point of my year was House passage of student loan reform.

For decades I have fought to create and improve the Direct Loan program, a more cost-effective way to provide student loans than the older guaranteed loan program. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that doing away with guaranteed loans and expanding the alternative Direct Loan program would save \$87 billion over 10 years even though direct loans are made with the same terms.

With my persistent and enthusiastic participation, the House has voted to make the switch, directing that some of the savings be used to reduce the deficit while some will fund student grants and other educational priorities. The Senate has yet to act, but is expected to do so in the months ahead.

Troops to Teachers

Another approach to improved education is my Troops to Teachers (TTT) proposal which I introduced in April along with Rep. Doris Matsui and others, and in an expanded form in October with Sen. John McCain and others.

TTT, which I helped to create in the early '90s, provides a stipend to help retiring members of the Armed Forces put their valuable life experience to use as public school teachers. However, a drafting error in the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act caused the Education Department to greatly restrict the number of school districts in which veterans can fulfill their teaching requirement. The TTT reform proposals would establish more reasonable limitations.

Air Flight Safety

The tragic crash of a regional jet outside Buffalo, New York, last February revealed lapses in pilot training and safety — particularly for regional airlines. Following a hearing by the House Aviation Subcommittee, where I serve as the Ranking Republican Member, we introduced and passed through the House a bill to strengthen training standards, certifications, and professional development for pilots. It also establishes comprehensive pre-employment screening of prospective pilots, and directs the FAA to update its current rules on pilot flight and duty time to address the issue of fatigue. H.R. 3371, the Airline Safety and Pilot Training Improvement Act of 2009, which passed the House on October 14, would ensure that we have one level of safety for all air travel.

Better Tests

Sixth District teachers have told me how much they value “adaptive” tests—tests done on computers in which the questions automatically get harder or easier depending on how well the test-taker is doing.

Adaptive tests are very effective in quickly telling just how much each individual student knows. However, the Education Department insists that schools stick to old fashioned pencils and paper when doing the tests necessary to comply with the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

It's time for the Education Department to step into the 21st Century. My bill, H.R. 655, would allow adaptive tests to be used to comply with the NCLB law. It has strong support.

Dairy Caucus

The recession has hit the dairy industry particularly hard, so in July I joined with other members of the House to restart the Congressional Dairy Farmer Caucus. In October, the caucus met with Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, and we urged the Administration to redouble its efforts to strengthen price stabilization programs and to modernize the dairy price support program, which is totally inadequate for today's circumstances.