

# Representative Tom Petri

## News from Congress



March 2012

## Government is Holding the Economy Back

BY REP. TOM PETRI

America's businesses want to expand and hire, but they are waiting for changes in the economic environment and government policies necessary to justify the risks involved when they open new factories, create and market new products, and hire new employees.

The needed changes have been slow in coming. Partially as a result, last year the economy grew an anemic 1.7 percent, well below the previous year's 3 percent. In January, Federal Reserve policymakers predicted that growth this year would be 2.2 percent to 2.7 percent. They have also predicted that unemployment may still be above 7.5 percent at the end of 2014.

This is simply unacceptable. We need a concerted effort to restore the economic confidence of both business leaders and consumers. Amending a famous Ford slogan, jobs have to be Job One.

### Strange Priorities

The Administration tells of its concern

about jobs, but somehow, other priorities seem to come first. The most notorious example is the President's decision to block the proposed Keystone pipeline, which would transport Canadian oil to Gulf Coast refineries.

The pipeline would be built with private funds and the National Association of Manufacturers reports that it "is estimated to create 20,000 high-paying manufacturing and construction jobs." The indirect jobs which would eventually result could, by some estimates, exceed 100,000.

Motivated by the promise of jobs and the concern that the President was planning to ignore the issue, last December a bipartisan majority in Congress approved legislation to force a decision.

When the President announced that he was rejecting the pipeline at least for now, he complained that Congress hadn't given him enough time to properly consider it. In fact, the federal government has had three years to study the project. We fought and won World War II in about the same amount of time.

Some worry that oil spills from the pipeline could threaten the groundwater in Nebraska, where some 21,000 miles of pipeline already exist. After extensive review, the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) by the Obama administration's State Department found that the pipeline "poses lit-

tle environmental risk if managed properly."

With the President insisting that jobs are an urgent priority, one would think that his administration would have found a safe way to let the pipeline go forward. But apparently not.

### Job-Killing Regulations

The annual cost of federal regulations in the United States exceeded \$1.75 trillion in 2008, according to two economists whose work was commissioned last year by the Small Business Administration. Had every U.S. household paid an equal share of the federal regulatory burden, each would have owed \$15,586 in 2008.

Regulations are necessary to safeguard the public, but periods of economic instability call for extra care and moderation on the part of regulators.

Nevertheless, over the first two years of President Obama's term, executive branch agencies published 112 economically significant regulations (defined as having impacts of \$100 million or more per year). That averages out to 56 major regulations per year, which is almost 25 percent higher than President Clinton and President Bush, who each published an average of 45 major regulations per year during their terms. (House Report 112-278 - Part 1.)

In order to move the country to alternative fuels, the Environmental Protection Agency has been aggressive in its efforts to increase the costs of using coal. As the President himself has acknowledged, this will necessarily make the cost of electricity "skyrocket."

### Senate Ignores House Jobs Bills

As of this writing, the House of Representatives has approved 27 job creating measures to limit taxes, ease unnecessary regulations, restrain the imposition of new regulations, increase congressional oversight of regulatory decisions by the federal bureaucracy, require that regulators consider the cost of new regulations, lighten the regulatory burden on businesses seeking to raise funds, and more.

The Senate leadership has ignored most of these proposals. More information on these bills can be found at: [petri.house.gov/senate-ignores-house-jobs-bills](http://petri.house.gov/senate-ignores-house-jobs-bills)

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**Job Fair**—If you are looking for work or interested in exploring a career change, I invite you to attend the Job Fair I will host on **Monday, April 23** at the Oshkosh Convention Center. Further details and information regarding registration can be found on my website at: [petri.house.gov](http://petri.house.gov). Employers wishing to register should call my office at (800) 242-4883. There is no fee for participating. Note that space is limited and reservations will be made on a first-come, first-served basis. I'm hoping that any 6th District company looking to fill positions will take this opportunity to meet face-to-face with job seekers.

**Art Competition**—I am once again sponsoring an art competition for high school students as part of the nationwide annual Congressional Art Competition, with an exhibit, reception and awards ceremony on **Saturday, April 28** at Fond du Lac's Windhover Center for the Arts.

The first-place entry will be displayed in the U.S. Capitol for a year, and the winning artist will be invited to travel to Washington, D.C., for a reception for student artists from around the country. Please visit my website for more details regarding the competition and reception.



*Rep. Petri frequently visits area employers to keep up to date with business conditions in the 6th District. Shown here, on Jan. 30 he toured the Kondex Corporation facility in Lomira.*

## Petri Pilots FAA Changes Into Law

Air travel is set to go through revolutionary changes over the next 15 years thanks to Congressional passage, in early February, of legislation to reauthorize and reform the Federal Aviation Administration. As chairman of the Aviation Subcommittee, I helped to write and win approval of this new law, and I'm very excited about what it means for the traveling public.

The FAA Modernization and Reform Act carries out the basic function of keeping the FAA on the job overseeing all aspects of civil aviation in the U.S. But more than that, it advances that agency's "NextGen" air traffic system modernization project.

Converting to satellite-based air traffic control will enable airplanes to travel directly from point to point rather than having to follow established routes to accommodate the current 1950s-era ground radar system. While enhancing safety, it will allow more closely-spaced aircraft operations, more efficient continuous descent procedures for landing and all weather air traffic operations. This will result in significant reductions in

weather and congestion-related delays as well as reduced flight times.

Successful implementation of NextGen by 2025, using conservative assumptions about future demand for travel, price increases of oil, and other factors, would result in an estimated savings for the airlines of \$29 billion in current dollars during the first year of the new traffic control system.\*

Those savings will only increase with each following year, and will ultimately be reflected in ticket prices and improved airline service in this competitive market. During the first year after implementation, the airlines can expect to save 830 million gallons of jet fuel, flight delays will be cut by more than 20%, airplane noise will be reduced and 6.8 million metric tons of carbon emissions will be avoided. \*That is truly revolutionary.

The reauthorization law also funds needed airport infrastructure improvements, includes consumer protection provisions and reforms the Essential Air Service program to eliminate wasteful taxpayer subsidies.

\*May 2011 DeLoitte LLP study cited by DeLoitte Vice Chairman Tom Captain at 10/5/11 Aviation Subcommittee hearing.

\* **Fixing Military Leave Error**— Clerical errors made during demobilization caused hundreds of soldiers to be wrongly denied paid leave, and the errors were noticed well after they were eligible to use it. Many served with the Wisconsin National Guard. In early February I joined with Sen. Herb Kohl and Rep. Ron Kind to introduce the Fair Military Leave Act to fix this problem.

\* **Circumventing the Senate**—As a senior member of the Education and Workforce Committee, in early February I joined with other representatives in sending a letter to the President protesting his appointments of three individuals to seats on the National Labor Relations Board. In making the appointments, the President bypassed the constitutionally required role of the Senate, when it is legally in session, of consenting to the appointments.

\* **No Budget, No Pay**—In January, I cosponsored the No Budget, No Pay Act. Under this bill, Members of Congress would not get paid if Congress fails to pass a budget resolution and complete action on all regular appropriations bills before the start of the fiscal year on October 1. While the House approved a budget last year, the Senate has failed to do so since April 29, 2009. The Senate Majority Leader, Harry Reid, has said that he doesn't plan to approve a budget for fiscal year 2013 either.

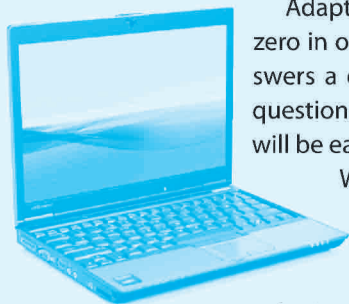
\* **No Insider Trading**—Responding to concerns that government officials, including Members of Congress and their staffs, might profit from non-public information learned while doing their jobs, the House recently passed its version of the STOCK Act. This bill, the Stop Trading on Congressional Knowledge Act, would prohibit such insider trading and make it easier to discover and punish breaches of the tougher new rules. I was pleased to join a majority of my colleagues in approving the bill by a vote of 417 - 2. Differences between our bill and that passed in the Senate need to be reconciled before the STOCK Act can become law.



# Petri Education Ideas Move Forward

Two of my education proposals have been included in large committee bills which, as of this writing, are expected to be approved by the Education Committee and sent to the House floor for consideration.

\* **Adaptive Testing**—The first would allow schools to use sophisticated adaptive testing to satisfy the federal Education Department's testing requirements under the No Child Left Behind law.



Adaptive tests taken on computers adjust the questions to zero in on the student's level of competence. If a student answers a question correctly, the test then presents a harder question. If the student answers incorrectly, the next question will be easier.

With a traditional test, you can learn whether a student is mastering the material at the proper grade level. But with adaptive testing, you can find out how much ahead or behind the student is, which areas he or she is particularly strong or weak in, and by how much. And

the results are instantly available.

Currently, the Education Department only accepts adaptive tests which are restricted in scope. Several school districts in Wisconsin and elsewhere consider the most effective adaptive tests to be so valuable that they pay for them even though they also have to give the tests that the Education Department requires.

My *Assessment Accuracy and Improvement Act*, now a part of the *Student Success Act*, would give states the flexibility to take fuller advantage of these innovative assessments while also satisfying federal testing requirements.

\* **Troops to Teachers**—My second proposal is designed to enhance the Troops to Teachers (TTT) program.

By the time they leave the service, our military personnel have learned discipline and leadership, and many have also trained in specialties requiring science and math. They can bring a unique set of skills to K through 12 teaching.

TTT provides veterans with a \$5,000 stipend to help cover the costs of teaching certification in exchange for three years of service in schools which serve largely low-income students.

My provisions to improve the operational efficiency of the TTT program are included in the *Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teachers Act*, and I am working to double the number of schools eligible to employ certified teacher veterans under the TTT program.



*Rep. Petri participated in the Feb. 4 sendoff ceremony for the National Guard's Oshkosh-based 1157th Transportation Company which was leaving for training and an overseas deployment.*

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In response, in January FirstEnergy Corp. decided to close six coal-fired plants in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Maryland. We can expect higher energy costs and fewer jobs in those states as a result. This is surely just the beginning. Keep in mind that Wisconsin and the Midwest in general are highly dependent on coal for our power.

Of course, the biggest regulation of all is the President's new health care law which is currently being phased in. It's too complicated and too costly.

Employers are uncertain about how much it is going to cost and how new health care regulations will affect them. This encourages them to delay hiring additional people for as long as possible.

If we want to revive the economy and get people back to work, we should take seriously the costs of out-of-control regulations. Over-reaching regulators burden businesses, raise costs for consumers, and keep people unemployed.

### What We Need to Do

It's no secret what we need to do to strengthen the economy and create jobs. Congress and the President have plenty of ideas about how to improve the country, and we should continue to debate and work on those ideas. But jobs have to be Job One—and preferably private sector jobs, as they do the most to make the economy grow and generate taxes to the Treasury rather than adding to deficits.

We need to focus on rebuilding the economic environment in which businesses thrive. That means making the tough decisions to assure job creators that we are, in fact, bringing the budget under control, issuing regulations only when truly necessary, limiting taxes, ensuring that inflation will be kept in check and getting out of the way when investors try to create or expand businesses.

America has created the greatest economic success in the history of the world. Our innovative society has dramatically improved the length and quality of life for billions of people around the globe. This same ingenuity must be unleashed to get the economy back on track and workers back to work.

Congress of the United States  
U.S. House of Representatives  
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Official Business

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Visit Congressman Petri Online at [petri.house.gov](http://petri.house.gov) — and “Like” him on Facebook

To email Rep. Petri, or to receive his periodic electronic newsletter or email issue updates,  
please follow the “contact” link on the front page of the website above.



**Town Meetings provide opportunities to discuss national issues in a group setting. My latest round of Town Meetings will take place from April 2nd through April 12th at 12 locations throughout the 6th District.**

**Please come and express your opinions!**

### Monday, April 2nd

2:00 - 3:00 p.m.—**NEENAH**  
City Hall, 211 Walnut Street  
City Council Chambers

### Wednesday, April 4th

10:30 - 11:30 a.m.—**WAUTOMA**  
Public Library  
410 West Main Street  
Meeting Room

### 2:00 - 3:00 p.m.—**PRINCETON**

City Council Chambers  
431 West Main Street (*Back of Fire Station*)

### 4:00 - 5:00 p.m.—**RIPON**

Public Library  
120 Jefferson Street  
Silver Creek Room

### Thursday, April 5th

3:00 - 4:00 p.m.—**OMRO**  
City Hall, 205 South Webster Avenue  
Council Chambers

### Monday, April 9th

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 Noon—**BRILLION**  
Public Library, 326 North Main Street  
Lower Level Meeting Room

### 3:30 - 4:30 p.m.—**MANITOWOC**

City Hall, 900 Quay Street  
City Council Chambers

### Tuesday, April 10th

3:30 - 4:30 p.m.—**PLYMOUTH**  
Generations Intergenerational Center  
1500 Douglas Drive  
Masters Gallery Room

### Wednesday, April 11th

9:30 - 10:30 a.m.—**FRIENDSHIP**  
Village Hall  
507 West Lake Street

### 1:30 - 2:30 p.m.—**ENDEAVOR**

Community Center  
400 Church Street

### Thursday, April 12th

9:30 - 10:30 a.m.—**WATERTOWN**  
Senior & Community Center  
514 South First Street  
Conley Hall

### 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.—**MAYVILLE**

City Hall  
15 South School Street  
City Council Chambers