A WEEKLY WASHINGTON UPDATE

CAPITOL CONNECTION

CONGRESSMAN GARY G. MILLER
CALIFORNIA'S 31ST DISTRICT

August 2, 2013

House Sends Bipartisan Student Loan Certainty Act to President's Desk

College tuition has been climbing rapidly for decades. As a result, students and their families have been forced to take increasing amounts of student loans to achieve the dream of a college education. To help ease the burden, a law was enacted in 2007 that gradually reduced the fixed interest rates on newly originated subsidized Stafford Loans for undergraduate students from 6.8% in July 2006 to 3.4% for the 2011-2012 school year, after which the rate would return to 6.8%. While the House of Representatives took action earlier this summer to extend the 3.4% rate, failure by the Senate to act in a timely manner resulted in the doubling of student loan rates on July 1, 2013.

I was pleased to vote this week for a bipartisan compromise that will provide greater certainty in the establishment of student loan rates. In his Fiscal Year 2014 budget proposal, President Obama called for moving federal student loan rates to a market-based system. On Wednesday, the House overwhelmingly passed legislation that does just that by tying federal student loans interest rates to market rates. To protect students against high and fluctuating interest rates, the compromise legislation establishes reasonable rate caps and establishes fixed rates for the period of the loan. As this legislation heads towards the President's desk for his signature, I will continue to work to help increase educational opportunities for students in the Inland Empire and our nation.

Legislation to Increase Congressional Oversight of Major Federal Regulations Passes House

Excessive regulations impose huge costs on our economy, hindering job creation and economic growth. According to the Small Business Administration, federal regulations cost our economy $1.75 trillion per year. Currently, Congress may only check regulatory overreach by the executive branch by passing a joint resolution disapproving a federal regulation, which must then be signed into law by the President.

To reduce the burden of costly government mandates while ensuring that sensible and needed regulations may take effect, the House of Representatives this week passed H.R. 367, the REINS Act. The measure would require congressional approval for all federal regulations that have an estimated economic impact of $100 million or more. The REINS Act would restore accountability to the rule-making process by preventing regulations that will have a major impact on our economy from being implemented without congressional approval.

In addition to the REINS Act, the House passed a measure to specifically address regulations that would have an impact on energy prices. H.R. 1582, the Energy Consumers Relief Act, would require the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to submit a report to Congress prior to finalizing any energy-related regulation that would cost more than $1 billion. The report must contain a cost-benefit analysis and estimate whether the regulation would raise energy prices and state how it would impact American jobs. Furthermore, H.R. 1582 would prevent the EPA from finalizing such a rule if the Secretary of Energy determines that the rule would have an adverse impact on our economy. I supported these common-sense measures to reduce the influence of unelected bureaucrats, restore congressional oversight to the regulatory process, and hold federal agencies accountable for the economic impacts of their regulations.

House Votes to Hold IRS Accountable to Taxpayers

This week, the House adopted a number of measures to protect taxpayers by preventing abusive practices by federal agencies. Several of these bills are addressed directly at the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), which has been ensnarled in several major controversies from inappropriate targeting of organizations for questionable purposes to excessive spending on conferences.

Amid the revelations by agency officials that IRS employees have been targeting certain organizations seeking tax-exempt status for extra scrutiny for political reasons, the House passed H.R. 2565, which would allow the IRS to quickly terminate employees who take official actions for political purposes. To add insult to injury, a recent report from the Treasury Department's inspector general detailed instances of IRS overspending on a multi-million dollar conference for agency executives and managers. To prevent future lavish spending on such conferences with taxpayer funds, H.R. 2769 was adopted to impose a moratorium on IRS conferences until the recommendations of the inspector general report are implemented.

In addition, I supported H.R. 2768, the Taxpayer Bill of Rights Act, which was adopted unanimously by the House to require that IRS employees act in accordance with a number of taxpayer rights including: the right to be informed; to be heard; to appeal; to pay no more tax than the correct amount of tax; to representation; and to a fair and just tax system. As your Representative, I will continue to use my voice and my vote in Congress to hold federal agencies accountable to the hard-working taxpayers they serve.