



# Congressman Gene Green Reports

Dear Friend,

By the time you get this newsletter, Congress will be nearing the end of the legislative session for 2011. Congress still needs to vote on the proposal offered by the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction, which will be given a yes-or-no vote without amendments before Christmas.

I strongly agree that we need to take a hard look at spending and revenue to make sure that taxpayer dollars are being put to use effectively in programs that are important to our community and nation. I oppose solutions that involve Social Security because these benefits have been earned by hard-working Americans and payment of these benefits has not increased the federal deficit.

This newsletter discusses issues like the Social Security cost-of-living-adjustment and Medicare Part B premium increases for 2012. In addition, other critical federal and legislative issues that affect jobs are discussed, like the Free Trade Agreements, U.S. Postal Service closures, and the proposed Keystone XL Pipeline.

Many economists have predicted that our economy will suffer a worse recession if legislative action is not taken, which is why I am strongly against divisive partisanship and will continue to work across the aisle to see that Congress works to do what's right for our country.

Finally, I would like to wish all of our service members who served in Iraq a welcome back and thank you for your dedication to our nation. I visited our troops in the Middle East over Veterans Day and cannot say thank you enough for their service.

As always, as your representative in Congress, I strongly value your opinion and hope that you will continue to write, call, and email our office to voice your opinions. I wish you and your family a successful and happy 2012.

Sincerely,

Gene Green  
Member of Congress

## Creating American Jobs

While Houston has been fortunate to not have been hit as hard as the rest of the nation by the housing and economic crises, the fact remains clear that we need to take action to make sure our economy continues to grow and our nation continues to recuperate from these setbacks. The best way to accomplish this is through strengthening our domestic economy and creating jobs. Measures that have been proposed include:

### Tax Cuts to Help America's Businesses Hire and Grow

The payroll tax paid by businesses on their first \$5 million in payroll could be cut in half to 3.1 percent. This would greatly help small businesses, which constitute 98% of all firms, and 390,000 businesses in Texas. Firms that increase their payroll by adding new workers or increasing the wages of their current workers could be exempt from paying any payroll tax.

A "Returning Heroes" hiring tax credit for veterans: This measure would provide tax credits from \$5,600 to \$9,600 to encourage the hiring of unemployed veterans.

### Putting Workers Back on the Job While Rebuilding and Modernizing America

Immediate investments in infrastructure would improve our roads, rail, airports and waterways such as the Port of Houston. Highway and transit modernization projects would allow immediate investments of billions of dollars in Texas which would support thousands of local jobs.

*(Continued on page 2)*



Rep. Green with Members of Congress, Henry Cuellar (TX), Michael McCaul (TX), Jeff Duncan (SC), and Michael Fitzpatrick (PA), Major General Huggins, commander of U.S. and NATO forces in South Afghanistan, and soldiers at the FOB Pasab in Kandahar Province in Afghanistan. Members of Congress met and ate with Texas soldiers and Marines serving in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Landstuhl Military Hospital in Germany. They also met with government officials in Iraq and Pakistan to discuss security issues.

## 29th District Town Hall Meetings

**Tuesday, January 3**  
6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

In conjunction with  
Denver Harbor Civic Club  
Denver Harbor Multi-Service  
Center  
6402 Market St.  
Houston 77020

**Wednesday, January 4**  
6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

In conjunction with  
LULAC Council 402  
Harris County Education Building  
Room 100  
6300 Irvington Blvd.  
Houston 77022

**Thursday, January 5**  
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

In conjunction with  
Songwood Civic Club  
Masonic Lodge  
603 Baca St., Houston 77013

\* Senior Issues Forum \*  
**Wednesday, January 11**  
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Magnolia Multi-Service Center  
7037 Capitol St., Houston 77011

**Wednesday, January 11**  
6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

North Channel Branch Library  
15741 Wallisville Rd.  
Houston 77049

**Thursday January 12**  
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

In conjunction with  
Meadow Creek Civic Club  
Meadow Creek Community Center  
5333 Berry Creek Dr.  
Houston 77017

**Thursday, January 19**  
6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Lone Star College Greenspoint  
Room 306  
250 N. Sam Houston Pkwy E.  
Houston 77060

Public schools and community colleges across the country could be renovated and modernized, which would create jobs while improving classrooms and upgrading our schools to meet 21st century needs. Texas could receive over \$2.3 billion in funding for public schools and over \$458 million in funds for community colleges according to formulas proposed in the American Jobs Act.

### Pathways Back to Work for Americans Looking for Jobs

As part of an extension to unemployment insurance to prevent 5 million Americans from losing their benefits, reforms to unemployment insurance have been proposed, including giving states greater flexibility to use Unemployment Insurance funds to best support job-seekers in their area.

Some plans build on and improve innovative state programs where persons who are on unemployment take temporary, voluntary work or pursue on-the-job training while they continue looking for employment. Other measures propose a \$4,000 tax credit to employers for hiring long-term unemployed workers.

### Tax Relief for Every American Worker and Family

A continuation of the payroll tax cut passed last December could cut workers' payroll taxes in half next year. A typical household in Texas, with a median income of around \$47,000, would see a tax cut of around \$1,460. This is money back in the pockets of Americans.

## Jobs News

### U.S. Postal Service Considering Closures

The United States Postal Service has announced that they are examining the possible closure of 220 post offices in Texas, including five in our district. Many of the local post offices that were listed by the Postal Service for possible closure have been an important part of our community for decades, and are located in urban and minority neighborhoods that are growing and thriving and use the services at these post offices.

I am a cosponsor of legislation in Congress that will help alleviate the financial crunch the Postal Service presently finds itself in due to bureaucratic barriers. I will urge my colleagues in the House and Senate to find a legislative path that will put the USPS on the road to profitability while protecting the livelihoods of the hard-working people of the Postal Service.

### AT&T / T-Mobile Merger

Federal antitrust laws prohibit mergers that inhibit healthy competition. The Department of Justice announced a lawsuit against the pending AT&T/T-Mobile merger. These laws are critical to maintaining a healthy economy, but I am concerned that this deal falling through would have a negative impact on the nation's job market.

AT&T is an American-owned company and it has announced that as part of its deal to purchase T-Mobile from its European parent company, it would reverse the decisions made by Deutsche Telekom that led to over 5,000 jobs being outsourced to Asia. It is this type of commitment to American job growth that must be encouraged, not blocked, if we are going to remain the largest, most productive economy with the most innovative technology sector in the world.

### NASA

In September, NASA announced plans to move forward with the development of the Space Launch System (SLS). This means America now has the major elements in place to usher in a new era of human space exploration and Houston's Johnson Space Center (JSC) will remain a vibrant centerpiece of America's continued leadership in space.

Last year, my colleagues and I wrote to the Obama administration and presented a plan to pursue the immediate development of Orion and a heavy-lift rocket capable of launching Orion beyond low Earth orbit. With NASA's announcement on the Orion Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle and SLS, we were pleased that the plan was adopted.

This announcement strengthens our nation and ensures we will continue to be the world leader in space exploration while continuing to use the talent, resources, and facilities that we have in Houston.

## Paying for College Workshop

Tuesday, January 10  
6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Cesar E. Chavez High School  
8501 Howard, Houston, Texas 77017

Congressman Green invites you to his free financial aid workshop on paying for college. Learn about the financial aid process and finding scholarships in a presentation by Sallie Mae. Representatives from local colleges will be present to give information and answer questions.

Congressman Green conducts a ribbon cutting at the grand opening of Burlington Coat Factory at Northline Commons on September 30. Rep. Green also spoke about the importance of continuing to spur business growth and job creation.

Pictured left to right: Eugene O'Brien (Berenson Associates), Jeff Procell (General Manager, Northline Commons), Congressman Gene Green, State Representative Armando Walle, Houston City Councilman Ed Gonzalez, and Marco Romero.



## Free Trade Agreements

At a time when 14 million Americans are out of work – one million in Texas alone – it is important that Congress not turn its back on our nation’s working families by voting for trade agreements that would hurt our domestic manufacturers. The Korea, Colombia, and Panama Free Trade Agreements are based on the same failed model as NAFTA, which has been one of the biggest factors in undermining our nation’s manufacturing base over the past 15 years.

Texas alone has lost 150,199 manufacturing jobs since NAFTA was signed and these agreements will lead to further job losses and larger trade deficits. The Economic Policy Institute estimates that the Korea and Colombia trade deals will displace 214,000 American jobs and increase our trade deficit by nearly \$17 billion. This is why I am opposed to all three agreements and voted against them when they came before the House of Representatives.

I am a strong supporter and voted in favor of the Trade Adjustment Assistance program. This program provides vital support and services for workers who are displaced by foreign trade.

## 2012 Benefits Update

### Social Security Cost of Living Adjustment

The Social Security Administration states that there are almost 67,000 Social Security beneficiaries in the 29th District and close to 3.5 million Texans that depend on Social Security for their livelihood. I was glad to hear that there will be a 3.6 percent cost-of-living-adjustment, or COLA, for Social Security and Social Security Disability recipients beginning January 2012. This increase is long overdue since no cost of living was allowed for the last 2 years.

2011 marks the first year since 2009 that the formula used to determine whether a COLA can be issued showed an increase in inflation for consumer goods and services for average urban workers. This system is flawed because Social Security recipients have different spending patterns than the general population.

This is why I am a cosponsor of legislation that would use a different formula to calculate COLAs – one that would more accurately reflect the inflation experienced by seniors. To date, this legislation, H.R. 456, is still in the Subcommittee on Social Security. Rest assured that I will vote in favor of this legislation if it is brought to the House floor.

For more information on the cost-of-living adjustment, visit [www.socialsecurity.gov/cola/](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/cola/) or call the Social Security’s toll-free number at 1-800-772-1213.

### Medicare Part B Premiums

January 1, 2012 marks the beginning of the new implementation year for Medicare plan changes made during the 2011 open-enrollment season.

Under law, Medicare premiums cannot increase if there is not a Social Security cost-of-living adjustment that year. Since a COLA was issued for 2012, it was announced that monthly premiums for beneficiaries with Medicare Part B, which covers doctor visits and outpatient care, will also increase. The good news is that Medicare reported that the majority of people with Medicare will only have a monthly increase of \$3.50, which is much less than the monthly gain from the Social Security COLA. Additionally, the Medicare Part B deductible will decrease \$22.

When you or your loved ones visit the doctor, make sure to ask about free Medicare preventive screenings and services like a yearly wellness exam made available through provisions from the health care reform law of 2010.

As required by the Older Americans Act of 1965, seniors and their family members can obtain free benefits counseling through senior advocacy agencies like the Harris County Area Agency on Aging. Counselors are available to assist with Medicare questions at 832-393-4301, or toll-free at 1-800-213-8471, from Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

## Senior Issues Forum

Wednesday, January 11  
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Magnolia Multi-Service Center  
7037 Capitol St., Houston 77011

Join Rep. Green for his discussion regarding updates on legislative issues affecting seniors. In addition, agency representatives from the Social Security Administration, Houston/Harris County Area Agency on Aging, and the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services will share important information and be available to answer questions about health care, referral services, and programs for seniors.



Congressman Green presents a U.S. flag to Mr. Thomas Pena at his home in the 29th District where Rebuilding Together Houston made repairs to the veteran’s home. Congressman Green also spoke on the importance of continued federal assistance for programs that support our community

## Keystone XL Pipeline Delayed

On November 10, the State Department announced that the Keystone XL Pipeline permitting process would suffer an additional 15 month delay after an already unusually prolonged assessment period. While other international pipelines have been granted permits within 18 to 24 months, it has already been 38 months since TransCanada filed an application with the Department of State for a permit to build and operate this extension of the existing Keystone pipeline.

I am very disappointed because this project will create thousands of domestic jobs, raise local revenue, ensure a more consistent energy supply, and improve America's energy independence from hostile nations. The Keystone XL Pipeline project is estimated to bring in \$20 billion of private sector investment into the American economy, with \$69.7 million of that being directly in Harris County. It is also estimated that the project could create 20,000 direct jobs, spur the creation of 118,000 spin-off jobs, and pay out \$5 billion in taxes to local counties over the project's lifetime. Harris County alone could see over \$10.2 million in property tax revenue according to a Perryman Group study. It concerns me that the project may be scrapped altogether due to these unnecessary delays.

The U.S. has consumed approximately 18 million barrels per day of petroleum products over the last 10 years and imports 10 to 11 million barrels. As the largest single exporter of oil to the U.S. and a stable energy partner, Canada has and will continue to help reduce our dependence on energy supplies from nations that are hostile to us. North American oil sands are a vital source of energy for the U.S., and it is imperative for the U.S. to diversify our energy sources by exploring alternatives such as the oil sands in Canada. The Keystone XL Pipeline would link secure and growing supplies of Canadian crude oil with the largest refining markets in the United States, including the Houston Ship Channel, which would significantly improve North American energy security and supply. In our Congressional District, approving this project will help meet our domestic energy supply needs while we transition to cleaner burning fuels and alternative forms of energy over the next 30 years.

Among the most important benefits, the Keystone XL Pipeline would help our economy by creating thousands of high-wage manufacturing and construction jobs across the U.S. The construction industry has been one of the hardest hit in the last three years so this project comes at a time when these jobs are most needed.

## 29th District E-Newsletter

With budget cuts ahead and blackout period restrictions on mailing publications during election years, you can receive breaking and important news straight to your email inbox by signing up for the 29th District electronic newsletter.

The e-newsletters contain content similar to our regular newsletter but are able to relay up-to-the-minute information on district events, federal legislative initiatives, and important information that affects you without the delay of the printing press.

To sign up, visit the 29th Congressional District e-newsletter subscription page at:

<http://green.house.gov/contact-me/newsletter>

Much of the criticism against the pipeline surrounds its safety; however, the Keystone XL Project has undergone the most thorough and comprehensive review process of any other international pipeline. TransCanada has also agreed to comply with 57 additional special conditions developed by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration. In addition, we are already currently refining heavy crude along the Gulf Coast and the refineries in our area, where the pipeline will end, have already upgraded their control technology in order to refine the heavier Venezuelan and Mexican crude and comply with the Clean Air Act. Any increase in emissions would be addressed by individual refineries to maintain their operational permit under the Clean Air Act.

Across the U.S., Americans are calling for jobs today and I am extremely disappointed that the Keystone XL Pipeline has been delayed since it would provide shovel-ready jobs, huge gains to our national and local economies, and increase our energy supply and independence from foreign oil. To avoid losing out on these benefits, I hope that TransCanada and its contractors will continue with the project despite this unnecessary delay.

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