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## 'H-prize' bill tops Inglis' achievements this session

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WASHINGTON -- President Harry Truman nicknamed the 1948 session of Congress "do-nothing," but the U.S. House is on track to meet even fewer days this year, prompting some to revive the label.

Rep. Bob Inglis, R-S.C., said the characterization is "somewhat unfair," adding that votes were scheduled when measures were ready for action, and that Congress could just as easily be described as "efficient."

With the Congress in recess and only weeks away from wrapping up when House members return after Labor Day, Inglis reflected recently on what he has accomplished in Washington.

Inglis can now turn his attention to his re-election to a second consecutive term, but in a staunchly conservative district, it doesn't appear to be much of a contest, experts say.

"It's a very safe Republican seat, not one that I think will end up on anybody's target list," said Amy Walter, political analyst with the Cook Political Report, a nonpartisan Washington publication that analyzes elections and campaigns.

Inglis considers the House's passage of the "H-prize" bill his crowning achievement in the 109th Congress. The legislation he introduced would offer financial incentives for breakthroughs in research in hydrogen power. Action on the identical bill in the Senate is pending.

Inglis believes South Carolina could lead the way in hydrogen research because of Clemson University's International Center for Automotive Research, the University of South Carolina's fuel cell research, South Carolina State University's Clyburn Transportation Center and the Savannah River National Lab.

"Hopefully we'll have some action before the year is up, so we won't have to pass it again through the House," he said.

William Griffith, Inglis' Democratic challenger in the November race, said Inglis' efforts are misguided. Griffith, 58, is a retired Michelin executive.

"I think Congressman Inglis has primarily one issue, and that's hydrogen," Griffith said. "And quite honestly, we have a severe crisis that demands prompt treatment and the hydrogen solution is a much longer-term solution. ... The hydrogen economy is a potentially doubtful thing."

Other Inglis highlights in the 109th session:

- As chairman of the research panel on the House Science Committee, Inglis brought researchers from USC and Clemson to congressional hearings and arranged visits by the National Science Foundation director to the two campuses. "Hopefully that will enhance the opportunities that USC and Clemson will have with the NSF," he said.
- On the Judiciary Committee, he brought attention to mandatory minimum sentences and has pushed to eliminate some of them. Fewer anti-crime bills called for mandatory minimums this year, he said.
- Inglis was among several textile region lawmakers that helped secure "fixes" to the Central American Free Trade Agreement, or CAFTA, to lessen the impact on Upstate textile companies. The House approved a bill on July 28 that would grant President Bush power to establish agreements making certain that CAFTA countries trade pockets and linings made only in member nations. The idea was to avoid giving China a piece of the action.

In addition, the modification requires Nicaragua to buy more fabric from the United States than what was initially required under its Tariff Preference Level. The Senate passed similar legislation Thursday.

Not everyone is singing Inglis' praise. The AFL-CIO, a federation of labor unions, said Inglis has voted in accordance with the organization's position on worker-related legislation in only three out of 30 key labor votes in 2005 and up to this point in the 2006 House session.

"From our position, he's really done nothing, except for the wealthy," said Donna Dewitt, president of the South Carolina AFL-CIO. "He's sort of been in lockstep with the president."

The American Conservative Union, however, doesn't agree that Inglis is a slave to party lines. The group gave him an 80 percent rating for 2005 votes reflective of a conservative agenda. The group considers an 80 percent grade card the cutoff for a representative to be considered conservative, said spokesman Jonathan Rick.

The rest of the Republican members of the South Carolina delegation rated 96 percent or higher, suggesting Inglis has an independent streak.

By way of example, he was the lone Republican on the Judiciary Committee to vote against a bill that would safeguard the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance, temporarily blocking the legislation. Inglis objected to the fact that the bill would have stripped federal courts of jurisdiction over cases raising questions about the Pledge, setting a dangerous precedent for Congress.

Inglis supported a federal constitutional amendment that would define marriage between a man and a woman, but gave nuanced objections in an op-ed piece and on the House floor before the roll call vote, calling it the wrong amendment at the wrong time with the wrong motivations.

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