



CONGRESSMAN

John J. Duncan, Jr.

Washington Report

Second District—Tennessee

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

✓ **Immigration Bill**

The Senate failed to pass its immigration bill, but supporters say they will now try to pass the bill in smaller pieces. This bill, counting amendments, ballooned to over 1,000 pages. No one, supporters or opponents, really had time to learn everything in it because of its length and because it kept changing right up to the last vote. The Congress wants to be seen as doing something about this problem. However, the *Washington Times* said in an editorial published June 15: “A point often lost in the debate over border security and illegal immigration is that many of the laws necessary to fix the problem are already on the books, but federal authorities have decided for political reasons not to enforce them.” We already allow several million to immigrate legally into this country each year and have done so at this level for many years. We allow far more immigration than any other country. We do not need an increase in immigration. We need to enforce our laws and secure our borders, and we have given mega billions to immigration and border officials to help them do their jobs. Actually, local law enforcement could probably do a better job for half the money.

✓ **American Generosity**

Americans do more to help people in other countries, by far, than do people in any other country. Every nation has natural resources and/or natural beauty that could produce great wealth, but liberal or left-wing governments have ruined or held back the economies in many countries. Thus, *Newsweek* reported that half the people of the world have to get by on \$2.00 or less a day. These people are wondering if they are going to get enough to eat, not what they are going to buy at the mall. So, you cannot blame them for wanting to come here. However, our entire infrastructure—our schools, roads, hospitals, jails, sewers—just could not hold the massive influx of people who would come here if we simply

opened our borders. Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation said, “One of the goofiest things anyone can say is that we need to bring in more immigrants to take care of our problems with Social Security.” “In fact,” he added, “taxes are going to have to be raised on baby boomers to pay social security for immigrants.” The Heritage Foundation study on this situation found that 50 to 60% of illegal immigrants are high school dropouts. The findings were that the average low-skill household would receive an average of \$33,395 annually in government benefits over taxes paid, for a lifetime cost of \$1,669,750 for each household headed by an illegal immigrant high school dropout.

✓ **Amnesty**

The overwhelming majority of the people in East Tennessee are strongly opposed to amnesty. This was tried after the Congress passed the Simpson-Mazzoli Act in 1986, and almost four million were given amnesty. The same arguments used in favor of that bill are being used in favor of an immigration “compromise” today. The 1986 law was supposed to bring illegal immigration under control, yet all it did was lead to a huge increase. The government now estimates 12 to 20 million are here illegally now, but most think there are probably many millions more. Some who do not want strong enforcement say sarcastically that you cannot line up buses clear from San Diego to San Francisco and immediately remove 20 million people. Yet no one has ever advocated that. But just because you cannot solve all crime overnight does not mean you stop trying to enforce the criminal laws.

✓ **Huge Volume**

In a typical week, we receive between a thousand and two thousand letters, e-mails, or postcards and roughly the same number of phone calls in our four offices put together. Roughly half will be about the bills

or legislation, and about half will be from constituents who need some type of help or information. In all my years in Congress, I have never even come close to receiving as large or lopsided a volume as I have on immigration. In addition to all those who have called or written our offices, many, many others have expressed their opinions to me at meetings and events of all types throughout the District. The calls, letters, and comments from our constituents ran more than 50 to 1 against the bill in the Senate or any effort toward more liberal immigration.

✓ **Gas Prices**

Gas prices are far too high because we really are held hostage by OPEC and other foreign oil producers. If we just start producing a little more U.S. domestic oil off our shores, in Alaska, and a couple of other places around the Country, these foreign producers would lower their prices. Yet they are confident that our environmental groups will stop any significant increases in production or refining capacity here. Some environmentalists want gas prices to go much higher so people will drive less. They tell us we are lucky we are not paying the \$5, \$6, or \$7 a gallon people do in Europe or other places around the world. However, the Europeans pay the same world oil price as we do. They just put much higher taxes into their gas prices to pay for government medical care and higher welfare payments. Also, some third world countries have higher gas prices because of unstable or corrupt governments. The U.S. is a much bigger country than most, and most of our people have to drive more because of job requirements or family needs. Too much dependence on foreign oil also weakens our national security.

✓ **Interns and Pages**

I have had many outstanding young people from East Tennessee serve as interns in our offices or as pages in the House of Rep-

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representatives. This year, Brett Mayes of Alcoa, and Amber Greaves and Jackie Hartmann, both of Knoxville, have served as interns. Brett and Amber attend the University of Tennessee, and Jackie is a student at the University of Alabama. Adam Reynolds of Sweetwater served as a House Page for the entire school year.

✓ **Thomas Jefferson**

In his inaugural address, Thomas Jefferson listed what he called “the essential principles of our government.” One of these was what he described as “Jealous care of the rights of election by the people.” Our state legislature a few years ago took away the peoples’ right to choose school superintendents. This was wrong. All it really did was put control over this position into the hands of a very small group. Some say we should appoint all judges. Those who say this simply do not want judges to be held accountable for very bad decisions. We need to give people more power over who holds these offices, not less. It is very elitist to want to remove citizens’ control over their government and instead place it even more into the hands of so-called “experts”.

✓ **Other Principles**

Three other “essential principles” listed by Thomas Jefferson are also being largely ignored. One is peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none. Another is supremacy of state governments over the federal government, since government closest to the people is almost always better and less arrogant. Jefferson also believed in civilian control of the military. This is not being followed when government officials, trying to prove their patriotism, brag about giving the military everything it wants or never question any military actions. We should respect and appreciate the military, but we should not worship it.

✓ **Big Business**

Many on the far left frequently attack and criticize big business. Yet their policies have done more to help big business get even bigger. As government has grown, at all levels, the rules, regulations, and red tape have grown. The smallest businesses have found it very difficult, very costly, and oftentimes impossible to comply. And government bureaucrats find it much easier to deal with one giant company instead of one hundred little ones. Big businesses can hire the lobbyists and staff to court and deal with the government officials. Also, the big businesses get most of the government contracts, tax breaks, and favorable regulatory rulings. This has been seen very clearly in the Katrina money and in defense spend-

ing, especially in Iraq. But it goes on all over the Country and in most of the money the federal government spends around the world. Liberals advocate, and often succeed in, making government bigger. The bigger government grows, the more almost every business or industry ends up being dominated by a few big giants. This is not a conspiracy; it is just an inevitable consequence of bigger and bigger government. Big business is not inherently bad if its success comes from fair and free competition. But too often today it comes from government favoritism, regulatory overkill, or laws that make it too expensive for the smallest businesses to compete.

✓ **Gun Shops**

Nowhere can this big government bias in favor of big business be seen more clearly than in what has happened to most of our Nation’s small gun shops. Somewhere around 80% of these stores have gone out of business or have been forced to close by government rules, regulations and red tape. Agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives trying to show how powerful they are, have made it ridiculously difficult and even at times impossible for these small stores to survive by going to extremes in enforcing the most nitpicky, bureaucratic regulations imaginable. Some anti-gun extremists want a “Big Brother” world in which no private gun ownership is allowed, and maybe this is where we are headed. And I am for harsh sentences for those who use guns to commit violent or serious crimes. But guns have also protected millions of law-abiding citizens and have stopped countless numbers of crimes over the years. And teaching a young person to hunt is one of the finest things anyone can do. It is sure better than seeing them lying around watching T.V. and bumming around a mall, or even using drugs.

✓ **Davy Crockett**

Davy Crockett lost his last election to Congress and served only six years in total probably because he usually voted against almost all spending bills, no matter how sympathetic sounding they might be. In one memorable speech on the House Floor, he said: “Mr. Speaker, I have as much respect for the memory of the deceased and as much sympathy for the suffering of the living, if there be, as any man in this House, but we must not permit our respect for the dead or own sympathy for part of the living to lead us into an act of injustice to the balance of the living. I will not go into an argument to prove that Congress has not the power to appropriate this money as an act of charity. Every member on this floor knows it. We have the right as individuals

to give away as much of our own money as we please in charity; but as Members of Congress we have no right to appropriate a dollar of the public money. I am the poorest man on this floor. I cannot vote for this bill, but I will give one week’s pay to the object, and if every member of Congress will do the same, it will amount to more than the bill asks.” One of the easiest things in the world to do is to spend other people’s money. And it is always much more popular to say yes than to say no. That is why the federal government is in such a big hole today.

✓ **Deadbeat Doctors**

The Government Accountability Office reported recently that 21,000 healthcare providers, mostly doctors, had tax debts totaling \$1.3 billion as of last Sept. 30, while continuing to receive Medicare payments. The acting administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services said: “We are very concerned about this issue and are working hard with the Department of Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service to ensure that we do not over pay providers or other entities who owe the I.R.S. money.”

✓ **Global Warming**

Richard Lindzen, a professor of atmospheric science at MIT, wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* a few months ago about what he called the “alarmism” and “feeding frenzy” surrounding the climate change – global warming debate: “But there is a more sinister side to this feeding frenzy. Scientists who dissent from the alarmism have seen their grant funds disappear, their work derided, and themselves libeled as industry stooges, scientific hacks, or worse. Consequently, lies about climate change gain credence even when they fly in the face of the science that is supposedly their basis.” Professor David Deming, a geophysicist, wrote: “The media hysteria on global warming has been generated by journalists, who don’t understand the provisional and uncertain nature of scientific knowledge. Science changes.” Robert Bradley, President of the Institute for Energy Research, wrote in the *Washington Times*: “The emotional, politicized debate over global warming has produced a fire, ready, aim mentality, despite great and still-growing scientific uncertainty about the problem. Still, climate alarmists demand a multitude of do-somethings to address the problem they are sure exists and is solvable. They pronounce the debate over in their favor, and call their critics names, such as deniers, as in Holocaust deniers. This has created a bad climate for scientific research and for policy making. In fact, the debate is more than unsettled.”

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE continued from page 2✓ **Hateful Letters**

Some people feel so strongly that global warming is our greatest problem that they send very hateful or mean-spirited letters to the editor or to public officials. Hate has never produced good legislation. We have made great progress in cleaning our air and water over the last 30 or 35 years, although some groups will not admit this for fear of losing contributions. We can and will do even better things for our environment unless we resort to socialist, big government "solutions". The *Washington Post*, in a recent front page story, and columnist Georgie Anne Geyer in a recent column, pointed out that global warming is good in some places, bad in others. A one-size-fits-all approach almost never solves any problem.

✓ **Indoor Children**

Until the television and computers took control, most children and young people spent long hours outdoors. On June 19th, the *Washington Post* ran a lengthy front-page story about the growing problems of "indoor children." The story said many young people have developed both physical and mental problems when spending too much time staring at computer and television screens or playing video games. The story said "concerns about long-term consequences affecting emotional well-being, physical health, learning disabilities, and environmental consequences—have spawned a national movement to 'leave no child inside.'" This has become a subject of some Capitol Hill and state legislative hearings. I speak to many groups of young people and frequently tell them if they can occasionally pull themselves away from the very addictive computers and television screens and go out and actually live their lives and maybe even help out a live human being, they will be amazed at how much time they have and how much they can accomplish.

✓ **More Government**

Every government department or agency, knowingly or unknowingly, always exaggerates the problem or threat it is dealing with. This happens because its employees usually believe in what they are doing and especially because they always want more funding. This process is aided by the 24-hour news stations which have to sensationalize as much as possible to keep and expand their audiences. But unless people want higher and higher taxes and bigger and bigger government, they are going to have to read below the headlines and question the sensationalism of the news stations. It is always a good question to ask how much a government department or agency is getting compared to five or ten years ago.

Almost always it is way above the rate of inflation, especially if the department is currently politically popular or dealing with a sympathetic issue.

✓ **National Parks**

President Bush has proposed the biggest increase ever for our National parks. The budget for the National Park Service this fiscal year, which starts October 1, will be \$1.9 billion. The appropriation for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park for the last four years and the upcoming fiscal year is as follows: FY04:\$15,329,000; FY05:\$16,358,000; FY06:\$16,796,000; FY07:\$17,201,000; FY08:\$18,690,000 (proposed). One very strong and fast-growing trend in recent years has been for friends or support groups all over the Nation to make monetary contributions and volunteer thousands of hours of service to our parks.

✓ **Academic Fashions**

In an earlier newsletter I wrote that it was unfortunate that many professors do not seem to like to teach and that it had now become much more fashionable in academic circles to emphasize research and writing. Research is important, but the primary mission of a college or university should still be teaching. It is too important to frequently be fended off to graduate students. Also, it takes the average undergraduate over five years to complete what used to take four years. Students often cannot get the classes they need to graduate because some professors are not teaching more than six hours a week. *Stoner* is a widely acclaimed but very sad novel about a professor who taught English for almost 40 years at the University of Missouri. In a passage from that book, at a dinner held in his honor, Professor Stoner, in great pain, near death from cancer, is asked to speak. "I have taught..." He began again. 'I have taught at this university for nearly forty years. I do not know what I would have done if I had not been a teacher. If I had not taught, I might have—' He paused, as if distracted. Then he said, with finality, 'I want to thank you all for letting me teach.'" That was his entire speech. It is a very special privilege to be a teacher.

✓ **Clean Coal**

The U.S. has sometimes been called the Saudi Arabia of coal. And in recent years, the government and many private companies have spent billions on producing clean coal technology and in mining coal in ways not damaging to the environment. In fact, some former strip mine areas have been reclaimed and beautified to make areas for elk habitat or even golf courses. A 2007 revi-

sion of a book called *Armageddon, Oil and Terror* says: "The United States is rich in coal—with the equivalent of one trillion barrels of oil. Uranium is abundantly available for nuclear power. Heavy oil supplies in the form of tar sands in Alberta, Canada far exceed the oil reserves of Saudi Arabia." The worst polluters and economies in the world are the socialist countries where the government runs and controls almost everything. The surest way to have both clean energy and a good economy is to allow the free market to produce what is needed both economically and environmentally.

✓ **DC In Congress**

The House has now passed a bill to give the District of Columbia a full voting member of the House. I voted against this bill and President Bush has promised to veto it if it passes the Senate. First, every state has a combination of varied interests, urban, suburban, and rural. The District of Columbia is just a city and not even one of our more populous ones. Second, the District already receives about four times as much federal money per person as the highest state, so the City is certainly not being shortchanged monetarily. Third, Washington, D.C. was originally established to be a federal city for all the people of the nation, not just its inhabitants. Fourth, and most important, the Constitution says members of the House shall be chosen "by the People of the several States." Unfortunately, many people do not pay attention to the Constitution today if it interferes with their goals.

✓ **Energy Independence**

Everyone says they are for energy independence, but environmentalists loudly, but unfortunately effectively, oppose any and every type of natural resource production in this Country. They do not want us to drill for any oil, dig for any coal, cut any trees, or produce any natural gas. Their methods have driven up the prices of all these products and have destroyed jobs and have really hurt poor and lower income and working people. They have greatly helped foreign energy producers. Now the majority party is pushing a bill called the Energy Policy Reform and Revitalization Act of 2007. Despite its wonderful sounding title, this bill would make energy even more expensive in this Country. One of my committees is the National Resources Committee. James L. Martin, President of the 60-Plus Association for seniors, testified at a hearing on this bill: "I've testified at hearings in Virginia, Texas, and in New Jersey, on the need for deep sea exploration. When seniors are told that drilling platforms are so far out in the ocean you can't

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see them even with binoculars...they then ask why we aren't drilling." He added that China is drilling for oil in partnership with Cuba just 40-60 miles off the coast of Florida "and with the ability to apply 'snake drilling' the question arises, is Cuba stealing our resources which under present policy we are not allowed to develop... It's a perverse policy we practice in the U.S., not allowing development of our resources while other countries dig and drill and develop theirs, then we buy them!" Rep. Neil Abercrombie (D-Hawaii) said in a speech on the House Floor: "We are losing our manufacturing base. We are losing our ability to farm, while rich, elite people in this Country that support some of these environmental organizations are out there trying to say that some of us that are trying to get to energy independence are the ones that are causing the difficulty."

✓ **Federal Contracts**

The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, of which I am a member, issued a report June 27 stating that half of all federal contracts fell short of "full and open competition." Out of \$412.1 billion worth of contracts and purchases studied, the report said 25% had no-bid procedures, and another one-fourth had little, even sham, competition. Most federal contracts are awarded due to contacts or friendships within the bureaucracy. This does not mean the companies cannot do quality work, but it does help lead to exorbitant profits for government contractors that usually far exceed profits they would get in the private sector. The sad thing is that federal contractors can generally do things more cheaply and efficiently than the government itself can, even when the contractors are making huge profits. The five biggest government contractors are Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, General Dynamics, and Raytheon.

✓ **General Aviation**

According to a recent article in *USA Today*, general aviation (non-airline aviation) contributes over \$100 billion each year to our economy. There is a strong effort to impose user fees on general aviation aircraft. The problem right now is that fuel has gone up so much that fewer people are taking flying lessons and private pilots are flying their planes less. The Congress has helped out troubled airlines in several ways since 9/11. We all want our airlines to do well, but we also need to make sure that we do not harm the very vital general aviation sector.

✓ **Good News**

The non-partisan Congressional Budget

Office has estimated that the 10-year cost for the Medicare prescription program will be \$265 billion less than previously forecast. Competition resulting from private insurers negotiating prices with drug companies have produced these savings, which the *Washington Post* reported has produced an average savings for seniors of \$1200 a year. However, due to the unpopularity of insurance and drug companies, many in Congress want the government to handle all these negotiations instead of many private companies. Government price negotiations or controls would result in much less choice of medicines and much higher costs over the long haul.

✓ **Government Payments**

Economist A. Gary Shilling appeared on C-Span recently and reported that today 52.6% of Americans receive a significant portion of their income from federal programs. This is up from 28.3% in 1950. Mr. Shilling's study counted both dependents as well as the direct recipients of government income.

✓ **Hidden Pork**

Almost every appropriations bill has many good things but also many ridiculous things. Often amendments to take out these items are not permitted by the Rules Committee or are included in un-amendable conference reports. One method often used now is to include them in very popular military spending bills. One recent extra military appropriations bill had \$21 billion in non-defense spending. Space would not permit a full listing, but a few examples included: \$74 million for peanut storage costs; \$100 million for assistance to citrus growers; \$60.4 million for salmon fisheries; \$67 million to secure nuclear material in the former Soviet Union; \$910 million more for FEMA (the agency that bought all the unused trailers); \$283 million for the Milk Income Loss Program; and \$500 million for wildfire suppression when the Forest Service had already been given \$831 million for that purpose. All this was in a bill to "support the troops" in Iraq. One article in a small-circulation Congressional publication had a headline which read "Something For Everyone In Supplemental."

✓ **Homeland Security**

The *Washington Post* carried a front page story the next day reporting that one no-bid, \$2,000,000 contract awarded by the Department of Homeland Security in 2003 ballooned up to \$124 million by July of this year. In December of 2004, Department lawyers said payments to Booz Allen Hamilton, one of the largest federal con-

tractors, to provide consultants had gone "grossly beyond the scope" of the original contract. The lawyers advised the Department to allow other companies to compete. At that point, payments had reached \$30 million. The competition did not take place for more than a year. During that time payments, under a no-bid arrangement, went to \$73 million. Then, DHS broke it up into five contracts totaling \$51 million. Shock of all shocks, Booz Allen Hamilton won "competition" for all five contracts, thus adding up to \$124 million so far. The Department of Homeland Security has apparently turned into a very lucrative gravy train for some people.

✓ **Improper Payments**

In 2002, the Congress passed the Improper Payments Information Act as one small way to hopefully eliminate some of the waste, fraud, and abuse in federal programs. The two programs most subject to these problems are Medicare and food stamps, with anywhere from one-sixth to almost one-fourth of the funds being lost in these ways. Earlier this year, the Office of Management and Budget sent a letter to me and other members on certain committees bragging about improper payments being reduced from \$45.1 billion in 2004 to \$36.3 billion last year. Of course, if the government is admitting this amount, the true figure is probably much higher. And improper payments are just part of the waste, fraud, and abuse in federal programs. The law we passed has helped some, but the only way to significantly reduce these problems is to drastically downsize the overall cost of the federal government, and this will probably never happen.

✓ **Iraq Contracts**

There are so many scandalous contracts among our spending in Iraq that an entire newsletter could be devoted to them. In fact an entire book has now come out about the activities of just one contractor named Blackwater. However, a few examples of ridiculous or wasteful spending by other contractors include the following: DynCorp was paid \$43.8 million for building and storing a residential camp that was never used, including \$4.2 million on VIP trailers and an Olympic-size swimming pool that were not authorized. Parsons Global was given a contract in 2004 to build 150 primary health centers at a cost of \$243 million. After \$186 million had been spent with only six centers completed, the contract was terminated with the contractor required to complete only 14 more. Bechtel was removed from a contract for the Basrah Children's Hospital when what was supposed to be a \$50 million project

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had reached a cost of \$98 million and was about a year behind schedule. Unfortunately, because of friendships and connections within the Defense Department, Companies keep getting contracts even when they have overcharged or screwed up on earlier ones. Franklin Spinney of the Center for Defense Information said: "The porking is totally out of control. It's the military-industrial-congressional complex. It's basically a self-licking ice cream cone at this point." Fiscal conservatives should be, and I believe are, very upset about much of this wasteful spending.

✓ **Medical Costs**

One of the biggest problems we face in this Country today is the exploding cost of medical care. It has gone out of sight because we pay for it through a third-party-payer system—government and insurance. Thank goodness that the great majority does not pay for other necessities such as food, clothing, housing and transportation that way or their costs would be unbelievable, too. President Reagan frequently said that government is not the solution, government is the problem. The crazy thing is that government messes things up and then the simple, easy solution is more government to try to solve the problem. Yet, the simple answer is frequently wrong. Because medical costs have gotten so high now, most people will demand that the government take it all over. This will lead to even higher costs paid through taxes. When the Medicare program started in 1965, it was predicted that it would cost only \$9 billion after 25 years. Instead, spending in 1990 ended up being \$111 billion. And the projected cost for 2007 is now almost \$444 billion. Through the "tyranny of good intentions", the federal government has exploded the costs of both medical care and higher education (through the federal student loan program). We have turned what were very minor problems for very few people into major problems for almost everybody.

✓ **Military Healthcare**

I participated in the very first hearing on the poor treatment of wounded soldiers at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington. Everyone wants our active military and our veterans to receive the best care possible. Problems sometimes occur because the civil service system makes it almost impossible to remove lazy or incompetent employees. Money is sure not the problem. Spending on medical care for the Defense Department and the Veterans Administration put together rose from approximately \$50 billion in 2003 to about \$69 billion in 2006, a 38% increase. Overall VA spending was \$30.5 billion in 1990. This fiscal year, the



Congressman Duncan is shown here with the Veterans Honor Guard after speaking to the Veterans Memorial Ceremony at the Honor Fountain City Day on May 28, 2007. Congressman Duncan has never missed a Fountain City Day since it first began 31 years ago.

figure is approximately \$85 billion, and the House just voted 409 to 2 to give the VA its biggest increase ever for next year.

✓ **Nation Building**

In 2000, then Gov. George Bush said many times that he opposed "nation building" and that we needed a "more humble" foreign policy so as not to create so much anti-American sentiment around the world. I agreed with him then and still believe this today. Columnist Michael Kinsley wrote in early June that President Bush criticized "...his predecessor for engaging in military action (in Kosovo and Somalia) without an exit strategy. He mocked the notion of trying to establish democracy in distant lands. He denounced the use of American soldiers for 'nation-building.' In 2000, if you were looking for a way to express your disapproval of the policies and prejudices that later got us into Iraq, your obvious answer would have been to be for George W. Bush."

✓ **Presidential Libraries**

Several years ago I found out that some middle-eastern governments and even a relative and a close friend of a man who received a pardon from President Clinton were contributing huge sums to his presidential library. And it was all being done with no limitations or reporting or disclosure requirements. I introduced a bill not to limit or ban these contributions but to at least shed some light on them by requiring disclosure of the contributors and the amounts. This bill passed the House, but was not acted on by the Senate. Now we have passed this overwhelmingly once again in the House. Without this law someone can make a large contribution even while a President is still in office in hopes of influ-

encing some decision and do it in secret. This bill should be passed no matter who is President, regardless of party.

✓ **Safe Drivers**

I now serve as the ranking member of the Highways and Transit Subcommittee. This subcommittee controls more money than almost all other subcommittees in the Congress. However, our biggest concern is supposed to be highway safety. Drunken driving standards were toughened in most states after the Congress passed laws to withhold some federal money if alcohol levels were not lowered. Now, with our aging population, some want us to make it tougher for senior citizens to renew driver's licenses because there is a myth about them being very unsafe drivers. However, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recently found that drivers 75 and older are the safest drivers of all. The next safest are those 65 to 74, and this is based on the crash rate per 10,000 drivers. In this study, the lower percentage was better, and the figure for those 75 and over was 2.5%, while the rate for those 16 to 20 was 13.3%.

✓ **Stress Syndrome**

For a hearing in late May, we were given the latest figures for veterans receiving payments for Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. In 2005, 215,871 received PTSD benefit payments at a cost of \$4.3 billion, up from \$1.7 billion in 1999. The VA Inspector General reported that over the last five years, the number of veterans receiving compensation for PTSD has grown seven times that of veterans receiving benefits for disabilities in general.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE continued from page 5✓ **Tax Code**

According to the Congressional Research Service, the Internal Revenue Code and IRS Regulations now total over 66,500 pages with over 9,000,000 words. Even IRS employees have problems with a system this complicated. No tax plan would be perfect or popular with everyone, but almost anything would be better than what we have now. A system called the Fair Tax is the only major proposal which would insure that drug dealers, illegal immigrants and others in the so-called "underground" economy pay their taxes. I believe the Fair Tax would be lower than experts have predicted because I think those working "off the books" is far larger than the government has estimated. Even if these projections are correct, everyone who is paying his or her legal share today would receive a significant tax reduction under the Fair Tax. This is because millions not paying now would be paying their share, tax preparation costs would virtually be eliminated saving many billions, and foreign tourists would be paying in the price of goods thus helping reduce taxes for U.S. citizens. We now have about 55 million foreign tourists each year, not counting those who come here illegally.

✓ **TVA Debt**

The TVA Board tripled its debt from 1980 to 1997, reaching a high point of 27.7 billion. At that time (1997), TVA was paying 34 cents of every dollar just to service the debt. Several years ago, I contacted the Federal Financing Board to request that TVA be allowed to refinance some of the debt at the lower interest rates then prevailing, and this was approved. This debt has now been slowly reduced to about \$25 billion, and I hope the new Board will keep chipping away at this in spite of tremendous growth in our region. The financing expense has gone down, thankfully, to 14% of total expenses. TVA's annual SO₂ and NO_x emissions have both been reduced by more than half since 1992. France gets 71% of its power from nuclear energy, we need to rely more on nuclear power and not let a very tiny number of anti-nuclear crazies make it unaffordable.

✓ **Federal Spending**

The Cato Institute reports that federal spending, aside from interest, has risen 54% since 2001, while the consumer price index (what we usually call inflation) has risen just 16%. There have been very large increases for the Department of Defense, Education, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, State and Veterans Affairs. I do not vote for many spending bills that I might support if the federal government had surplus cash. However, many bills that sound good on the surface have

wasteful, pork barrel spending buried deep within the bill. And every bill is given a motherhood and apple pie title. But with a national debt of almost nine trillion dollars, the simple but unpleasant truth is that we cannot afford everything that every department or agency wants, even if that department or agency happens to be one that is currently popular.

✓ **Unfunded Liabilities**

Even worse than the nine trillion national debt is what the Government Accountability Office (GAO) says is now \$50.5 trillion in unfunded future pension liabilities. David Walker, head of the GAO, has been trying to be a Paul Revere on this. He has been speaking around the Country and testifying before Congressional Committees to try to warn people about this problem, which is huge now and headed higher at an unfortunately fast rate. This means that if federal spending continues at present or higher levels, we will not be able to pay military and civil service pensions, social security, Medicare and other commitments 10 or 15 years from now without greatly inflating money (which means pensions will buy less), or cutting benefits, or raising taxes to a level our economy could not sustain. Mr. Walker said on 60 Minutes July 8 that he "would argue that the most serious threat to the U.S. is not someone hiding in a cave in Afghanistan or Pakistan, but our own fiscal irresponsibility." He called it a "fiscal cancer" which if we do not take drastic action will have "catastrophic consequences."

✓ **Spendthrift Congress**

In spite of this problem, which everyone acknowledges at least with lip service, the new majority in Congress is rapidly increasing spending. In early June, the appropriations subcommittees were given new allocations to increase spending by 9.2%, about three times the rate of inflation. President Bush had requested an overall spending increase of 2.2%. Defense spending has jumped from about \$450 billion in 2002, to about \$750 billion this year, counting regular and supplemental bills, a roughly 66% increase over this period.

✓ **War Costs**

Robert Samuelson, a columnist for the *Washington Post* and *Newsweek*, a few months ago wrote about Iraq: "The war has cost far more than I (or almost anyone) anticipated." He wrote that the requests so far, including for the next fiscal year, total \$746 billion for Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, he cited a Harvard budget expert as predicting future health and disability benefits at a present value of another \$300 to

\$600 billion. On July 31, the Congressional Budget Office estimated future military costs in Iraq and Afghanistan for the next ten years to be \$481 billion to \$1 trillion if we reduce the number of troops there to 30,000 by 2010 (lower cost estimate) or 75,000 by 2013 (higher cost estimate). Gen. Peter Pace, who is just stepping down as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, says we will be there for at least 10 more years. I have said many times that we simply cannot afford all this and still pay all the Social Security, Medicare, government and military pensions, and all the other things that the people now expect. What we are doing to our children and grandchildren is shameful.

✓ **Democracy**

In his often-quoted book, *Democracy In America*, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote: There are two things which will always be very difficult for a democratic nation: to start a war, and to end it." Those individuals and companies who continually want more money for defense have made it unpatriotic to oppose getting into a war and to get out of it, even when it would really be simple to do so. Thus, today it is very easy to start a war, but very, very difficult to end it. Robert Samuelson, in the column cited above, wrote although he supported going to war, "With hindsight, it seems almost incontestable that the Iraq war should never have been fought. It has eroded our global power, weakened our military and resulted in thousands of American and Iraqi deaths." Apparently, though, our military will be there for many years to come. Richard Cohen, another columnist who originally supported the war, wrote: "But by now, the obscuring of death and injury with emotive words and patriotic babble ought to be seen as a hideously obscene avoidance of accountability. The way to protect our soldiers is not to double our losses but to agree on a sensible withdrawal policy." Hopefully, at the least, we will be a little more careful about rushing into this type of mess in the future.

✓ **War Zone Cash**

In addition to paying for work by check, one report said our government sent 363 tons of cash into Iraq to keep its economy from collapsing. One Foreign Service officer who spent a year there told me about seeing an SUV stuffed full of cash with barely enough room for the driver. Too many of our leaders, in both major parties, want to be seen as world statesmen. And liberals have made our government so big over the last 50 years or so that these "statesmen" can seemingly rationalize or justify even the wildest or most ridiculous

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expenditures. The top three federal auditors reported that one out of every six dollars spent for work in Iraq was lost due to poor accounting, work delays, bloated expenses, or was shoddily or never done.

✓ **Private Property**

The State recently added another 82,000 acres to its land inventory. Tennessee already has several million federal, state and local acres set aside as parks and wilderness and recreation areas. This is happening all over the Country. We keep shrinking the tax base at the same time the schools and other government agencies keep telling us they need more money. It sounds great for a government official to create a park, but most park supporters tell us we are not spending enough to properly maintain, much less improve, the ones we have now. And we really cannot give much use to all the wilderness and recreation and park areas we have now unless we miraculously find a way for all our people to take permanent vacations.

✓ **Secret Ballots**

Some union officials want to do away with the right of workers to have secret ballots when voting on whether to join a union. The House recently caved into union pressure and voted to do away with secret ballot union elections. This is not the American way, and many fear this could lead to workers being harassed or intimidated by union organizers. Hopefully, this bill will not make it through the Senate. Rep. George Miller (D-Cal.), one of the main sponsors of this bill, actually wrote in 2001, with 15 colleagues, to Mexican officials on behalf of Mexican workers insisting "that the secret ballot is absolutely necessary to ensure that workers are not intimidated into voting for a union they might not otherwise choose." What is right for Mexican workers should also be given to American workers, too.

✓ **Security Overreaction**

I believe that most members of Congress will vote for almost anything if the word "security" is attached to it so that they will not be blamed if something bad happens later. We should do some things to protect against terrorism, but we should not go overboard if we still believe in things like freedom and liberty. Actually most security spending is more about money for government contractors and increased funding for government agencies than it is about any serious threat. Just three weeks after 9/11, when security requests for money were already pouring in, *The Wall Street Journal* hit the nail on the head in an editorial: "We'd like to suggest a new post September 11

rule for Congress: any bill with the word 'security' in it should get double the public scrutiny, and maybe four times the normal wait, lest all kinds of bad legislation become law under the phony guise of fighting terrorism." Unfortunately, Congress has not followed this good advice, but it is just as relevant today as when it was first written.

✓ **Unfair Trade**

The U.S. has an almost \$300 billion annual trade deficit with China. This means that we lose millions of jobs to the Chinese each year. Much of this deficit has come about because of China manipulating its currency. I have co-sponsored legislation called the Fair Currency Act of 2007 with Congressmen Duncan Hunter (R-CA) and Tim Ryan (D-OH) to try to help decrease some of the unfairness to U.S. industries. Also, in the last few months, the Chinese have sent in fishmeal with sawdust in it; chicken feed with melamine (a product used in plastic) in it; toys with illegal levels of toxicity; and event tainted dog food and toothpaste. The Chinese must really be laughing at us or be amazed at how much they can get away with in the U.S. as long as they have the lowest price.

✓ **Unneeded Property**

The federal government now has 21,000 vacant or unused properties worth a whopping \$18 billion dollars. I have introduced legislation in the House requiring the government to sell these unneeded, obsolete properties. Senators Tom Coburn (OK), and Tom Carper (DE) first introduced this bill in the Senate. Senator Coburn said: "It is obscene that the value of our government's vacant or unused properties exceeds the value of the gross domestic product (GDP) of half the nations on earth."

✓ **World Statesmen**

Nothing the American people have ever done could have justified or excused the cruel killing of innocent people such as happened on 9/11. Ordinary Americans were certainly not at fault. On a per capita basis, the U.S. has done far more to help other countries than has any other nation. Yet we cannot stick our heads in the sand and deny that there is great resentment, and at times even hatred, for us around the world. The problems have been caused by a very small number of foreign policy elitists in very powerful positions who want to prove that they are world statesmen. So they have involved us in too many religious, ethnic, and governmental disputes around the world. We need more often to take the role of a neutral power broker or peacemaker instead of leaning too far toward one side or the other.

✓ **Early Warning**

In case anyone thinks I have criticized our policies in Iraq only since President Bush came into office, they should read the speech I gave in the House on September 22, 2000, several months before President Clinton left the White House. At that time we had been bombing Iraq on the average of once every four days, which the *Christian Science Monitor* said was costing \$2 billion a year and occupying "20,000 soldiers, 280 aircraft, and 25 ships". We had been doing this all through the Clinton Administration, enforcing a so-called "no-flight" zone. The *Washington Post* called this a "forgotten war" because most Americans did not even know we were doing this at what now, in comparison to today, was the small cost of \$6,000,000 a day. I thought even this was excessive and unnecessary. I said then: "What a waste. What are we accomplishing? Probably just the opposite from what we should be trying to do. Probably the only thing our bombing has accomplished is to keep Saddam Hussein in power by making the U.S. so unpopular in Iraq. These people were our allies in the 1980s. They could be our friends again if we would stop bombing them. Iraq is no threat whatsoever to the U.S. unless we continue to bomb them for so long and so much they are forced to send terrorists in here in acts of desperation." The 2000 Post story about the "forgotten war" told of a fifth-grade boy who had his head blown off by one of our bombs while he was looking for grass for his family's sheep. The story said "a week of conversations with wounded Iraqis and the families of those killed... showed that civilian deaths and injuries are a regular part" of this air war. The September 21, 2000, *Monitor* story that helped lead to my speech that next day said "Iraq does not even have the means to pose a threat to its neighbors." Now, President Bush's Homeland Security advisor told the *Today Show* a few days ago that Iraq had become a recruiting and training ground for terrorists. Also, as many reports have said, we have increased our spending on this war to \$12 billion a month.

✓ **Conservative Writers**

Many conservative newspaper and magazine columnists were against the war in Iraq from the start. William F. Buckley, Jr. supported the war at first but wrote in 2004 that if he had known in 2002 what he then knew, he would have opposed the war. Even more significantly, he wrote in June of 2005: "A respect for the power of the United States is engendered by our success in engagements in which we take part. A point is reached when tenacity conveys not steadfastness of purpose, but misapplica-

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tion of pride. It can't reasonably be disputed that if in the year ahead the situation in Iraq continues about as it has done in the past year, we will have suffered more than another 500 soldiers killed. Where there had been skepticism about our venture, there will be contempt." Unfortunately, since that was written, instead of 500 deaths, we have now had over 2,000 U.S. military deaths in Iraq since then.

✓ **Popular Columnist**

Several years ago a conservative, Charley Reese, was chosen as the most popular columnist in a vote by many thousands of C-Span viewers. Certainly no one would agree with everything he writes, but he does write in a plain, down-to-earth, straightforward way that gets people to read his columns whether they agree with him or not. On June 25, he wrote the following in one of his columns: "As a matter of fact, we should not only pull all of our troops out of Iraq, but also withdraw them from Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and anywhere else they happen to be in the Middle East. If our leaders had the brains to do this, they would discover that the people in that part of the world are quite capable of running their own affairs. Some of them might kill each other, but eventually things would settle down. It is, after all, one of the oldest civilizations in the world. In the meantime, no one in that part of the world could use us as an excuse for doing anything, and it wouldn't be our guys who are getting killed. I would also pull out of Afghanistan and say to the government, the Taliban and al-Qaeda, you fellows work this out among yourselves, because frankly we don't give a damn. Your hardscrabble country isn't worth 10 bucks, much less the billions we've spent on it. If you need water, dig a well; if you need food, grow it. Goodbye and good luck. The American people have been conned into accepting the idea of an empire, when there is no need for one. Wherever there is oil, it will be available for sale because it is otherwise worthless, and why should we care from whom we buy it?"

Some of the worst people in the world are sitting on big oil reserves, and you know what? Their oil burns just as well as anybody else's. The imperialists have created the illusion that we are in control of the world and if we weren't, everything would fall apart. That's not true." You can read more by Charley Reese at www.lewrockwell.com.

✓ **Hospital Infections**

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that 90,000 people die each year from infections picked up in our Nation's hospitals. A more recent study by the Association for Professionals in Infection Control estimate that deaths may be as high as 119,000. To try to help some with this problem, I have co-sponsored H.R. 1174, the Healthy Hospitals Act. This bill would require hospitals to publicly report their infection rates, thus giving patients helpful information and putting more pressure on hospitals to become cleaner. This bill, if passed, would also give grants to hospitals that achieve the lowest infection rates. This is a problem that is costing this Nation approximately \$50 billion each year, in addition to all the deaths.

✓ **Government Waste**

On July 19, I spoke on the House Floor and said we hear and read about so many examples of waste by the federal bureaucracy that almost nothing shocks or surprises us anymore. However, the day before news came out about a really ridiculous waste by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the same people who bought thousands of unneeded trailers. Now we find out that FEMA bought 112,000 tons of ice and paid millions to buy it and another \$12.5 million to store it. According to news reports, 42,000 tons has been unused, and FEMA is going to pay \$3,400,000 to have this ice melted. I said in my floor speech that a first grader could melt ice. The Department of

Homeland Security, of which FEMA is part, has 171,000 employees. Surely they have more than enough workers who could melt this ice without paying some company \$3.4 million to do it. FEMA should be placed in the Hall of Fame of Government Waste if one is ever created.

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