



▲ Rep. Levin speaks with students about legislative issues.

*Representing the 12th Congressional District of Michigan*

## **The Congressional Connector**

Week of May 19 - 23, 2008

### **House Approves Extension of Unemployment Benefits**

On May 15, the full House of Representatives passed an extension of unemployment insurance benefits to help the growing number of jobless workers nationwide. The extension, which was taken up as an amendment to the War and Domestic supplemental funding package, would extend unemployment benefits for 13 weeks across the country and 13 additional weeks in high unemployment states like Michigan. The House approved the amendment on a vote of 256 to 166.

During the Floor debate, Rep. Levin said, "I come from Michigan with a high unemployment level. I want all the unemployed long-term to be covered wherever they live. I think it's time that the minority and the President get out of the offices they reside in and get into the shoes of typical American families.... Opposition to extension of unemployment compensation is unconscionable."

[For more information, or to watch Rep. Levin's Floor speech, click here.](#)

The Senate is expected to debate the supplemental funding bill this week. Then, House and Senate negotiators must hammer out a final version of the legislation to send to the President.

### **Congress Suspends Oil Shipments to Strategic Petroleum Reserve**

Last week, the House and Senate overwhelmingly approved legislation to suspend filling the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) in order to free up 70,000 barrels of oil a day for domestic consumption. The SPR is over 97 percent full with 700 million barrels of oil. The Bush Administration, which had heretofore opposed the proposal, has indicated that the President will sign the bill. Oil shipments to the SPR will therefore cease for 180 days, beginning on July 1.

### **House to Consider Bill to Improve Veterans Substance Abuse Treatment**

According to the 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, approximately 25 percent of veterans age 18 to 25 meet the criteria for substance use disorder (SUD), while 7 percent of veterans overall meet the criteria for SUD. Too often, these veterans do not receive the comprehensive treatment they need to overcome substance problems. Further, there are discrepancies in the availability of treatment for substance use disorder among VA medical facilities. On May 20, the House will consider legislation [H.R. 5554] to expand and improve the Department of Veterans Affairs' substance use disorder treatment and prevention programs. H.R. 5554 would require the VA to provide treatment for substance use disorder at every VA medical center and would also launch a pilot program for internet-based substance use disorder treatment aimed at veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Rep. Levin is a cosponsor of this legislation. For more information, [click here](#).

### **The Week Ahead**

The House is expected to consider legislation [[H.R. 6074](#), the Gas Price Relief for Consumers Act] to crack down on OPEC-controlled entities and oil companies for oil price fixing. The bill authorizes the Justice Department to take legal action against OPEC state-controlled entities that participate in conspiracies to limit the supply, or fix the price, of oil. The House is also expected to debate [H.R. 6049](#), the Renewable Energy and Job Creation Act as well as [H.R. 5658](#), the National Defense Authorization Act.