

The Do-Less-Than-Do-Nothing Congress Leaves Again Without Addressing America's Priorities

This Republican-controlled Congress has met only 65 days this year tying with 1998 for the fewest days in session before the Fourth of July in at least sixty years. It is fewer days than even the famous "Do-Nothing" Congress that Harry Truman successfully ran against.

MINIMUM WAGE: The minimum wage has not been increased since 1997 and is at its lowest level (adjusted for inflation) in 50 years. Recent polls show that more than 80 percent of Americans support increasing it. Yet Republicans refuse to allow a fair vote on the House Floor to raise it. After Democrats successfully attached an amendment increasing the minimum wage to the FY07 Labor-HHS Appropriations Bill, the House Republican leadership pulled the bill from the schedule indefinitely. House Speaker Dennis Hastert said that the pressure to increase the minimum wage was a "problem." [[Wall Street Journal](#), 6/20/06]

IMMIGRATION: Although immigration is consistently rated as one of the top issues Americans would like Congress to address, Republicans are stalling in the face of major internal divisions. "The debate over illegal immigration already has been held; the additional [Republican-sponsored] hearings are meant only to delay – and possibly kill – passage of legislation this year." [[Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#), 6/27/06]

PENSIONS: With Baby Boomers set to retire and Americans increasingly concerned about their retirement security, prospects for passage of a pension overhaul are unlikely as "lawmakers are fast approaching another self-imposed deadline — the July Fourth recess — with no compromise in place." [[CQ](#), 6/19/06]

VOTING RIGHTS ACT: The Voting Rights Act was expected to be renewed before the Fourth of July Recess, but "[p]rotests from a broad cross-section of Republican lawmakers...prompted House leaders to scrub a vote on the measure...throwing reauthorization of the landmark 1965 law into an uncertain future despite initial expectations of an easy renewal." [[Roll Call](#), 6/22/06]

LOBBYING REFORM: Despite Republican pledges for quick and strong action on reform, "the legislation remains in limbo and, so far at least, a shadow of its initial expectations." [[Washington Post](#), 6/26/06]

BUDGET: The Republican Congress cannot even complete the most basic responsibility of crafting a budget. The House and the Senate have yet to even go to conference on the budget, and an agreement remains "highly unlikely." Yet, Republicans have had time to substantially increase the debt and deficits by \$781 billion this year to almost \$9 trillion. The budget-in-waiting would raise the debt limit another \$653 billion to more than \$9.6 trillion. [[Congress Daily](#), 6/8/06]

HEALTH CARE: "What about health-care reform? The broken status quo [46 million Americans uninsured, an increase of 6 million since 2001, and skyrocketing health costs] is a major threat to the national economy; the United States spends twice as much as most industrialized nations and gets half the value. Yet 'Health-Care Week' in the House will focus on tort reform. That's a joke." In addition, Republicans have left many seniors vulnerable to a lifetime Medicare tax, as well as failed to address the "donut hole" that will leave many seniors paying more for prescription drugs. [[Salt Lake Tribune](#), 6/5/06; [Knight Ridder](#), 5/31/06]

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE: The "[House Republicans' so-called] 'energy week,' which may not last even five days, is a joke," consisting of one bill to expand drilling. [[New York Times editorial](#), 6/26/06]

TAX REFORM: Democrats have been pushing for reform of the tax code, but the President and Congressional Republicans have abandoned any such effort, with a leading House Republican saying it will wait until at least 2009. [[Congress Daily](#), 6/6/06]