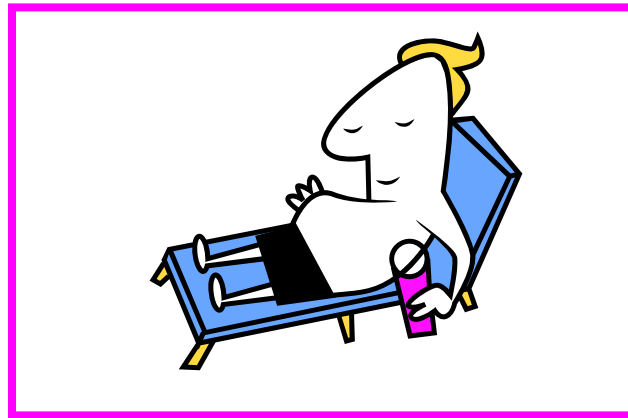


The Do-Less-Than-Do-Nothing Congress Leaves for the Summer



Washington Republicans left town for the rest of the summer having spent the 109th Congress doing virtually nothing to confront the challenges facing our country (see list below). They will return in September for a few short weeks before adjourning to campaign for a tough election. This puts them in line to work 27 fewer days than the infamous “Do-Nothing” Congress that President Truman successfully campaigned against 50 years ago (83 days v. 110 days). Meanwhile, Democrats will spend August talking about the ideas that we have put forward to take the country in a new direction.

“Led by Republicans divided among themselves, stained by scandal and fleeing the stigma of a flailing president, this Congress is heading shortly into its campaign summer recess with almost nothing to show for more than 19 months on the payroll.” –Baltimore Sun editorial, 7/24/06

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE/GAS PRICES: According to the newest nationwide Lundberg survey, the average retail price of a gallon of gasoline has now reached an all time high. Democrats have offered comprehensive proposals to achieve energy independence, including the PROGRESS Act and the Rural Working Group’s BIOFUELS Act. Republicans continue to propose only increased drilling, which is the same old one-note approach that will not achieve energy independence.

MINIMUM WAGE: The minimum wage now stands at its lowest level in 50 years, adjusted for inflation, and it has not been increased since 1997. The vast majority of the American public (85%) favors increasing the minimum wage [CBS/New York Times, 7/21-7/25/06]. Democrats have been fighting for years to increase the minimum wage and have recently forced numerous votes on the House Floor on the issue. However, in a cynical political ploy meant to avert any meaningful action, House Republicans passed a minimum wage increase attached to a virtual repeal of the estate tax. This action essentially held hostage a pay raise for millions of hard working Americans in return for a tax cut for the wealthiest few estates in America – a tax cut which has failed in the Senate several times and House Republicans knew would so was likely to fail again. It ultimately did fail in the Senate, and thwarted any real action on increasing the minimum wage. House Republican leaders

oppose increasing the minimum wage and the vote was no more than an attempt to give political cover to vulnerable Republicans.

HEALTH CARE AND AFFORDABLE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS: Six months after the Republicans' misguided prescription drug bill went into effect, nearly 3.4 million seniors are starting to hit the "donut hole," a gap in coverage that is leaving many seniors struggling to afford their medications. Most of these seniors are middle-class seniors with multiple chronic illnesses. Republicans have done nothing to address the unfair "donut hole," or the other harmful provisions in the prescription drug bill. In contrast, Democrats have proposed the "Prescription for Change" that will help close the "donut hole" and lower prices by allowing Medicare to negotiate lower costs with drug companies.

HONEST LEADERSHIP AND LOBBYING REFORM: Democrats offered a comprehensive "Honest Leadership, Open Government Act" to make Congress more accountable and transparent. The sham lobbying reform bill that House Republicans passed was a "joke," according to leading editorial boards. House and Senate Republicans remain unable to agree on a Lobbying Reform bill despite the culture of corruption that has embarrassed Congress and hurt the American people by raising the special interests over the people's interests.

IMMIGRATION: In the 9/11 Act of 2004, the Republican Congress promised to provide much needed resources to protect our borders. Two years later, we are still 800 Border Patrol agents, 5,000 detention beds, and nearly 500 immigration agents short of the levels promised. Time after time, Republicans have voted against Democratic efforts to fund the authorized number of agents. Democrats are united behind a Real Security Agenda, which includes securing our national borders as recommended by the 9/11 Commission, and are committed to achieving comprehensive immigration reform. Republican infighting has dimmed the chances of achieving real immigration reform this Congress.

BUDGET: Two months away from the new fiscal year, the Republican Congress still has not completed a budget – one of the most basic responsibilities of governing. The budget that did pass the House would do nothing to rein in the record deficits and debt created by Republican policies, and would actually increase the debt limit by another \$653 billion to more than \$9.6 trillion. The Democrats' FY07 budget would reach balance by 2012, reinstate the "pay-as-you-go" policies that helped create the budget surpluses of the 1990s, and included important investments in America's priorities.

TAX REFORM: Under the Bush Administration, the tax code has increased by 20,000 pages, yet a leading House Republican has now said that tax reform will have to wait until at least 2009. Democrats continue to demand that tax reform make the code simpler and fairer, not increase taxes for middle class families and working Americans, and must not increase the deficit.