



▲ Rep. Levin speaks with students about legislative issues.

Representing the 12th Congressional District of Michigan

The Congressional Connector

Week of January 19 – 23, 2009

Historic Inauguration Witnessed by 2 Million on the National Mall

On January 20, nearly 2 million people packed the National Mall in Washington to witness Barack Obama take the oath of office as the nation's 44th President. Appealing for unity, President Obama framed the many difficult challenges confronting the nation: "That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood. Our Nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the Nation for a new age. Homes have been lost; jobs shed; businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly; our schools fail too many; and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet. These are the indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable but no less profound is a sapping of confidence across our land, a nagging fear that America's decline is inevitable, that the next generation must lower its sights. Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. They are serious, and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America--they will be met."

[To read the entire inaugural address, click here.](#)

House Approves Bill to Extend Health Care to Four Million Children

On January 14, the House of Representatives voted for bipartisan legislation [H.R. 2, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Act] to provide health care to four million additional children in modest-income families. The House adopted the measure on a vote of 289 to 139. The legislation, which will soon be considered by the United States Senate, is supported by President Obama. A similar bill to expand children's health care was vetoed by President Bush last year.

Speaking in favor of the CHIP bill, Rep. Levin said: "The State Children's Health Insurance Program currently covers about 7 million children, including 114,000 kids in my home State of Michigan. However, there are still about 9 million children in our country who are uninsured. This is unconscionable. No mother should have to worry about whether she can pay for the health care her child needs. No father should have to take his son to the emergency room because he does not have insurance to visit a primary care doctor. No society should allow a child to go without the security health insurance provides." [To view Rep. Levin's remarks in full, click here.](#)

Lawmakers Call for Advanced Battery Funding in Economic Recovery Bill

On January 15, a bipartisan group of 37 Members of the House wrote to Speaker Nancy Pelosi to urge funding for loans and grants for advanced batteries and vehicles in the economic recovery package. The letter was organized by Rep. Levin and Rep. Mike Thompson of California. Noting that nearly all batteries for hybrid electric vehicles are made in Asia, the letter states, in part: "We cannot move from a dependency on foreign oil to a dependency on foreign-made technology.... Japan – the acknowledged leader in advanced battery

production – has been investing in this technology for many years. We have not. We are coming to the game late and must build capability to keep up.” For more information, [click here](#).

Speaker Pelosi and other key leaders in the House subsequently included a total of \$2 billion for advanced battery loans and grants in the draft Economic Recovery legislation that Congress will consider in the very near future. [To view a summary of the proposed American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan, click here.](#)

House Adopts Two Bills to Ensure Equal Pay for Women

More than 40 years after the passage of the Equal Pay Act, women continue to be paid less for performing the same job as their male colleagues. On average, women earn just 78 cents for every dollar earned by a man. The wage gap hurts everyone – husbands, wives, children and parents – because it lowers family incomes that pay for essentials. Among the first legislation to be considered by the House in the new Congress were two key pay equity bills: the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act and the Paycheck Fairness Act.

On January 9, the House voted 247 to 141 to adopt the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act [\[H.R. 11\]](#) to make it easier for women and other workers to pursue pay discrimination claims. The House also approved the Paycheck Fairness Act [\[H.R. 12\]](#) to strengthen the remedies available to combat sex-based pay discrimination. The vote on H.R. 12 was 256 to 163. To read a summary of both bills provided by the House Education and Labor Committee, [click here](#).