



▲ Rep. Levin speaks with students about legislative issues.

Representing the 12th Congressional District of Michigan

## The Congressional Connector

Week of January 5 - 9, 2009

### **111th Congress Convenes, Pelosi Elected Speaker**

On January 6th, the 111th Congress was sworn in as the legislative branch geared up for early action on an economic recovery package. By a vote of 255 to 174, Nancy Pelosi of California was re-elected as Speaker of the House. In her remarks to the House, Speaker Pelosi called for bipartisan solutions to the serious challenges confronting the nation: "Hardworking and still hopeful Americans who are losing their jobs, their businesses, their retirement savings, their homes that are facing foreclosure, cannot wait any longer for us to move from the depths of a recession to the solid ground of an honest and fair prosperity for the many, not just the few."

Congress and members of the incoming Obama Administration continued work this week on an economic recovery package to jumpstart the economy. The package is expected to contain federal funds to create jobs through investment in our nation's crumbling infrastructure, further assistance to jobless workers, expanded food assistance, tax relief for workers and businesses, and financial help to states dealing with shortfalls in health care funding.

[To view Rep. Levin's comments on the economic recovery package from the January 7 edition of the Macomb Daily, click here.](#)

### **Congress to Tighten Rules on Earmarked Spending**

Earmarks are provisions in federal funding bills that direct funds to be spent on specific projects, usually in Members' states and districts. Not all earmarks are bad, but a number of earmark requests (such as the notorious "Bridge to Nowhere" project in Alaska) have given project-specific requests a bad name. Over the last two years, Congress significantly cut back on earmarked spending projects by Members of the House and Senate and instituted reforms to ensure public disclosure of each earmark, the entity receiving it, and the name of the Member who requested it. In order to provide additional transparency and accountability, Congress will now require all Members to post information on their earmark requests on their websites – a practice Rep. Levin's office has followed for years – and provide for earlier public disclosure of projects that are selected to receive funding. [For additional information, click here.](#)

### **This Week in Congress**

On January 7, the House approved two government reform bills, the Presidential Records Act Amendments [\[H.R. 35\]](#), which restores meaningful public access to presidential records, as well as the Presidential Library Donations Reform Act [\[H.R. 36\]](#) which requires the disclosure of big donors to presidential libraries. On Thursday, the House and Senate held a joint session of Congress to count and certify the Electoral College Ballots for President and Vice President of the United States. On Friday, the House will consider two important labor bills, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act [\[H.R. 11\]](#) and the Paycheck Fairness Act [\[H.R. 12\]](#).