



▲ Rep. Levin speaks with students about legislative issues.

*Representing the 12th Congressional District of Michigan*

## **The Congressional Connector**

Week of Aug 11 – Aug 15, 2008

### **House Approves Paycheck Fairness Act**

On July 31, the House of Representatives approved legislation [H.R. 1338] to strengthen the Equal Pay Act and help bridge the wide disparity in wages between men and women working in similar jobs. The House passed the bill on a vote of 247 to 178. The measure seeks to strengthen the landmark Equal Pay Act signed by President Kennedy in 1963 by closing loopholes that have allowed employers to avoid penalty for discriminatory pay.

Speaking in favor of H.R. 1338, Rep. Levin said, “Wage discrimination is not just a women’s issue, it is a family issue. Women in Michigan are paid less than 70 cents for every dollar earned by a man. The cost of this income disparity is often borne not just by an individual, but by all the members of a household who rely on that income.” The legislation now advances to the United States Senate.

[For more information, click here.](#)

### **Congress Adopts Overhaul of U.S. Product Safety Rules**

The House and Senate recently completed work on the most expansive overhaul of U.S. product safety rules in decades. The legislation [H.R. 4040] responds to a multitude of product recalls involving a wide range of imported products, including 45 million toys and children’s products recalled in 2007. H.R. 4040, which is broadly supported by the nation’s consumer groups, imposes sweeping new rules to make children’s toys and other products safer, increases penalties for rule violators, and strengthens the enforcement ability of the Consumer Product Safety Commission by providing the Commission with more resources. The bill has been sent to the White House and the President is expected to sign the measure into law. [For more information, click here.](#)

### **Lawmakers Introduce Bill to Protect Medicare Beneficiaries from Identity Theft**

On July 24, Rep. Levin and 39 other House Members introduced legislation that seeks to help protect seniors and the disabled from identity theft. The bill [H.R. 6600] requires the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to phase out the display of Social Security numbers on Medicare cards to reduce the likelihood that beneficiaries’ numbers will be used in identity theft crimes. The Social Security Administration recommends that people avoid keeping their Social Security numbers on their person, but CMS currently prints the numbers on cards meant to be carried. The legislation was introduced just days before federal investigators uncovered a massive identity theft ring in which an estimated 41 million credit and debit card numbers were stolen. Federal prosecutors charged 11 people with stealing millions of dollars in the scheme. Congressman Levin commented, “The discovery of the recent identity theft racket underscores the importance of H.R. 6600. The bill will eliminate the contradiction in policies of two federal agencies, and protect people’s privacy and financial security.” [For more information, click here.](#)

### **Oil Companies Post \$44 Billion in Profits**

While American families continue to struggle with high energy costs, the oil companies recently reported record profits for the 2nd quarter of 2008. In just 3 months, oil companies reported a whopping \$44 billion in profits. ExxonMobil reported earnings of \$11.68 billion over the three-month period, the largest quarterly profit by a U.S. company in history. Other 2nd quarter oil industry profits include: Shell – \$11.56 billion; BP – \$9.47 billion; ConocoPhillips – \$5.4 billion; and Chevron – \$6 billion. Profits for the top five oil companies are projected to top \$160 billion this year.

### **To Our Readers**

On August 1, the House of Representatives adjourned until September 8 to allow lawmakers to return home for the August District work period. With Congress in recess, the Connector will suspend weekly updates until the House and Senate return. The next issue of the Connector will go out on September 16.