

An Update from Washington

On January 20th, Barack Obama was sworn in as the 44th President of the United States. It was a historic event, and a time of celebration for our country. I was humbled and honored that hundreds of people from the Second District made the trip to Washington to participate in the Inauguration.

It would be easy to get caught up in the ceremony and significance of the Inauguration, and indeed it is a time to reflect on everything that makes America the greatest nation in the world. However, we must also approach the coming weeks and months with a determination fitting the tremendous challenges that lay ahead. As I noted in my column two weeks ago, ordinary citizens are struggling in this recession. We must find ways to make sure hard-working Americans keep their jobs, and those who have lost jobs have an opportunity to get back to work. President Obama has said the economy is his number one priority, and I will do as much as I can to ensure that he honors this commitment.

I firmly believe that we can jumpstart the economy by helping our small businesses. I am proud to announce that my first bill - H.R. 361 - has been included in the upcoming economic recovery package that Congress is scheduled to consider this week. The bill extends the tax breaks which small businesses received in 2008, but expired at the beginning of 2009. It is my hope that, if passed, this bill will give small businesses an incentive to expand and create jobs even as the economy is in recession.

As I traveled across the district last weekend, it was clear that people and small businesses in the Second District are working hard to stay afloat. People were hopeful and optimistic, but less certain about the future than they have been in the past. A problem that started on Wall Street has trickled down to become a crisis on Main Street. Unlike the "bailouts" that were passed in the last Congress, any economic recovery package that Congress passes must focus on putting Americans back to work- not rewarding companies for bad business decisions. I will continue to keep you updated on any legislation that Congress considers.

Since I last wrote to you, I received some exciting news that will greatly benefit the Second District. I was named to three committees- The Armed Services Committee, The Agriculture Committee, and the Small Business Committee. In most cases, Members of Congress are only allowed to serve on two committees. I specifically requested a third committee assignment because I knew how important it would be for my district. I promised my constituents that I came to Congress to be a work horse- not a show horse- and I intend to carry through on that pledge.

Finally, let me reiterate that it is my top priority to be open and accessible to you. This doesn't simply mean keeping my office open; it means going out into communities across the Second

District and meeting with constituents. During my first trip back to the district last weekend, I went to six of the district's 16 counties and met hundreds of our friends and neighbors. I also held my first two "Congress on Your Corners," designed to offer constituent services closer to where people work and live. I will continue to hold these throughout the district and I look forward to visiting with you.

Again, if you have any questions or if there is something I can do to help you, please do not hesitate to call our Montgomery office at (334) 277-9113 or the Dothan office at (334) 794-9680. It is my great pleasure to serve you and the entire Second District of Alabama.