

An Update from Washington

Recently, the House passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (H.R. 1). I was one of eleven house members from my party who voted against the bill. While H.R. 1 contained many good provisions, I ultimately decided to vote no because I was not convinced the legislation would give the economy the boost that nearly everyone agrees it needs.

When I wrote to you two weeks ago, I mentioned that the stimulus package included my first bill, which provided increased tax breaks for small businesses. It also contained other important features, such as individual tax relief and investments in infrastructure. However, H.R. 1 also directed billions of dollars to other government programs. While many of these programs have merit, they do not belong in a stimulus package intended to quickly jump start an economy in recession.

Americans have become weary of massive spending bills due to past actions that our government has taken. Last year, Congress passed and the President signed the Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP) into law, or what has become known as the Wall Street bailout. Months later, we still don't know where much of the \$700 billion went, and there have been no fundamental reforms to the institutions that govern our financial markets.

With these past actions in mind, I was extremely skeptical about a bill with an \$819 billion price tag and one that, like the Wall Street bailout, was rushed through Congress in a matter of days. It is important that we move quickly to jump start the economy, but it is also important that Congress acts as a responsible steward of taxpayer dollars. Furthermore, we must have confidence that such a large bill is absolutely necessary and I felt that many spending measures in this legislation eroded the confidence of the American people. It became quite clear that this bill did not meet either criterion.

As I write this article, the Senate is debating another version of a rescue package. I am tracking changes made by our Senate counterparts and I hope there are changes to the bill that will make it a wiser investment for the American people. Specifically, I would like to see a package which has a stronger focus on investments in infrastructure as well as tax relief for small businesses and the middle class. We need to be assured that any bill Congress approves is an investment in America's future that will have enduring value.

Stops across the District

Over the past three weekends, I have made trips home to the district. I have already visited all of the district's 16 counties and met with my friends and neighbors from Evergreen to Wetumpka. Seeing and talking to people across the district is not only one of my favorite parts of the job, but it gives me the opportunity to really know and understand the issues affecting southeast Alabama. I plan to continue these stops throughout my time in Congress and I look forward to seeing you in the coming weeks and months.

As always, if you have any questions or if there is something I can do to help you, please do not hesitate to call our offices in Montgomery at (334) 277-9113 or Dothan at (334) 794-9680. Additionally, we are online at www.bright.house.gov to answer your questions and assist you in any way we can. You can also visit my website to sign up for my e-newsletter. It is my great pleasure to serve you and the entire Second District of Alabama.