



October 14, 2008

## THE REVIEWS ARE IN... 110<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS MAKING PROGRESS FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

### WALL STREET/ HOUSING CRISIS

Key accomplishments signed into law include the Economic Rescue Plan to protect taxpayers and homeowners, comprehensive subprime lending reform, and new refinancing options to help families prevent foreclosure and stay in their homes.

#### **New York Times – “Bailout Votes and the Economy Threaten to Overwhelm Other Issues” *Economic Rescue Bill***

*“...Despite the persistent partisan tensions, the leaders of the two parties came together in the final days of the session to put together the bailout measure at the behest of the Bush administration.” [10/4/08]*

#### **Washington Post Editorial, “Now for the Hard Part” *Economic Rescue Bill***

*“The measure, as finally approved, was a dramatic improvement over the three-page, just-sign-here proposal that Treasury Secretary Henry M. Paulson Jr. initially submitted. ... It includes increased oversight and greater protections for taxpayers.” [10/5/08]*

#### **Los Angeles Times Editorial, “Bailout” *Economic Rescue Bill***

*“The measure... kept the core of the Administration’s plan largely intact. The Treasury Department would still seek to buy distressed assets, such as mortgage-backed securities, from financial institutions to help clarify their worth and the health of the banks that hold them. If it’s executed properly, the bailout should provide that clarity without requiring the government to overpay for troubled assets.” [10/2/08]*

#### **National League of Cities *Comprehensive Housing Package***

*“The National League of Cities congratulates the Administration and Congress for enacting legislation that will help thousands of Americans stay in their homes, provide cities with the funding they need to stop the downward spiral of home vacancies and neighborhood deterioration, and stabilize the home financing system.” [7/30/08]*

#### **Connecticut Post Editorial, “Housing bill an aid” *Comprehensive Housing Package***

*“...historic mortgage relief legislation that won final approval in Congress.....should offer aid to rescue hundreds of thousands of Americans faced with foreclosures and ultimately calm down the instability and flux permeating the housing and lending markets.” [7/29/08]*

#### **Coalition of Housing and Community Development Groups *Comprehensive Housing Package***

*“The nearly \$4 billion in supplemental Community Development Block Grant funds will provide needed capital to purchase foreclosed homes, at a discount, and rehabilitate or redevelop the homes for new homeowners or renters to stabilize neighborhoods and stem the significant losses in the values of neighboring homes. We are pleased that the bill recognizes the importance of helping all families affected, including funding specifically for housing families below 50 percent of median area income.” [7/24/08]*

#### **Numerous Consumer & Related Groups *Credit Cardholders’ Bill of Rights***

*The Credit Cardholders’ Bill of Rights “rests on the basic rules of fair dealing that Americans expect everyone to play by. It curbs some of the most arbitrary, abusive, and unfair credit card lending practices that trap consumers in an un-ending cycle of costly debt...The bill protects consumers from these abuses without stopping credit card companies from taking a number of steps to account for the financial risk of the consumers to whom they are loaning money.” [9/19/08]*

## **ECONOMIC RECOVERY/COMPETITIVENESS**

Key accomplishments signed into law include the Recovery Rebates to jump-start the economy, first increase in the minimum wage in more than a decade, extension of unemployment benefits, largest expansion of college aid since World War II, historic investments in food and farm economy, an Innovation Agenda and improvements to Head Start.

### **The Jackson Sun Editorial (TN), "Sign economic stimulus package into law quickly" *Recovery Rebate Bill***

*"The new, improved stimulus package continues the spirit of bipartisanship that has characterized this entire process...The theory behind this stimulus package is solid: Put money into the hands of the people who will quickly spend it. Give money back to businesses to enable them to buy new equipment..." [2/10/08]*

### **Newsday Editorial, "Bush, House right on tax rebates to help economy" *Recovery Rebate Bill***

*"...President George W. Bush and House leaders were right to forge a quick compromise on a fiscal stimulus package aimed at averting or softening the looming economic crisis. The speed of the bipartisan compromise announced last week underscored the urgency of the government to act to stall a slide in the economy - and to show domestic and foreign markets, and American voters, that it is doing so..." [1/28/08]*

### **The Courier-Journal Editorial (KY), "Raising the Floor" *Minimum Wage Increase***

*"After six years of one-party Republican rule that placed its highest priority on tax cuts and other benefits for the most affluent Americans, the Democrats' interest in the most struggling workers is refreshing...Unlike the tax cuts, a higher minimum wage won't even raise the deficit." [1/13/07]*

### **The Herald-Sun Editorial (NC), "Minimum wage gets small boost" *Minimum Wage Increase***

*"A lot of low-wage earners got a pay raise Thursday, thanks to a law increasing the federal minimum wage from \$5.85 to \$6.55 per hour. For millions of hard-working Americans, the raise couldn't have come soon enough. Families struggling to make ends meet in a tight economy some say is in a recession can surely use every extra dollar the new minimum wage brings..." [7/27/08]*

### **Orlando Sentinel Editorial (FL), "Help Unemployed" *Extended Unemployment Benefits***

*"A timely but temporary boost for the unemployed will help them and the economy recover sooner from the current downturn." [6/18/08]*

### **American Association of University Women *College Cost Reduction and Access Act***

*"AAUW supported the College Cost Reduction and Access Act because it is a positive step for access to higher education in general and for women in particular...Students shouldn't have to mortgage their futures for a college education - or worse, avoid college altogether - because of skyrocketing costs and dwindling aid." [9/27/07]*

### **United Negro College Fund *College Cost Reduction and Access Act***

*"At a time when a college degree is a prerequisite to launching almost every good career, the increasing cost of attending college has made it difficult or impossible for students from low- and middle-income families to get the education they need and deserve. The Act's 25 percent increase in Pell Grants and tying student loan repayment to income level will be important steps in opening college doors to the young men and women who are our future scientists, teachers and doctors." [9/27/07]*

### **Grand Rapids Press, "GOP abandons Bush to help pass farm bill" *Farm Bill***

*"...About two-thirds of the bill would pay for nutrition programs such as food stamps and emergency food aid for the needy. An additional \$40 billion is for farm subsidies while almost \$30 billion would go to farmers to idle their land and to other environmental programs...Only 91 Republicans voted against the bill one day after the party lost its third straight special election this year for filling House vacancies..." [5/15/08]*

### **The Business Roundtable *Innovation Agenda***

*"The United States is facing a critical talent gap in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and is not keeping pace with foreign competition. Enacting H.R. 2272 will help reverse these alarming trends and help to develop the next generation of scientists and engineers so crucial to America's continued scientific, technological and economic preeminence... This vital piece of legislation will help keep America on the cutting edge of science and technology well into the 21st century. The future success of our nation and the ability of our youth to succeed in the global marketplace depend on your actions today." [8/2/07]*

### **Greenville News Editorial (SC), "Bush, Congress give more kids a Head Start" *Improving Head Start***

*"The brawl over children's health insurance in Washington has overshadowed an important victory for young children: President Bush and Congress recently came together on a modest expansion of Head Start, the early education program for children from*

low-income families. Bush signed a five-year renewal of Head Start that will open the program to more children and ensure teachers are better-qualified. A bipartisan Congress overwhelmingly embraced the Head Start legislation last month and Bush recently gave his approval." [12/30/07]

### **Seattle Post-Intelligencer Editorial, "Head Start: Forward at last" *Improving Head Start***

"Congress has put Head Start in a better position than ever to deliver good services that prepare children for a lifetime of learning. The passage of a strong Head Start reauthorization bill is a major achievement, made all the more impressive by the repairs to deeply flawed Bush administration proposals." [11/25/07]

### **National Women's Law Center *Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act***

"The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act is critical if our nation's promise of equal pay for equal work is to be realized. Its passage is crucial for women, and all Americans, who are subject to pay discrimination and will help to ensure that employers can be held accountable for discriminatory pay decisions." , " said NWLC co-President Marcia D. Greenberger. [4/22/08]

## **AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE**

**Key accomplishments signed into law include protecting Medicare for 44 million seniors and people with disabilities, ban on genetic discrimination in health coverage, and ending discriminatory treatment of mental health coverage.**

### **Mental Health America *Mental Health Parity***

"This is a historic day and a great civil rights victory for millions of Americans who have been unable to access mental health treatment...With approval of this bill, we will tear down the walls of stigma and discrimination and the open the doors to the power and promise of treatment and recovery...With economic problems making it even harder for Americans to afford treatment and driving up rates of depression and family difficulties, passage of this law is even more important," said David Shern, Ph.D., president and CEO of Mental Health America. [10/3/08]

### **National Retail Federation *Mental Health Parity***

The Mental Health Parity bill was "an incredible process...We built the bill piece by piece from the ground up. It's a good harbinger for future efforts on health care reform," said E. Neil Trautwein, a vice president of the National Retail Federation. [New York Times, 10/6/08]

### **American Medical Association *Medicare Improvements for Patients & Providers***

"It has been a long and winding road, but today we celebrate that Congress heard the voices of millions of patients and physicians and voted to override President Bush's veto and protect the health of America. We thank the bipartisan majority in Congress who voted to put patients first," said AMA President Nancy H. Nielsen, MD, Ph.D., on Congress' action to protect Medicare. [7/28/08]

### **Register-Guard Editorial (OR), "A win for Medicare" *Medicare Improvements for Patients & Providers***

"There's reason to celebrate the bipartisan thumping Congress handed President Bush with its lopsided override of an ill-advised veto. By preventing an unfair 10.6 percent cut in Medicare physician reimbursements from taking effect, Congress protected many Medicare beneficiaries from losing access to doctors who would have been forced to stop seeing Medicare patients as a result of such a steep reduction..." [7/19/08]

### **Genetics and Public Policy Center at Johns Hopkins University *Genetic Nondiscrimination***

"After a very long wait, Americans can now be confident that their genetic information cannot be used by health insurers or employers in harmful or hurtful ways," Kathy Hudson, director of the Genetics and Public Policy Center. [4/24/08]

### **New York Times Editorial, "Putting Poor Children Second" *Coverage of 10 Million Children***

"On far too many occasions, the president has sacrificed the interests of poor children to what he deems higher budgetary or ideological priorities. Congress should not allow Mr. Bush to do the same with SCHIP....The bill that the president has vetoed would increase funding for SCHIP substantially and would, in fact, 'put poor children first.' Republican Senator Orrin Hatch, a key sponsor, estimates that some 92 percent of the children who would benefit would come from families with incomes below twice the poverty level, the group the president says he wants to concentrate on. House Members should vote to override the president's veto. It is the best way to protect low-income children." [10/18/08]

### **Hartford Courant Editorial (CT), "Stem Cell Progress" *Stem Cell Research***

"The bill passed by the House on Thursday to make more available from unused embryos stored in fertility clinics, embryos that would otherwise be discarded, may not be veto-proof. But it makes lifesaving sense and would surely speed up the quest for cures." [1/14/07]

## **ENERGY INDEPENDENCE**

Key accomplishments signed into law include the first increase in vehicle efficiency standards in 32 years, historic commitment to American grown biofuels, renewable energy tax credits to spur innovation and green jobs, and Greening the Capitol.

### **Seattle Post-Intelligencer Editorial, "Energy Policy: Not as Cozy for Oil"**

*"The new Democratic majority in Congress is taking a fresh, properly unfriendly look at cozy federal treatment of the oil industry...The modest changes in the treatment of the thriving oil industry will restore a measure of balance. That's a start toward wiser energy policies."* [1/17/07]

### **New York Times Editorial, "A Shameful Presidential Threat" *Energy Independence and Security Act***

*"The bill represents a historic opportunity to ease America's dependence on foreign oil and to take steps in the battle against global warming..."* [12/13/07]

### **Birmingham News Editorial (AL), "A Tip to CAFE" *Energy Independence and Security Act***

*"Finally, Congress passes landmark legislation requiring more fuel-efficient vehicles... The law has been a long time coming - 32 years, in fact, since Congress last mandated a significant increase in vehicle fuel economy standards... Officials estimate the energy bill, including the CAFE, ethanol and other energy efficiency measures, will cut U.S. oil demand by 4 billion barrels a day by the year 2030. That is more than twice the amount of oil the U.S. now imports from the Persian Gulf."* [12/20/07]

### **Solar Energy Industries Association *Tax Incentives for Renewable Energy***

*"This bill is a major step in our long journey toward energy independence and ensures that solar energy will be a significant part of America's energy future. This long-term extension of the solar tax credits will create a domestic solar industry with hundreds of thousands of jobs while providing clean, affordable, carbon-free energy to millions of American families, businesses, and communities."* [10/3/08]

### **American Wind Energy Association *Tax Incentives for Renewable Energy***

*"We salute Members of Congress in both parties who fought under difficult conditions to keep the renewable energy production tax credit and small turbine investment tax credit on the agenda until the very end, and then pushed them across the finish line. These tax credits are essential to the continued growth of wind energy, to the economic and energy security of the United States, and to a successful beginning in the fight against global warming."* [10/3/08]

### **Roll Call, "Green Congress" *Greening the Capitol Initiative***

*"...we applaud most elements of Speaker Nancy Pelosi's (D-Calif.) initiative to help make Congress "green" by making House operations carbon-neutral by the end of the 110th Congress and reducing energy consumption by 50 percent in 10 years. The effort includes installing environmentally friendly lighting for the Capitol Dome, retaining a new food-service vendor using 100 percent biodegradable food containers and replacing coal with cleaner natural gas at the Capitol Power Plant...Congress is also setting an example for the rest of the country..."* [4/23/08]

## **TROOPS & VETERANS**

Key accomplishments signed into law include a new GI bill for veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, largest increase in veterans' health care funding in history, Veterans' Mental Health Improvements Act, Wounded Warrior Act for improved health care, and a pay raise and tax cut for our troops and military families.

### **Military Officers Association of America**

*"While we might say Congress didn't do this and that, if you just took those two things alone -- VA health care funding and the GI Bill -- you would have to say it is one of the best congresses in recent memory,"* said Col. Bob Norton (ret), MOAA's deputy director of Government Relations. [Gannett, 9/28/08]

### **Oregonian Editorial, "A big day, a mixed outcome" *G.I. Bill for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

*"...Under the agreement reached this week, service members could use their benefits to pay tuition at in-state universities and to receive a housing stipend. The improved G.I. Bill amounts to a much delayed recognition of the debt America owes its veterans."* [6/21/08]

### **Bangor Daily News (Maine): “A New GI Bill” *G.I. Bill for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

*“Given the recruiting challenges the military faces with the protracted Iraq conflict looming over every enlistment contract, the new GI Bill would seem a smart investment. And on moral grounds, a government commitment to educating those who risk their lives is an easy sell to the public, much easier than justifying continued spending on the Iraq occupation...”* [5/16/08]

### **American Legion *G.I. Bill for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

*“Improvements to the current GI Bill, like its predecessors, will serve as the ultimate stimulus package for veterans, their families, and for the nation.”* [5/9/08]

### **Veterans of Foreign Wars *Largest Increase in Veterans’ Health Care Funding in History***

*“I salute the president and Congress for making this additional funding available, and for their untiring support of military families past and present. This budget puts veterans first, which will help ensure VA remains a world-class health care system that is accessible and responsive to those who may require a lifetime of care for their physical and mental injuries,”* said VFW National Commander George Lisicki. [Army Times, 1/18/08]

### **Veterans of Foreign Wars *Veterans’ Mental Health Improvements Act***

*“The treatments for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder are just wonderful, and this will greatly improve care for thousands of returning service members,”* said Chris Needham of the VFW. [Washington Times, 9/25/08]

## **SECURITY**

Key accomplishments signed into law include enacting the 9/11 Commission recommendations, 3,000 new border patrol agents and saving the COPS program that Bush tried to eliminate.

### **Washington Post, “House Passes Bill to Implement More of 9/11 Panel’s Suggestions,” *Implementing 9/11 Commission Recommendations***

*“Voting 299 to 128, congressional Democrats, backed by scores of Republicans, delivered on a key part of their “100 hours” agenda. The nearly 300-page anti-terrorism measure sets new mandates to scrutinize air- and ship-borne cargo, send more federal aid to areas at the greatest risk of terrorism, improve emergency communications, fight nuclear proliferation overseas, and strengthen a civil liberties watchdog board.”* [1/10/07]

### **Lee Hamilton, co-chair of the 9/11 Commission *Implementing 9/11 Commission Recommendations***

*“The bottom line is that the American people will be safer.”* [AP, 7/27/07]

### **Newsday Editorial, “Bush Should Sign 9/11 Bill” *Implementing 9/11 Commission Recommendations***

*“When Democrats became the majority party in Congress this year, they promised to enact the 9/11 Commission’s recommendations to improve the nation’s defenses against attack. They’ve delivered.”* [8/1/07]

### **U.S. Conference of Mayors *Saving the COPS Program***

*“[Under the COPS program,] in the 1990s, mayors and police chiefs put extensive efforts into increasing public safety. And as we all know, there were dramatic results. Many cities saw crime rates drop to historic lows...While the history of the 1990s was one of partnership and crime reductions, what has happened in recent years has been very different. Cities lost more than \$2 billion annually as the COPS hiring program was eliminated. [By renewing the COPS program,] we need to once again form a strong partnership between the federal and local governments to fight crime.”* [4/24/07]

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Key accomplishments signed into law include landmark lobbying and ethics reform, the creation of an independent Office of Congressional Ethics, toxic toy ban and strengthened consumer safety, and overturning the Supreme Court’s decisions that weakened Americans with Disabilities Act.

### **Los Angeles Times, “House Stiffens Ethics Rules” *Landmark Ethics and Lobbying Reform***

*“In the most sweeping overhaul of congressional ethics rules since the Watergate era, the House on Tuesday overwhelmingly approved a bill aimed at curbing the influence of lobbyists and repairing Congress’ corruption-sullied image. Democrats promised to pass the measure after they won control of Congress following a campaign that denounced the Republican “culture of corruption” on Capitol Hill. The legislation is one of a number of accomplishments that the majority party...”* [8/1/07]

### **Public Citizen *Landmark Ethics and Lobbying Reform***

*"The new 110th Congress stormed Capitol Hill last year on a promise to pass comprehensive lobbying reform and change business as usual. It delivered on that promise. Earmarks are no longer secret...The business of Congress is now surprisingly transparent for the public to scrutinize, criticize and sometimes even praise,"* said Craig Holman, Legislative Representative at Public Citizen. [[Roll Call, 1/22/08](#)]

### **Democracy 21 *First-ever Independent Office of Congressional Ethics***

*"The bottom line is, it is a major improvement in the system...It addresses the single biggest problem with the ethics committee: Things go to the committee and disappear into a black hole,"* said Democracy 21 president Fred Wertheimer. [[Washington Post, 3/12/08](#)]

### **U.S. PIRG *First-ever Independent Office of Congressional Ethics***

*"The creation of the new Office strikes at the status quo and establishes an independent and open process that will lead to greater accountability. Tonight, the House leadership made good on their commitments to the public to aggressively work for changes that will rein in the ethical abuses we have witnessed in the past few years,"* said Gary Kalman, director of U.S. PIRG's federal legislative office. [[Press Release, 3/11/08](#)]

### **New York Times Editorial, "Protecting the Littlest Consumers" *Toy Safety/Consumer Protection Act***

*"This bill would create mandatory toy standards as set by an international safety organization. It would ban lead in children's products and require third-party testing and certification for products going to children age 12 and under. The bill would also finally provide much-needed resources and clout for the safety commission, enabling it to get products off the shelves more quickly and hand out greater fines and penalties for violating product safety laws.... This bill could go a long way to promote product safety and bring relief to consumers who fear nobody in government is making certain that whatever is on the shelves is safe."* [[7/30/08](#)]

### **American Academy of Pediatrics *Toy Safety/Consumer Protection Act***

*"This is legislation Members of Congress can be proud of as they return to their home districts over the August break... It will protect millions of children from hidden hazards in their favorite toys and products, and give parents the reassurance they need to protect their families from danger."* [[7/29/08](#)]