



# Office of the Assistant to the Speaker

*Honorable Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)*

## Recently Elected Members Media Coverage

Highlights from the April District Work Period

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## Recently Elected Members

### Democrats fill recess calendar with business-friendly events

#### The Hill

Democrats have filled their recess schedules with events aimed at small businesses, partly in hopes of making new friends out of longtime enemies.

In 2008, groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) spent millions on behalf of business-friendly Republican candidates.

So this cycle, at the urging of Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), about 20 freshman Democrats are holding roundtables, town halls or press events with local small businesses and Chambers of Commerce during the Easter recess, hoping to highlight their support for legislation the business community can support.

“Call me naive or whatever, but I was elected to Congress to represent everybody in the 3rd district of Pennsylvania,” said Rep. Kathy Dahlkemper (D), a freshman lawmaker who will hold events with local businesses over the break. “I’m trying to reach out to them to make sure that I hear their issues and concerns.”

As a side benefit, Democratic strategists hope the collaboration between their younger members and business groups will ease a historic tension and mitigate what might otherwise be a massive financial foe.

“I’m trying to break down that typical barrier there seems to be between business groups and Democrats,” said Rep. Frank Kratovil (D-Md.), who says he is fighting the reflexive view that Democrats and business interests collide rather than intersect. “I’m doing my best to reach out and demonstrate that’s not the case.

“The way we’re going to get this economy going is to reach out to businesses, and especially small businesses,” Kratovil added.

So far this year, Democrats have found themselves allied with businesses on several major issues, not least of which was the massive economic stimulus bill. House Republicans unanimously voted against the measure.

Though the U.S. Chamber will not use a vote on the stimulus bill on its annual scorecard, the group put out press releases praising Democrats for their vote.

“We’re not at all shy about going and talking to people to hear what they have to say,” said Rep. John Boccieri (D-Ohio), who is holding 17 events with small businesses over the break.

Many of the freshman Democrats planning events with small businesses are playing up their own backgrounds as business owners. Dahlkemper and Reps. Betsy Markey (D-Colo.), Suzanne Kosmas (D-Fla.), Harry Teague (D-N.M.) and Walt Minnick (D-Idaho) all made their business backgrounds a big part of their 2008 campaigns.

“I came into this office coming right out of small business,” said Dahlkemper, who ran a landscape design firm with her husband. “I got a lot of support from small-business owners because they saw that I understood their issues.”

The partnerships with business groups also reflect a simple realization about which party holds the Speaker’s gavel.

“We think small-business issues are really nonpartisan,” said Gary Palmquist, the legislative affairs manager at the NFIB. “We’re trying to find areas where we can work with the new majority, with our Democratic friends.”

NFIB, another group whose political activity has skewed heavily to the GOP side, has set up meet-and-greets with half a dozen freshman Democrats — as well as several freshman Republicans — in an effort to build good relationships early.

And the sit-downs over recess aren't likely to be the last time Democrats reach out to business interests.

Bocchieri said he will work with businesses in his district on cap-and-trade issues, which he said could be “very harmful” to Ohio.

Dahlkemper, who is the chairwoman of the Small Business Committee's Subcommittee on Regulations and Healthcare, has already held hearings on food recalls and their effects on small businesses.

And Kratovil said he would work to alleviate concerns that new taxes would have a painful impact on businesses.

“Truly, I believe, the best ideas for legislation come out of those who are in the trenches every day,” Dahlkemper said. [LINK](#)

## Health Care Tops the Homework List for Rank-and-File House Democrats

### CQ

House Democratic leaders are asking their members to use the spring recess to reach out to constituents and sell the White House and congressional plans to overhaul the nation's health care system.

Rank-and-file Democrats have been asked to hold at least one event each on the economy, health care and energy while home in their districts.

“On health care, we are specifically asking that you hold a town hall meeting — traditional, telephone, or online — to facilitate a national, grass roots discussion on the need for reform,” House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., wrote in a letter to her caucus. Other top House Democrats also signed it.

The events are part of the sales job lawmakers are being asked to do to help build public support for a health care overhaul.

“This represents a new big push on health care as the issue moves to the forefront of the agenda,” said Stephanie Lundberg, spokeswoman for House Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer, D-Md., whose office is coordinating many of House Democrats' health care efforts.

Hoyer's office has been distributing talking points and sample press releases to members, urging them to focus on how rising health care costs are hurting businesses, individuals and the economy as a whole. Democratic leaders also are pushing the message that a health care overhaul will help people who already have insurance — by letting them keep what they have while lowering premiums and increasing access to doctors.

In Denver this week, Rep. Diana DeGette, D-Colo., hosted a health care event at the City Club, where she told the downtown policy forum audience that businesses and individuals were suffering under the high cost of health care in the United States.

“Reform must reflect this fundamental truth: affordable, quality health care is not the privilege of the fortunate few, it is the right of every American,” DeGette said, according to a statement from her office.

It is almost inevitable that at some point during the process, groups opposing parts of an overhaul bill will begin making their own push against it. The Democratic effort appears to be a strategy to get out in front of that, as well as to get rank-and-file members in on the process while committee heads and other key players draft legislation.

Other lawmakers are using the event as a way to prepare themselves for the debate in Congress. Rep. Jim Himes, D-Conn., has scheduled over half a dozen public and private events over recess with health care providers, insurance and drug companies, constituents and other groups.

“We’re really calling it a listening tour. The point of it is for the congressman to prepare for the debate that’s going to come,” said Himes spokeswoman Elizabeth Kerr.

And on Monday in Florida, Democrat Ron Klein held a “town hall” style event in Boynton Beach, according to a spokeswoman. At Bethesda Memorial Hospital he told a group of 80 constituents that “too many Americans are unable to access health care due to cost, pre-existing conditions or lack of employment. The time for action is now.”

Klein also pushed the idea of bipartisanship. “Neither political party has a monopoly on smart solutions,” he told the group. [LINK](#)

## Freshmen reach across aisle

### Politico

A small group of freshman Democrats think they’ve found a simple but effective way to signal to their constituents that they aren’t part of the problem in Washington: frequently reaching across the aisle to co-sponsor bills with Republicans.

The Democrats — many of whom occupy competitive districts that will be up for grabs in 2010 — say the idea is to lay the groundwork for reelection campaigns where they can plausibly argue that they fulfilled their campaign promises to set partisanship aside.

“The perception of Washington, D.C., as partisan is palpable, and I’ve decided to be one of those that will play outside of the sandbox,” said Rep. Kurt Schrader, a freshman Democrat from Oregon. “I think it’s just the right thing to do.”

In some cases, the freshmen are partnering with veteran Republicans who share similar legislative interests. Schrader, who won election to a marginal Portland-area seat in 2008, recently introduced a bill with nine-term Rep. John McHugh (R-N.Y.) that would cut taxes on people starting up small businesses. Rep. Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.), who won election to an Albuquerque-based swing district in 2008, is working with conservative fourth-term Rep. Trent Franks (R-Ariz.) on a missile defense bill.

In others, the Democrats have found common ground with newly minted Republican congressmen facing similar political pressures. Rep. John Boccieri, a freshman Ohio Democrat who resides in a district John McCain narrowly won in 2008, is sponsoring a measure with Rep. Chris Lee (R-N.Y.), another freshman from a competitive seat, which would provide manufacturing companies with a tax credit for research and development.

Lee is also the co-sponsor with Rep. Frank Kratovil (D-Md.), who represents a heavily Republican district, of a bill that aims to create a small-business tax deduction.

Kratovil told POLITICO he didn't know whether his co-sponsorship efforts with Republicans "plays to my [political] advantage or not" but that his bill would surely help struggling small-business owners in his Eastern Shore district.

House Democratic aides, who say the freshmen hatched the bipartisan outreach plan without prompting from leadership or from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, say the effort will help those freshmen convince voters in moderate and conservative-leaning districts that they can effectively represent a broad spectrum of voters.

In doing so, the Democratic freshmen are taking a page out of the playbook of Democrats such as Reps. Christopher P. Carney (D-Pa.), Harry E. Mitchell (D-Ariz.) and Carol Shea-Porter (D-N.H.), who pursued a similar path when faced with tough reelection campaigns after capturing their seats in 2006.

Carney introduced a slew of bipartisan bills during his first two years in the House, including a March 2007 bill co-sponsored with Rep. Todd Platts (R-Pa.) that called for a 2 percent income tax cut for veterans. Mitchell and Shea-Porter also worked with Republicans on veterans-related legislation.

"Our new members are making good on their commitment to work across party lines when it serves the best interests of their districts," DCCC Chairman Chris Van Hollen told POLITICO. "They were not sent here to support Republican ideas or Democratic ideas; they pledged to do what is best for their constituents, ... and they're doing it."

Rookie Democrats, well aware of the low approval ratings of Congress, say that their response to those concerns will be central to their 2010 reelection bids.

Voters are "tired of hearing people frame issues in party language," said Rep. Glenn Nye, a freshman Democrat who is working with several of his Virginia Republican colleagues on bills to address veterans issues. "They really just want to see the House of Representatives produce results."

The freshmen are also using the opportunity to put some distance between themselves and the national party. One of the best examples of that approach is Rep. Parker Griffith, an Alabama Democrat from a solidly conservative seat, who is co-sponsoring bills with Reps. Bill Posey (R-Fla.) and Mike Rogers (R-Ala.).

"I think there is an interest with some of the new members to differentiate themselves with Democrats from other parts of the country," said Schrader. Schrader said that, in the coming months, he would be looking to work with Rep. Greg Walden, a veteran Oregon Republican, on agricultural issues central to the state.

New York Rep. Mike McMahon, a Staten Island-based Democrat who has been working across the aisle on veterans issues — an area where members from both parties frequently find common cause — said that when it comes to 2010, efforts such as his own "certainly [don't] hurt, especially when you come from a swing district."

"If it helps down the road with Republicans, then so be it," he said. [LINK](#)

## Adler

### Adler seeks to give elderly protection from annuity scams

Press of Atlantic City

U.S. Rep. John Adler wants to crack down on salespeople perpetuating a particular type of scam targeting the elderly.

Adler, D-3rd, plans to introduce federal legislation giving states financial incentives to regulate the sale of annuities, insurance-like contracts providing regular payments to investors.

What has been happening, Adler says, is that people have been selling long-term annuities, spanning 20 or more years, to buyers in their 80s and 90s. The annuities are set up so that most of the payout comes at the end of the term, and most of the buyers do not live long enough to see the big payout at the end.

Most people caught by this scheme have dumped thousands of dollars into their investments, while others have put in their entire life savings, Adler said. As much as \$10 billion could be in play nationwide on these fraudulent annuities, Adler said.

"They're definitely going after people in their 80s, who are often happy to have a visitor, and by the time they leave, they have a signed contract," Adler said Tuesday after a teleconference with members of AARP New Jersey.

Adler plans to model his legislation after a state law he sponsored in the New Jersey Senate last year that targeted predatory salespeople. Like the state law, his federal law would require all states, which regulate the sale of annuities, to give people 10 days to cancel a contract after signing it.

His law also would provide federal funding to states that adopt strict guidelines for tracking and prosecuting fraudulent marketing and sales practices pertaining to annuities.

Sy Larson, AARP's New Jersey chapter president, called the New Jersey law "one of the strongest laws in the nation of its kind" and praised the move to extend that law to other states.

Adler said he plans to introduce the bill in the next several weeks, once he has obtained enough feedback from AARP and the insurance industries to do so. [LINK](#)

## **Handshakes and milkshakes**

### **Asbury Park Press**

When Rep. John Adler, D-N.J., stopped at a diner on Route 72 this week to discuss his first 100 days in Congress, he was comfortable blending in with the lunch crowd, who did not seem to recognize their new man in Washington.

"You know what I would like? Could I get a chocolate milkshake, please?" the freshman congressman asked the waitress.

With the 111th Congress in recess, Adler, 49, is crisscrossing the 3rd District, offering face time with constituents, talking early accomplishments and listening to stories about economic misfortune.

Being a congressman is far more demanding than he imagined, Adler admitted. But he loves the work, and the awe factor has yet to wear off.

"Every day when I look at the dome, I look at the Capitol and know what it represents for our country and for the rest of the world," Adler said. "I feel such a surge of pride and patriotism about what our country has been for over 200 years now — I have to keep our future better."

Among his assignments, Adler has a seat on the House Financial Services Committee, chaired by the outspoken Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass.

His proudest achievement so far was to persuade Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke to include commercial fleet vehicle management in one of several initiatives to keep credit markets flowing. PHH Corp. in Mount Laurel, which provides fleet management services, had sought Adler's help. The move saved hundreds of jobs.

On this side of his district, Adler got the Army Corps of Engineers to close the munitions storage site in Surf City and move World War I-era explosives recovered during beach replenishment operations on the same day they are found.

He also secured \$12 million for the design of a new bridge to Long Beach Island after hosting a round-table discussion between state and local officials in February.

"It was very nice of him," said state Assemblyman Daniel M. Van Pelt, R-Ocean, after the meeting. "You know, it's obviously very politically savvy to try to make inroads into Ocean County. It's smart on his part."

Historically, the district is reliably Republican. Before Adler, Jim Saxton held the seat for 24 years. To prove his election was not a fluke in a bad year for the GOP, Adler must get himself re-elected in 19 months.

The National Republican Congressional Committee is not waiting. Relentless in so-called "robo-calls" and press releases, the GOP criticizes Adler on such issues as support of the \$800 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the economic stimulus package. The bill passed the House without a single GOP vote.

"Here's Adler's problem for me," said Chris Russell, who served as campaign manager for Republican opponent Chris Myers last year. "I think (Adler's) completely out of step in terms of issues with Ocean County residents. It's basically tax-cutting, small government-type values in Ocean County."

Barely two months into office and Adler voted for the biggest increase in federal spending in the U.S. history, Russell pointed out.

"He knows he can't win Ocean County on the issues so he is going to try and charm them to death," Russell said.

Without government intervention to stimulate the economy, Adler warned the national unemployment rate could have hit 15 percent. Democratic and Republican economists agreed; Democratic and Republican lawmakers did not, Adler said.

"I think there are a lot of encouraging signs. I think the housing market has hit bottom. I think banks have by and large avoided the insolvency crisis that they were facing in September and October and are starting to lend again," Adler said. [LINK](#)

## **Altmire**

### **Funding extends youth leadership training program in Aliquippa**

#### **Beaver County Times**

Aileen Gilbert is hoping a leadership program for youngsters in Aliquippa can become an example of the good that federal earmarks can do.

Gilbert, the executive director of Nerih Leadership and Development Training Center, will receive a check this morning from U.S. Rep. Jason Altmire, D-4, McCandless Township, to cover program costs and other needs for the fledgling program, which currently draws about 20 Aliquippa Middle School girls each week.

The \$57,000 check will help Gilbert continue the 2-year-old program and allow her to make a few purchases that will help her expand it, she said.

“Right now we’re just working with those girls, but we want to expand it to boys and to include kids of more ages,” Gilbert said. “The money from Rep. Altmire will allow us to buy a couple new computers, some other technology things and maybe bring in some speakers we otherwise couldn’t afford.”

The Nerih program has been working in a temporary home at Uncommon Grounds for its meetings, Gilbert said. She hopes to change that by renovating the space formerly occupied by Sandwiches Galore, 427 Franklin Ave., and using that as the program’s home.

“That space pretty much hasn’t been touched since the floods,” Gilbert said, referring to the flash flood that swept down Franklin Avenue in July 2007. “We need new floors, a new hot water tank — it needs a lot of work.”

Gilbert is working with foundations in Pittsburgh to find money to pay for those repairs, which she hopes to start as soon as next month.

“Finding money is tough sometimes,” she said. “We’re hoping that the money from Rep. Altmire will open the doors for other funding down the road.”

## NERIH

Executive Director Aileen Gilbert said her Nerih Leadership and Development Training Center works with teen girls to help them develop leadership skills, avoid teen pregnancy and keep them from dropping out of school. The program meets once a week at Uncommon Grounds Cafe, at 380 Franklin Ave. in Aliquippa.

“We want them to see there is more for them than hanging out, dropping out and having kids,” Gilbert said. “These girls have their whole futures in front of them.” [LINK](#)

## Arcuri

### Tax Refunds

#### News Channel 34

New Yorkers will start to see a little bit more money in their paychecks. That announced by Congressmen Michael Arcuri and Maurice Hinchey. Nearly 7 million working families will see the tax refund promised by President Obama in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The credit is for up to \$400 for individuals and \$800 for couples. Families should see about a \$65 a month increase in pay. [LINK](#)

### Arcuri Increases Earmark Transparency And Accountability

#### Lansing Star

U.S. Rep. Michael A. Arcuri (NY-24) announced today that he will make all requests for Congressionally-directed funding (commonly referred to as “earmarks”) available on his official website this week to facilitate full disclosure of federally-funded local projects and initiatives.

“In my continued fight for openness and transparency in Congress, I want to make sure that my constituents know how this process works and how I fight for only the most valuable projects for my district,” Arcuri said, “This brings openness and accountability to a process that is critically important to the economic viability of Upstate New York. I will continue to make information readily available to my constituents so that all citizens feel confident in their government and engaged in local projects.”

In January 2009, the House of Representatives announced that members of Congress would be required to post all Congressionally-directed funding requests online. Arcuri went further in his fight for transparency by additionally requiring that each entity applying for funding submit three letters of support from outside organizations or elected officials that highlight how the project benefits residents, the community, and/or the economy of New York's 24th District. Additionally, each applicant must include a letter stating the purpose, potential for job growth, and the lasting and positive impact on the quality of life for residents of the 24th District from the proposed project.

Congressionally-directed funding requests allow members of Congress to help fund local priority projects within the districts they represent. Under the federal process, members of Congress submit requests to the House Committee on Appropriations, which reviews each request and has the final say on which projects receive funding. Projects funded through Congressionally-directed funding still require the agency, business or organization that submitted the request to meet all application requirements of the federal agency administering the funding.

Arcuri's website will feature project descriptions and total costs for all Congressionally-directed funding requested by Arcuri for fiscal year 2010. Constituents and members of the media will be able to see who has requested federal funding, how much they have requested, and full project details. [LINK](#)

### **Arcuri says rail is key to redeveloping upstate**

#### **Evening Sun**

The \$8 billion in federal stimulus money President Barack Obama has earmarked for investments in high speed rail could positively impact our local area, according to Congressman Michael Arcuri.

"I think high speed rail will be as important to the re-development of upstate New York as the Erie Canal (once was)," he said at a town hall-style meeting held yesterday at the Norwich Fire Department.

Critics of the president's high speed rail initiative point out there is no real monetary savings, but Arcuri maintains there are benefits, including that it employs cleaner technology and is much faster than traditional rail.

Ten corridors have been designated as a part of the president's plan, including the Empire Corridor which would stretch from New York to Niagara Falls, passing through Albany, Utica, Syracuse and Rochester.

"If I get my way, we'll get the line from Utica down through Binghamton ... connected," Arcuri said, referring to the Utica Branch Line of the New York Susquehanna & Western Railroad which cuts through Chenango County. [LINK](#)

### **Boccieri**

#### **Congressman: Health care big issue in DC**

##### **Wooster Daily Record**

One of his campaign mottos was government needed to be more concerned with Main Street than with what's happening on Wall Street.

On Monday, U.S. 16th District Rep. John Boccieri, D-Alliance, spent time trying to get a clearer view of how business owners on Main Street feel about various federal issues, answering questions from chamber of commerce members from Wooster, Orrville, Rittman and Ashland.

"We have a lot to be thankful for, but we also have a lot of challenges," Boccieri told the audience at Memories Party & Conference Center. "This is a country with nearly \$11 trillion in gross national product, a great expanse

of trading partners and so many different issues that affect us on a daily basis. We need to understand the things we're doing in Washington are about making our country stronger, about making our people as educated as they can be, and about projecting a future that shows growth, sustainability, and invests in our greatest asset, our people."

Bocchieri fielded questions about how the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will affect health care and education locally, as well card check and cap and trade policies.

Bocchieri, who began by stating he is not in favor of government-run health care, said one of President Obama's "hard-charging issues" is to try and reduce inefficiencies built into the system.

One example he used dealt with the real-time accessibility of medical records, so providers outside of a patient's primary care physicians can gather those records and potentially reduce the number of expensive tests needed to determine a person's injury.

He said the president's budget has strategic investments in health care, energy and education.

"Health care issues right now, from small businesses to large corporations, is probably the single most important factor we have to address in Congress. I'm not for a government-run program, but what I'm for is ... a system that covers all people. Because if we don't, that diabetic who lost their job can no longer seek routine care with their physician. Now that ulcer on their foot gets worse and they have to go to the emergency room, and they end up costing all of us three and four times the cost than they would be if they went to their physician."

When asked about education, Bocchieri praised Stark County's effort of tying Stark State's curriculum with the local economy, and questioned when jobs as laborers and machinists stopped being considered valuable careers.

State Sen. Bob Gibbs, R-Lakeville, asked exactly what tax breaks were included in President Obama's stimulus bill, which Bocchieri said were the largest in American history. After shuffling through his papers, Bocchieri listed several cuts, including \$116 billion in payroll tax credits, \$70 billion to restructure the alternative minimum tax, \$15 billion for the expansion of the child tax credit, \$14 billion for expanded college credits and \$6.6 billion for home buyer tax credits, among others.

Bob Gessner, president of Massillon Cable, requested Bocchieri and his fellow representatives pay careful attention that the government isn't giving some small businesses an unfair advantage in competition with others.

"We all just want to compete fairly," Gessner said. "The hundreds of billions of dollars coming into the system, be careful that this money being distributed to try and boost the economy doesn't hurt the businesses who are putting their own private capital at risk."

Mike Pallotta, Wooster Area Chamber board chairman, said having Bocchieri speak to Chamber members about what's happening nationally gives them a better understanding of how things will be impacted locally.

"We're concerned about what's happening in our backyard," Pallotta said. "... I think it's good for him that he's hearing these questions from people we face every single day. ... I think my concern with the stimulus is how they'll keep track of it. I think everyone is a bit hesitant, especially after seeing the banks. What happened to the money? Small business is really the pillars of the economy, whether you employ three people or 300, it's key to Ohio." [LINK](#)

## **Bocchieri calls health care No. 1 concern for Congress**

**Ashland Times Gazette**

One of his campaign mottos that was government needed to be more concerned with Main Street than with Wall Street.

On Monday, U.S. 16th District Rep. John Bocchieri, D-Alliance, spent time trying to get a clearer view of how business owners on Main Street feel about federal issues, answering questions from chamber of commerce members from Wooster, Orrville, Rittman and Ashland.

"We have a lot to be thankful for, but we also have a lot of challenges," Bocchieri told the audience at Memories Party & Conference Center in Wooster. "This is a country with nearly \$11 trillion in gross national product, a great expanse of trading partners and so many different issues that affect us on a daily basis.

"We need to understand the things we're doing in Washington are about making our country stronger, about making our people as educated as they can be and about projecting a future that shows growth, sustainability and invests in our greatest asset -- our people," he said.

Bocchieri fielded questions about how the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will affect health care and education locally, as well as cap-and-trade energy policies. Bocchieri said one of President Barack Obama's "hard-charging issues" is to reduce inefficiencies in government.

One example he used dealt with the real-time accessibility of medical records, so providers outside of a patient's primary care physicians can gather those records and potentially reduce the number of expensive tests needed to determine a person's condition.

He said the president's budget has strategic investments in health care, energy and education.

"Health care issues right now, from small businesses to large corporations, is probably the single most important factor we have to address in Congress.

"I'm not for a government-run program, but what I'm for is ... a system that covers all people because if we don't, that diabetic who lost their job can no longer seek routine care with their physician. Now that ulcer on their foot gets worse and they have to go to the emergency room, and they end up costing all of us three and four times the cost than they would be if they went to their physician."

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## **Bocchieri hears concerns of health-care providers, patients**

**Canton Rep**

A breast cancer diagnosis a year ago forced Cathy Schoeppner into the labyrinth of the health-care system.

"I call myself a healthy person diagnosed with breast cancer," said the 48-year-old pharmaceutical representative.

Schoeppner joined a gathering of 15 health-care professionals Wednesday for a round-table discussion with freshman U.S. Rep. John Boccieri, D-Alliance. The hour-long meeting was another stop on Boccieri's three-day tour of the district.

Answering Boccieri's questions about her experiences, the cancer survivor said she was fortunate to have good health-care insurance as well as long-term disability coverage. Schoeppner admitted to future concerns about health insurers discriminating against people who, like her, have battled cancer or have pre-existing conditions.

"I think it would be helpful if we had a national database available to everyone where you could drill down to your state and see what kind of help is available to you when you have a health issue," said the North Canton resident.

Boccieri picked up on her point when he outlined four of his health-care concerns.

First, he said, health insurance should be available to all Americans through "a robust employment health-care program," adding that he does not endorse a government-run system.

Second, those with pre-existing conditions should no longer be discriminated against by health insurance companies.

"The third is prevention. We have to promote a healthier lifestyle in this country," Boccieri said. "And, last is physicians. We need to provide incentives for physicians and nurses to go into the health-care system. There is going to be a shortage."

"We have great health care in this country, if you can afford it," he said. "But in a country as wealthy as ours, the basic essentials of life should include the ability to see a doctor when you need one."

Today, the congressman is in Alliance, conducting a similar roundtable discussion at Alliance Community Hospital and visiting the high school. [LINK](#)

## **Renamed highway honors fallen hero**

### **Salem News**

After three years of legislative work, a portion of U.S. Route 62 in Alliance has been formally renamed in memory of a local fallen hero.

U.S. Route 62 from the western border of Alliance east to Highland Memorial Park was officially christened "Lance Cpl. Daniel McVicker Memorial Highway" at a dedication ceremony Tuesday afternoon at VFW Post 1036 in Alliance. Two signs will mark the roadway; one already erected near the Carnation Mall and the other to be raised today near Highland.

McVicker, a 2003 West Branch graduate and member of the U.S. Marine Corps, was killed when his Humvee struck an improvised explosive device while driving security detail near Al Qaim, Iraq, in October 2005. He was 20 years old.

"This memorial will ensure that Dan's life will never be forgotten," said 16th District U.S. Rep. John Boccieri, an Air Force veteran who introduced the bill while a state senator in 2008. "As a congressman, I honor his sacrifice; as a soldier, I honor his bravery; and as a father of one son, I mourn for the family's loss."

Initiated by family friends, Don and Theresa Locke, following a brick dedication in Sebring in November 2005, the bill spent the following three and a half years in legislation before fruition Tuesday.

"So many of [McVicker's] friends and family are in this area, so it just seemed like a great thing to do," said Theresa Locke. "A lot of prayer and hard work went into this, and God has answered our prayers.

"I believe the Lord is smiling today; and so is Danny."

McVicker's father, Mark, expressed similar sentiments.

"It's a good day," he said. "We've been trying for along time to get this done, and it's great to be able to share it with good friends. It's an honor to look around and see all the people who are still a part of this, and it helps a lot."

But McVicker's mother, Carey Meissner, said the sign is about more than just her son.

"I don't want these signs to just honor him, it should be an honor for all the fallen service men and women," she said. "But it is very meaningful to have this memorial. Every time you drive by it's like he's there again; a little piece of him watching over us."

And Boccieri said he is proud to play a part in the memorial of the soldier.

"This scene of loss has been visited over 4,000 times since the war began," he said. "Whether you agree with the war or not, we have to honor these soldiers who went because there country asked them to."

Boccieri, state Rep. Mark D. Okey and state Sen. Joseph Schiavoni joined family and friends at the ceremony, extolling the memory and sacrifice of McVicker and the efforts of current and fallen service men and women.

"It's a privilege to support memorial legislation, and you guys put it all in perspective, make it real," he said. "I hope these signs can serve a visual reminder of your love for Dan."

Family and friends packed the VFW hall to witness the ceremony and offer support, something not lost on the family.

"The community has always been so supportive so I would expect no less," said McVicker's step-mother, Irma. "We've been blessed with so many friends and extended family, and that is a living memorial to Danny. Hopefully now people will be able to see and realize that freedom isn't free...and that is the most we can hope for."

"These events are always bittersweet because he's not here with us, but having them means that we are remembering," said McVicker's sister, Mollie McVicker. "And now we can keep remembering him every time we see these signs."

"It's an honorable tribute that will help remind people of the sacrifice he made," added his brother, Ed Ricci. [LINK](#)

## **Boswell**

### **Officials discuss widening of Army Post Road**

#### **Des Moines Register**

Democrat Congressman Leonard Boswell and representatives from the Iowa Department of Transportation and Des Moines Metropolitan Planning Organization highlighted a south Des Moines transportation project during a news conference Tuesday at the South Suburban YMCA.

The event was held to discuss the widening of Army Post Road from Southwest Ninth Street to Southeast Fifth Street, which officials said will happen because of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act passed by Congress. [LINK](#)

## Braley

### Braley touring district, talking green jobs

WQAD

Iowa Congressman Bruce Braley is making a trip this week across the state promoting green jobs with wind energy.

He was in the Quad Cities Wednesday touring Alter Barge's Terminal because it has moved blades and parts that make wind turbines from Houston to the Midwest.

He says Iowa is already a wind energy leader and believes this sector can create even more jobs.

"There have been eight companies that have already visited the Quad Cities who are interested in some stage of the manufacturing process in these very simple appearing but complicated wind turbine facilities" says Braley.

Braley says he will fight in the upcoming debate on the energy and climate bill to make wind energy a priority. [LINK](#)

### Community Health Care gets \$458K in stimulus money

Quad City Times

Federal stimulus funds soon will reach the Quad-Cities as almost a million dollars flows in to help cover health costs for underserved residents.

Community Health Care, with medical facilities in Davenport, Moline and Rock Island, will receive \$458,742. It's part of the \$337 million going out to 1,100 public facilities like it in the United States, all from the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The funds announcement was recently made by U.S. Rep. Bruce Braley. The Democrat reported that three public clinics in eastern Iowa got more than \$909,000 in aid, including those in Dubuque and Waterloo.

"This money will help us to add staff and also to preserve jobs," said George Barton, chief executive officer of the Davenport facility.

The Community Health Care organization handles 31,000 patients each year, and that number has increased by 2,000 visits annually, each of the past three years. One effect is on hospital emergency rooms run by Genesis Health System and by Trinity Regional Health System.

Some patients who have little or no health insurance tend to use emergency facilities as a main care provider. Nonprofit hospitals, such as Trinity and Genesis, are obligated to care for all individuals but costs to the organization can be staggering. For example, Genesis is expected to spend \$50 million on charity and uncompensated care in 2009.

"Anything that can improve access to primary care for the underserved in our community is a wonderful thing," said Dr. Paul Bolger, Trinity's director of emergency medicine. "Community Health Care does a fantastic job in caring for patients in our community who don't necessarily have access to care elsewhere."

“Genesis continues to provide health services to the uninsured and underinsured, but if federal stimulus funding allows Community Health Care to also help more of these patients, their health and the community’s health will benefit,” said Craig Cooper, Genesis media relations coordinator.

Most of the clinic patients have some insurance but one-third do not, Barton said.

“In general, the trend is with individuals who have no or little coverage, including those working part-time,” he said. An uptick in the number of routine checkups is also in play, Barton added.

About 10 new employees will join Community Health Care this summer, Barton said. Those hired include doctors, nurses and mid-level workers.

The funds, he added, “go quickly in health care.” Federal government support is 17 percent of the clinic’s overall budget.

There will be three more opportunities for Community Health Care to apply for federal stimulus aid, Barton said. The first round of funds was intended to help with the growing number of newly unemployed individuals.

The next grants will be competitive in nature. That money will go for improved electronic record capability and more mundane items such as generators and boilers. [LINK](#)

## Bright

### Bright addresses Chamber guests

#### Troy Messenger

After 90 days in office, Congressman Bobby Bright has made strides to bring benefits to small businesses.

That’s what Bright told members of the Pike County Chamber of Commerce Tuesday morning, at the chamber’s quarterly breakfast.

“(Some) 70 to 80 percent of employees throughout the country are provided jobs through small businesses,” Bright said. “I’m on the small business committee, and I fully intend to help small businesses.”

The first piece of legislation Bright worked to pass since taking office was one that gives tax credits to small businesses. Now, that bill is included in the federal economic stimulus plan.

“I am proud to say if a small business in Troy or surrounding cities wanted to invest up to \$250,000, they could take that off their taxes,” Bright said.

While the luncheon was centered on chamber members, Bright addressed several other issues besides small business.

From the federal budget recently passed to education, Bright laid out several topics of interest to those in attendance.

While Bright said he did not support the \$3.6 trillion budget supported by President Barack Obama, it was the best choice of all those proposed.

“I didn’t support that budget,” Bright said. “It was a little too heavy spend wise. (But), the best one was the one that passed.”

Bright said his next goal will be speaking with people in the district about an effort to modify the No Child Left Behind Act.

“We really will be listening to our constituents on this one,” Bright said.

Pike County Chamber of Commerce President Jenniffer Barner said the event is one that will be held each quarter of the year, each featuring a different speaker.

The first one of the year was a breakfast with the local mayors and a county commission representative, but Barner said she isn't sure just yet who the other guests will be.

“I'm just happy to keep supporting the members,” Barner said. “He brought up good points about small businesses, and I'm just glad the chamber is able to do this for our members.”

Adam Drinkwater, chairman of the chamber's new Legislative Affairs Committee, said the Pike County Chamber was proud to play host to Bright during his time in the district.

“We're proud to be the first chamber of commerce he visited since being back in the district,” Drinkwater said. “The congressman showed a real interest and understanding of the issues that affect small businesses.” [LINK](#)

## **Bright crosses party line for constituents**

### **Montgomery Advertiser**

Weeks into the new Congress, Rep. Bobby Bright bucked his party by voting against two Democratic measures -- one to expand federal health insurance for poor kids and the other aimed at stimulating the economy.

And before returning to Alabama for the congressional recess early this month, Bright was one of 20 Democrats to vote against the \$3.5 trillion budget resolution, a blueprint for federal spending in 2010.

"I think we're doing the American citizen an injustice by voting for a budget that large," Bright said.

Only four months into the job, Bright has voted against many of his party's signature issues. The freshman congressman promises more of the same anytime Democrats push a bill he believes would cost taxpayers too much.

Bright comes from a conservative district and says he promised constituents he wouldn't support measures to raise taxes.

"You never raise taxes on people when they're in a bad economic environment," he said. "We're in a bad environment."

Bright was one of a handful of Democrats to vote against expanding the federal health insurance program for poor children. He objected to the bill's source of financing -- an increase in the federal tax on cigarettes.

He also voted against the \$787 billion stimulus bill, a proposal to give the government more control over tobacco products, and legislation that makes it easier for women and others to sue over pay discrimination.

"You will not count on my vote as a Democrat just because I've got that label," Bright said. "I am an independent, focused toward what's right for our country. ... My constituents are a close second. Party labels have a place, but it's down the line."

Bright did vote with his party on a \$410 billion federal spending bill, a federal public-lands bill that preserves millions of wilderness areas and a measure to expand funding for volunteer programs.

Distancing himself from his party will ensure Bright's survival, said David Wasserman, House editor for the nonpartisan Cook Political Report. The report, which tracks congressional elections, considers Bright's seat a tossup in 2010.

Bright, the former mayor of Montgomery, narrowly beat state Rep. Jay Love, R-Montgomery, last year for the seat left open when GOP Rep. Terry Everett retired. Both parties courted Bright, whose mayoral office was nonpartisan.

"He's probably as conservative as the district, but the fact that he signed on with national Democrats in 2008 was the reason his race against Jay Love that year was close," Wasserman said, noting that Bright supported the presidential bid of Republican Gov. Mike Huckabee of Arkansas.

"He is not a born-and-bred Democrat," Wasserman said. "That reputation serves him well. He's a Democrat on the ballot only."

Republicans, meanwhile, plan to remind voters that Bright shares a political party with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a liberal Democrat from California.

"No matter how hard Bobby Bright tries to distance himself from Nancy Pelosi, he is still a member of a party whose national leaders are pushing an agenda that is vastly out of touch with the views of Alabama voters," said Paul Lindsay, a spokesman for the National Republican Congressional Committee. "Not only will Bright face a strong challenger next year, he will also face a political climate not nearly as favorable as the one that brought him to office in 2008."

Aside from Love, other potential Republican candidates include George Wallace Jr., the former state treasurer, and Martha Roby, a Montgomery city councilwoman. Roby is expected to meet soon with national Republicans.

Love won't say whether he plans to run again.

"I just want to make sure it's the right time," he said.

Bright is part of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee's Frontline Program, which aims to help vulnerable incumbents. Still, he brushes off talk of Republicans targeting his seat.

"They need to target someone else. They're not going to take this one back," he said. "I'm going to work hard. And if anyone can outwork me, they deserve it."

Democratic leaders in the House know better than to punish Bright for his independent voting streak, political experts said.

"They understand it's critical to his survival," Wasserman said. "They would prefer to have him remain in their caucus and help keep their majority. They know that he could not survive if he towed the party line."

But Bright said he has taken heat from Democrats back home.

"They would always say, 'We didn't send you up here to vote like a Republican,'" Bright said. "I would say, 'Listen, I went up there to vote for the vast majority of my constituents.'"

The Alabama Education Association is disappointed with Bright's votes, particularly against the stimulus bill, which includes major funding for schools.

"He has reasons that are difficult to justify, given the poor state of the economy and how badly it has affected schools in Alabama," said David Stout, a spokesman for the association, adding that the stimulus bill could save 6,000-7,000 education jobs.

Stout said many association members supported Bright in his bid for Congress because they thought he would be an advocate for public education.

"We hope in future that he has a better understanding of how programs impact Alabama," Stout said. [LINK](#)

### **Bobby Bright: District takes a front seat Prattville Progress**

While the title of my weekly column, "An Update from Washington," usually reflects ongoing efforts or current legislation before Congress, my work for the next two weeks will focus entirely on the Second District. During the April district work period, I will visit cities and counties across the district and attend meetings and events that I would not otherwise be able to join because of my schedule in Washington.

As I have said before, my favorite part of my job as a Congressman is traveling throughout the district and meeting with constituents. Meeting with friends and neighbors in our communities and listening to your concerns helps me better represent the district when I am in Washington. To find out when I will be in your hometown, please visit my Web site at [www.bright.house.gov](http://www.bright.house.gov). I hope to you can find the time to join me.

My first three months in Congress have certainly been busy, and rightfully so. Our country faces great challenges, and everyone is focused on finding solutions to our economic problems. While I don't always agree with the final product, I do believe that members of both parties are patriotic and are acting on what they think is best for the country.

Most recently, Congress debated, at length, our budget for fiscal year 2010 as well as several alternative budgets. The budget is Congress's opportunity to layout our priorities as a nation, including finding ways to address serious problems such as energy, health care, and our current fiscal crisis. I feel strongly that budget legislation should truly be a collaborative product and unfortunately, this year the budget fell victim to partisan politics.

The budget that ultimately passed the House has some strong provisions, including a commitment to pay-as-you-go budget principles and honest budgeting numbers that properly account for spending on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It also proposes a long overdue investment in our veterans, something that is much needed while so many young men and women are serving our country overseas.

However, I felt that the budget did not give enough consideration to the serious fiscal crisis in which our country currently finds itself. People in southeast Alabama have, for years, learned to tighten their belts when times got tough. Meanwhile in Washington, the budget that passed the House is a record \$3.55 trillion and leaves us with a projected \$1.752 trillion deficit. It is my job to be a responsible steward of taxpayer dollars, and I could not vote for such a massive budget during a time in which government revenues are declining.

As always, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call our offices in Montgomery at (334) 277-9113, Dothan at (334) 794-9680, Opp at (334) 493-9253, or Ozark at (334) 445-4600. You can also visit my web site to sign up for my e-newsletter. It is my great pleasure to serve you and the entire Second District of Alabama. [LINK](#)

## Carney

### Carney visits robot development program at Bucknell

#### Danville News

Still a member of the military, U.S. Representative Chris Carney, D-10, of Dimock, said he knows first-hand the importance of advances in technology for the protection of both soldiers and civilians — particularly in dangerous, urban environments.

That's why he's lobbying for \$4 million in federal funds to support work on military robot development at Bucknell University. The funds are in addition to an \$800,000 federal earmark obtained by the congressman last year, which made the university's robotics lab, located in the basement of the Dana Engineering building, a possibility.

But the project is just one of about 130 projects, worth almost \$300 million, that Carney's office has endorsed for federal earmarks this year. [LINK](#)

## Castor

### Foreclosure assistance is available for free

#### Tampa Tribune

Thousands of Tampa Bay area homeowners face foreclosure, and they don't always find help on the other end of their lender's 1-800 number.

Many end up turning to for-profit companies that collect thousands of dollars to help troubled homeowners modify their mortgages.

But they don't have to.

Local nonprofit groups offer help for free. There are opportunities to get help this week.

The Housing and Education Alliance, a local nonprofit housing counseling agency, is holding a group education session tonight. The session is from 6:30 to 8:30 at the Children's Board of Hillsborough County, 1002 E. Palm Ave. in Ybor City.

On Saturday, homeowners facing foreclosure can see a counselor at a foreclosure assistance workshop hosted by U.S. Rep. Kathy Castor. The event is from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Middleton High School, 4801 N. 22nd St.

Representatives from banks, nonprofit organizations and other community groups will answer questions and offer financial advice. [LINK](#)

## Childers

### Education funding released

#### Daily Corinthian

Congressman Travis Childers has announced that the first installment of emergency education funding has been released for schools in north Mississippi to help save education-related jobs and maintain programs for low-income students and students with disabilities.

School districts will receive 50 percent of the allocated Title I and IDEA funds immediately.

"North Mississippi schools are struggling to serve their students during these difficult economic times," said Childers. "These Recovery Act funds will provide significant aid to the school districts and students that need it the most and will help ensure that our children receive the education they need to succeed. These investments in education will also help create and save jobs by providing funds to retain teaching faculty and hire workers for school modernization."

In the Crossroads Area, the allocations included \$766,000 to the Alcorn School District; \$472,000 to the Corinth School District; \$186,000 to the Booneville School District; \$604,000 to the Prentiss County School District; \$651,000 to Tishomingo County Schools and \$234,000 to the North Tippah School District.

Nationwide, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provides \$13 billion in Title I funds, which helps low-income students and \$13.5 billion in IDEA funds, which helps students with disabilities. This is the first of two installments of direct funding for Title I and IDEA programs that school districts will receive under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The second installment of funds will be released to districts in the fall of this year.

In addition to the Title I and IDEA investments, the economic recovery plan also created a state stabilization fund to help stabilize state and local budgets and restore harmful cuts to education. Guidelines were issued this week to clarify how these funds must be used to help clear up recent confusion over whether the state can decide how local districts and colleges use those funds. States can now apply for this funding.

The guidelines confirm that while states allocate the funds, it should be up to the local school districts and colleges and universities to decide how to use this emergency aid, not up to the states. The guidelines also reaffirmed that state stabilization funds should be used for three purposes: to backfill harmful cuts to k-12 and higher education, to stave off teacher layoffs and to modernize school facilities - which could create new jobs.

IDEA is the major federal program that provides funding for special education and related services to students with disabilities. The Title I program provides funds to low-income school districts that are in even greater need during the economic downturn. The funds appropriated through the Recovery Plan are distributed through the previously defined IDEA and Title I formulas. [LINK](#)

## **Bypass paving on go with ARRA funds**

### **The South Report**

The Holly Springs Industrial Bypass Road will be paved with \$2.5 million from American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds, according to Congressman Travis Childers.

The 1.5-mile project in Marshall County was funded, along with about \$25 million listed for ARRA projects in the Mississippi counties of Bolivar, Washington, Pearl River, Lauderdale, Tishomingo, and Sharkey.

Childers said the money for ready-to-go transportation projects will create and save jobs for Mississippians and give much-needed business to contractors and construction companies in the First District.

"I am extremely pleased that this project has finally received funding," Childers said. "Marshall County and the City of Holly Springs will benefit greatly from this money, which is a prime example of recovery funds going towards shovel-ready projects to update critical infrastructure and create and save jobs during these difficult economic times."

The bypass project has languished for two years due to lack of money. High oil and energy prices caused bidders to overbid on the Mississippi Department of Transportation engineer's estimate by several millions of dollars.

Mississippi Department of Transportation solved part of the problem by refusing all bids, trimming down the scope of the project to fit the available funds and postponing the paving work until money for the project could be found. Luckily, President Obama's and Congress's economic recovery act (ARRA) found the money to finish the bypass road this year.

Bill Minor, Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) commissioner for the northern district, said Monday the \$2.5 million for the Holly Springs Bypass Road paving project has already been transferred into the State Aid fund and the project is a sure thing. Any money not used from the transfer will be left in the State Aid fund for other projects, he said.

"We already have it set up," he said. "Bids have to be let in 120 days. No doubt we should get the job done this summer."

Minor expressed gratitude for Congressman Childers for the way he works with MDOT.

"Congressman Childers has been good to us," Minor said. "He's helped us do a lot of things for Marshall County and I really appreciate it."

Ronnie Joe Bennett, president of the Marshall County Board of Supervisors, was glad to get the good news.

"Of course, it is going to help tremendously," he said, "especially the City of Holly Springs and economically it will help. It will tie everything (highways) into a complete loop so traffic can get around the city." [LINK](#)

## **Southaven Leaders Tackle Economic Problems**

### **WREG**

In Southaven, Mississippi, key elected leaders in federal and local government sat side-by-side to address the city's economic issues head-on.

Congressman Travis Childers says one issue that has to be tackled is the area's unemployment rate, "DeSoto County is not exempt from what has happened all across the district, all across this state, this nation. The unemployment rate is about as high as it has been in a long time."

Congressman Childers, Southaven Mayor Greg Davis and aldermen-at-large candidates Greg Guy and Odie Hart were part of the Southaven Chamber of Commerce's first ever economic forum. The forum was broadcast on WREG News Channel 3 Live At 9 and it focused on how the economy also impacts problems such as crime.

"We still have to make sure crime stays low. Businesses like to go where crime stays low and we want to continue to make that investment into our public safety," Davis said.

Another issue is jobs and a rising unemployment rate in DeSoto County. Alderman-at-large-candidate Greg Guys says Southaven must continue to attract new companies, "From a national level, we have had some bigger chains that have left and we have been proactive in getting businesses to come into those locations."

Alderman-at-large candidate Odie Hart is calling for more cooperation from elected leaders to address the economy.

Hart says, "We are going to have to work with our mayor to go out and sell Southaven and show them the kind of people we have."

They also addressed the troubled housing market which includes more foreclosures and a decline in building permits for homes.

"We we went through a period of some might call it false growth where people bought homes they couldn't afford, bought homes too large and just really criminals involved in lending," Childers said.

But a lighter moment came when Childers and Davis, who once opposed each other for Congress, admitted they could agree on schools.

Davis says, "Let me tell you schools are important. He's right. The congressman is correct. " "That's the first time he's agreed with me, " Childers said. "That's right you enjoy it," David said. [LINK](#)

## Connolly

### Other Metro extensions considered

#### Fairfax Times

With the Dulles Metrorail extension on more solid footing, some local leaders are now looking forward to other potential transit expansion in the region.

U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-11th) has introduced a bill that would allow study and some preliminary engineering work of future extensions of Metrorail's Orange, Blue and Yellow lines to accommodate existing demand and anticipated future growth, particularly associated with the Department of Defense base realignment in southern Fairfax. It would also allow study of overall Metro capacity expansion.

The bill would not come with any funding or a firm timeline, but it gets the project on the table, according to Connolly spokesman George Burke.

"This is getting the ball rolling on a whole other phase," he said.

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors voted March 30 to support the bill, although some supervisors said they think any study must include more transit options than just rail.

Speaking about the Route 1 corridor, Supervisor Jeff McKay said it is in a position where it needs transit improvements, but is not necessarily a good candidate for rail right now.

"We have a need today that far exceeds the existing service on that corridor," he said. "[But] if rail comes to Route 1, it's only going to come if there is significant redevelopment."

Supervisor Michael Frey also cautioned the board against linking transit and high-density land use, which he said could prevent communities like Centreville from backing extension of the Orange Line down Route 66.

"Centreville is not necessarily a potential spot for density," Frey said. "I don't want any presumption that the extension of rail automatically brings higher density."

Burke said Prince William County officials also have expressed support for Connolly's bill. [LINK](#)

### Congressman Connolly visits Dale City

#### Inside NoVA

People came to talk to Rep. Gerald E. "Gerry" Connolly, D-11th, about things ranging from the stimulus package to Cuba when he visited Giant Food at Center Plaza in Dale City on Tuesday.

During Connolly's "Congress on Your Corner" session, Vladimir Atseff compared the money in the stimulus package to priming a pump and said he didn't want to prime the pump with more money used to prime the pump that is the economy.

"We hope you don't have to do that twice," the 73-year-old Atseff said.

Connolly told Atseff, a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel, that he didn't want to vote for a second round of stimulus and said people had to keep a couple of things in mind when thinking about the stimulus.

The government had to invest in things that would eventually show a return and keep the economy intact at the same time, Connolly said.

"We can't let the economy go off the cliff," the congressman said.

Atseff said he was satisfied with Connolly's response to his questions.

"I think what the congressman was trying to tell us is that this is temporary and we should expect some things coming back. I think it's going to be very slow and I think he knows that too," Atseff said.

Atseff said he hoped that people weren't expecting things to happen too quickly.

Matt Hatley wanted to talk about a flat tax and asked Connolly if that would be something to consider although it had been unsuccessful in the past.

"Whenever they ran the numbers, it always created a huge shortfalls in revenues compared to the current system," Connolly said. "It's worth taking another look at. I'm open to anything."

John Montemayor, a retired Marine, asked Connolly to look out for deficit spending.

Connolly assured him he would work toward a balanced budget.

"I'm very cheap," Connolly said.

Connolly reiterated that the country had to stop the economic slide, but said that the budget Congress recently accepted would balance in years to come.

"The budget we approved does put us on a glide path to a balance. Within five years, the budget we approved cuts the budget by two-thirds," Connolly said.

Connolly, who is on the budget committee, said he would be concentrating on "sensible federal spending policies."

Montemayor said he heard what he came to hear when he talked to Connolly.

"His staff has been helpful in explaining how he balanced the budget in Fairfax. I'd like to see him do that up on the Hill," the 53-year-old Montclair man said.

Steve Bellayr, 60, told Connolly that he thought 47 years of an embargo against Cuba was enough.

"I think if we start traveling there like we did in China, they'll open up and collapse," the Lake Ridge man said.

Connolly said he thinks there's an "opportunity for reviewing Cuba policy" during the "last days" of Fidel Castro and his brother, Raul Castro.

Allowing families to visit Cuba more freely is probably a "reasonable step" while keeping human rights in mind, Connolly said.

"As we move forward the United States has to exert some concerns we have in exchange for any kind of opening up," Connolly said.

Dan Donley, 71, was concerned about the prices of prescription medicine.

"It seems to me Medicare has to be able to negotiate, because that would bring down the price of pharmaceuticals," Connolly told Donley, who pointed out that the Veterans Administration was able to negotiate for lower prices.

Connie Moser, 55, said she was pleased that Connolly held the get-together in front of the grocery store.

"We actually are just thrilled. We think it's a great idea that he made an effort to come down here," Moser said.

[LINK](#)

## **FC News Briefs: Connolly, Hull Blast Va. GOP's Stimulus Rejection Falls Church News Press**

U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly led an entourage of fellow Democratic state legislators, including Del. Bob Hull of Falls Church, at a rally in Alexandria Monday to "declare outrage" at the vote by Virginia's House Republicans last week to reject \$125 million in federal stimulus funds for enhanced unemployment benefits for out-of-work Virginians.

To qualify for the stimulus funding, Gov. Tim Kaine called for amending Virginia unemployment insurance law at last week's so-called "Veto Session" of the legislature in Richmond. It would expand coverage to include unemployed workers looking for part-time jobs and state-approved job training courses. But House Republicans led the opposition to the proposal, and it fell in the House of Delegates, 53-46, despite all Democrats voting for it. With Virginia's unemployment trust fund depleted, "accepting the funds would have kept the trust fund solvent for several more months and saved employers from higher taxes," Hull said. "It would have been good for business as well as persons unemployed through no fault of their own." In some areas of rural Virginia, the unemployment rate has soared above 12 percent. [LINK](#)

## **Courtney**

### **Courtney Tours Stimulus Recipients**

#### **The Day**

As the wind ripped across Stonington Harbor early Tuesday afternoon, Congressman Joe Courtney stood at Don's Dock in Stonington with a small group of people.

Among them were two Stonington men who have spent the past four years trying to persuade Amtrak to fund a project that will raise the clearance under two railroad bridges so more boats can gain access to the upper harbor and the marina at Don's Dock, which caters to small boats.

Courtney had come to celebrate the announcement that \$10 million of the \$1.3 billion that Amtrak is receiving in federal stimulus money will be used to replace the century-old spans and increase the clearances.

## **LOCAL PROJECTS**

## Amtrak

\$10 million split evenly between two Stonington rail bridges that will be replaced, with new spans providing more clearance for marine traffic.

## New London Housing Authority

\$380,000 to refurbish the courtyard, playground and parking area of the Thames River Apartments, sometimes called the Crystal Avenue high-rises.

## L&M Hospital

Plans to use stimulus funding toward an information technology update.

## New London Police Department

\$105,392 for new equipment purchases.

Don's Dock was among several stops the Democrat from the 2nd District made Tuesday as he visited places that will receive federal stimulus money.

Courtney was not able to say exactly how many jobs the \$10 million bridge project would create, but he said it would provide work for steelworkers, masons and others in the building trades, who he said have been particularly hard-hit by the recession, layoffs and foreclosures.

"This is the kind of work that will help get that segment of the economy going again," he said. "It's also an investment in our transportation system."

Ian Hetherington, owner of Don's Dock, said the work will also benefit his plans to add 120 slips to his operation. He said the expansion will eventually lead to the hiring of six more employees.

Courtney said he will press Amtrak to start work on the 8-month-long project this year.

Because the bridge clearances are so low now, small boats can get under them for only a few hours a day; no vessel can pass at high tide. The project will raise the bridges by 18 and 23 inches, respectively, which will allow boats to pass under during most tides and give larger boats access as well.

When Bryan Chesebrough and Andy Williams heard Amtrak was going to replace the bridges back in 2005, they began a campaign to persuade the railroad they could complete the project and increase the clearance without raising the height of the tracks.

The project was eventually approved but never funded. But both men said Tuesday their persistence paid off.

"There were plenty of times when we could have given up on this and thrown our hands up in the air," said Williams, a native of Scotland who recently became a U.S. citizen. "This is an example of what can happen when you get involved."

Courtney said it appears that eastern Connecticut has received more Amtrak stimulus money than any other congressional district.

Also approved was \$100 million to replace the Niantic River Bridge, \$16 million to paint the Thames River bridge, \$7 million to replace the Miamicock River bridge in Niantic and \$2 million to replace a bridge in Madison.

## Polish for the Crystal

Later in the afternoon in New London, the wind was still howling, this time along the shores of the Thames River, when Courtney stopped by the Thames River Apartments to see how the New London Housing Authority will use \$381,000 from the Capital Fund Program.

"This is a job that will benefit the citizens and help create jobs in our city," said Joseph Abrams, executive director of the authority.

The money will be used to refurbish the courtyard of the high-rise apartments on Crystal Avenue, including new playgrounds, benches and picnic tables, trees, lighting and other amenities for the residents.

"We're going to tear it all up and give people a nice place to be outside, day and night," Abrams said as he stood in the courtyard between the two buildings, which has not changed since the nine-story structures were erected in 1967. Original wooden benches are splintered and the playground equipment is missing pieces.

The housing authority will hire 10 New London residents immediately, preferably from low-income housing, Abrams said, to help with prep work for the project such as tearing out the old playground equipment. The jobs will be temporary but on a full-time basis, he said.

The contractor, who has yet to be hired, will be required to hire the 10 workers, Abrams said, at the same rate of pay as other landscape workers.

"It will be part of the contract," Abrams said. "And if they need more labor, we're going to ask they hire from the city of New London."

Kent and Frost Landscape Architecture of Mystic is working on the plans and is expected to submit drawings in about two weeks. The project is expected to go out to bid in about three months.

"We need to make it an enjoyable and inviting place," said Chad Frost. "It needs to be safe and durable."

Courtney praised Abrams for having a project that will provide jobs while updating a dilapidated area that badly needs an overhaul.

Kara Storniolo, manager of the complex, said the more than 200 kids who live at the complex with their parents deserve a better place to live and play.

"I can't wait to have a playground," she said. "It'll be great to have no puddles after it rains, and no trip hazards."

### Subsidizing safety

Next, Courtney visited the New London Police Department to learn where stimulus money going there might be used. The police were awarded \$105,392 in early March from the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program, which is part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Courtney also met with officers, detectives and union officials before going on a ride-along with Patrol Officer Tricia Marcaccio. Courtney told the officers he and the Obama administration believe it is important to invest in job growth as well as in public safety.

"We're doing both, to try to make sure there's no risk to the public safety during this economic downturn," he said. "The economy is in a depression."

Courtney said the Byrnes grant would help fill a gap in equipment funding, and said the stimulus bill also contains more than a \$1 billion for the COPS (Community Oriented Policing Services) program, which, when distributed, will not require the recipient communities to match the funds, as in the past. He reiterated that point later in a meeting with Police Chief Bruce Rinehart.

"That's what we need," Rinehart said. "The problem with these grants is the matching requirement. Some communities just don't have it."

Rinehart asked if the funds the city receives from the COPS grant, which is designated for hiring new officers, might also be applied to retaining officers.

"If it could be fashioned to pay existing officers, it would still be a part of the stimulus," Rinehart said. "It would keep people off of unemployment."

The chief expressed concern that recently hired officers might have to be laid off if the city cuts the public-safety budget.

"Some of our officers passed on jobs in other communities," he said. "To have to let them go when they first get here would be a shame."

When Courtney noted that school superintendents facing a similar scenario are asking the same question about money they would be receiving, Rinehart pointed out he was headed for a City Council meeting later in the evening.

"The department went backwards five or six years ago," he said. "I hope that doesn't happen when I get to the council tonight. We have been steadily building up the department. I hope the council doesn't vote to do that. That would be a shame."

"The goal," Courtney said, "is to prevent that." [LINK](#)

## Dahlkemper

### Dahlkemper gets input on problems from area residents

#### Leader Times

A U.S. congresswoman gave her constituents the chance to tell her to her face what they really feel about the economy and their other concerns for the district.

They didn't disappoint her.

Rep. Kathy Dahlkemper, D-Erie, spent the better part of Tuesday afternoon in the bakery department at the Foodland grocery store in the Hilltop Plaza in East Franklin meeting with the Armstrong County public in a continuous line of one-on-one sessions.

Dahlkemper was there on the second day of a seven-day, seven-county, economic recovery tour of her district highlighting her efforts to get the local economy back on track.

Throughout the tour, billed as a "Congress in the Community" event, Dahlkemper is meeting with constituents, including the business community, farming community, health care providers and nonprofit groups.

Dahlkemper voted in favor of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and is promoting the benefits of the stimulus bill that included substantial funding and investment for Armstrong County and what that means for her district.

She said she wants constituents to express their concerns so she can take it back to Washington.

Dahlkemper's 3rd Congressional District includes the boroughs of Applewold, Atwood, Dayton, Rural Valley, South Bethlehem, West Kittanning and Worthington, Parker City and the townships of Boggs, Bradys Bend, Cowanshannock, East Franklin, Hovey, Madison, Mahoning, Perry, Pine, Rayburn, Redbank, Sugarcreek, Valley, Washington, Wayne and Kittanning, and the western voting precinct of South Buffalo Township. In addition to parts of Armstrong County, the district includes parts of Butler, Crawford, Mercer, Venango and Warren counties and all of Erie County.

"I get to see people in the grocery stores, libraries, very public places where people are just going about their daily activities," said Dahlkemper. "They come up and talk to me about veterans' issues, agriculture, bills they are either opposing or supporting. It helps me get a good feel of what their concerns are."

Earlier in the day, Dahlkemper met with business owners at the Belmont Complex in East Franklin and toured the Penn State Electro-Optics Center in the Northpointe Industrial Park in South Buffalo.

"I learned from them that there are a lot of great, high-paying, high-quality jobs that are being created right here in Armstrong County," she said. "The more I find out about these points of excellence, the more I can promote them outwardly. They were bragging about the good things that are happening here," she said.

Dahlkemper, who is on the House Committee on Agriculture, will hold a meeting today in Meadville to discuss farming issues.

Some local farmers lined up to talk to her at Foodland.

Howard Erdley, a Kittanning Township dairy farmer, told Dahlkemper about his concern for milk prices.

"We can't do it, economically, at the price we're getting," Erdley said. Dairy farmers had the price paid to them cut from \$17 to \$12 per 100 pounds, he said.

"Get the government out of it and let it float on the free market," he said. "If they're going to set the price, then set it at a modest price or we're going to end up drinking milk from China."

Dahlkemper said she wants to address the problems dairy farmers are facing with the low price they're getting for their milk.

"Dairy farmers have been struggling," she said. "There are a couple of agriculture bills that people have talked to me about their concerns for going forward. I got the bill numbers and we will look into them to see if we can get back with some information."

Dahlkemper heard about the Healthy Armstrong program during her tour in the county.

"It's a great program, a model that could be used nationally, groups coming together for a common purpose," Dahlkemper said.

Bill Cloak, assistant fire chief for Pine Fire Department, discussed funding for a new fire station with Dahlkemper. She told him stimulus money was coming available through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and to apply for it when information becomes available. Cloak said he will apply for a grant.

A woman whose son is a veteran and who has been unsuccessful in finding a job and in getting promised compensation from the military, told Dahlkemper of his concerns.

"She would like him to be close. He's injured, he has two purple hearts," Dahlkemper said. "Where are the jobs? She wants to know."

Dahlkemper's constituents were interested in hearing about the economic recovery.

People are afraid that the economy is going to worsen and the job losses are going to increase and they won't be able to take care of their families and stay here, she said.

"If you have a specific need, come to us," Dahlkemper told constituents about the stimulus package. "We will direct your project to where you can find the money and how to apply."

"If it doesn't come here (to this district), it's going somewhere else in the country," she added. "So let's make sure we get our fair share here in the 3rd District."

Dahlkemper said she keeps hearing from people that they can't remember a federal legislator ever being here talking directly to them.

"People can know we're accessible and that they can come and talk to me about their concerns," she said.

Foodland manager Paul Zimmerman was happy to have Dahlkemper pick his store for her tour.

"It's good to see a politician coming out to speak to the people," Zimmerman said. [LINK](#)

## **Dahlkemper: The first 100 days**

GoErie.com

There hasn't been much down time for freshman U.S. Rep. Kathy Dahlkemper. The 51-year-old mother of five went from first-time political candidate to Washington legislator in 15 months -- and now she's closing in on her first 100 days as a member of the 111th Congress.

Dahlkemper was among 52 new members of the U.S. House of Representatives who took the oath of office on Jan. 6. Since that time, she has witnessed the inauguration of the nation's first black president, Democrat Barack Obama; taken part in House floor discussions that crafted the sweeping federal stimulus bill, designed to jump-start the nation's economy; and spoke out against millions in executive bonuses tied to the federal government's \$700 billion bailout of struggling Wall Street firms.

Dahlkemper, who knocked off 14-year incumbent Republican Phil English in November's general election, sat down with Erie Times-News reporter Kevin Flowers earlier this week to discuss her first three months on the job, Obama, the stimulus package, bailouts, her family and other issues.

QFirst off, let's talk a little bit about what these first three-plus months in Washington have taught you about D.C. politics, the responsibilities of the office and what you think you still need to learn to be an effective legislator.

The first three months, obviously, there's been a big learning curve. Particularly the first month, six weeks. Now that I've been there for a few months, I feel, you know, a little bit more settled in.

The key thing is having a good staff surrounding you, ... there is so much to learn. I was talking to a representative just the other day who's been there two years longer than I, and he said it really took him his first two years to feel like he had a grasp on everything.

The workload is tremendous, that I guess didn't really surprise me, but maybe just the volume of it and the amount of things that are going on right now. ... We are very busy. We've got a lot of big legislation that's happened in three months.

QWhat have been your toughest challenges in terms of getting up to speed with the new job?

Just the really unprecedented times that we're living in. We've got an economic crisis in front of us, the worst economic times we've seen in decades, and how do we best go forward? So trying to get all of the information I can gather continues to be the biggest challenge.

QExplain why you voted against the Wall Street bailout, and whether Congress discussed any potential protections that could have avoided situations such as the AIG bonuses.

When we were going through that process, there were regulations looked at, but they were not law when we had to vote on whether to release the second half of that money. And because there were no regulations on the books, I just couldn't vote for the money to be released until I felt that money would be better regulated in terms of where it goes, and obviously we've had a problem with it since.

QWhen we last talked, I believe it was in early January, you told me you wanted to make sure local officials, in terms of the stimulus plan, worked together to prioritize projects here. Is that going on? Are you actively involved?

My staff has been probably a little bit more on the ground, actively involved in it, meeting with representatives from all the different localities. ... We have a very active Web site that has the recovery package on there, and so Amy Cuzzola-Kern in my office has been named as my recovery-package director, and so she really keeps up on a lot of that information.

I've had (local officials) already come down and meet with me in Washington. ... It still remains sometimes a struggle to get everyone to come together and prioritize. But I think it's important going forward that we continue to speak with one voice.

The airport (runway extension), I think when you're looking at Erie County, still tends to be the No. 1 project.

How much confidence do you have in the stimulus plan, in terms of what it can do not only for the district, but for the nation as a whole?

I have a lot of confidence in the plan, and I did when I voted for it.

A lot of people want immediate change. They want something to happen right away. This is a problem that took a while to get here, and it's going to take a while for it to obviously be rectified.

So we're just starting to see the stimulus money come out. ... We're just beginning to see the dollars flow in. In fact, people's paychecks, this first paycheck in April will be the first money they see. Transportation, infrastructure projects are just being put out to bid, obviously there's a little bit of a process that happens there.

The one thing we know it did, as soon as the schools knew how much money they were getting, the school districts, they didn't have to lay people off that they were looking at laying off. So right away it saved jobs.

In a recent news release, (National Republican Congressional Committee Communications Director) Ken Spain said: "Kathy Dahlkemper is shirking her responsibility as a member of Congress by supporting a vague (federal) budget that will do nothing more than open the door to controversial tax-and-spend policies and overburden the pockets of American families for generations to come." How do you respond to that?

Well, I think he's absolutely wrong. ... A budget is a blueprint. It sort of lays out the direction that we want to go in this country. And they are exactly the things I campaigned on. Health-care reform. I think that's one of the key things we need to do in terms of economic recovery for the long term to avoid bankruptcies in this country. I campaigned on the fact that I believe a strong education is really the foundation of a strong economy. And if we don't have our students prepared for the global market and for the next technologies and science applications, we are not going to be able to compete.

Energy. I campaigned a lot (about) energy independence and moving toward renewables. ... We are being responsible. We know we have got to get a handle on the spending in this country, and this budget does that.

You were witness to the inauguration of (Obama), the first black president. What stands out for you from that experience? Have you gotten a chance to speak to him one-on-one at all?

The inauguration day was a very emotional experience for anybody who was down there. ... It really was a pilgrimage that day for so many people. And that's I guess what I came away (with), seeing what a historical day this was. The people that came in walkers and wheelchairs, and really, they had to be there. It didn't matter that it was cold. It wouldn't have mattered if it was snowing. They were going to be there, and nothing was going to stop them from being there.

I have had a chance to shake (Obama's) hand a few times, and be in a room when he's spoken, but I have not had a chance to actually sit down with him and discuss the district with him. ... Obviously he's got a lot of things on his agenda, and I'm one of 435 (House) members.

Talk about the town-hall-type meetings you've been having and meeting with residents on the state of the economy, and what you might say to skeptics who say these meetings are grandstanding.

I've made a concerted effort over the last three months to try to stay in touch with the people of the district by doing what we're calling "Congress in the Community." It's a way for me to just be out where people gather, whether it's a grocery store, or a library, or a festival, and go where they will feel comfortable coming up and talking to me.

I think people are very receptive because there's no intimidation. They can just walk up and talk to me about whatever their concern is.

The best ideas for Congress are not coming from within the walls of the Capitol building. They're coming from the people out there everyday, working.

Anybody who's spent any time in Washington knows that Washington is a very different place, and it's a bubble. And you can become very detached from your district. So the best way for me to stay attached is to continue to come back and be out among the people. [LINK](#)

## Dahlkemper, Holden pick minds of local farmers

### Meadville Tribune

When it comes to battles over farm policy in the nation's capital, the line of demarcation does not fall along party lines.

"It's not Republican versus Democrat," U.S. Rep. Tim Holden told more than 70 members of Crawford County's agriculture community who gathered Wednesday evening on the campus of Allegheny College. "It's regional."

These are not, he added, regional disagreements. "They're regional wars."

At the half-way point of a seven-county, seven-day economic recovery tour of Pennsylvania's 3rd Congressional District, Rep. Kathy Dahlkemper turned her attention to agriculture Wednesday evening during a town hall-style meeting on the campus of Allegheny College.

The newly-elected Dahlkemper brought along some experienced backup. She was accompanied by Holden, a fellow Democrat who represents Pennsylvania's 17th Congressional District.

Holden, who now serves as vice chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, had been feeling thoroughly outnumbered on the committee before the 111th Congress took office in early January, he recalled Wednesday. A member of the committee since 1993, he was the only Pennsylvanian — and one of only three legislators representing states east of Ohio — serving on the 19-member committee in recent years.

With the election of Crawford County's new representatives, Dahlkemper and Glenn Thompson, however, Holden isn't feeling nearly as outnumbered. The freshmen representatives have both joined the committee. This brings agriculture's eastern contingent all the way up to four, including one committee member from New York state.

Together, the Pennsylvania trio represents all or part of 27 of the commonwealth's 67 counties. In addition to most of Crawford County, Dahlkemper's 3rd District includes all of Erie County and parts of Armstrong, Butler, Mercer, Venango and Warren counties.

In addition to an eastern corner of Crawford County, Thompson's 5th District includes all of Centre, Clarion, Clinton, Elk, Forest, Jefferson, McKean and Potter counties and part of Clearfield, Juniata, Lycoming, Mifflin, Tioga, Venango and Warren counties.

Holden's 17th district includes all of Dauphin, Lebanon and Schuylkill counties and part of Berks and Perry counties.

### Talking agriculture

Wednesday, Dahlkemper and Holden were on a fact-finding mission, gathering comments from members of the county's agriculture community on topics ranging from animal identification to food safety to country-of-origin labeling to milk prices to international trade.

One of the most striking lessons Dahlkemper learned during her campaign, she recalled, is that while agriculture is definitely the number-one industry in the district, the people working in that industry are the most disenfranchised she encountered. As a result, she made a point of including a session with members of the district's farming community in her tour, which also includes talks with constituents in the business community, health-care providers and those working in the nonprofit sector.

While several members of the audience expressed concern about a house bill known as the Food Safety Modernization Act, they learned that it is still in the early stages of development. “There are a lot of hearings on food safety going on,” Dahlkemper observed.

In response to a question about whether enough rules were already in place to allow the government to proceed with criminal prosecution in the recent peanut-contamination case, Holden noted that there’s a fine line between protecting the public interest and disrupting business.

When asked what can be done to make sure that product-safety rules in force in the United States are applied to products imported from China, Dahlkemper responded by saying that while it’s a big concern, the country can’t close down trade. “We want them to buy our products, too,” she said. “We need fair trade — not just free trade,” she said in response to a later question, “but we cannot close doors.”

“We’re in a global economy whether we like it or not,” Holden added.

As for her position on corn ethanol, “It’s never a good idea to use something we eat to move cars from Point A to Point B,” Dahlkemper said.

Noting that “all the experts” agree that the corn ethanol market should be allowed to stand or fall on its own — without assistance from the government — Holden said that the real interest these days is in second-generation ethanol, manufactured from cellulose instead of corn.

This afternoon, Dahlkemper and Holden will tour the Ernst Conservation Seeds facility in Union Township to see cutting-edge 21st-century agriculture at work on products including second-generation ethanol. [LINK](#)

## **Donnelly**

Payment to seniors available to help 'make ends meet'

### **Carroll Comet Comet**

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will provide a one-time payment of \$250 to retirees, disabled individuals and supplemental security income recipients receiving benefits from the Social Security Administration, railroad retirement beneficiaries and disabled veterans receiving benefits through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The announcement was made last week in Logansport by Congressman Joe Donnelly.

"Our retired seniors who have worked hard all their lives and paid taxes are just as impacted by this slow economy as the rest of us," Donnelly said. "I am pleased that the recovery act included the one-time payment so we can give seniors a little help to make ends meet."

Payments will begin in early May and continue throughout the month. No action is required to receive the payment, which will be sent separately from the regular monthly payment. [LINK](#)

## **More than \$40K in stimulus for food, shelter in county**

### **Sharon Herald**

Mercer County will receive over \$40,000 in stimulus for their emergency food and shelter programs.

The money hasn't arrived yet, but will eventually be divided by the county's Emergency Food and Shelter Program, which is managed by a board currently headed by the county's former personnel director Bill Boyle.

In the past, the program has mostly channeled money to food programs because of declining funds and the desire to make some impact, said Lori Weston of the Community Food Warehouse.

With the influx of \$41,748 in stimulus cash, Ms. Weston said she isn't sure how the board will divide up funds this year.

The money has in the past been distributed among about 15 county agencies, Ms. Weston said. The stimulus cash was announced in a release by U.S. Rep. Kathy Dahlkemper, Erie, D-3rd District, who voted in favor of the stimulus bill. [LINK](#)

## Driehaus

### Rep. Driehaus Visits Deer Park School

#### WCPO

Students at a local school learned a little about what goes on in nation's capitol after they got a visit from a newly elected Congressman.

St. Nicholas Academy students learned about what the US Congress does.

US Representative Steve Driehaus visited the Deer Park school last Friday.

He also met with student senators Will Kruspe, Cameron Scott, Joki Folzenlogen and Corey Muchmore. [LINK](#)

### WWII vet gets his medals

#### Cincinnati.com

For John Miller of Colerain Township, a Navy veteran of World War II, Friday was a day he had awaited for 64 years.

It was well worth the wait.

Most of the six children and 16 grandchildren he and his wife, Dolores, watched grow over the years gathered around him at the noon hour Friday in a conference room at Good Samaritan Hospital.

They looked on with love and appreciation as their father and grandfather - suffering from congestive heart failure and battling pneumonia - at long last received the medals and ribbons he had earned as a young sailor all those years ago.

"I couldn't have imagined 60 years ago that I would have a family like this all together in one place," said Miller, who had been under constant care from a visiting nurse in the condo he and his wife share before pneumonia sent him to the hospital.

"I am blessed."

The medals and ribbons Miller earned were never given to him when he left the Navy in December 1945, after serving three years on board the destroyer USS Drayton in the South Pacific.

It wasn't until a couple of months ago that one of his daughters, Linda Graf of Colerain Township, realizing that her father's health was declining rapidly, contacted the office of U.S. Rep. Steve Driehaus, D-Price Hill, for help tracking down her father's medals.

It is something congressional offices are called on to do often - records were lost, officers failed to do paperwork, and hundreds of thousands of veterans service records were destroyed in a St. Louis fire in the early 1970s.

In Miller's case, a faulty typewriter operated by a clerk at his old Navy unit rendered his records unreadable.

Driehaus' office cut through the red tape.

On Friday, the congressman brought to the hospital what Miller had earned all those years ago - a campaign medal, a Combat Action ribbon, an Honorable Service lapel pin (known to veterans as "the ruptured duck") and an honorable discharge medal.

Driehaus also handed the World War II veteran an American flag lapel pin.

"This is flag you fought for," Driehaus said.

Just before the ceremony, the family was told Miller's pneumonia was under control and that he might be released to go home. Graf said that, as they did before his hospital stay, the family would have a palliative care nurse in the home to care for the 85-year-old and their mother, who will turn 83 on Sunday.

"They've always insisted on being on their own," Graf said. "So we do the best we can for them."

As the children and grandchildren formed a semicircle to snap photos of Miller and his wife - he in a wheelchair and she holding on to his arm - Jean Bosse, a daughter, said the whole family is glad that it did not take any longer than it did to track down his paperwork and have his medals issued.

"He's been so sick; he's been in and out of the hospital so many times," Bosse said. "We all wanted him to have a day like this."

Kevin Miller, a son, said it was only right that it happen in front of the large family his father has raised.

"Family is everything to him," Miller said. "That, and his military service. He is proud of having served. And he is the kind of guy who, if the Navy came to him today, and said, 'Miller, we'd need you,' off he would go." [LINK](#)

## Ellison

### When landlords default, renters need to learn their rights

#### WQAD

Renters aren't immune to the heartache of foreclosure. When their landlords default on the mortgage, tenants could be squeezed out of a place to live. But often renters aren't aware of their rights in these situations.

"It is extremely confusing," said Maria Foscarinis, executive director of the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty. "In fact, the tenant might be going along and paying rent, and may be even paying the rent after the foreclosure is finalized ... not having been notified that (the landlord) is no longer the owner of the property."

State and local laws regarding the foreclosure process and tenant eviction vary throughout the country, she said. To clear up some of the confusion tenants are facing, the center released a report last month, titled "Without Just Cause: A 50-State Review of the (Lack of) Rights of Tenants in Foreclosure." The report is posted on the center's Web site, <http://www.nlchp.org>.

Seventeen states require that tenants receive notice when they'll be evicted due to foreclosure, according to the report. Twelve states require tenants be named as parties to foreclosure proceedings, in order to terminate tenancies or give the new owner immediate possession rights.

In New Jersey and the District of Columbia, a tenant's lease can outlive a foreclosure, and tenants can continue to rent from the new owner of the property when a foreclosure is finalized \_ often the bank, Foscarinis said. In nine states, the lease may be protected if it predated the mortgage, according to the center.

"Tenants should not assume that they must leave because the owner is being foreclosed upon," Foscarinis said. "However, they should be aware that they might be required to leave and find out what the law is in their state."

Foscarinis said that information in the report was compiled after the center began hearing about increases in homelessness around the country, evident from the increased use of emergency shelters and food pantries. Renters were not receiving much attention, even though they're often at a greater risk for homelessness due to foreclosure, she said.

"This report is a big, loud warning bell about what happens when renters are forced to leave their homes without warning because of a building foreclosure," said Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., in a news release. "Renters who do no wrong shouldn't pay the price of being evicted without the necessary time to make alternative living arrangements."

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, more than 20 percent of U.S. properties facing foreclosure are rentals, and renters make up about 40 percent of all families facing eviction.

In a news release, Rep. Keith Ellison, D-Minn., called those renting foreclosed homes the "untold victims" of the housing crisis. The research, he said, "reinforces many of the stories I have heard from my constituents in Minnesota." He has joined House Financial Services Chairman Barney Frank, D-Mass., to introduce legislation on the issue, Ellison added.

"When the foreclosure crisis began, people weren't considering renters in the equation," said Keith Wardrip, senior research analyst for the National Low Income Housing Coalition. "We are starting to raise the awareness."

To make the rules clearer \_ and more favorable to tenants \_ the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty wants national laws regarding renters' rights when the property they're living in goes into foreclosure.

"We are advocating for the federal government to take some action to create a uniform standard and require that the tenants be given a minimum of 90 days notice so that they have an opportunity to find housing," Foscarinis said. Sen. Kerry also said law needs "to protect tenants by allowing them to stay in their homes for at least 90 days after a foreclosure."

On a separate but related front, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are implementing a National Real Estate Owned Rental Policy to allow renters living in foreclosed Fannie and Freddie-backed properties to stay in the home \_ at least for a while.

Under the new policy, renters who are current on their rent would be offered a month-to-month lease at market rent, said Brad German, spokesman for Freddie Mac. This way, the home stays occupied, which is beneficial to the upkeep of the property. Plus, renters have a smoother transition into finding a new place to live.

"One of the stipulations is that we are going to try and sell it to reduce losses on the foreclosure," he said. If the property is sold, the lease would be terminated, he added.

But for some investors, buying a property that already has a tenant living there might actually be a selling point, German said. In that case, the tenant might stay in the property and simply have a change in landlord.

## IF IT HAPPENS TO YOU

First and foremost, renters who are living in a home that is being foreclosed on shouldn't assume that they have to leave immediately, said Maria Foscarinis, executive director of the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty.

But right away, they should find out about state and local laws to determine their legal rights. They should also seek the advice of legal aid attorney or a housing counselor on what the next step should be, said Keith Wardrip, senior research analyst for the National Low Income Housing Coalition.

For some low-income Americans, getting counseling might be a challenge because many legal aid offices are overwhelmed these days, Foscarinis said. The center's report provides additional resources for each state for those struggling to find the help they need.

Renters also could call their local member of Congress, Foscarinis said. "Possibly they can help through their constituent services office, and this also lets them know that this is a problem that they need to address," she said. [LINK](#)

## Ellsworth & Hill

### Indiana companies eye stimulus funds for 'clean coal'

#### Indy Star

Hoosier companies are hoping for federal stimulus money to help them fulfill their ambition of making Indiana a leader in the nascent "clean-coal" industry.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act includes \$3.4 billion for such projects, power plants that would capture and store much of the carbon dioxide they produce, reducing the release of greenhouse gases linked to climate change.

The Department of Energy has yet to detail how it would dole out the money, but Reps. Brad Ellsworth and Baron Hill say they are ready to help two projects in Indiana that could benefit.

Also, state Secretary of Commerce Mitch Roob said his department plans to help corporations try to secure some of the stimulus money.

Ellsworth, a Democrat, represents Edwardsport, the location of a coal-gasification project under construction by Duke Energy. Once it goes online in 2012, the operation will be the nation's largest such plant, generating enough power to light more than 200,000 homes.

A plant also is envisioned in Rockport, east of Evansville, though last fall the company behind those plans put its ambitions on hold in light of what it said was an uncertain regulatory environment.

Whether it will move forward remains to be seen. But its prospects brightened last week after Gov. Mitch Daniels signed legislation allowing the Indiana Finance Authority to act as a go-between for the plant and utility companies to negotiate a 30-year contract to buy and sell the synthetic natural gas the plant would produce.

The Edwardsport plant, an upgrade and retrofitting of an existing operation, represents the next step in cleaning up coal plants, said Marty Irwin, director of the Purdue University-based Center for Coal Technology Research.

"It will be the cleanest coal plant in the world when it is completed, bar none," he said.

Much of the federal money is destined for existing projects, but about \$1 billion has yet to be allocated, Hill's office said.

Duke Energy spokeswoman Angeline Protogere said the company hopes to qualify for stimulus money to study "carbon sequestration" at the Edwardsport location.

It already has received \$1 million in federal funds to study how best to store carbon dioxide at the plant.

Though advocates say clean coal holds much promise, it faces much opposition. While the gasification process reduces levels of mercury, sulfur and nitrogen oxide, environmentalists say its benefits are exaggerated.

Grant Smith, executive director of the Indiana-based Citizens Action Coalition, said the new wave of coal power is too expensive for ratepayers and that the money would be better spent on developing alternative energy sources.

Duke began to phase in an 18 percent rate increase in January to pay for its project. [LINK](#)

## Foster

### Congressman Proposes Bill to Help Military Families

#### WGIL Radio News

U.S. Rep. Bill Foster (D-Geneva) has announced a bill that will create the National Military Family Relief Fund and provide greater aid to military families in all branches of the armed services. Foster recently introduced the bill, H.R. 1175, in the House of Representatives and says he modeled it after the Illinois Military Family Relief Fund, which provides a checkoff box for donations on the Illinois tax returns.

"It is imperative that we provide our military families with the support and relief they deserve," Foster said. "During these tough economic times, we cannot leave our heroes and their families behind. This is a solution that also would allow any taxpayer to say thank you to our service members families and provide relief in a common-sense and fiscally responsible way."

Foster's bill calls for a National Military Family Relief Fund to which taxpayers would voluntarily contribute by filling in an amount on their federal income tax forms. The amount for the relief fund would be added to the supporter's tax bill or deducted from their refund.

Foster says the Department of Defense would administer the fund. Active-duty and veteran servicemen and servicewomen fighting in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and their families would be eligible for grants from the relief fund if they are experiencing financial hardship.

Illinois' program, created in 2003, has been successful and has distributed more than \$8 million to Illinois military families. More than 35 states have similar programs of their own.

Fosters hopes Congress will approve the measure before the next April's tax filing season. [LINK](#)

## Counties get stimulus cash for hardship assistance

Aurora Beacon News

Counties in the 14th Congressional District will receive about \$600,000 for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program, as part of the federal stimulus package, Rep. Bill Foster announced Monday.

"At a time when many families are facing economic hardship, support services like those provided by the Emergency Food and Shelter Program are vital," the Geneva Democrat said.

The money can be used for a variety of services, including homeless shelters; food distribution through food pantries and food banks; one-month assistance with rent, mortgage and utility payments to prevent evictions; and transition assistance from shelters to stable living conditions.

Area counties will receive: Kane, \$187,787; Kendall, \$37,735; DeKalb, \$39,204; and DuPage, \$296,206.

The funding is based on levels of unemployment and poverty in the counties. [LINK](#)

## Giffords

### Officials discuss violence at border

Arizona Republic

Some of the nation's key border-protection officials brainstormed privately Tuesday with top Arizona leaders about the threat of Mexican cartel violence to border states.

When the lengthy closed-door confab ended, Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz., offered no new strategies, but announced consensus in support of a remedy promoted in border states for years: more money.

"Additional resources are pivotal," said Giffords, who organized the gathering. "We need to have more boots on the ground and more air support."

Participants in the meeting included David T. Johnson, head of the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs; Vice Adm. Roger Rufe Jr., director of operations coordination for the Department of Homeland Security; Capt. Robert Dean, executive director of the Federal Interdiction Committee; and Terry Goddard, Arizona's attorney general.

Giffords described the gathering as "a milestone for border security," and said it is critical for local, state and federal enforcement agencies to communicate and collaborate.

Goddard said narcotics violence from Mexico has seeped into Arizona for years, but a more volatile situation was created when President Felipe Calderón launched a campaign to shut down the drug syndicates and their corruption.

In the past year, Mexico reported 7,000 homicides related to the drug war and to turf conflicts among the gangs.

"The government of Mexico is taking on the cartels and paying a huge price for it," Goddard said, referring to police officers and soldiers killed in the conflict. "If we're unsuccessful, it will spill over to the United States . . . The cartels are fighting for their lives, and they will fight in the U.S. as well as Arizona."

Pima County Sheriff Clarence Dupnik praised Calderón's courage and agreed, "We need to do everything in this country that we can to see that (he) does not fail."

Giffords said she convened Tuesday's conference so that Arizona law-enforcement officials could meet their federal counterparts and trade ideas, taking advantage of sudden national interest in border mayhem.

"We've got to strike while the iron is hot," she said. "This is in the public's attention, and it is a key budgeting time right now." [LINK](#)

## **Giffords summit addresses Mexico drug violence, spillover**

### **Tucson Citizen**

Authorities north of the Mexico border must take heed of the drug cartel violence unfolding in Mexico and prepare to battle it here, Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz., said Tuesday.

Giffords spoke at a 4 p.m. press conference following a daylong law enforcement summit on border drug violence she hosted.

"Today is a milestone in the history of border security in Arizona," Giffords said at the Evo A. DeConcini U.S. Courthouse, 405 W. Congress St.

The significance of the summit, Giffords said, was getting 60 federal, state and local law officers together to discuss drug violence in northern Mexico and its spillover into the United States.

Giffords said the summit should focus more attention on getting additional law enforcement equipment and personnel to the border to combat the problem.

Mexico's deadly drug wars, with cartels battling each other and the Mexican Army, have led to an estimated 7,000 deaths in Mexico since the beginning of last year, Giffords said.

Flanked by 15 area law officers at the news conference, Giffords said violence has spilled north of the border and "is flaring up in numerous states hundreds of miles away from the border and as far away as Canada."

Giffords said that in Tucson, cartels distribute drugs and operate stash houses and do whatever it takes to protect their "illicit interests."

A federal study published last year by the National Drug Intelligence Center shows that an unspecified number of Mexican drug trafficking organizations have formed alliances with two drug cartels here, the Federation and the Juarez Cartel.

The cartels, which control drug trafficking from production to wholesale operations and shipping throughout the United States, are in Tucson mostly to ensure their drugs are shipped from Tucson to their ultimate destinations, area law officers have said.

Some of their drugs are sold locally to smaller drug trafficking organizations, which sell here and fuel Tucson's drug violence, authorities said.

While some local authorities have questioned the extent to which cartels operate in Tucson and point out that drug violence here goes back for decades, Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard said he has seen increasing cartel violence in southern Arizona. [LINK](#)

## **8 Stimulus could create 70000 jobs in Arizona, Giffords says**

### **Tucson Citizen**

The federal stimulus money intended for Arizona could create or save 70,000 jobs over the next two years, U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords said Wednesday during her state of the district presentation.

The \$800 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will offer local help, Giffords, a Democrat, told about 200 people attending the luncheon event.

"We're talking about 8,000 jobs in southeast Arizona," she said.

That would be good news for Arizona, where the unemployment rate has been inching closer to 10 percent with each monthly jobs report announcement.

"In Arizona last year, every single day about 220 people were told they no longer had a paycheck," Giffords said.

"Last year, one out of every 198 homes in the state received a foreclosure notice," she said. "Here in Pima County that translates into almost 25 foreclosures every single day."

The federal stimulus package calls for funding to increase the nation's capacity for generating power from solar, wind, geothermal and other renewable sources, she said. Arizona's abundant sunshine should make the state a magnet for such business growth, she said.

The stimulus package, 40 percent of which comes from tax cuts, is not expected to have an immediate impact.

"The hope is that by the end of 2009 we will have hit the bottom and be on the way back up," Giffords said.

"But if 2009 is truly terrible, as opposed to just bad, we may need to do more," she said.

Results for efforts to boost education, new alternative energy businesses and other economic areas will be examined and programs refined if necessary, she said.

"We need to stand back and evaluate what is working," she said.

The economic crisis has pushed issues important to residents in Giffords' 8th Congressional District - such as border security - to the back burner, she said.

"I haven't forgotten about it," Giffords said. "It's still being discussed but it is not a top priority."

A spate of drug-related border violence, including 7,000 homicides in Mexico, is pushing the issue back to the forefront, Giffords said.

"The most contentious part of this is what we do with the 12 million to 14 million people who are here (illegally)," she said.

She said documentation of illegal entrants should be mandatory, they should be required to pay back taxes and fines, and must not jump to the front of the line ahead of people who have been waiting to acquire documentation to come to this country legally. [LINK](#)

## **Tax credits make energy more affordable**

### **Nogales International**

So many rebates, so many tax credits, so many decisions to consider; all reasonable concerns that brought more than 250 people to the Santa Cruz County Renewable Energy Expo at the fairgrounds in Sonoita Saturday.

It was a handout-friendly event. Most visitors left with enough reading material to last days.

In a nutshell, higher rebates now available from Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative Inc. (SSVEC) plus additional tax credits available from federal and state governments are making solar options more attractive.

Tamarack Little, Constituent Service Representative with U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffordâ€™s (D-Ariz.) office said that the Sun Watts Program that SSVEC is offering is the best rebate deal going. Sun Watts offers rebates to SSVEC customers who install solar voltaic systems tied to the SSVEC grid. The utility will rebate to residents \$4 a watt of installed solar voltaic capacity or 50 percent of the total cost of the project whichever is less. Tucson Electric Power Co. (TEP) rebates \$3 a watt, he said.

### System size

Depending on the size of the system, the installed cost of solar voltaic systems starts at \$1,100 for a 1 to 1.9 kW system to \$13,400 for a 9 to 9.9 kW system, according to a brochure from exhibitor Arizona Renewable Energy in Sonoita (520) 858-0255.

Most homes would require the largest of these systems to generate most of their electricity from solar.

Sonoita resident Rob Horsmann said that he hadnâ€™t realized that that the SSVEC rebate had increased and that means now is the time to take the plunge. â€œThink what a difference it would make if many residents in the Sonoita area did grid-tied solar. â€œWe might not need an additional power line,â€ he said.

### Payback

Katharine Kent, an Expo exhibitor and the president of the Solar Store in Tucson estimates that for TEP customers the payback is 20 to 25 years. However, if electrical rates continue to increase then the payback would be sooner.

With federal and state tax credits payback time is further reduced.

SSVEC customers should have a somewhat quicker payback due to the higher \$4 per watt rebate. In addition, a new ruling from the Arizona Attorney General is that Arizona utilities will have to go to net metering by the end of the year. That means that those with grid-tied systems who generate more power than they use in a year would receive credit from the utility for the extra power. It doesn't amount to all that much because the credit is calculated at the utility's wholesale cost, not at the retail rate customers pay. Even so it would provide some additional income to those who generate more than they use.

Available tax credits for residential systems include: a federal 30 percent credit with no cap on total system cost and an Arizona state tax credit of up to \$1,000. Those considering taking advantage of tax credits are advised to seek the advice of a tax accountant to be sure they qualify for the credits.

### Information

Expo exhibits included information about systems for producing power from solar panels and wind generators. Information about both off the grid and systems that tie to the grid were available.

Other vendors were providing information on solar water heating for swimming pools and domestic hot water. There were many handouts with suggestions about how to save energy.

And, as Little said, one should first make their home more energy efficient by adding insulation, purchasing energy efficient appliances and the best insulated windows. Tax credits are available for these upgrades provided approved materials, approved appliances and professional installation are documented.

The Expo event was organized by Sonoita resident Jeanne Horsmann. She said she put the event together in less than three weeks. She lined up 15 exhibitors arranging for eight of them to make special presentations, signed up the Hog Wild Band for entertainment and solicited free products to be given away by drawing names of those who filled out an entry form. There were more vendors interested in exhibiting than Pioneer Hall could accommodate so they had to be turned down. [LINK](#)

## Grayson

### New Performing Arts Center May Be Saved

#### WFTV

Orlando's most popular venue may be saved. Money troubles threatened to put a new performing arts center behind schedule, but \$10 million in federal money could keep the center on track.

Bill Efferdink is an advocate of the arts and believes a new performing arts center will put downtown Orlando on the map.

"Immediately it's going to bring jobs and secondly going to make us a world class city," he said.

Congressman Alan Grayson said he's requested \$10 million from the federal government to help make the art renderings of the center become a reality by 2012 as planned.

It's one of more than 40 earmarks the freshman congressman is trying to add into next year's budget to help Central Florida.

"If it's not approved, find some other way to get it down because first of all we need the jobs," said Grayson.

Even if the \$10 million in earmark money makes it into the federal budget, the project is still short. The new performing arts center will cost \$408 million.

So far, donors have given \$87 million and the city has to make up a \$120 million shortage of tourist tax money.

In March, the city caught a break when First United Methodist Church agreed to reduce the price of its land for the new building. Some taxpayers aren't so sure this is the time for the city to spend money on what some consider a pet project.

"The idea is definitely a nice one. But let's be reasonable," said Efferdink. [LINK](#)

### Stimulus helps Orange County Schools, for now

#### WDBO Radio

The new deficit numbers are so much smaller for Orange County Schools, so why are we still talking school closings and job cuts?

It's a question that continues to haunt Orange County School Superintendent Ron Blocker, who points out that the reason next year's deficit is much smaller now is partially thanks to the federal economic stimulus.

But he wonders, "When the stimulus money runs out, what do you do?"

Congressman Alan Grayson says it's sad Florida lawmakers still don't get it.

"There's virtually nothing coming from the state legislature. The difference that they are talking about is almost entirely federal aid."

Which is exactly why board member Kat Gordon is so frustrated.

"I cannot run a school system based on a stimulus package... I've got to base it on what is sound for Orange County Public Schools." [LINK](#)

### **Congressman wants money for missing child program**

**MiamiHerald.com**

U.S. Representative Alan Grayson of Florida wants \$500,000 from Congress to establish a missing-child program in Orlando named in memory of Caylee Anthony.

If granted, the funds would go to the Fort Lauderdale-based A Child Is Missing organization, which helps law enforcement across the country search for missing children, elderly or disabled people.

The group uses a telephone system to alert communities when someone is missing. The request requires the money to be spent in the 8th District, which includes Orange and Lake counties.

Caylee was 2 when she went missing in 2008; she was later found dead. Her mother, Casey Anthony, is charged with the girl's murder.

### **Halvorson**

**Halvorson wants better government**

**Kankakee Daily Journal**

Illinois is the new Texas when it comes to political clout.

So said U.S. Rep. Debbie Halvorson, D-Crete, who represents the 11th District, following retired Republican Jerry Weller.

It's a position that gives her lots of access, way more than you might expect from someone who has been in office nine weeks. The former state senator from the 40th district visited The Daily Journal Tuesday for a wide-ranging interview with members of The Daily Journal editorial board.

Being from Illinois, she said, has a certain cachet these days. She can visit with Ray LaHood, the former Republican congressman from Peoria who now heads the Transportation Department, or with Arne Duncan, the former chief of the Chicago Public Schools, who now heads the Department of Education.

She can knock on Rahm Emanuel's door. Emanuel, a former Chicago congressman, is the chief of staff for the president.

Halvorson is speaker of the house, Nancy Pelosi's appointee to the powerful Steering and Policy Committee in the House.

"I'm a freshman and I'm setting policy," she said.

And, she kids, when both were in the Illinois state Senate, she was Barack Obama's leader. Now, Obama is her leader. Halvorson was the first woman to be majority leader in the state Senate.

But, she added, the Illinois delegation, both Republicans and Democrats, work together to try to bring funding back to Illinois. That's a bipartisan trend, she said, that started strongly under Dennis Hastert, when the

Republican from Illinois was speaker of the house. It continues today under Sen. Dick Durbin, second in command of the U.S. Senate after fellow Democrat Harry Reid of Nevada.

"It helps to have someone in the leadership," Halvorson said.

It's also a good time to be in Washington, as opposed to Springfield, where state officials are dealing with the wreckage of the Rod Blagojevich governorship.

Reform, she said, all comes down to money and public financing. Political campaigns, she said, are "too long, too nasty and too expensive." The need to raise money to run is constant.

It seems, she said, that "it's all you do."

Federal fundraising guidelines, she noted, are stricter than Illinois law, because she now holds a federal office, she can raise no more than \$2,400 from any single individual and cannot take any money from corporations.

Illinois has no practical limit of fundraising for state races, so long as the totals are reported correctly and in a timely fashion.

And if voters want better government, they might want to consider electing more women.

"It's sad to say that I'm the first woman here or the first woman there," she said, "but it's true."

In Congress, only 12 percent of the members are women.

"You never see a woman go to jail," she said of the recent Illinois scandals. "Maybe it's a conscience. I know that every day, I work hard to be squeaky clean." [LINK](#)

## Heinrich

### Heinrich Details Agenda For N.M.

#### Mountain View Telegraph

U.S. Rep. Martin Heinrich said his No. 1 priority as congressman from New Mexico's 1st Congressional District isn't different from his predecessors: constituent services.

"It doesn't matter if the name is Lujan, Schiff, Wilson or Heinrich, my staff and I are here to help you," Heinrich said Tuesday during a town hall visit to Moriarty.

Heinrich was in town as part of his "First 100 Days Tour" of communities in the district.

He has one difference from his predecessors, though: he is the first Democrat elected to the seat since its creation in 1968.

However, Heinrich avoided taking potshots at Republicans and focused on his and Congress' accomplishments since Jan. 1.

"We've been working as hard as we can to move things forward positively," Heinrich told the crowd of about 40.

The priority for Congress, he said, has been the economy. He said that a key accomplishment was the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which is meant to pump \$787 billion into the economy.

Several questions about the stimulus act were directed at Heinrich, mostly asking when the money might trickle down to New Mexico and when the economy might react to it.

Heinrich said that stimulus money is already having an impact on social programs and education. Other money for infrastructure needs and business loans should be seen in the coming months, he said.

One aspect of the measure that he said is encouraging for New Mexico is the investment in renewable energy.

"New Mexico has the opportunity to benefit from some of these programs," Heinrich said.

Other accomplishments Heinrich pointed to are passage of the State Children's Health Insurance Program, known as SCHIP. The program strives to provide health insurance to 4 million uninsured children nationwide, Heinrich said.

He added that SCHIP is a good first step in the reform of the nation's health care system. Congress should work toward reform that makes sense and can save money, he said.

At this point, health care is available to everyone, but only through emergency services. Congress needs to focus on providing care before individual health issues become an expensive problem.

"We provide health services in the worse and most expensive way," he said. "We have a moral responsibility to make sure citizens of this country have health care."

He acknowledged, though, that the struggle for universal health care will be tough and that some incremental reforms can be passed now.

"It's going to be a slugfest," Heinrich said. [LINK](#)

## **Heinrich touts stimulus plan at Chamber event**

**Bizjournals.com**

April 16 will mark the 100th day of this congressional session, but U.S. Rep. Martin Heinrich, D-NM, said the blur of activity has made it feel like just a few weeks.

The freshman congressman from New Mexico's 1st District discussed his leadership strategy and the federal stimulus plan at a luncheon hosted by the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce April 9 at the Hotel Albuquerque.

Heinrich spoke about his experiences with constituents — at a job fair in Albuquerque where the line of hopeful applicants stretched into the parking lot, and in rural places like Estancia where he learned of a man who had supplemented his wages with wood cutting in better years, but recently had to seek jobless benefits for the first time in his life.

Such experiences informed his approach to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Heinrich said. The stimulus plan is designed to create jobs today, but also to increase the country's competitiveness over the long term. America has fallen behind countries like China and India by neglecting investments in infrastructure, he said, which ARRA tries to remedy.

Health information technology and medical records are part of that infrastructure, Heinrich said, and are key to controlling spiraling medical costs. ARRA contains \$2 billion in health information technology grants aimed at small providers that are just beginning to develop their information technology. It also includes \$17 billion in

health information technology improvements aimed at helping organizations that are already on their way to implementing electronic medical records.

“We have to get health care costs under control or they will eat up the national budget and the entire economy,” Heinrich said.

ARRA also contains the “single biggest renewable energy legislation to emerge intact from Congress,” he added.

It includes loan guarantees for renewable energy programs. Those guarantees will be a bridge for renewable energy companies that can’t get equity capital right now because of the credit crunch.

He acknowledged that those loan guarantees have actually been on the books since 2005, but the Department of Energy has been slow in moving the money out the door. The new DOE Secretary Stephen Chu is revamping that process and funds are starting to move.

The recovery act will be a bridge, Heinrich said, but it will be businesses and entrepreneurs that will grow the economy.

“We must restore consumer confidence and use policies to lay the groundwork so we have a competitive advantage,” he said.

The early 1990s can be instructive, Heinrich noted, because the country was facing a deficit. There was a good budget resolution in 1992, he said, and much of the debt was paid off about five years later.

“What allowed us to do those things is, we grew the economy,” he said.

When asked how long he thought the recession might last, Heinrich said 2009 will continue to be a bad year, with more job losses, but he anticipates things starting to turn around in 2010. Anecdotally, he said, people have mixed feelings now about the future, whereas three months ago, it was mostly doom and gloom.

“Frankly, that’s an improvement,” he said.

He credits some of that switch to the fact that the country has a plan in place and things are moving forward, even though many people might not agree with the direction the administration is taking.

Although he’s new to Washington, D.C., Heinrich has sussed out enough information to decide to go a different route in staffing his offices. Unlike many representatives, he decided to have more staff in his Albuquerque office than his D.C. office because he wanted people on the ground for constituent services. The 1st District might be the smallest congressional district (geographically) in the state, but it’s one of the larger districts (based on population) nationally. So, he has staff people assigned by geography and by issues.

“I’ve seen the corrosive impact some congress people fall into with the D.C. and local staff who rub each other the wrong way and who compete,” he said. “That’s bad for constituent services.”

Heinrich is serving on the House Armed Services Committee, which will allow him to advocate for things that matter in New Mexico — such as support for Kirtland Air Force Base, which is getting \$30 million in infrastructure funding from ARRA and Sandia National Laboratories.

He also was elected president of the new Democratic members in the House, which puts him in a position to communicate concerns and ideas to the governing body’s Democratic leadership. [LINK](#)

## [Hill](#)

### **Clean energy brings opportunities**

#### **New Albany Tribune**

The challenge is the economy; the opportunity is clean energy. More and more Americans realize the challenges we face are connected.

Our overreliance on fossil fuels is the leading source of global warming emissions, pollutes our air and water, exposes consumers to the price spikes of a global fuel market, and threatens our national security. We need to repower America by shifting to 100 percent homegrown, clean electricity, cut our dependence on oil in half, and dramatically cut global warming pollution — moves that will create millions of new green jobs and help rebuild our economy on a sound foundation.

President Obama has in two short months set the nation in a new direction on these issues. But the president needs Congress to deliver in order to make his vision a reality.

Environment America applauds Obama, Congressman Baron Hill, Sen. Evan Bayh and their colleagues for passing the economic recovery plan last month. The plan invests more than \$80 billion in clean energy and public transit — an important down-payment toward more fundamental change.

The next step is to pass comprehensive legislation to accelerate the transition to a clean, renewable energy economy and address climate change — legislation that will work for Indiana.

Indiana relies on manufacturing jobs for about a quarter of its economy, and Hoosiers are hurting as that industry flags. But our manufacturing resources and skills set the state up to succeed in a new energy economy: Even during this recession, the renewable energy business is growing and that means it's hiring. For example, a Bloomington brake manufacturer, traditionally producing parts for trucks and heavy mining equipment, is now making brakes to hold wind turbines steady in the most powerful winds. Carlisle Industrial Brake looks to wind to become the fastest-growing sector of their business and expects to create and maintain jobs.

And that's just the beginning: The American Wind Energy Association estimates that Indiana could meet a 25 percent by 2025 renewable electricity standard by developing less than a quarter of its full wind potential. We also receive enough sunshine for families to supply household power from a home solar installation.

Obama's budget is an important step. His proposed budget assumes the revenue from reducing global warming emissions and requiring polluters to pay, and it dedicates a portion of this revenue to building a clean energy economy. It would also help protect our health by reinstating a fee to clean up the nation's worst toxic waste sites and fund upgrades to our drinking water and sewage treatment infrastructure. This budget lays the groundwork for future action on clean energy and climate change, including legislation expected in Congress by Memorial Day.

America is at a crossroads on energy. We can help Obama put millions of Americans to work building a clean energy future, or stay the course with oil companies and other polluters that favor the status quo. We look forward to working with the president, Hill and Bayh to realize our shared vision of a clean energy economy.

[LINK](#)

### **Indiana Rep. Baron Hill's supporting higher tax deduction for small businesses**

#### **New Albany Tribune**

The Small Business Formation and Job Creation Act gained another sponsor Wednesday in Rep. Baron Hill, D-Ind.

If passed, the measure would increase the maximum deduction for business-startup expenses through the Internal Revenue Code. The maximum break for businesses now is \$5,000, with additional expenses deducted over a longer period of time.

The new measure would increase the deduction amount to \$20,000. Lawmakers proposed the plan in response to the recession and suggested the deduction be limited from 2009 to 2011 if passed. The House version is pending before its Ways and Means committee.

"The success of small businesses is essential to our economy truly rebounding," Hill stated in a news release. "During this time of economic downturn, small businesses have been presented with many challenges. This bill addresses one of those challenges and will provide some much-needed relief to Hoosier small businesses."

## Himes

### Himes pushes tighter financial regulations

#### The Hour

Washington lawmakers could hammer by summer a new regulatory structure aimed at protecting the financial sector and larger economy against meltdowns as occurred last fall, according to Congressman Jim Himes.

Himes, D-4, told The Hour on Thursday that the discussions are centered around the creation of a systemic regulator that likely would work under the Federal Reserve System.

Such a regulator would work with international regulators "to identify entities, products and groups creating systemic risk, and avoid the kind of meltdown that we've had."

"The Fed and the (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation) have watched the banks, have watched the capital ratios within the banks, and that's been partly successful," Himes said. "But you've had these huge new markets develop that didn't have any oversight, the auction rate securities market, that massive market that didn't exist 15 years ago. Of course, the example that everybody goes to right now is the credit default swap market that AIG was doing -- \$63 trillion of market without any real regulation."

Himes described the discussions around regulation as a "dry, complicated and very important." Regulation of the financial sector currently falls under an "alphabet soup" of agencies, including the Securities and Exchange Commission and the U.S. Commodities Futures Trading Commission. Each of the agencies has its own political constituencies and "a certain amount of bureaucratic inertia," he said.

Oversight of credit default swaps falls under the Commodities Futures Trading Commission. Based in Chicago, the commission was founded to monitor orange juice and hog belly futures, Himes said. A systemic regulator would be unlike other regulators, while not displacing the existing agencies, according to Himes.

"Its mandate would be to seek out those entities or products, or groups of entities, hedge funds locking together that might create such a risky situation that taxpayer dollars might have to come to the table to fix it, if these things that become 'too big to fail,'" Himes said. "It would almost certainly require legislation to create."

Himes said he hopes such can be completed and voted upon this summer.

The Obama administration last month unveiled a sweeping overhaul of the financial system designed to impose greater regulation on major players like hedge funds.

Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner told lawmakers that the changes are needed to fix the flaws exposed by the current financial crisis, the worst to hit the country in seven decades.

The goal is to repair a system that has proven "too unstable and fragile," he said.

"Over the past 18 months, we have faced the most severe global financial crisis in generations," Geithner said in testimony to the House Financial Services Committee. "To address this will require comprehensive reform. Not modest repairs at the margin, but new rules of the game."

The administration's proposal, which will require congressional approval, would represent a major expansion of federal authority over the financial system. It would impose tougher standards on financial institutions judged to be so big that their failure would represent a risk to the entire system.

It also would extend federal regulations for the first time to all trading in financial derivatives, exotic financial instruments such as credit default swaps that were blamed for much of the damage in the meltdown.

The administration also wants larger hedge funds to be required to register with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The Obama administration proposed the creation of a systemic risk regulator to monitor the biggest institutions. Geithner did not designate where such authority should reside, but the administration is expected to support awarding this power to the Federal Reserve.

The passage of the \$700-billion Troubled Assets Relief Program under the Bush administration last fall and imposition of restrictions upon banks taking money through the program has prompted some to charge the federal government with nationalizing banks.

Himes rejects that assessment.

"The government has no appetite to own these banks," Himes said. "In fact, all of us are recognizing now the very challenging issues that come up when you've got public money in private entities. This goes back to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. When you try to mix the private and public sector, it can be ugly." [LINK](#)

## **Himes tours Northrop Grumman**

### **The Hour**

Information is ammunition.

Wanting U.S. Rep. Jim Himes, D-4, to be significantly armed when it comes to fighting for defense money, officials from Northrop Grumman Norden Systems gave the congressman a tour of the Norwalk manufacturing facility on Monday morning.

Northrop Grumman Norden Systems, a global defense and technology company, is the largest manufacturer in Norwalk, specializing in surveillance and radar equipment for the military. Local Northrop Grumman officials wanted to make sure Himes was up to speed on major projects such as the Multi-Platform Radar Technology Insertion Program (MP-RTIP) and Joint STARS radar systems, which are major contracts for the defense company.

Himes said he was glad to receive the tour considering Secretary of Defense Robert Gates is "radically rethinking the defense budget," according to Himes. "That can have an impact on Connecticut."

Tony Fischetti, director of engineering at Northrop Grumman in Norwalk, showed Himes the upgrade work being performed on the Joint STARS radar system.

"This is greatly needed for national security," Fischetti said. "It's a powerful tool for surveillance and reconnaissance. This system is the premier air-to-ground surveillance of its kind."

Tony Izzo, site director, and Mike D'Orlando, director of manufacturing operations, led the first part of the tour, ushering Himes through the magnetics division, F16 area, and AN/APN241 all-weather radar area.

Aside from seeing how Northrop Grumman makes its high-tech equipment, Himes got the opportunity to shake hands and chat with several employees.

"One take away from this tour is the incredible capacity of the people who work here," Himes said. "We need to keep this intellectual capital that keeps our country safe. These are skilled jobs. We don't want to see these jobs go overseas, for security reasons."

Employers at Northrop Grumman expressed appreciation for Himes' visit but also pride in their workmanship.

"I told him we build a great product here," Mike Mercer, an employee in the magnetics division, said. "We appreciate his support."

Stu Pivovor spent considerable time explaining to Himes how the F16 transmitter is built.

"We're very proud of what we do. Reliability is good and it gets better every day," Pivovor said. "It was nice of him (Himes) to come by and say hello to the people -- other than just at election time."

Tony Izzo, site director at Northrop Grumman in Norwalk, said having Himes meet some of his employees was just as important as the tour itself.

"We wanted him to meet with some people and we wanted him to see the products we build in this facility," he said. "We wanted him to feel comfortable talking about what we do here because the people in Washington will need to hear it as they make their decisions."

Himes also met with union officials at Northrop Grumman.

Izzo said U.S. Sen. Joseph Lieberman and Sen. Chris Dodd have been extremely supportive of Northrop Grumman Norden Systems. Dodd visited the facility recently to celebrate the company landing a contract.

Northrop Grumman employs more than 400 people at its Norwalk facility. Himes was informed early in the tour that the company planned to hire 19 new manufacturing employees to work on existing contracts. That was music to Himes' ears.

"That was some rare good news on the employment front," he said. "I'm thrilled that, given the times, the facility is adding jobs. It's great that they keep manufacturing alive in Fairfield County." [LINK](#)

## **Himes addresses affordable housing needs**

### **Stamford Advocate**

U.S. Congressman Jim Himes on Tuesday addressed the need for affordable housing in the region's small and medium-sized towns.

Himes, D-Conn., was the keynote speaker at a housing summit sponsored by the South Western Regional Planning Agency.

"If we don't get this right, we will have a foundational virus that will erode the vitality of this region," Himes told a Town Hall audience of about 70 affordable housing advocates from across Fairfield County.

While larger state cities such as Stamford and Bridgeport have made inroads in building affordable housing, small and middle-sized towns have typically run up against community resistance to various forms of below-market-rate housing. Meanwhile, the lack of affordable housing options has been cited by businesses as an impediment for moving into the region.

Himes, a former affordable housing advocate, said that "political reality" in those communities made low-income housing -- targeted at individuals making less than 60 percent of the median income -- extremely difficult to achieve.

Smaller municipalities, he said, should instead focus their efforts on building housing for seniors and workers forced to commute there. He suggested looking at opportunities to develop land owned by local housing authorities as well as rehabilitating foreclosed homes. Himes stressed that the emphasis should be on downtown housing, close to transit hubs.

Based on the comments afterward from several affordable housing advocates in the audience, smaller communities often fear increases in density.

But Gordon Joseloff, Westport's first selectman, noted that mindset may very well be changing, as the recession affects a broader swath of residents who can no longer afford living in their homes.

"These economic times might be the economic opportunity to change people's mind," he said. [LINK](#)

## Kagen

### Payday tax cuts go into effect: 95% of workers are eligible

#### WLUK

You may be one of the many still waiting for this year's tax refund, but help in the form of a new tax break should be in place by next payday.

"If they have not seen it in their last payroll check, they should be seeing it soon," Mary Mellem, with Ashwaubenon Tax Professionals, said.

Starting Wednesday, employers are required to withhold less money from the paychecks of about 95% of workers. Some have already been doing so for several weeks.

The tax cut, which will be in place for two years, is part of the recent economic stimulus package.

"Yes, every little bit helps. I've noticed a small difference and that's good," Mary Wilquet, of Green Bay, said.

How much extra cash you will see depends on several factors, but on average: working individuals are going to receive a \$400 credit per year and married taxpayers are going to receive \$800 credit.

That breaks down to about \$15 extra on every paycheck.

Congressional leaders believe it will help stimulate the economy.

"These are your tax dollars coming back home right where they belong: into your pocket. These dollars go a long way in the Midwest," Rep. Steve Kagen (D-8th Congressional District) said.

Tax professionals, however are warning that some could end up having to pay back a portion of the extra money they receive.

"The burden is on you, as the recipient of the money, to watch it," Mellem said.

According to Mellem, those who receive more than the allowed credit will have to pay it back on next year's income taxes.

Those with more than one job are the most likely to be affected.

"You're going to get it a little at a time and it's easy to spend and to stimulate the economy - which is what the purpose is - but, at the end, if you owe money you're not going to be a happy camper," Mellem added.

For some, next year might be the first time they've ever owed after years of receiving a refund check at tax time.

Individuals that make more than \$75,000 and couples that make more than \$150,000 are not eligible for the tax break.

If you are receiving social security or veteran's benefits, you are also going to see some relief. The plan provides a one time payment of \$250. [LINK](#)

## Kilroy

### Chase, city talk about more jobs for area

#### The Columbus Dispatch

JPMorgan Chase has confirmed that it is in talks with Columbus officials about the possibility of bringing a significant number of jobs to central Ohio.

The discussions came to light during a letter-writing skirmish between Rep. Mary Jo Kilroy and JPMorgan Chase executives about a reported plan to outsource jobs.

In a March 23 letter to Kilroy, Chase Executive Vice President John Donnelly wrote: "... please be aware that our chief administrative officer, Frank Bisignano, and Mayor Coleman have recently discussed adding a significant number of jobs to Columbus."

Despite Donnelly's acknowledgement of the meeting, Chase and city officials refuse to talk about the details.

Regardless, the prospect of new jobs would be a welcome contrast to the steady stream of layoffs that have hit the area in recent times.

"Chase is clearly a bank in a stronger position than others, and we've met with them and said if there are any opportunities to increase your operations here, we stand ready to help in any way we can," said Columbus Chamber CEO Ty Marsh.

Nothing more is known about what's being discussed, and the parties won't give any hints.

"All conversations between the mayor and employers need to be private," said Coleman spokesman Dan Williamson. "I don't know anything about (the letter) and am not going to look into it. It has to be private."

Local Chase spokesman Jeff Lyttle declined to comment on the meeting, but he said the bank "has more employees in central Ohio today than at any time in our history, and employment continues to grow."

Chase has more than 14,500 local employees and will soon add 130 mortgage-servicing jobs, he said.

City officials and local leaders hope Chase's acquisitions of Washington Mutual and Bear Stearns provide an opportunity to integrate some of these operations -- and jobs -- here.

"Chase is the largest private-sector employer in the region, and we've worked closely in the past with them when they bought Bank One and added jobs here," Marsh said.

Kilroy spokesman Paul Tencher said the congresswoman has spoken to Coleman about Chase and is aware that "they're working to bring more jobs here."

However, he added, "It's important we know how many jobs could be created and how many could be outsourced, and Chase has not answered that yet."

Adding jobs in central Ohio is realistic for Chase, said Matt McCormick, an analyst with Cincinnati investment adviser Bahl & Gaynor.

"There are two types of banks, the ones that are strong and will survive and increase their market share -- and those that won't," he said. "And Chase is clearly one that will."

The letter exchange began March 13 when Kilroy contacted Chase CEO Jamie Dimon.

She wrote that members of Congress were "outraged by the potential actions of your company to outsource tens of thousands of U.S. jobs" after accepting \$25 billion in federal bailout funding.

Kilroy made reference to a newspaper report that Chase plans to spend \$400 million on jobs in India. In his response, Donnelly said the report, from The Economic Times of India, contained "inaccurate information."

Donnelly then detailed how Chase employs 225,000 people worldwide, including 180,000 in this country.

"Last year in Ohio, we contributed over \$54 million to charities," he wrote, adding the company has made more than 27,000 loans totaling \$3.8 billion in Ohio.

Kilroy responded Wednesday in a letter to Dimon.

She asked for specifics on the inaccuracies in The Economic Times article and wrote: "I am also concerned, however, that your company did not refute the outsourcing numbers. In fact, your letter did not directly address any of the concerns members of Congress presented to you."

Kilroy added her office has received several calls from Chase employees concerned about "future plans to outsource."

"Yes, we're being hard on them," Tencher said. "But we realize how important they are to (the) Columbus area and we want to work with them so they can continue to grow." [LINK](#)

**Kilroy takes Funk case to Subcommittee on Military Personnel**  
London Madison Press

U.S. Rep. Mary Jo Kilroy took the cause of Madison County native Lt. John W. Funk Jr. and other MIAs from World War II to the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Military Personnel last week.

Kilroy, who represents Madison County as part of Ohio's 15th Congressional District, wants increased resources for the U.S. Defense Department's Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) in Hawaii. JPAC is the organization charged with recovering the bodies of American soldiers, sailors and airmen lost to combat in World War II and subsequent conflicts.

Funk was one of five U.S. Army airmen killed in August 1943 when their C-87 cargo plane crashed while flying over the Himalayas in an area known as "the Hump." In October 2008, an expedition of the Arizona-based MIA Recoveries organization located the wreck of the long-missing plane in northeast India, along with the graves of its crew.

Kilroy saw a story about Funk's plane in The Madison Press and joined the effort to bring the airman's body home. She asked to be added to a Congressional subcommittee looking into JPAC's scope of activities, as well as its funding and staffing requirements.

"We had a particular interest in JPAC because of Lt. Funk," Kilroy said. "I wanted to understand what JPAC's needs are and set some sort of benchmarks for funding."

On April 2, she sat on the committee as it heard testimony from various veterans' organizations, as well as the JPAC commander, Rear Admiral Donna L. Crisp. She questioned Crisp and others about the need for money and critical personnel at the agency.

Following the hearing, Kilroy spoke to Crisp personally about recovering the bodies of Funk and his crewmates, requesting a commitment that JPAC bring the bodies home.

In a telephone interview with The Press on Monday, Kilroy said Crisp indicated she will travel to India this summer to undertake new recovery operations for those lost in Arunachal Province where the wreck of Funk's plane lies.

"India's government is very cooperative in the effort," Kilroy said.

However, the weather and terrain of far northeast India may prove hurdles to forensic experts working on the case.

"There's only three months out of the year when they can mount recovery efforts in that area," Kilroy said. "Whether or not our wreck will be among those recovered remains to be seen."

Regardless, Kilroy said she will continue to pursue the matter in order to show proper respect to those lost and to their families who were left grieving and wondering.

"The committee chairman will keep me informed and I will stay involved," she said.

More than 1,000 Americans were lost flying "the Hump" in World War II, records indicate. Kilroy said most of those on the military's list of missing personnel stem from that conflict. [LINK](#)

## **Small Biz Owners Talk Health-Care Reform**

**NBC4i**

Health care comes up as a campaign issue and Congress is trying to tackle health care reform under each new administration.

According to the latest Discover Small Business Watch survey, 85 percent of small business owners don't offer health benefits to employees. That's an increase from 77 percent in 2008 and from 74 percent in January 2007.

Small-business owners met with U.S. Representative Mary Jo Kilroy Wednesday at the Columbus Chamber of Commerce to discuss their concerns about health care.

Business owners are concerned about 50- to 60-percent rate increases each year, high deductibles and pre-existing conditions.

Spinelli's Deli employs 17 people, but only six of them receive health care.

"Our biggest challenge is the very cost year over year. For the past five years, we've seen anywhere from 15 to 20 percent increase in our premiums," said Joe Spinelli, of Spinelli's Deli.

Precise Resource saw a 50 percent rate increase last year and a 60 percent increase this year.

"You just have to bear the brunt and make a few changes. Last year, I didn't make the changes. I kind of bit the bullet, took the hit in our bottom line. This year, we actually changed the plan, increased the deductible," said Janice Mitchell, of Precise Resource.

Mitchell's employees now pay more for doctor's visits, emergency room visits and prescriptions.

Four small business owners brought their concerns to the attention of Kilroy to get feedback before Congress tries to reform health care nationwide.

"It's been very hard to get accomplished in the past. I think 48 million Americans are without health care insurance and the burden that small businesses in particular like we're hearing today have been feeling. It is imperative that we get it done this year," Kilroy said.

Kilroy said the goal is for Congress to have a plan ironed out by August.

In the meantime, she's also talking to physicians, health care providers and social service groups to get as much information as she can from her constituents. [LINK](#)

## **Kirkpatrick**

### **Rep. Kirkpatrick Leads Fight to Add New Personnel, Technology to Secure the Border** PRNewsWire

Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick (D-AZ), Arizona's sole representative on the House Committee on Homeland Security, today introduced a bill to give the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) authorization to dramatically increase security resources along the U.S.-Mexican border.

The Border Violence Protection Act of 2009, H.R. 1867, would enact much of the plan proposed by Secretary Janet Napolitano last week, allowing DHS to shift its resources to the Southwest. The department will be supplying modern technology to catch smugglers at border crossings and providing more support for programs with track records of success in bolstering security along the frontier between the United States and Mexico.

"It is clear that the presence of Mexican drug cartels on the border has led to escalating violence, and it requires a swift, comprehensive and sustained response," said Rep. Kirkpatrick. "We are going to put our resources

where they can do the most good, taking advantage of 21st-century technology and building up programs that have proven effective in making our borders safer."

"This plan is a vital first step towards stopping the drug-related violence in northern Mexico from spilling onto American soil, and we will closely monitor the impact of these resources and prepare to do more if and when necessary," continued Rep. Kirkpatrick.

Under the terms of this act, the Border Patrol will be able to use special mobile X-Ray units and high-tech screening devices to reinforce their capability to scan cross-border traffic, making it easier for them to detect hidden weapons and currency.

The plan also allows DHS to double the number of Border Enforcement Security Task Force teams and mobilizes eight new Law Enforcement Tactical Centers to help the different levels of law enforcement responsible for guarding the border work together. In addition, it brings three new mobile response teams to the Southwest, where they will be able to quickly jump into action when problems arise along the frontier. These programs have repeatedly been demonstrated to be valuable weapons against smuggling, violence and other problems associated with lack of security at the border.

"Getting more boots on the ground is central to this effort, but coordination is also extremely important," said Rep. Kirkpatrick. "This plan will allow federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement to coordinate their efforts, strengthen our ability to investigate and target criminals and build on the progress we have had in catching smugglers."

"The escalating violence in the U.S-Mexico border region is a serious security threat," said Homeland Security Committee Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS). "This legislation takes aim at that threat by strengthening DHS's capacity through the increase of technology and personnel to combat the violence and smuggling occurring on our borders."

"I applaud Congresswoman Kirkpatrick's leadership on border security and I look forward to working with her on this critical issue," said Representative Thompson.

The Congresswoman has emphasized that the DHS plan does not take any options off the table, and that she considers this bill just one piece of a new, tougher approach to border security. [LINK](#)

## **Bills would help law enforcement**

### **Sun Shopper**

U.S. Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick introduced two bills this month that aim to help law enforcement officials control drug trafficking and border violence.

They are likely to be a topic of discussion when Kirkpatrick travels to Prescott April 17 to meet with police and Chamber of Commerce officials.

The Border Violence Protection Act would enact most of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano's plan to add new resources to border security efforts.

Kirkpatrick is Arizona's only U.S. House member on the U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security. Napolitano, Arizona's former governor, made a presentation to the committee about her plan, Kirkpatrick told The Daily Courier.

"We are going to put our resources where they can do the most good, taking advantage of 21st Century technology and building up programs that have proven effective in making our borders safer," Kirkpatrick said in a press release.

The legislation authorizes the administration to spend \$70 million to increase infrastructure and inspection capabilities at ports of entry, buy two X-ray mobile inspection units, set up 10 canine teams, acquire license plate readers and get more body armor.

It also authorizes an appropriation of \$30 million to hire 100 Border Enforcement Security Task Force (BEST) personnel, improve and expand BEST facilities, and increase resources and personnel for Operation Armas Cruzadas, which seeks to reduce the amount of arms flowing into Mexico from the U.S.

The actual appropriation of money would be a separate action.

"The escalating violence in the U.S.-Mexico border region is a serious security threat," said Homeland Security Committee Chair Bennie Thompson, D-Miss. "This legislation takes aim at that threat by strengthening DHS' capacity through the increase of technology and personnel to combat the violence and smuggling occurring on our borders."

The other Kirkpatrick bill, the Southwest Border Narcotics Reduction Act, would expand the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Program to all of Arizona, including Yavapai County. Right now, the Southwest Border HIDTA includes only eight of the state's 15 counties.

Yavapai and the other six new counties would get new access to resources and information to help them shut down drug trafficking routes, a press release from Kirkpatrick stated.

"Our sheriff's departments and local police are doing the best they possibly can to shut down the drug trade, but they could do more with additional resources," Kirkpatrick said. "The drug cartels are taking advantage of the gap in our law enforcement's plan of attack."

Under Kirkpatrick's bill, law enforcement agencies in the remaining Arizona counties would gain a voice on the HIDTA regional councils, more federal money, and the chance to share data.

With major trafficking routes moving along Interstate 40 and Interstate 17, the 1st Congressional District is a crucial front in the War on Drugs, Kirkpatrick said.

As an example, she cited how the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office confiscated 117 pounds of pot last week from a vehicle traveling on I-17. [LINK](#)

## **Veterans shelter wins bank reprieve**

### **Payson Roundup**

Days after a judge ordered some two dozen homeless, often disabled veterans evicted from a Payson home, the bank that owns the house suspended the eviction and agreed to renegotiate the dispute.

Misti Isley DeCaire, 83, has for years been privately offering shelter to homeless and disabled veterans, without any official status or help from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Her tenants pay what they can, but so many lost their odd jobs that she fell behind on her mortgage payments, said Art Rousso, a veteran who serves as spokesman for the group.

The \$310,000 in loans on the house had originally been written by US Bank and serviced by Wells Fargo Bank. The house was put up for auction in January and Wells Fargo bought it for the amount of the outstanding loan, said Tyler Smith, a supervisor in the bank's Real Estate Owned department.

Last Tuesday, a judge ordered DeCaire and the 22 residents evicted.

Smith said the bank had offered each resident \$3,000 to move out, but residents refused the offer. Only at that point, said Smith, did he realize the true situation.

He said the real estate agent who made the offer came back and said, "Did you know there's 22 veterans living there?"

Smith said he therefore last week realized "we don't want to turn 22 veterans out of their home — we're going to factor all that into account. Obviously, the biggest thing is doing right by this — it's an extreme situation and we want to make sure we're doing the right thing.

Rouso credited the protests and media inquiries with prompting the bank's change of heart.

"The bank called and said they would terminate the eviction proceedings and is there anything else I need," said Rouso. "I said, 'I'd like that in writing.'

"The community support has been fantastic," he added.

The group had enlisted the support of Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick and former Payson mayor Bob Edwards among others and crowded the court with residents and supporters at last week's eviction hearing.

Smith said he hadn't heard from any political figures about the situation.

Rouso also said that the \$300,000 property had been auctioned for \$230,000. Tyler said he hadn't been involved in the foreclosure auction, but said the bank had acquired the property for the \$310,000 loan amount.

Veterans Helping Veterans has grown over the years as a result of DeCaire's determination to take in any veteran. DeCaire is a 22-year veteran of World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

She began taking in veterans one at a time in 1993 and kept the improvised effort going until last year, when the recession hit. Her efforts to raise \$12,000 to catch up on the mortgage fell short. Rouso said the bank rejected a final \$3,000 mortgage payment on her 6,000-square-foot home, for lack of a late fee from preceding months.

However, her shelter doesn't have any official relationship or support from the VA. Some existing veterans groups have kept their distance, due to uncertainty about the programs and financing and status of some of the residents.

Tyler could not confirm any details of the actual foreclosure, since he became involved only after Wells Fargo bought the property at auction. Banks often buy properties at auction to gain clear title, before turning it over to an internal department that specializes in selling it for whatever the bank can recover.

Now the property will go to the bank's Loss Mitigation Department, charged with renegotiating, selling or finding federal mortgage bailout funds to get what the bank can from the property.

That might include selling it back to DeCaire for a new, lower amount based on a new appraisal, said Tyler.

The bank will explore all of the options in the next 60 days, in hopes of working out a settlement that will not result in the eviction of so many veterans, many of them disabled.

“Getting the \$310,000 back is not the priority,” said Smith.

“The way we look at it here in REO, we don’t concern ourselves with that number. That number is gone.”

[LINK](#)

### **Kirkpatrick expands anti-drug trafficking program to include District 1 law enforcement Verde Independent**

Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick has introduced a bill that would give local, state, and tribal law enforcement new access to resources and information, helping them to shut down drug trafficking routes throughout the First Congressional District. The Southwest Border Narcotics Reduction Act will add seven Arizona counties, all in the district, to the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program run by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

In recent years, Mexican drug cartels have established numerous cross-border smuggling routes for methamphetamines, cocaine and heroin in Arizona, posing a tremendous challenge to local law enforcement. Eight of the state's 15 counties are already a part of the program, and Rep. Kirkpatrick's bill would make Arizona the first HIDTA state by bringing Apache, Coconino, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, Navajo and Yavapai Counties into the program.

"Our sheriff's departments and local police are doing the best they possibly can to shut down the drug trade, but they could do more with additional resources," said Rep. Kirkpatrick. [LINK](#)

### **Kissell**

#### **Kissell visits troops**

##### **Stanly News**

At the conclusion of his first trip to Iraq, Congressman Larry Kissell left with both an optimism conveyed to him by American military leaders and the stark reality of the work left to be done.

Touring with five other congressmen, Kissell, who serves on the House Armed Services Committee, visited with a number of American troops and Iraqi leaders as well.

“I was pleased in these tough economic times to hear our commanders tell us that Congress had provided them with the materials to make their work successful,” Kissell said

In meeting and having dinner with the American troops, the former East Montgomery High social studies teacher was struck by the youthfulness of the troops.

“We visited with so many of our brave young men and women that are fighting for Iraqi peace,” he said.

“We’re so very proud of the job they’re doing.”

After seeing first-hand the situation on the ground and being briefed by key commanders — Gen. Ray Odierno, Lt. Gen. Charles Jacoby and Maj. Gen. Kenneth Glueck — Kissell said: “I feel great optimism coated with a heavy dose of stark reality for the future of Iraq. This process is a fragile one and I am confident in what our military is doing. There are, of course, major challenges, we are doing everything we can to provide the necessary services for a self-sufficient Iraq while ensuring the safety of our troops.”

While there has been a drop in the violence, Kissell said Monday's five attacks that wounded 140 highlights just how fragile the situation is.

"We're told that there were few killed yesterday, but the attacks remind us that there are many who don't want peace to work," Kissell said.

Still, he sees marks of progress, such as the provincial elections, which "went off without a hitch" and today's greater exposure to the outside world for the Iraqi on-the-street.

"In 2003, there were no cell phones here; but today, there are eight million," Kissell said.

"While the Iraqi people were shutout from the world under Saddam Hussein, they now want to be part of the world."

Among the Iraqis that Kissell met with were two female parliamentarians, who he said "have a great determination to make their new government work."

While there has been progress in developing the Iraqi police and military, the lower oil prices have adversely impacted revenues and has created concern for continued funding of both.

As he leaves from his first trip, Kissell observes that the Kurds "definitely want to be part of Iraq," but he has great concern for how the Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds can co-exist.

He summed that concern up with a comment from Monday: "We were told that the Sunnis fear the future, the Shiites fear the past and the Kurds fear both." [LINK](#)

## County to get funds

### Richmond County Daily Journal

The federal government is responding to the unemployment and exacerbated poverty being created by the nation's economic deterioration by mobilizing tax dollars for disaster relief.

An additional \$21,525 have been designated for Richmond County from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), as part of its Emergency Food and Shelter Program (E.F.S.P.) through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (A.R.R.A.).

This in addition to a \$45,241 allocation which E.F.S.P. Board Chair Michelle Parrish said was \$8,800 more than it received in the 2008 fiscal year.

"The Emergency Food and Shelter Board sends me specific instructions about how the money can be spent," Parrish said. "They may send us instructions to re-advertise and accept applications for these funds ... but they do send us instructions to make sure the funds are spent properly."

She said the additional \$8,800 in regular appropriations were based on a formula that factored in unemployment, "and the general need in this community."

This funding comes as part of a \$100 million parcel of grants from F.E.M.A., on top of its \$200 million annual fiscal year 2009 appropriation announced in December.

"These A.R.R.A. funds will provide immediate relief to communities impacted by unemployment and poverty," U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Neapolitano said in a Thursday release accompanying

the funding. "The community organizations receiving this money not only support Americans in need, but also play a crucial role in helping to get our economy back on track and families back on their feet."

Congressman Larry Kissell also sent out an accompanying release.

"The safety of our communities must always be a priority," Kissell said. "The folks and programs responding to disasters deserve every available dollar to better help them protect and secure the citizens of Richmond County."

He also said assisting emergency response systems was one of the reasons he voted for the A.R.R.A.

Parrish outlined the allocation of funding from the regular appropriations of \$45,241.

Our Daily Bread received \$6,000, New Horizons Life and Family Services received \$5,000, Southern Mission Ministries received \$1,200, Back Pack Pals received \$15,000, Samaritan Colony received \$10,000, Richmond County Mental Health Society received \$5,136 and Outreach For Jesus - Unlimited received \$2,000.

The remaining \$905 was used for administrative expenses.

The National E.F.S.P. Board is chaired by F.E.M.A., and consists of representatives from the American Red Cross; Catholic Charities, U.S.A.; National Council of Churches of Christ In the U.S.A.; The Salvation Army; United Jewish Communities and the United Way of America.

The local board has 11 members, with Parrish serving as the board's chair. [LINK](#)

## **Kosmas**

### **Florida lawmaker opposes House budget because it keeps 2010 shuttle retirement date Orlando Sentinel**

U.S. Rep. Suzanne Kosmas, D-Florida, voted against a House budget bill today because the federal spending guidelines "does not give NASA the flexibility to fly the space shuttle past 2010," according to the freshman lawmaker.

She cited the need to protect Central Florida jobs -- which should disappear by the thousands when the shuttle stops launching from Kennedy Space Center -- and concerns about safety, as "setting a hard deadline for Shuttle retirement could cause dangerous schedule pressure."

Said Kosmas in a statement: "Though there are areas of the budget that I support, my priority is helping Central Florida through these difficult economic times, and I believe the Senate's proposed budget does more to protect jobs in our community. Thousands of jobs at Kennedy Space Center and tens of thousands across Florida are at risk due to the pending spaceflight gap. Unlike the Senate version, the House budget does not give NASA the flexibility to fly the Space Shuttle past 2010." [LINK](#)

### **School dollars coming to Central Florida Orlando Sentinel**

Federal dollars from the stimulus plan have begun flowing to Florida schools, with millions of dollars now en route to Orlando-area districts. But \$2.7 billion more hangs in limbo, as state officials plead with Washington to give them the money.

According to U.S. Rep. Suzanne Kosmas, D-New Smyrna Beach, here's a breakdown of how local education dollars are being distributed: \$13.5 million for Brevard County Schools, \$36.5 million for Orange County Schools, \$10 million for Seminole County Schools and \$12 million for Volusia County Schools.

Florida also is in line to receive \$2.7 billion, but that money depends on whether Washington will grant the state a waiver to requirements of the stimulus act, which require that states keep their education at 2006 levels, which Florida has not done.

Officials are optimistic, however, because Republican Gov. Charlie Crist was one of the most vocal supporters nationwide of President Obama's stimulus plan. [LINK](#)

## **Federal, local dollars to aid first-time homebuyers**

**Daytona Beach News-Journal**

With the help of federal and private funding, 64 local low-income working families could apply for financial assistance to move into new homes by next summer.

The Community Foundation of Volusia & Flagler, a division of the local United Way, is providing \$150,000 to match federal funding of another \$150,000 toward a program to assist first-time homebuyers.

U.S. Rep. Suzanne Kosmas, D-New Smyrna Beach, presented the federal check from the Assets for Independence program to the Community Foundation on Thursday. Beginning July 1, people can apply to receive about \$6,000 toward the purchase of their first home.

Kathy Crotty, chairman of the Community Foundation, said the goal is to "reduce homelessness and poverty in our community for the long term."

Kosmas said the program will provide "better opportunities" for low-income families.

The United Way, which will administer the program, will work with Family Renew Community, The Neighborhood Center of West Volusia and Habitat for Humanity in Flagler County. United Way officials say nearly 64,000 people in Volusia County are living in poverty, about 12.8 percent of the population. In Flagler, about 7.6 percent of the population lives in poverty. [LINK](#)

## **Kratovil**

### **Congressman pays Farm Bureau a visit**

**Delmarva Daily Times**

His comments were brief with no mention of specific issues. But that hardly lessened the significance of U.S. Congressman Frank Kratovil's whistle stop at this weekend's 69th annual banquet of the Somerset County Farm Bureau.

The banquet was the second of a three-stop tour Friday of the Eastern Shore for Maryland's newly elected 1st District representative who visited the NASA Space Center in Wallops Island and an Ocean City gala dinner benefiting the breast cancer support organization Women Supporting Women.

More than 100 members and guests, including Maryland Secretary of Agriculture Roger Richardson, attended the banquet at First Baptist Church, a significant increase over recent years, said David Willoughby, regional director of the Maryland Farm Bureau.

The freshman Congressman said he was fortunate to be a member of a congressional Agriculture Committee that examines issues facing the industry and where he intends to seek a "balance between what can protect the bay resources and what can protect agriculture in the state, county and district."

For Shore farmers, a key issue focuses around the regulatory Continued Animal Feeding Operation that proposes what farmers call stiff restrictions on ditch boundaries for spreading manure. [LINK](#)

## **ASTA praises congressmen for startup deduction bill calls**

### **Travel Daily News International**

ASTA is praising Congressman Frank Kratovil (D-MD) and Congressman Chris Lee (R-NY) for introducing legislation to expand the maximum allowable federal tax deduction for business startup expenses. The bill, H.R. 1552, the Small Business Formation and Job Creation Act, would quadruple the deduction limit to \$20,000 from the \$5,000 allowed under current law.

"This bill couldn't have come at a better time," said Chris Russo, ASTA's President and Chair. "By providing an added incentive to start a travel agency or other small business during these challenging economic times, H.R. 1552 will spur both job creation and economic growth."

In a letter to Congressmen Kratovil and Lee endorsing the bill, Russo pointed to startup capital as one of the prime hurdles to entrepreneurs seeking to start a new business. "Providing targeted help to the small business sector should be at the top of the agenda in Washington," Russo added. "I urge the Congress to act swiftly to pass H.R. 1552 and to help get America's small business economy moving again." [LINK](#)

## **Seafood packers talk solutions with Kratovil**

### **Delmarva Now**

At least eight seafood packing companies on the Eastern Shore are operating shorthanded or not at all due to employee shortages caused by federal restrictions on temporary worker visas.

That's according to members of the Dorchester Seafood Packers Association who gathered at Old Salty's Restaurant on Hooper's Island on Thursday morning to talk solutions with Rep. Frank Kratovil, D-Stevensville.

"I'm afraid if we close up, even for one year, we'll lose a lot of the hold that we have on our crabmeat market," said Virgil Ruark Jr., president of Charles H. Parks & Co. Seafood Packers. "Folks will have to find crabmeat elsewhere, and once they go elsewhere they might not come back."

Among Maryland seafood packers, the greatest need is for crab pickers. Historically, the job was performed by the wives and children of watermen. In recent years most crab pickers have been foreign workers, usually women, in the U.S. on H-2B temporary worker visas.

Kratovil said resistance from the Congressional Hispanic Caucus has been a major obstacle on the path to a solution to the H-2B problem.

"They view it as a bargaining chip related to immigration reform," Kratovil said. "But their bargaining chip is jobs in my district."

Caucus spokesman Miguel Ayala said the group simply wants to see all immigration issues addressed at one time.

"The caucus as a whole supports the (temporary worker visa) program, or rather has nothing against the program, but at this point the CHC doesn't want to see any immigration legislation done in a piecemeal fashion," Ayala said.

"After meeting with the president on March 18, I think our members are very hopeful and looking forward to moving forward on immigration reform this year."

That might be too late to help industries like the seafood packers, already facing a costly late start to the season. Likewise, a Feb. 5 bill extending the H-2B exemption provision for three years, introduced by Sen. Barbara Mikulski, D-Md., is held up in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

At Old Salty's, Ruark and representatives from six other packing companies -- about one-third of such businesses still operating in the state -- set up tables for an advertised job fair, hoping to snag enough local hires to get their businesses running. By late afternoon, only about a dozen potential workers showed up.

It was the first time the packing companies tried holding a job fair, said Jay Newcomb, general manager of A. E. Phillips & Son and Dorchester County council president. They had hoped for a better turnout.

"They held a job fair over in Ocean City and got several hundred people," Newcomb said. "We thought, well, let's try anything." [LINK](#)

## Lujan

### Lujan fields questions on health care, water project during ENMU visit

#### Clovis News Journal

Health care and a major water improvement project dominated questions Congressman Ben Ray Lujan fielded from Eastern New Mexico University students.

Lujan said he was a little surprised to see a large turnout of students for his visit.

"Students have a lot of responsibilities," Lujan said. "Typically when you're a guest speaker, you're not sure if the students are going to show up because they have so much to do. It was great for us being able to visit, and having the Q&A session."

Questions focused on health care, the Ute water project and wildlife that will be displaced when the pipeline is installed.

"I think the questions that were asked today were the same questions asked from the constituency before," Lujan said. "It's amazing to talk about education, energy and health care. And here we are on a campus where education is important. I mean these are issues that the country is facing, that New Mexico is facing."

Vice President of Student Affairs Judith Haislett said she appreciates the time Lujan spent with students.

"I appreciate how cordial he was with the students in addressing their concerns," Haislett said. [LINK](#)

## How rural communities can seek stimulus funds

### Quay County Sun

In addition to \$1.8 billion in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds for New Mexico, an additional \$78 billion in grant funds is available to the states for programs from health care to weatherization, said Lt. Governor Diane Denish.

Denish and U.S. Rep. Ben Ray Lujan spoke to community and government leaders on Thursday about the availability of funds through grants to state and federal agencies from the federal act, better known as the stimulus package.

"Leave no money behind," Denish said. Other states may be sending their funds back, but New Mexico can use those funds, Denish said.

Denish said she viewed the federal funds as more of a stabilization package for New Mexico because of the state's budget deficit and the global economic downturn.

Denish said her office had partnered with the New Mexico Community Foundation to bring notice to different communities, especially those in rural New Mexico, about the funds and programs available.

Kathy Keith of the N.M. Community Foundation briefly highlighted what funding programs were available including those for individuals, families, businesses, schools, non-profits, governmental agencies and municipalities.

Here are highlights from the presentation:

- Individuals can take tax credits for certain expenditures, including a new car. Provisions have also been made for increased unemployment benefits, relief from the Alternative Minimum Tax, child tax credits and tax relief for laid-off workers.
- First-time time homebuyers, those persons who have not owned a home in three years, can apply for low interest loans, including down payment assistance, Denish said.
- "If you applied for a Pell grant (for higher education) and were turned down, apply again," Keith said. New monies are available.
- Only 65 percent of the individuals who could qualify for food stamps apply, Keith said. With the downturn in the economy affecting people livelihoods, there are additional funds and residents should apply, Keith said.
- Businesses can also look to relief for suspended loan payments, and funds for business expansion through approved applications to the Small Business Administration, Keith said.
- The federal package also includes funding for schools and healthcare. The state will receive \$630 million to fund Medicaid and \$260 million to be distributed to school districts.
- There is 15 times more money available for weatherization projects, that also include items such as appliances as well as insulation, updating heating and cooling systems.
- In addition funds available through the state's Department of Public Safety for law enforcement, fire departments, programs for at-risk youth and others.

Franklin McCasland, chairman of the Quay County Commission, said that at Monday's commission meeting grant possibilities would be discussed. If an upgrade to the Courthouse's electrical and HVAC systems would meet qualifications, that may be a program to pursue, he said.

At Thursday's city commission meeting, Commissioner Robert Lumpkin suggested that the city explore ways to hire a grant writer part time or full time, who could pursue funds for the city. "It's going to be very competitive," Lumpkin said. "I'd like to see Tucumcari put its best foot forward and best effort toward getting these grants written." [LINK](#)

## **Maffei**

**Rep. Dan Maffei wants a union rep to testify about Madoff thefts before House subcommittee**  
**Post Standard**

U.S. Rep. Dan Maffei wants the world to hear about how Bernard Madoff stole about \$180 million from Upstate labor unions.

So he's trying to arrange for a union official from Syracuse to testify before a House subcommittee investigating why the Securities and Exchange Commission didn't catch Madoff.

He suggested that William Towsley, chairman of the Central and Northern New York Building Trades Council, could help Congress understand how the Madoff theft will affect thousands of Upstate union workers.

Towsley likes that idea.

"I certainly think somebody from labor should give some testimony," said Towsley, the business manager of electricians Local 43, which lost an estimated \$2 million.

Madoff's theft could force some unions to reduce benefits for retirees and workers, and require workers to contribute more to their benefit plans, Towsley said.

About three dozen Upstate union benefits plans that invested in Madoff through a Syracuse financial adviser, J.P. Jeanneret Associates, lost an estimated \$180 million, according to Post-Standard reports.

Joint benefit plans for union carpenters across the state lost about \$63 million, according to Department of Labor records. The United Association of Plumbers & Steamfitters Local 73 in Oswego lost about \$24 million from its pension and annuity plans.

Towsley and Maffei said they haven't received an accounting of the total Upstate union losses.

Maffei said Rep. Paul Kanjorski, D-Pa., chairman of the Financial Services Subcommittee on Capital Markets, Insurance and Government Sponsored Enterprises, plans to hold another hearing on the Madoff scandal after Congress returns from its April break.

"It's not a sure thing we will have a witness (from Syracuse), but it is looking good," Maffei said.

There appears to be little chance Congress will pass legislation soon to provide relief to the unions, which are required by federal law to keep their benefit plans funded at certain levels, Maffei said. He met last Wednesday with Rahm Emanuel, the White House chief of staff, to suggest the Obama administration should help the union victims by temporarily relaxing regulations on their benefit plans. [LINK](#)

## **NY union bosses say layoffs would threaten lives**

**NewsChannel 9 WSYR**

Union leaders representing New York state workers said Wednesday that their members are united in opposition to contract concessions to avoid layoffs, adding that Gov. David Paterson's call to reduce the work force threatens lives.

Paterson's office called for an apology for the "insensitive remarks."

The leaders of the Public Employees Federation and Civil Service Employees Association said Paterson's threatened layoffs would put lives in danger by further straining workers required to do too much already.

They cited the March fire at a state-run group home in the Adirondack town of Wells in which four of the nine disabled residents died. The union leaders said the home was staffed at only a fraction of what was necessary and layoffs would create similar situations.

"The people of New York deserve better than the dangerous political game the governor is playing," said Danny Donohue, president of the Civil Service Employees Association. "His approach is reckless and irresponsible and will put peoples' lives at risk."

The CSEA has released a list containing the number of workers that would be laid off in each state agency if cuts Gov. David Paterson wants to make go through.

According to the list, the hardest hit agency would be the State Correctional Services Department, where over 2,000 jobs would be cut. The office of Mental Retardation would shed 1,400 jobs and the office of Mental Health would have over 1,000 jobs cut.

Gov. Paterson told his department heads Tuesday to make plans for layoffs effective July 1, but he also made a last-minute pitch to workers to pressure union bosses to make concessions.

In a letter to state workers, the Democrat said the order for as many as 8,900 layoffs is one of the most difficult decisions he has ever made. But he says he has no other option because union leaders refuse concessions such as forgoing raises of 3 percent this year.

The state's other big union, the Public Employees Federation, joined the CSEA in the news conference.

"We demand that the governor stop playing politics with peoples' lives and realize there are less damaging ways to cut the cost of state government than by laying off hardworking public employees," said PEF President Kenneth Brynien.

They continue to refuse Paterson's months-old offer to reopen contracts and make concessions, such as giving up this year's 3 percent raises, to avoid as many as 8,900 layoffs.

"Throughout the course of negotiations, Governor Paterson has treated union leadership with dignity and respect and expected the same courtesy in return," said Paterson spokesman Errol Cockfield. "Unfortunately, CSEA President Danny Donohue's inappropriate remarks display an unwillingness to engage in a serious dialogue about addressing our state's fiscal crisis and reflect a lack of respect for the taxpayers of New York. We call on him to apologize and repudiate these insensitive remarks."

There was no immediate comment from Donohue.

Paterson said that without concessions, he must resort to layoffs of 8,900 jobs to save \$481 million over two years. The job reductions, which could include cuts by attrition, would come from among 141,000 executive branch employees in the public work force of 200,000.

Last week Paterson rescinded 3 percent raises for nonunion management employees, but he also exempted most from layoffs, which further angered the union leadership. Madarasz said it creates a situation where laborers trying to make ends meet now also have to worry about layoffs, while their supervisors don't.

Donohue and Brynien said only a few members agreed with Paterson's plea to give up a 3-percent raise. They said most members are galvanized by Paterson's latest plea and his decision last week to exempt non-unionized managers from layoffs. Paterson did, however, suspend managers' 3 percent raises for a year to help address a fiscal crisis.

Cutting jobs – and adding them?

Even though he's ordered roughly 9,000 state jobs be cut by July 1, Governor David Paterson, alongside Congressman Dan Maffei, announced Wednesday that central New York could be adding close to 2,000 jobs.

Those jobs would be the result of a total of \$82 million in federal transportation and infrastructure funding that would go toward road and highway repairs, as well as bridgework.

The funding would lead to the creation of 1,936 jobs by mid-June – a time where about 600 state DOT workers could lose their jobs due to the proposed cuts.

Paterson said at the press conference that the funding is “a shot in the arm that this area needs –we will need construction workers, we’ll need surveyors, we’ll need engineers, we’ll need truck drivers – we will need people to help us leverage” the \$60.8 million available for projects, which will include \$1.2 million in state funding.

To be eligible for the projects, Paterson says they must be started by mid-June, and they must be completed within three years. [LINK](#)

### **Maffei draws full house in Irondequoit**

**MPNnow.com**

A standing-room only crowd of citizens from across the 25th Congressional District filled the Broderick room of Irondequoit Town Hall Thursday night, April 9, as Congressman Dan Maffei held a town hall-style meeting to listen to constituents’ concerns.

Maffei, D, Syracuse, whose sprawling district encompasses all or parts of four upstate New York counties, an estimated 650,000 people and the Monroe County towns of Irondequoit, Penfield and Webster, was elected last fall and succeeded Congressman Jim Walsh, R, Syracuse, who retired.

As a freshman Congressman in Washington, D.C., Maffei has been on the job about four months now.

“Every input I get helps me weigh my decisions,” Maffei told the crowd. “Exchanges like this are important.”

Citizens from Irondequoit, Penfield, Webster, Ontario and Macedon brought concerns ranging from economic development to federal bailout money to banks.

Other questions dealt with gaps in Medicare funding, an announcement by internet provider Time Warner to start charging for service based on usage, and high speed rail.

George Winter of Webster asked if the Congressman would look at access into and out of Irondequoit, specifically at finally getting Route 104 exit ramps from the west end of the Irondequoit Bay Bridge “connected up” with Titus Avenue and Route 590 in Irondequoit.

Maffei said that while federal stimulus money will go to maintaining current infrastructure, the ramps might be considered in a future transportation bill.

An oncology nurse, from Penfield, at Rochester General Hospital asked if Maffei could address the problem of the under-insured and uninsured not getting needed cancer screenings that could mean earlier treatment and save lives.

Maffei said her concern “is a good example of how the health care system is broken ... government has to catch up.”

Regarding the Time Warner concerns, Maffei promised to contact the provider “and ask what the heck they’re thinking.”

‘It’s nice to have someone willing to listen to the citizenry,” Phil Monahan of Penfield. [LINK](#)

## Markey

### Betsy Markey opposes Dems' budget

#### Coloradoan

Rep. Betsy Markey broke with Democratic Party leaders Thursday and voted against a \$3.6 trillion budget that includes a \$1.2 trillion deficit.

"I grappled with this budget but ultimately could not support it," said Markey, a freshman Democrat from Fort Collins. "I was elected to bring fiscal responsibility back to Washington, and I believe that Congress must be more aggressive in cutting our federal deficit. At a time when families all across the country are tightening their belts, we can do a better job of rooting out inefficiencies and cutting out government waste."

Markey was among only 20 Democrats to vote against the budget proposal, which passed the House 233-196. No Republicans voted for the budget.

Later Thursday, the Senate voted 55-43 to pass the budget. Colorado's two Democratic senators, Mark Udall and Michael Bennet, voted in favor of the budget.

Markey and 10 of the other Democrats casting "no" votes are in their first full term in the House after winning seats previously held by Republicans.

She also voted against four alternative budget plans put forth by progressives, the Congressional Black Caucus, Republicans and a splinter group of conservatives.

The budget vote marked the third time in just under three months in Congress that Markey has split with the Democratic leadership on a major issue.

The first was when Markey joined 98 other Democrats to support a largely symbolic measure to block release of the second half of the \$700 billion financial bailout package approved by the previous Congress; the second was a mortgage relief package earlier this month that was opposed by only 24 Democrats. [LINK](#)

### Markey sponsors gas legislation

#### Coloradoan

Rep. Betsy Markey, D-Fort Collins, is co-sponsoring legislation that could lead to greater reliance on natural gas to power vehicles, she announced Wednesday.

"We are at a crossroads in the history of our nation's energy policy," said Markey, who spoke at a news conference with oilman T. Boone Pickens, whose "Pickens Plan" promotes expanded use of natural gas and wind energy as a way to end reliance on foreign oil.

"The decisions we make in Congress today will determine the stability of our future energy industry, our domestic supply and the daily cost of energy for millions of consumers and businesses across the nation. Natural gas is a cleaner-burning, cheaper and domestically abundant alternative to conventional transportation fuel."

The New Alternative Transportation to Give Americans Solutions Act includes an 18-year extension of three tax incentives that focus on natural gas as a transportation fuel, the purchase of natural gas-fueled vehicles and the installation of commercial and residential natural gas refueling pumps. [LINK](#)

## Markey visits school; answers tough questions

### Holyoke Enterprise

Obviously worried about what kind of economic situation the current generation in power will leave them, Holyoke junior high and high schoolers had some tough questions for Congresswoman Betsy Markey when she addressed them at an assembly Monday afternoon, April 6.

Having recently been elected to her position as representative of Colorado's fourth district, Markey told the student body the last few months have been a whirlwind for her and her staff. Because of her busy schedule, she admitted many letters and emails she has received have yet to be read and addressed, and she is using her week off from Congress to travel across the district and meet with residents to hear their concerns directly.

One reason she is visiting high schoolers across the district, she added, is because of Ault High School, whose students have sent her 40-50 letters since she took office. Rather than answering through a letter, she decided to address high schoolers directly.

Congresswoman Betsy Markey speaks to junior high and high school students at an assembly Monday, April 6. —Enterprise photo

“High schoolers ask great questions, too,” she said. “Sometimes, much better than adults.”

Markey then guided the students through her typical day in Washington, D.C. Beginning at 8 a.m., she said, she holds breakfast meetings with her staff and/or other public officials, and is usually in committee meetings during the rest of her day, except when called to vote.

Voting in the House of Representatives, said Markey, is not done by raising hands or yelling, like many people imagine. Instead, each member of Congress has their own card, which looks very similar to a credit card. On the seat in front of them is a slot for the card, which is inserted when House members are ready to vote. They then must choose between a green button for “yes” or red button for “no.”

On the wall of the chamber is a list of all the Congress members' names. Next to each name, either a red or green light will come on when that rep. has cast a vote, showing how each member voted.

Recently, said Markey, the House has been busy working on the stimulus package. The current House of Reps., she added, has four areas of emphasis it wants to address. They include investing in education, affordable healthcare for everyone, reducing the country's dependence on foreign oil and cutting the nation's deficit.

Allowing time for the students to ask her a few questions, Markey was hit with demands to explain how more spending is supposed to get the country out of the current economic recession, and if she was worried about causing inflation by doing so.

Markey replied the recession is the result of the government's former hands-off approach to business. “We have to do something or the recession will become a depression,” she said.

The key, she continued, is to target the spending and invest it in areas like transportation and energy, which badly need the funding anyway and will provide more jobs. She noted she does not approve of the bailouts that were given out, particularly those to the auto industry, as they were handed out with no regulations on how the money should be spent.

Markey also pointed out she did vote against the last budget, saying it was too big and there were areas in which she felt spending could be cut. However, she added, Americans spend more than \$789 billion every year on foreign oil. The stimulus package, at least, more aggressively attempts to put an end to America's energy crisis so that money can be put back into the economy.

One other issue addressed by female students was the female-to-male ratio in Congress. When asked how many women are in Congress, Markey replied 17 percent. "That's actually higher than any Congress in the past," she said.

When asked why she thinks the ratio is so low, Markey answered that positions of power in government have traditionally been held by men, and the process of changing that perspective has been slow. Also, many women choose to put their political careers on hold to raise families. "I chose not to run for Congress until my kids were grown," she added.

As a way to end the assembly on a positive note and to reassure the audience, Markey had this to say about the recession: "We are a country that bounces back; we are a country of entrepreneurs, and we will bounce back from this recession." [LINK](#)

## **Minnick**

### **Rep. Walt Minnick swears off earmarks Idaho Statesman**

The move by the delegation's lone Democrat marks a partisan split among Idaho leaders.

Rep. Walt Minnick, Idaho's best liaison to the Democratic majority, surprised his colleagues and some Idaho institutions with the news he wouldn't bring federal dollars to his district through the widespread but controversial use of earmarks.

"We are in scrambling mode," said Marty Peterson, lobbyist for the University of Idaho, which like many public colleges has relied on the practice to pay for some projects and programs.

Minnick said he knew some people would be upset.

"In this tough economic time, we all need to cut back," he said. "I strongly support many of the projects submitted to my office, so I understand why this decision will not be popular with some and that it may meet criticism."

Minnick said he would not push for earmarks - specific spending authority placed in congressional bills - for at least one year. He said he would try to bring money to Idaho by helping businesses and agencies win competitive grants offered in the stimulus package.

The Republicans who dominate Idaho's delegation were skeptical of his motives - even though all have criticized the practice.

Rep. Mike Simpson said going after federal grants is no different than going after earmarks - they come from the same pot of taxpayer money.

"The only difference between the two is who allocates money - your elected representative or some bureaucrat in the Obama Administration," Simpson said.

The day before Minnick's announcement, Simpson laid out his earmark requests and put them on his Web site, urging constituents to comment on his choices. He wrote an opinion article explaining his choice in Wednesday's Statesman.

Simpson said this process was more transparent than working behind the scenes to steer money to the state.

Freshman Sen. Jim Risch has not decided yet whether to seek earmarks this year, said Brad Hoaglund, his press secretary. But if he does, he will put them on his Web site.

"Sen. Risch remains opposed to this process and seeks their removal, but until (Congress changes the practice), he may seek funding for Idaho projects," Hoaglund said.

Minnick said in the 2008 campaign he opposed earmarks but would seek them for Idaho projects until they were eliminated. But now he says the unprecedented federal budget deficit and the tough economy changed his mind at least for this year.

Each of Idaho's universities work with the entire delegation to get as many of their projects funded as possible. Simpson has an advantage since he serves on the Appropriations Committee but Sens. Mike Crapo and Risch also can make requests in the Senate.

Peterson said U of I was applying for stimulus grants, but also is counting on earmarks to pay for many ongoing projects.

Idaho has used earmarks in the past for a 10-year effort to find a drought-resistant strain of wheat that can be used on the Palouse. The Navy research facility is in the third year of a project sponsored by Minnick's predecessor, Republican Rep. Bill Sali.

Without earmarks, small states and small universities would be overwhelmed by larger states and big research universities, said John Freemuth, Boise State University political science professor.

Crapo's press secretary Lindsay Nothern said Crapo does not request earmarks for new or increased federal spending, but rather seeks to direct congressional spending to existing budgeted accounts.

"While he works to reduce the size of government and spending, when those levels are established, he will fight to ensure that Idaho programs and projects get their deserved consideration in the appropriations process," Nothern said.

Minnick said he meant no criticism of the rest of the delegation for seeking earmarks.

"I applaud their character and service," he said. "However, I have decided to do what I believe is best for Idaho and our country." [LINK](#)

## **Idaho Dem reliably bucks leadership**

### **Politico**

Since arriving in Washington, Rep. Walt Minnick has been a reliable "no" vote on the Democratic agenda. The Idaho freshman has voted against a financial industry bailout, the Democratic-sponsored budget, the omnibus spending bill and President Barack Obama's economic stimulus.

That wouldn't raise eyebrows, except for the fact that Minnick is a Democrat.

His party colleagues seem to understand. Though he has bucked leadership on practically every significant vote to hit the House floor, there is widespread recognition that it may be the best way to keep his solidly conservative seat in Democratic hands.

“He’s representing the district,” said Cecil Andrus, a Democrat who served for 14 years as Idaho governor. “If you had an election held today, he’d get more votes than he got in November. People say, ‘Hey, he’s got his head screwed on straight.’”

Last week, Minnick broke from his party yet again and said he would reject earmarks in the 2010 budget. That makes him the only Democrat to take that pledge.

Minnick’s record reflects his precarious position in representing a western Idaho-based district that delivered 62 percent of the vote to John McCain in 2008. Prior to that, George W. Bush won 68 percent and 69 percent of the vote there in 2000 and 2004, respectively.

“I represent Idaho. Idaho is a conservative state,” Minnick said in an interview with POLITICO last week.

Even Republicans concede that Minnick, a former Republican who shared an office with Watergate break-in mastermind G. Gordon Liddy during a stint working in the Nixon White House, is doing a good job of positioning himself for reelection.

“Walt Minnick, I think, to his credit ... has voted in such a way so that he is hardly not amenable to voters in the 1st District,” said Greg Smith, an Idaho-based GOP strategist. “He has voted like he is a Republican.”

Still, Minnick has a bull’s-eye on his back in 2010. Potential GOP challengers are already starting to line up against him, and among those mentioned are state Rep. Raul Labrador, Attorney General Lawrence Wasden, Iraq war veteran Vaughn Ward, state Rep. Ken Roberts and state Sen. John McGee.

And former Rep. Bill Sali, a first-term Republican whom Minnick defeated in 2008, has not publicly ruled out a rematch.

But Republicans say their best candidate might be state Treasurer Ron Crane, who is also said to be weighing a bid. Insiders say that Crane’s statewide stature would make him a formidable opponent.

Jonathan Parker, executive director of the Idaho Republican Party, argued that the Republican makeup of Minnick’s district would make life very difficult for him in his reelection bid.

“A majority of 1st District voters consider themselves conservative,” said Parker.

Still, it won’t be easy to dislodge Minnick. Aside from toting a well-calibrated voting record, Minnick proved he can run a highly disciplined campaign in an environment that isn’t favorable to Democratic candidates.

In his 2008 upset victory over Sali, Minnick raised more than \$1.6 million and contributed almost \$900,000 from his own pocket. Campaigning as something of a libertarian, Minnick argued that the government had no right to regulate people’s use of guns or whether they can have an abortion.

He managed to siphon off moderate and independent-minded Republican voters in the suburban and rural parts of the district, and he squeaked past Sali with a 51 percent to 49 percent victory.

“I think he’s doing what he has to do and will be tough to beat,” said Rep. Mike Simpson, the Republican who represents the neighboring 2nd District. “He’s doing everything right so far.”

Simpson warned that the GOP also faced the prospect of a crowded and divisive primary — something he said national Republicans were trying to ward off.

“My goal really has been to narrow it down so we don’t have a six- or seven-way primary,” said Simpson.

Sali, the former incumbent, remains a question mark hanging over the race. A polarizing presence on the state political scene, he ran what was widely viewed as a blundering campaign in 2008, raising less than his challenger and somehow managing to lose in a conservative-minded district even as McCain was rolling up huge margins at the top of the ticket.

The prospect of a Sali rematch emerged this year when he opened up a campaign fundraising account. But National Republican Congressional Committee Chairman Pete Sessions (R-Texas) squelched the idea of a Sali candidacy, telling POLITICO last week that “Bill Sali has indicated to me that he’s not made any intention about [running], and I don’t expect him to.”

Sessions declined to say whether the NRCC was recruiting Crane, instead saying the committee would try to find a candidate in Idaho around whom Republicans could unify.

In the meantime, Minnick is expected to keep the national party at arm’s length.

“Walt has been doing what he said he’d do during the campaign, which is vote the district and do what’s right for Idaho over what’s right for a political party,” said John Foster, Minnick’s senior adviser. [LINK](#)

## **Minnick pushes loan reform bill**

### **Spokesman**

Mortgage companies should be required to keep a certain percentage of any loan they make and take the first loss on any contract that goes bad, U.S. Rep. Walt Minnick said Thursday.

Minnick, an Idaho Democrat who serves on the House Financial Services Committee, said he introduced a bill last week with those requirements as a way to avoid some of the worst problems with undercapitalized, risky loans that crippled the financial system.

Minnick was critical of companies that, because they planned to quickly sell the loans to other companies, failed to adequately research borrowers.

The company making the loan “has to keep some skin in the game, and take the first loss,” he told The Spokesman-Review editorial board in an interview. “It’s important to put into the underwriting process an incentive that keeps somebody who makes a loan and does the underwriting from being able to shed all responsibility.”

He suggests the originator would be required by law to retain at least 15 percent of any loan made, but the final percentage will be subject to debate.

Minnick said all investments need a “systemic regulator” who oversees minimum regulations for transparency and adequate reserves. Now there’s a wide range of regulations for some financial operations and investments, from stringent FDIC rules for banks to unregulated hedge funds.

Everyone issuing a security should be regulated by someone, and every security should be subject to minimum standards of disclosure, truthfulness and adequate financial reserves, he said.

“The hedge funds, the investment banks and the AIGs had nobody supervising them, nobody setting reserves ... or anybody assessing the risk to the economy,” he said.

Minnick’s spot on the financial services committee gives him a “front row seat” to debates about the economy.

He disagrees with proposals to loan money to American automakers, and to bail out American International Group, saying both should have gone through bankruptcy to be restructured, shed certain assets and cut costs.

“Bankruptcy court would’ve changed those (AIG) bonus contracts, too,” he said.

In his first three months of Congress, Minnick has earned a reputation as the Democrat who votes least with his party’s leadership. He voted against the stimulus package and the omnibus appropriations bills, which were both pushed by Democratic leadership.

But as the Democrat elected by a small margin from an overwhelmingly Republican district, the leaders allow him to “vote my district,” he said. [LINK](#)

## **Idaho GOP icon Steve Symms lends Democrat Walt Minnick a hand**

### **Idaho Statesman**

Steve Symms, who for eight years held the U.S. House seat captured by Walt Minnick in November, is co-hosting the event with former Democratic Sen. Dennis DeConcini of Arizona.

Symms and DeConcini are partners in a Washington, D.C., lobbying firm.

Idaho Republican Party Chairman Norm Semanko minimized the significance of one of the state’s favorite conservatives helping a Democrat raise money to keep the very congressional seat he once held. Semanko said the event is “nothing more than a professional courtesy extended to a sitting congressman by two old political hands that lobby Congress for a living.”

Symms did not reply to a request for comment.

Symms and Minnick have known each other since Symms was in the House in the 1970s and Minnick was running Trus Joist International. Symms also served 12 years in the Senate.

“Walt’s got a pretty independent voting record,” said Minnick’s spokesman, John Foster. “Obviously, few people know the area as well as Steve Symms, so that’s a good sign for us.”

Foster said Symms and Minnick met by chance during freshman orientation last fall and have stayed in touch. Symms offered to host the fundraiser, Foster said.

The Idaho Republican Party has made retaking the seat a top priority. But no well-known Republican has announced for 2010.

Last week, Vaughn Ward, a newcomer and ex-Marine, said he would run in the GOP primary.

Minnick has gotten national attention for opposing President Obama’s budget, the stimulus plan and financial bailouts. [LINK](#)

## Mitchell

### Harry Mitchell spotlights "green-collar" industry

#### AZ Central

If green-collar jobs are the wave of the future, Congressman Harry Mitchell wants Arizona to be first in line for the economic benefits of that budding industry.

On Thursday, Mitchell, D-Tempe, toured two Tempe businesses that market solar energy locally and internationally and a Tempe bus-operations center that is recognized for its environmentally-conscious construction. He visited with business leaders and city officials to get a better understanding of Arizona's potential as a green-industry leader and how stimulus funding and future legislation could help speed that role.

"This money is supposed to help create jobs," he said. "I want to get an idea of whether that is happening. I think it is obvious from these (businesses) that it is."

The energy provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act are touted to create at least 500,000 jobs. Portions of the funding are targeted at increasing the nation's renewable energy production and making public buildings more energy efficient.

Larry Polizzotto, vice president of First Solar's investor relations, schooled Mitchell on the Tempe company's solar-panel technology and skyrocketing growth.

Since the First Solar opened in 2002 it has grown from 200 employees to 4,000. About 1,000 of those employees are in the U.S. The company has a plant in Germany, which has become an international leader in the wind-and-solar energy industry. Germany's second largest export is wind turbines and it exports nearly half of the world's solar panels.

While incentives for renewable energy have prompted Germany's transition to that industry, Polizzotto told Mitchell that the U.S. market has also expanded. From 2003 to March 2009, First Solar produced and installed 1 gigawatt of solar electricity. In the coming year alone, the company expects to produce 1.1 gigawatts.

"What's happened to the solar market here in the U.S. in just one year is really just remarkable," he said.

First Solar is working with California utilities to install its panels in open fields and on top of buildings to increase the state's renewable-energy sources.

Kathy Weiss, First Solar's vice president for government affairs, said that Arizona's sun could be harvested into a gold mine for the state.

"As renewable energy becomes a larger industry for the U.S. . . . you'd be able to generate that energy here and sell it on the West Coast. That would be an economic (driver) for Arizona," she said.

At American Solar Electric, a Tempe-based business that markets its solar panels primarily to businesses and the residential market, Sean Seitz, American Solar's co-owner and president, told Mitchell that his business is also growing.

Seitz boasted of a partnership with Shea Homes to include solar-power systems in some housing developments. At Arizona Shea Trilogy communities in Peoria, Queen Creek and Pinal County, solar-power systems are included as a standard feature on about 50 homes. The company has installed at least 1,000 solar-electric systems throughout the state.

Seitz said that the demand for solar power is growing in the Southwest as the public begins to better understand the technology's environmental and economic benefits.

American Solar is attributing some of the increased demand for solar power to federal legislation that passed last year. The Solar Investment Tax Credit allows a taxpayer to claim a credit of 30 percent of qualified expenditures for a solar-electric system. That credit was previously capped at \$2,000.

"It's really become affordable. We're hiring more workers to handle that demand," Seitz said.

At Tempe's East Valley Bus Operations and Maintenance facility, Mitchell saw the federal funding the city invested in the center, which services Tempe, Phoenix and Scottsdale buses. The facility uses alternative fuel for its buses, low-flow plumbing fixtures and waterless urinals to save more than 168, 000 gallons of water annually and natural light in nearly all its office space.

Tempe is using nearly \$6.5 million stimulus funds to improve the facility, expanding the parking area with shade canopies, placing solar panels on top of the parking shade structures and upgrading the alternative fueling capacity. [LINK](#)

### **Mitchell, Flake share East Valley stage Arizona Republic**

Democratic Congressman Harry Mitchell and his Republican colleague, U.S. Rep. Jeff Flake, who developed a bipartisan friendship by sharing flights from Washington to Phoenix, shared a platform at the Third Annual Statesman's Breakfast Thursday at the new Hilton Phoenix/Chandler.

They appeared before members of the East Valley Partnership and the East Valley Chamber of Commerce Alliance in a 90-minute session marked by gentle ribbing between the two Southeast Valley members of Congress. The breakfast was sponsored by APS.

"Congressman Flake and I may not always agree, but we both agree on what's good for this state," said Mitchell, a Tempe Democrat elected in 2006. "We're all looking for answers to this economy."

Flake represents most of Mesa, Chandler, Gilbert and most of the rest of the southeast Valley. Mitchell represents Tempe, Ahwatukee, and parts of Scottsdale and west Mesa.

Both Mitchell and Flake expressed serious concerns about how the country will pay for the deficit.

"But if we don't return life to the economy, we'll not pay for anything, not defense, not Social Security, not homeland security," Mitchell said.

Flake, a former executive director of the conservative Goldwater Institute who is serving his fifth term representing the Sixth District, was more blunt.

Noting he did not vote for the federal economic stimulus package, he said, "We simply cannot sustain this level of deficit. . . . It's going to be difficult to grow economically."

He also conceded Republicans helped run up the deficit in the Bush years, stating, "I'm the first to admit we Republicans didn't handle ourselves well."

Both congressmen said health care reform is poised to become a major issue.

"There are lots of proposals out there; there's a huge bipartisan effort," Mitchell said, saying either the U.S. House or Senate could be putting forth a proposal by June and voting on it by October.

"I hope we can do something that allows the free market to work but so we keep costs down and improve quality," Flake said.

During the question-and-answer session, one member of the audience asked how the federal stimulus money is coming to Arizona.

Stating even they still learn every day about new projects and programs that are being funded by stimulus money, they said money is arriving in several ways, including grants, loans and tax credits. They urged the business leaders to track stimulus funding by on the Web site [www.recovery.gov](http://www.recovery.gov).

Both Mitchell and Flake agree that energy reform is needed.

"You can be a global warming denier or agnostic and still want to get off fossil fuels," said Flake, who supports a revenue-neutral carbon tax that would allow companies to recoup taxes elsewhere.

A member of the audience asked them about the job House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is doing.

"She keeps things moving and keeps the Democratic caucus together" despite geographical and philosophical diversity, Mitchell said.

However, he added, there is pressure in Congress for more open debate and more chances to amend bills.

Flake agreed for the need for more open debate.

Mitchell and Flake shared discomfort over the bailout to AIG and the big executive bonuses.

"The bonuses are a slap in the face to taxpayers," Mitchell said.

"All of us were aghast when we found out what was happening with regard to the bonuses," Flake said. [LINK](#)

## **McMahon**

### **McMahon's bill would get bonuses rolling again**

#### **Staten Island Advance**

A Targeted Assets Relief Program-related amendment put forth by Staten Island's congressman, designed to entice recipient companies to repay funds as soon as possible by lifting restrictions on executive compensation, has passed the House.

The Bean-McMahon amendment, sponsored by Democratic Rep. Michael McMahon (D-Staten Island/Brooklyn) and Rep. Melissa Bean (D-Ill.), would nix a previous House restriction on a recipient company's ability to hand out bonuses or retention packages by permitting them to do so once the institutions getting TARP funding begin to repay the money and continue to do so.

McMahon said the measure provides an "incentive" for those companies to "get back to financial health."

"Bonuses are an important part of employee compensation in the financial services industry," said McMahon.

"This bill will not only affect the top-level executives ... (but) many of my constituents, dedicated, hardworking people, from secretaries to midlevel managers ... who deserve to be rewarded for their work."

Elsewhere, McMahon co-sponsored bipartisan legislation designed to reduce dependence on foreign oil, while at the same time lower gas prices and carbon emissions and make the U.S. competitive in foreign markets. Entrepreneur T. Boone Pickens met with McMahon and other House members to voice his support for the NAT GAS Act -- New Alternative Transportation to Give Americans Solutions.

Among the bill's provisions are expanded tax incentives for the use of natural gas and the implementation of grants for research and development of eco-friendly vehicles. It also mandates that half of all federal government vehicles operate on compressed or liquid natural gas by 2014. [LINK](#)

## **Rep. Michael McMahon begins constituent effort on Staten Island Ferry Staten Island Advance**

With Congress in recess this week, Rep. Michael McMahon used the opportunity yesterday to inaugurate his "Mondays with Mike" outreach aboard the 8 a.m. Staten Island Ferry, listening to constituents concerned about the economy and commutation costs.

He also told the Advance he intends to urge Democratic Party leaders to back Conservative Borough President James Molinaro for re-election this fall.

"The borough president has done an excellent job," said McMahon (D-Staten Island/Brooklyn). "He has been truly tri-partisan. We have the golden age of Staten Island politics, with elected officials working together. I will urge them to consider it."

No Democrat has announced for borough president; Republicans have already said they'll go with Molinaro.

While yesterday's ferry ride could be seen as a very early campaign swing -- McMahon runs again next fall -- he took a low-key approach to greeting commuters in the ferry terminal and aboard the boat. Many were surprised to see him.

"I think it's wonderful that he's keeping connected," said Al Young of Prince's Bay. "A lot of our leaders seem to forget about us."

While some, like Linda McCaffrey of Grasmere, wanted to talk about a threatened increase in bridge tolls -- telling McMahon "It's not nice" -- others, like Michelle Heath of New Brighton, told him her street needs a speed bump.

"All politics is local," said McMahon.

Taking the time to sit with commuters worried they'll lose their company pensions, like Robert Perrotta, and higher tolls, like Jim Galizia, both of Oakwood, McMahon noted his vote against penalizing low- and mid-level workers for the mistakes of their bailed-out companies, and said he hopes state leaders can craft a package that will forestall the MTA from instituting fare hikes and service reductions.

McMahon said his "Mondays with Mike" will have him at various transportation stops in the coming weeks, and on Saturdays he'll make the rounds at supermarkets, holding forth under the banner of "Congressman On Your Corner."

"I want to bring the office to the people," explained McMahon.

On the political front, McMahon repeatedly side-stepped questions about whether he thinks Vito Fossella will run again for Congress, saying only, "I wish him and his family well."

But he did express frustration with state leaders and lawmakers, saying, "Washington provided the (stimulus) money to bridge this difficult time. The city is trying to do what it can do to cut expenses and trim services. In Albany, they don't seem to be able to manage difficult issues." [LINK](#)

## **Congress McMahon To Help The Colamaria Family**

**WOR 710**

Michael E. McMahon, Congressman (R-Staten Island) joined The John Gambling Show to discuss the Colamaria family and how he is planning to help them.

Congressman McMahon said that this story is heart wrenching, a cop who served in the military and a nurse who is working hard and doing the right thing - this is a matter of life and death for this family. Congressman McMahon said that he is going to meet with the Colamaria's later this morning to see why Medicaid did not help them and also to find out exactly what can be done for them.

Congressman McMahon added the Health Care industry as a whole needs to be revised as a whole around the country and where there is one family like the Colamaria's, there is another somewhere else who needs the same assistance.

Congressman McMahon will keep us updated as this story unfolds. [LINK](#)

## **100 days into first term, McMahon looks to re-election**

**Staten Island Advance**

As he marked his first 100 days in Congress yesterday, Rep. Michael McMahon already was looking ahead, announcing that he has nearly \$400,000 in cash on hand for his 2010 re-election bid.

McMahon (D-Staten Island/Brooklyn), the first Democrat to hold the 13th Congressional District seat in close to 30 years, raised about \$277,000 between Jan. 1 and March 31 of this year, according to Federal Election Commission records.

"I am proud of the broad base of support from Staten Islanders and Brooklyn residents, to national supporters and organizations, all committed to keeping this seat in Democratic hands in 2010," McMahon said.

After spending big on McMahon's race last year, national Democratic leaders remain bullish on the congressman's future, records show.

The campaign committees of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer each gave McMahon \$4,000 during the filing period, while the committee of White House chief of staff and former Illinois congressman Rahm Emanuel kicked in \$2,000.

"It's good to know that they have my back," McMahon said. "But that doesn't mean I'm not my own man in Washington."

McMahon drew the ire of some party leaders when he was one of only six House Democrats to vote against punitive taxes on AIG bonuses.

"They know I'm with them most of the time," McMahon said. "But if I don't think it's right for my district, I won't be. It's good to know they respect that."

Looking back on his first 100 days, McMahon said it had been "an exhilarating honor" to be in Washington as lawmakers sought solutions to the country's economic crisis.

"It is the defining moment of our generation," said McMahon, who voted for President Barack Obama's \$787 billion economic stimulus package.

Through the stimulus, McMahon has secured around \$300 million in funding for the borough's transportation, education and health-care systems.

Another \$20 million is slated to come to the Island's two hospitals to help them digitize their medical records, he said.

McMahon also has sought to make his office more accessible by holding a telephone "town hall" meeting, and by meeting with constituents during a "Mondays With Mike" program.

The reach of the congressional office, and the respect it commands, have been a revelation, said McMahon, a former city councilman.

"People take my calls," he said. "They get back to me. It's a different level from the City Council. The possibilities are endless in terms of doing things for the community." [LINK](#)

## McNerney

### Congressman unveils three new environmental bills

#### Washington Energy Services

A California congressman has introduced three new bills that will promote energy efficiency as well as green jobs creation.

Rep. Jerry McNerney, a Democrat, announced the three bills this week. Under his Smart Grid Advancement Act, states and utilities would be required to create goals for reducing power consumption during peak times by using smart grid technology. The legislation would also enhance the Energy Star program with smart grid information.

"These three bills are an important step towards creating a sustainable energy plan for our nation. They also lay the groundwork for development of an economy fueled by clean energy and the next generation of green collar jobs," said McNerney.

Among the other two bills, one would help create more of the infrastructure that is expected to be needed for a growing number of electric cars on U.S. roads, while the other would provide \$100 million in grants to help develop career and training programs for green jobs.

The legislation was filed the same week other House Democrats announced a comprehensive energy plan that will, among other things, introduce national renewable energy and energy efficiency standards. [LINK](#)

## Murphy, Chris

### New federal tax credit aims to jump-start housing market

#### Republican American

Low interest rates, low prices, lots of choices — and now an \$8,000 tax credit.

It's an ideal time for first-time buyers to invest in a home, said U.S. Rep. Christopher S. Murphy, D-5th District, Thursday at Fercodini Properties.

Efforts to unclog the stagnant housing market may be yielding results, with local real estate agents and developers saying buyers are starting to spend.

“For people who are on the fence about buying their first home, this tax break could be the nudge they need to act,” Murphy said at his news conference. “We are here today to spread the word, so that people know to take advantage of this tax credit before it’s too late.”

The \$8,000 tax credit, part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, is available to first-time homebuyers through Dec. 1. The credit will be applied to tax returns filed in 2010 and is refundable, so even if a taxpayer has no tax liability, he or she will receive a tax refund in the amount of the credit.

Although the money won’t be in people’s hands for more than a year, the promise of its arrival might make a potential homebuyer confident enough to commit.

“They’re anticipating receiving it,” said Linda Fercodini, who owns Fercodini Properties. “They’re so excited, they have so much enthusiasm. Eight thousand dollars is a lot of money.”

For Nicholas Batista and Olivia Roy, who are buying their first home in Waterbury, the \$8,000 will go to good use.

“We can put it toward things we need around the house,” Batista said. He and Roy both work and attend college.

Murphy points to an increase in mortgage loans as evidence that home sales are up, although those numbers have been on the rise for months because low interest rates have sparked a wave of refinancings.

The Mortgage Bankers Association found that a mortgage-loan application index increased 4.7 percent last week. More than two-thirds of those applications came from borrowers seeking to refinance their loans at lower rates, however.

Also, Mass Housing booked a record \$25 million in loans during the third week of March.

In the face of what may be positive signs for real estate, the Warren Group, a Boston-based publisher of housing data, reported on Monday that sales of single-family homes in Connecticut fell 26 percent in February compared with February 2008.

People in the real estate industry hope the \$8,000 tax credit for first-time buyers will help spark a revival of the housing market.

The ripple effects of higher demand, caused in part by the \$8,000 credit, would help seasoned home buyers and sellers as well. With new buyers in the market, current homeowners may be enticed to sell their existing homes and upgrade to more expensive ones.

“Real estate is really the fuel that energizes our whole economy,” said state Rep. John S. “Corky” Mazurek, D-Wolcott.

Just as a healthier housing market may be starting to help buyers and sellers, developers also claim benefits.

Mark Lovely, owner of Lovely Development in Southington, said he’s seeing an uptick in activity. He’s sold five homes in the last two months, two of which were financed with the help of the \$8,000 tax credit.

“We’re seeing pent-up demand for spring, and we’re excited about that,” Lovely said. [LINK](#)

Nye

## Defense chief proposes weapons cuts

WAVY-TV

The nation should stop pouring billions into futuristic, super-expensive F-22 jet fighters, pull the plug on new presidential helicopters and put the money into systems U.S. soldiers can use against actual foes, Defense Secretary Robert Gates declared Monday.

Major overhaul plans laid out by the Obama administration's Pentagon chief would slash several giant weapons programs -- and thousands of civilian jobs that go with them. With recession unemployment rising, Congress may balk at many of the cuts in Gates' proposed \$534 billion budget for the coming year.

Still, despite all the talk of cuts, the total figure would rise from \$513 billion for 2009, and Gates spoke of using money more wisely, not asking for less.

Gates, a holdover from the Bush administration, said he is gearing Pentagon buying plans to the smaller, lower-tech battlefields the military is facing now and expects in coming years. He also said he hopes lawmakers will resist temptations to save outdated system that keep defense plants humming in their home districts.

The Pentagon, he said, wants to move away from both outdated weapons systems conceived in the Cold War and futuristic programs aimed at super-sophisticated foes.

Gates said he would expand spending on equipment that targets insurgents, such as \$2 billion more on surveillance and reconnaissance equipment. That would include funding for 50 new Predator drones such as those that have rained down missiles on militants hiding along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

"We must rebalance this department's programs in order to institutionalize and finance our capabilities to fight the wars we are in today and the scenarios we are most likely to face in the years ahead," he said.

Major programs facing cuts include the F-22 Raptor, the military's most expensive fighter plane at \$140 million apiece. An action movie come to life, sleek, fast and nearly invisible, the Raptor is ill-suited to deterring roadside bombs in Iraq or hunting insurgents who vanish into the Afghan mountains.

Gates says the Pentagon won't continue the F-22 program beyond 187 planes already planned. Bethesda, Md.-based Lockheed, the nation's largest defense contractor, has said almost 95,000 jobs could be at stake.

Gates also said no to a new fleet of Marine One presidential helicopters -- with a price tag of \$13 billion, more than double the original budget. He said new helicopters would be needed at some point but he wants time to figure out a better solution.

A \$160 billion Army system of combat vehicles, flying sensors and bomb-hunting robots would be reduced, too, as would plans to build a shield of missile interceptors to defend against attacks by rogue countries. The Navy would revamp plans to buy new destroyers.

A new communications satellite would be scrapped, and a program for a new Air Force transport plane would be ended.

Congress reacted cautiously.

Large defense contractors and their supporters on Capitol Hill scrambled to assess how the changes would affect them. Gates had demanded total secrecy during weeks of Pentagon discussions, even requiring senior military officers to swear in writing that they would not talk out of school.

Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa., chairman of the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, called the proposals an important and overdue attempt to balance want and need at the Defense Department.

"However, the committee will carefully review the department's recommendations in the context of current and future threats when we receive the detailed fiscal year 2010 budget request," Murtha said.

Some programs would grow.

Gates proposed speeding up production of the F-35 fighter jet. That program could end up costing \$1 trillion to manufacture and maintain 2,443 planes. The military would buy more speedy ships that can operate close in to land. And more money would be spent outfitting special forces troops who can hunt down insurgents.

The recommendations are the product of Gates' frustration at weapons systems that take on lives of their own, even when their missions are no longer relevant or costs balloon. The frustration extends to military services and defense contractors accustomed to measuring success by how big a piece of the budget pie they can claim.

The Pentagon said it could not predict how much money Gates' proposals might save, if any. Gates read off a hit list of programs to be canceled or trimmed, but the Pentagon did not release details.

Local Impact:

A 1st Fighter Wing spokesperson says there are two squadrons with 40 F-22s based at Langley Air Force Base in Hampton.

Twelve F-22s with more than 500 Langley Airmen are currently deployed to Kadena Air Base, Japan.

The remainder are conducting various statewide training and operational missions.

2D LT Georganne Schultz said, "The 1st Fighter Wing will continue to conduct training and operational missions as required. We are dedicated to maintaining worldwide combat air power in support of national defense."

Some consider the F-22s to be outdated and replaceable.

Second District Congressman Glenn Nye said he's not sure he agrees.

"What I think is we need to take a careful review of its capabilities comparing it to the F-35s and make some prudent decisions," said Nye.

Lockheed Martin could stand to lose huge amounts of business, according to the budget proposals.

The defense contractor has branches in Newport News, Hampton, Chesapeake, Virginia Beach and Norfolk.

A spokesperson told WAVY.com, "Several Lockheed Martin programs, including F-22, F-35, VH-71, LCS, and TSAT were discussed. We're assessing the impact of the Secretary of Defense's decisions on all affected programs." [LINK](#)

## Defense spending: Budget cuts may bolster argument to keep carriers in Norfolk

Daily Press

Defense Secretary Robert Gates made a big splash this week when he recommended dramatic shifts and cuts in military spending.

Reaction in Hampton Roads ranged from cautious to deeply concerned.

Now look for political leaders here to try to turn Gates' words to their advantage — at least on one issue.

Chief among the worries is Gates' plan to eventually reduce the aircraft carrier fleet from 11 to 10. The ships are a cornerstone of the region's economy, with thousands of jobs tied to their construction in Newport News and base in Norfolk.

Gates would put carriers on a five-year building plan, instead of every four — more fiscally sustainable, he says.

That will stoke further debate about the Navy's controversial plan to move one carrier to Naval Station Mayport near Jacksonville, Fla.

Virginia leaders are up in arms about this decision, reached by the Bush administration. They say it doesn't make strategic sense and cringe at the possibility of losing a carrier and its 5,000-plus crew — and their paychecks.

It will cost at least \$500 million to upgrade Mayport to accommodate a nuclear-powered carrier. If money is so tight, expect questions on how taxpayers can afford a second East Coast carrier port.

"The inefficiencies and the tightness of the budget point to the fact that that is absolutely absurd to try to continue with that," said Rep. Robert C. "Bobby" Scott, D-Newport News.

Joining Scott is Rep. Glenn Nye, D-Norfolk, who represents Naval Station Norfolk.

"It doesn't make sense to try to allocate a billion dollars to build a redundant port facility in Mayport," he said.

Sen. Jim Webb, D-Va., and Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Westmoreland, have echoed these concerns. Expect to hear more when President Barack Obama submits his budget in a few weeks.

### A military convert

Alison Buckholtz didn't grow up in a military family and didn't plan on being a military wife. But life has a way of throwing people curves, and she ended up marrying a Navy pilot whose squadron of EA-6B Prowlers is attached to Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia Beach.

She decided to write about the transition to military spouse, and her book, "Standing By," was released last week.

"I wrote the book for the person who I used to be," she said, "a civilian with no connection with the military."

Her husband, Scott, deployed from November 2007 to June 2008 on the aircraft carrier Harry S. Truman. [LINK](#)

## Perlmutter

### Congressman: Housing tax credit is working

#### Associated Press

A Colorado congressman says an \$8,000 tax credit for first-time homebuyers approved by Congress in this year's stimulus package is starting to work and may be extended beyond Dec. 1.

Democratic Rep. Ed Perlmutter said Tuesday he has been getting calls already from homebuilders seeking an extension to the tax credit, which Congress approved earlier this year to rouse a stalled housing market.

Perlmutter is a member of the House Financial Services Committee, which sets federal housing policy. The congressman was careful not to endorse extending the homebuyer tax credit, but he said an extension will be discussed in the House and that there are signals the tax cut may be stimulating demand.

"We're already seeing a little bit of an uptick in our housing market. It seems to be working," Perlmutter said.

Nationally, the clobbered housing market is showing signs of life. Existing home sales rose 5.1 percent in February, the largest increase in nearly six years. Sales of new homes rose 4.7 percent that month from January's record low.

Perlmutter talked about the homeowner tax credit as Colorado announced it will join other states in "fronting" the federal tax credit. That is, some first-time homebuyers who don't have money for a down payment can borrow an interest-free sum from the state and then repay it with the federal tax credit they receive next year.

Colorado housing officials announced that first-time homebuyers could apply for up to \$6,000 for a down payment and closing costs, with interest waived until the homebuyers receive their federal tax credit. Similar programs have been started in New Mexico, Missouri, Ohio and other states.

Perlmutter said the national housing uptick means members of Congress are likely to consider serious talk about extending the credit beyond Dec. 1, when it expires.

"The question is how quickly things get moving," Perlmutter said. "Because of course we want to get the economy going, but we're also operating at a deficit."

Colorado's program — called JumpStart — will allow first-time homebuyers who make less than 115 percent of their town's median income to receive up to \$6,000 interest-free from the state.

Homebuyers could use that money for a down payment or closing costs, and it wouldn't have to be repaid until the middle of next year, after they've presumably gotten the federal tax credit. Homeowners who didn't repay the \$6,000 by June 30 of next year would be charged interest on the loan.

Colorado housing authorities estimated about 1,250 families would use the interest-free loan this year.

Perlmutter, a second-term congressman from Denver's suburbs, is a lawyer who specialized in bankruptcies and other commercial litigation before joining the House. [LINK](#)

### Help for a first home

#### Denver Post

The Colorado Housing and Finance Authority rolled out a mortgage program Tuesday that advances a new federal tax credit for first-time homebuyers so they can purchase a home more easily.

Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, first-time homebuyers who purchase a property before Dec. 1 can receive 10 percent of the price, up to \$8,000, back as a tax credit.

The catch is that many potential buyers don't have enough money to cover the down payment to buy a home and obtain the credit. But if they could qualify, they could, in theory, find a way to make a purchase and get the credit.

CHFA's JumpStart program breaks the trap by lending up to \$6,000 or 3.5 percent of a home's purchase price, whichever is less, to cover closing and down-payment costs.

That second mortgage comes with no interest and no payments due until June 30, 2010. CHFA also will provide a 30-year, fixed-rate first mortgage to qualified borrowers.

"First-time homebuyers will be able to leverage the future benefit of the federal tax credit by working with CHFA to access the dollars needed to buy a home today," said U.S. Rep. Ed Perlmutter, D-Colo., who helped unveil the program.

Borrowers are expected to use their tax credit to repay the second mortgage before the June 30 deadline. If they don't, the loan becomes payable over 10 years at 8 percent interest.

"If you don't plan to pay off the second mortgage with the tax credit, then CHFA JumpStart isn't for you," said Karen Harkin, CHFA's director of home finance.

Buyers must also contribute \$1,000 of their own money and take a homebuyer education course.

CHFA expects the program to help as many as 1,250 families this year, but Harkin said CHFA would do its best to help as many people as are qualified. "We will find funding for every homebuyer who wants to participate," she said.

The offer, for now, is for a limited time. Perlmutter was noncommittal on whether Congress would renew the first-time home purchase credit for next year.

He said it would depend on the condition of housing markets, with no decision likely until later this year.

[LINK](#)

## **Perriello**

### **Perriello talks energy efficiency in Danville stop**

#### **Madison Messenger**

Officials interested in energy efficiency and weatherization joined U.S. Rep. Tom Perriello, D-5th, at a roundtable discussion at the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research on Monday afternoon to share their ideas on new energy projects.

It was part of Perriello's "New Energy for the 5th Tour" throughout the 5th District.

At issue was how to best spend the federal stimulus money available for area weatherization projects and sustain that effort to create new industries.

"We want the biggest bang for the buck, and we are more than willing and ready to pool our resources to serve as many as possible," said Sherman Saunders, Danville mayor and executive director of Pittsylvania County

Community Action, the agency that administers weatherization projects in the cities of Danville and Martinsville and Pittsylvania and Henry counties.

PCCA typically has half a million dollars yearly for home weatherization projects, but stimulus money is adding another \$1.1 million over the next 18 months — and possibly \$1.1 million more over the course of the three-year period.

“We are excited about this announcement,” Perriello said. “This area is economically depressed, but an area of great opportunity. This is about making sure we have the capacity to train and match funds.”

One of the issues discussed was the problem of motivating landlords to weatherize their rental homes.

“As a utility, we see the need to better market energy efficiency,” Joe King, assistant city manager for utilities, said. “The final solution will be making this attractive to the landlord.”

King, along with City Councilmen David Luther and Gary Miller, proposed the idea of having homes certified as energy efficient, which would not only benefit residents but would provide a new training and industry for the future.

Karl Stauber, executive director of the Danville Regional Foundation, concurred with the need to multiply the effects of the stimulus money.

“I would hope that when the stimulus money is gone, we will have 500 people trained in a whole array of energy-efficient businesses,” he said.

Perriello agreed.

“I think there really is the potential for Southern Virginia as a region to put ourselves at the forefront of a new energy economy,” he said. “This is the opportunity for us to improve the housing stock of the city, save money on utility bills and train people to move into a new industry.” [LINK](#)

## **Perriello Breaks with Party**

WSET

Area democrat Tom Perriello is breaking with President Obama over the new Federal budget. The congressman stopped by Gladys Elementary School in Campbell County this morning. The school was on the chopping block, but Federal Stimulus money is keeping it open. Perriello supported the stimulus, but says the new budget does not go far enough in getting America's finances in order.

Rep. Tom Perriello, (D) Virginia - "I voted against the budget because I think we have to get our books in balance. And part of what got us into this crisis was debt, government debt, household debt, and private sector debt with the over leveraging of companies."

The U.S. House and Senate passed versions of the new budget plan, largely along party lines. Perriello was one of only a few Democrats to vote against it. [LINK](#)

## **Congressman Perriello's Listening Tour Stops in Charlottesville**

NBC 29 News

Fifth District Congressman Tom Perriello continued his listening tour Wednesday in Charlottesville. The first term Democrat was just off the downtown mall, looking over an urban vegetable garden. He pointed to it as an example of how smart ideas can work.

Tuesday, Perriello was in Greene County during his tour. He answered questions about how the county could get stimulus money and about the government's bank bailout. [LINK](#)

## **County stimulus funding totals outlined**

### **South Hill Enterprise**

A new report from Fifth District Congressman Tom Perriello outlines the funding amounts Mecklenburg County will receive from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act federal stimulus package.

Perriello describes the Act as a “broad-reaching effort to create jobs, jumpstart growth, and transform our economy to regain American’s competitive advantage.”

Perriello said the Act will, through the tax cuts and investments, according to President Barak Obama estimates, create 7,600 jobs in the Fifth District, putting many of the 10,000 people that lost their jobs over the last 10 years back to work.

“There is clearly much more work to be done, but this plan will put the Fifth District on a solid road to recovery,” Perriello said.

Over the next two years \$1.5 billion in education funding will be distributed throughout Virginia. Perriello said that \$2.083 million of that would go to Mecklenburg County, with \$882,000 to be used for TITLE I programs, and \$1.2 million for IDEA (special education) programs.

Brunswick County will be receiving \$1.046 million in TITLE I and IDEA funding and Lunenburg County will be receiving \$996,000 in the funding.

The state will also receive \$983.9 million over the next two years to support the stabilization of the state funding of local schools and post-secondary schools. [LINK](#)

## **Peters**

### **Rep. wants banks to forgive auto debt**

#### **Politico**

One Michigan lawmaker is upping the pressure on bailed-out banks to cut the auto companies a break.

Rep. Gary Peters (D-Mich.) has written to four of the nation’s largest banks — all recipients of billions in taxpayer money and all major holders of Chrysler’s debt — urging them to negotiate with the troubled automaker and forgive the vast majority of the automaker’s debt.

The White House has given Chrysler, which is headquartered in Peters’ district, a 30-day stay of execution, during which the American company must strike a merger deal with Italian automaker Fiat to survive.

Peters is seeking to leverage popular anger at Wall Street to pressure the reluctant debt holders to forgive Chrysler’s debt. A press release announcing his letters to the CEOs of JPMorgan Chase, Citigroup, Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley scolded that the banks “should stop seeking more tax dollars through automakers.”

In his letters, Peters listed the amount each of the four firms has taken from taxpayers. JPMorgan, for instance, has taken \$25 billion through the Troubled Asset Relief Program and \$400 million when American International Group used some of its \$180 billion bailout to pay off counterparties in full.

“These banks hold the key to Chrysler’s survival,” Peters said in a statement. “Despite taking billions in taxpayer support to keep themselves solvent, these creditors are unwilling to reach a fair deal to keep Chrysler

alive and to protect hundreds of thousands of American families. These financial institutions are already leading recipients of taxpayer support, and any money received from Chrysler will simply be more tax dollars.”

“The banks that hold Chrysler’s debt were provided federal support for the good of the economy, and they should negotiate in good faith with automakers for the same reason,” he said.

But relying on public anger to shame the big banks into debt forgiveness may not be an effective strategy. Polls show little sympathy for the automakers’ plight. Sixty-three percent of Americans say the automakers’ problems are their own fault, according to a March 17 CBS News poll. [LINK](#)

## Pingree

### Pingree and Michaud Both Take Credit for More Maine Education Funds

#### Exception Magazine

Both of Maine’s representatives in the US House are taking credit for stimulus funds that will go to Maine schools.

Congressman Mike Michaud claims that Maine schools will get \$18.6 million for low-income school districts and \$29 million more for students with disabilities, with another round arriving in the fall.

“Maine school districts are struggling with tight budgets,” said Michaud in his statement. “This funding comes at a very important time. I have been fighting to properly fund IDEA for years. It is a huge unfunded mandate for our state and local school systems. This funding will help alleviate burdens on our local school systems. Overall, education investments made in the stimulus package will create jobs, improve schools, save education jobs, and prevent other cutbacks that could be detrimental to our children’s education.”

Congresswoman Chellie Pingree says Maine will get \$45 million right away.

“The goal of the stimulus is to create and save jobs immediately and invest in our economy long term,” Pingree said in her statement. “This education money does both by helping schools save teaching jobs and strengthens our education system. The most important investment we can make is an investment in our children’s education.”

Both Congresspeople say that the state should soon receive an additional \$193.5 in state fiscal stabilization funds, part of which will go towards education. [LINK](#)

### Stimulus Money To Fund Clean Air and Water

#### MPBN News

Several more Maine cities and towns will soon be “stimulated” with money from the federal Recovery Act. Today Governor John Baldacci joined U.S. Representative Chellie Pingree and other officials for the announcement of more than \$20 million for clean water and air improvements.

Nearly all of the money, about \$19 million, will go to the state’s Drinking Water State Revolving Loan program, which provides low-interest loans for water system infrastructure improvements. Governor John Baldacci says the money, combined with other resources, will allow the state to complete more than \$40 million worth of projects in 61 communities across the state. “This money will create more jobs, improve public health and safety and promote economic development.”

The projects are expected to create between 720 and 960 construction jobs in the next few months. But Dr. Dora Mills of the Maine Center for Disease Control says they will also help spur future economic growth. “A lot of our systems were built, as I mentioned, a hundred years ago and the community has outgrown them. So

when new businesses and new developments want to come to town they can't expand their drinking water capacity unless they revise their current systems."

Because of the economic downturn and budget shortfalls, some cities and towns have put off making infrastructure improvements. Mills says Maine is fortunate to have clean and safe drinking water despite having systems that are so old. She says there have been a few instances where quality has been compromised to the point where people have been advised not to allow infants to drink water because of contaminants, but she says new filtration systems will go a long way toward addressing those problems and preventing others.

In addition to money for clean water improvements, Maine will also get nearly \$2 million under the Recovery Act's clean diesel grant program. "We're very pleased that our entire delegation was on board on the Recovery Act and today we're seeing the fruits of our labor," says First District Congresswoman Chellie Pingree.

Pingree says this will enable the state to expand its clean school bus program. "This means retrofitting diesel school buses including putting in little heaters so that we don't have to idle the bus while we're warming it up waiting for kids to get in it."

The funds will also be used to establish the first statewide Clean Marine Engine program in the region which will reduce emissions by 70 percent. For more information on these and other Recovery Act projects, visit [www.MaineRecovery.gov](http://www.MaineRecovery.gov). [LINK](#)

## Polis

### Polis pushes tax incentives for investment

#### Longmont Daily Times-Call

LONGMONT — U.S. Rep. Jared Polis, D-Boulder, is sponsoring legislation that would create federal tax incentives to encourage private investment in troubled sectors of the economy, he said Thursday.

Another bill from the Internet entrepreneur proposes tax incentives for private real estate purchases in high-foreclosure areas.

"We need to grow the economy," Polis said during a meeting with representatives of the Times-Call editorial board.

He added that there is a role for government to play in that stimulus effort.

But Polis said that like many of his 2nd Congressional District constituents, he's been frustrated and critical of some of the proposed terms of government bailouts of such businesses as the auto industry.

One of Polis' recently introduced measures, which he calls the "Enterprise Sector Investment Opportunity Act of 2009," would waive capital gains taxes on private investments in the automotive, banking and financial services industries — if those investments are made within 18 months after the bill becomes law and are held by those investors for at least two years.

A second Polis bill, the "Investment Property Opportunity Act of 2009," would waive capital gains taxes on the sale of residential properties in "distressed housing areas," as long as those investments are held for three years.

According to Polis' staff description of that bill, a distressed housing area could include counties where foreclosure rates are 10 percent above the national average or where the housing market has declined by more than 15 percent. It also could include communities where more than 50 percent of the homeowners have greater than 80 percent loan-to-value ratios.

Polis introduced both tax-incentive measures late last month.

Polis said he's also crafting a measure that could encourage foreign investment in American companies by streamlining and expanding the EB-5 visa program for immigrants who make such investments in companies that create or keep specified numbers of jobs. [LINK](#)

## Rodriguez

### Officials See Renewed Focus on Border Issues, Relations

#### American Chronicle

Apr. 17--EL PASO -- Border experts agreed that President Barack Obama's first official visit to Mexico on Thursday was an important step toward renewing a strong relationship between the United States and its southern neighbor.

And though it took unprecedented drug violence to make it happen, border communities finally are getting the attention they deserve.

"President Obama's trip to Mexico provides the United States with a golden opportunity to strengthen our relationship with a valuable neighbor, trading partner and friend," said Chad Foster, chairman of the Texas Border Coalition and mayor of Eagle Pass, Texas. "The U.S. and Mexico share a common border, a common history and common economic interests.

The Texas Border Coalition includes mayors, county judges and economic development commissions that focus on issues affecting more than 2.1 million border residents.

Relations between Mexico and the United States had grown chilly during the administrations of President George W. Bush and Mexican President Vicente Fox, first after the 9/11 attacks and later after Fox's refusal to send soldiers from his country to assist in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"We had become more than distant neighbors. We had developed a rupture in our diplomatic relationship," said Eduardo Borunda, a political science professor at the Autonomous University of Chihuahua State in Juarez.

Still, issues such as illegal immigration and drug and arms trafficking are lived out daily in El Paso and other border cities.

"President Obama has been focused on working to re-establish relationships with a number of foreign countries, including Mexico, which is Texas' number one trading partner, and it is a major reason we have not fared as poorly as other states during the economic downturn," said U.S. Rep. Ciro Rodriguez, D-Texas, who was with Obama in Mexico City on Thursday.

"It's important we create a safe and secure border that allows for continued trade to prosper, and for our countries to work together. I hope Presidents Obama and (Felipe) Calderon can learn from each other and continue to nurture a healthy relationship."

Before Obama went to Mexico, a series of U.S. federal officials and lawmakers visited U.S. border cities. Earlier this week, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano toured the El Paso border and announced the appointment of a border czar.

"I believe the presidents are seeking more open relations between the two countries," said Socorro Tabuenca, a scholar with the UTEP Center for Inter-American and Border Studies, and who teaches at the University of Texas at El Paso. "Obama has provided a greater U.S. presence in Mexico than we ever saw under the Bush administration. I think both presidents, Calderon and Obama, are relatively young and have the futures of their countries in mind."

Jose Reyes Baeza, governor of Chihuahua state, which has felt the brunt of the drug cartel wars, flew to Mexico City to attend a dinner Thursday evening for the president and 100 prominent Mexican business and political leaders.

In a telephone news conference, Reyes Baeza said Obama's visit signaled a willingness to work closely with Mexican officials. "It's also a good moment to ratify our commitments to each other. We can collaborate with any country, while respecting each other's national sovereignty," he said.

Since 2008, nearly 2,000 people have been killed in Chihuahua state, most of them in Juarez. Officials attribute most of the deaths to warring drug cartels.

During the U.S. president's stay in Mexico, officials said, 15 people in the state of Guerrero were killed in a bloody firefight. More than 10,000 people have died violently since Calderon began a crackdown against drug traffickers two years ago.

The threat to security has prompted U.S. officials to step up border enforcement. For its part, Mexico has deployed thousands of soldiers to hot spots such as Juarez.

Other pending complaints between the two nations are the U.S. ban against Mexican trucks driving into the interior of the United States, and Mexico's retaliatory tariffs on 90 U.S. products for the trucking ban.

Danny Anchondo, a lawyer and chairman of the El Paso County Democratic Party, said a change in the U.S.-Mexico relationship was overdue. Since he became party chairman four years ago, he has met with 22 U.S. officials who have come to the border to learn about its problems.

"The relationship had been neglected by our former president for eight years," Anchondo said. "Building it up again is the first big thing that needs to happen."

"I think the security threat to the border has been exaggerated, but we do need to work with Mexico on immigration and the economy. If the Mexican economy does well, then we will be better off."

The White House issued a statement that also stressed a new direction for U.S.-Mexico relations: "The United States and Mexico are committed to a new approach in our bilateral relationship based on comprehensive engagement and shared responsibility."

Phil Jordan, an El Paso native and former Drug Enforcement Administration official, has praised Calderon's efforts to battle Mexico's violent drug kingpins.

"I hope this administration helps Calderon and doesn't take Mexico lightly," Jordan said. [LINK](#)

## Schauer

Area schools get \$2.2M in stimulus cash

The Daily Reporter

Branch County schools now have more than \$2.2 million in emergency funding available for education-related jobs and programs over the 2009 and 2010 school years, it was announced Thursday.

According to U.S. Rep. Mark Schauer, D-Battle Creek, the first half of that funding is immediately available under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), for low-income students and special education funds.

According to the federal government, Branch County districts are looking at:

- Bronson: \$195,754 Title I-A increase; \$323,000 IDEA increase;
- Coldwater: \$361,832 Title I-A increase; \$753,000 IDEA increase; and
- Quincy: \$236,738 Title I-A increase; \$365,000 IDEA increase.

Dr. Dale Martin, superintendent of Coldwater Community Schools, said Thursday the news was welcome.

“We have gotten three different memos from the federal government about money we would be receiving. We’ve been waiting for more detailed information,” he said. “What I must get is absolute direction on how the money is to be spent.” [LINK](#)

## **US Rep. Schauer gets hang of DC in tough times**

### **Coldwater Daily Reporter**

It has not quite been his first 100 days in office, but U.S. Rep. Mark Schauer said he feels he and the new administration are making some progress in Washington.

The Battle Creek Democrat stopped by The Daily Reporter office Tuesday — his 91st day in office — before going to speak at the Coldwater Noon Rotary across the street.

“I think of what I walked into, a rapidly declining economy with a \$1.2 trillion deficit and a recession with the worst unemployment rate in 26 years . . . It’s the deepest recession since the 1930s,” he said. “It’s a very steep, short learning curve . . . We’ve got a lot to learn.”

He was pleased child health insurance was quickly addressed and increased, with the passage of legislation twice vetoed by the former administration, and said the 2010 budget resolution passed by the House would cut the deficit nearly two thirds by 2013 and cut middle class taxes by \$1.5 trillion.

The House Budget Resolution provides for \$3.55 trillion in total spending in 2010, 3 percent less than the administration’s budget, but with a huge increase in spending for veterans. Schauer said there are three things addressed in the budget he considers priorities: Education, health care and energy.

“I don’t know that there’s a greater return on investment,” he said, than that regarding education “from cradle to career.” [LINK](#)

## **Schauer Announces Training Plan For LCC Students**

### **WLAJ**

Just days after Gov. Granholm signed legislation to help make Michigan a leader in battery technology, congressman Mark Schauer announced a \$2 million plan to help Lansing Community College train the workers needed to service those batteries and the cars they power.

"I have submitted as a priority funding request for the 2010 budget," said Schauer. "\$2 million for LCC's advanced automotive and electric vehicles and hybrid vehicles we want to train them right here."

Lansing Community College President Brent Knight says LCC already leads the way in alternative fuels, but this money will help the college stay on the cutting edge.

"The whole economy and technology is moving into alternative fuels and so it's essential that LCC continue to offer the latest training," said Schauer.

Congressman Schauer says the money would be used to expand the automotive program to include repair, maintenance and operation of hybrid and electric vehicles.

"We know there's a demand, a demand for workers to services electric vehicles and hybrid vehicles. We want to train them right here," said Shawn Cole, LCC automotive student.

Cole says he's excited about the possible expansion of the program, "Michigan is the car capitol of the world so why shouldn't we be leading the initiative towards alternative fuels and spreading our wealth to everybody else instead of the other way around and sitting idle while everybody else gets better."

He says now is the time to make the move, "It's the way everything's going...its either jump on board or stay in the back."

LCC plans to establish partnerships with auto manufacturers and dealerships which will create a pipeline for hybrid electric technicians. [LINK](#)

## The rare earmark with real purpose

MLive.com

The word "earmark" makes us cringe, too.

With a \$11 trillion federal debt, it is difficult to justify the federal government spending a penny more than necessary. The reality, though, is that pork remains a part of the political process in Congress. If your congressman does not try to bring federal money home, there are 534 others who will.

That's no defense, but a call for moderation. If there are going to be congressional earmarks, at least they should serve a greater interest than a politician's re-election. One good example is an earmark request from U.S. Rep. Mark Schauer that could yield more than 250 jobs for this community.

Schauer has requested \$5 million for Ann Arbor-based Cybernet Systems to develop a communication device for the Navy. If approved, this would produce work for RTD Manufacturing in Jackson by next year.

Schauer, a Democrat, is requesting many projects in the 2010 budget that feel good but should not be the federal government's business. These include money to buy public-transit buses, to renovate the Michigan Theatre, to restore the Cascades and to help the Ella Sharp Museum of Art and History.

The Cybernet request is different. The company started work on this Navy device with federal money. The \$5 million allows the next stage of product development that gets the device ready to sell to the Pentagon.

Unlike other spending requests, this earmark has to clear both the Armed Services and Appropriations committees. The Defense Department, too, must weigh in.

If money for Cybernet legitimately serves the national interest, it also serves Jackson County. Namely, it would produce permanent jobs. The expectation is that this company will get this money, develop a product and sell it for years.

Contrast that with the recent approval of federal money to demolish a building near Armory Arts Village. That funding serves a local need but creates no jobs, other than for the demolition crew. And the elimination of an eyesore and creation of a parking lot are not national priorities.

Take that litmus test — a national need, plus the direct creation of lasting jobs — and apply it to other requests on Schauer's \$78 million wish list. Apply it to requests from other members of Congress, and you can see how the federal government has grown so bloated.

That's where reform of the earmark process has to come in. We are encouraged that the public now will see all earmark requests on congressional Web sites, yet Congress needs pressure to do more.

Could it surrender control of the earmark process to independent commissions, much as it has done with military base closings? Should the president have a line-item veto to strike down foolish "bridges to nowhere"?

These are questions for a voting public that must look past the boost that comes from receiving federal money. Most pork goes to projects that have value, but not if it means maxing out the federal credit card.

It is up to members of Congress to approve projects that serve a true national purpose and create permanent jobs. Congress failed that responsibility with the recent stimulus and with most projects on members' earmark lists. The \$5 million for Cybernet Systems is the exception. [LINK](#)

## Schrader

### **Some high-ranking federal help: Congressman pitches in at Corvallis couple's home**

Gazette-Times reporter

Jennifer and Brian Rosenbalm are taking the notion of government help to whole new levels.

On Wednesday morning, U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader showed up to help a crew install insulation in the family's south Corvallis home.

Thanks to the latest economic stimulus, known as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and a host of weatherization grants available to low-income families, the Rosenbalms and their three children are looking forward to a warm home.

"The only catch is that you have to let people in to see that you do need help," Jennifer Rosenbalm said. "Once they see that you're not lying, the money is there."

Schrader is in his first term in the 5th Congressional District seat long held by Darlene Hooley before her retirement. He came to Corvallis on Wednesday to meet with Corvallis Mayor Charles Tomlinson and the Benton County Board of Commissioners. He spoke about how stimulus grants, such as the weatherization money, help families save money on utility costs, while creating jobs for installers, too.

"Too often you hear that government never does anything right or you never see any benefit," Schrader said. "This is to help people like Brian get through these tough times and make your tax dollars real for you."

Schrader was talking about Brian Rosenbalm, who lost his job at Hewlett-Packard in Corvallis during a wave of layoffs back in 2005. At the time, he was eligible for federal job-training assistance because the work was sent overseas. He earned an associate's degree and then went on to get his bachelor's degree in business management.

So far, however, he and his wife have been unable to find steady work. They make ends meet through some freelance photography, selling cosmetics and other odd jobs.

Community Services Consortium, a local nonprofit working in Linn, Benton and Lincoln counties, has been there to find assistance for such families.

Martha Lyon, executive director of the consortium, said ARRA funding will nearly double the agency's ability to help homeowners cut energy bills. She said about 16,000 houses in the three-county area are eligible for the grant money and hopes to help about 10,000 of them.

The consortium also has plans to work with people to build businesses, perhaps installing insulation in homes such as the Rosenbalms'.

Schrader said he is among the representatives working on a bill to standardize the tax deduction for home offices, and he is spreading the word about how the money is being spent. [LINK](#)

## Shea-Porter

### Sandown man hopes to keep his home

#### Eagle tribune

A man struggling to keep his home as foreclosure looms has enlisted the help of a congresswoman.

Curtis Bush, 60, hopes help from the office of U.S. Rep. Carol Shea-Porter, D-N.H., will give him the financial breathing room he needs to stay in his house.

He needs to complete construction on his replacement home, which is 70 percent done. Fourteen months ago, a motorist crashed into Bush's small house, reducing one end to splinters and knocking the structure from its foundation. In addition, Bush, an owner-operator trucker who hauls drywall for a living, has to catch up on his mortgage.

Shea-Porter's office has taken on Bush's case, researching programs and filing a comptroller-of-currency inquiry, spokeswoman Jamie Radice said.

The inquiry, filed March 25, looks into banks' lending practices for compliance with federal fair housing provisions. Bush's adjustable rate mortgage is held by Washington Mutual Bank. Radice said a response to the inquiry could come as soon as 30 days or as late as 90 days.

The bank's lawyer has put Bush on notice that the bank plans to call in his loan. Bush hopes the inquiry "lights a fire under someone."

It's unclear which, if any, stimulus program provisions Bush might qualify for. But he may be eligible for a small one-time payment because he is a veteran, having served in the U.S. Army from 1967 to 1969, Radice said.

In addition, there is pending legislation that could help 7 million to 9 million Americans stay in their homes.

"The congresswoman is hopeful that Mr. Bush will be able to negotiate a favorable resolution that will enable him to keep his home," Radice said.

Bush has fallen five months behind on his \$1,400-a-month mortgage while seeking the release of money to complete construction of the 776-square-foot home. Bush said he is owed about 15 percent or \$14,500 on his \$43,762 insurance settlement. The remainder being enough to complete his home, he said.

It is customary for a bank and insurance company to hold back 15 percent of the settlement agreement until work on a project is complete.

Bush also has used savings to pay for the construction.

Bush's strongest advocate has been neighbor Ron Lazisky. Lazisky has helped Bush file paperwork and look for program relief to stay in his home.

Lazisky said he, too, hopes Shea-Porter's help will keep his friend and neighbor in his home. Bush has received some good and bad news in recent weeks. Chief among the good has been the help from the congresswoman. In addition, freight hauling has picked up, boosting his work week from two or three days to almost full time.

On the downside, the town sent him a letter demanding more than \$2,800 in property taxes owed from 2008 or it will place a lien on his property at 398 Main Street.

Bush bought the house for \$85,000 and refinanced in 2006. [LINK](#)

## **World War II vet finally receives Purple Heart**

**Eagle Tribune**

A battle with German bombers over the port in Algiers cost World War II soldier John Gale some of his hearing.

Gale, who was serving with an anti-aircraft automatic weapons unit, became deaf from the sound of all the firepower.

On Monday, more than 65 years after he was wounded, the 93-year-old veteran finally received the Purple Heart during a ceremony at U.S. Rep. Carol Shea-Porter's Manchester office.

Gale said Shea-Porter helped cut through some of the red tape holding up his medals.

He also received many other medals, including the World War II Victory Medal, the American Defense Service Medal, the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal and the American Campaign Medal, to name a few.

Gale wanted the medals so he could leave them for his grandson John LeBlanc.

"I want to show off a little bit," he said, laughing. "For many years, I was ashamed to ask for them."

Gale estimated the anti-aircraft guns he fired would measure about the size of the living room in Plaistow where he now lives with his daughter, Patricia LeBlanc, and son-in-law, Ray Clermont.

"They're big guns," he said, and they were set in place on the ground.

He described the fighting as a mix of "moments of peace and moments of danger," while the soldiers had to "wait in anticipation" of an air attack.

Gale, who bore a resemblance to Hollywood actor Errol Flynn, also had a romance during the war, Clermont said. He met his late wife, Jacqueline, while stationed in France.

"I left America with a barracks bag, a rifle and a helmet, and I came back with a truckload of furniture, a wife and a daughter," he said.

Gale, originally from New York City, met his wife in Toulon, France.

"I asked her to dance, and of all things, it was the tango," he said. "It's very sensual." Gale thinks she made up her mind to marry him as he held her in his arms.

"Girls like to dance," he said. "We did get married in France."

He stayed in the Army until 1961 and also served in Korea. After the military, he worked in administration for security companies.

Gale moved to Plaistow after his wife died several years ago to be with his daughter and son-in-law.

Army medics initially told Gale he'd be all right. His hearing would come back within a week, the Army said.

The Army medic was partly right, Gale said. Most of his hearing returned after a week, but he still suffered some permanent hearing loss.

"I hid it," he said. "I didn't want to be a disabled soldier." [LINK](#)

## **NH getting nearly \$10.5m for unemployment benefits**

**Foster's Daily Democrat**

New Hampshire is getting nearly \$10.5 million to pay for unemployment benefits, made available by the federal economic stimulus package.

The state Department of Employment Security can use the funds to pay the benefits or, if appropriated by the Legislature, for administering its unemployment insurance program or delivering employment services.

Rep. Carol Shea-Porter said with the recent news that unemployment in the state jumped to 6.2 percent in March, the funds are needed more than ever to help people through these difficult economic times. [LINK](#)

## **Shea Porter gets look at couples' green dream home**

**Foster's Daily Democrat**

PORTSMOUTH — Congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter saw what going green is all about Thursday during a tour of Marc and Cheryl Batchelder's dream home on Lawrence Street.

She not only got a chance to speak with several of the contractors involved in making the green home a reality but also had an opportunity to tour the inside of what has been deemed the state's first owner-financed Platinum LEED residence and only the 28th in the nation.

LEED — which stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design — is the nationally recognized standard for energy efficient and sustainable buildings, with platinum being the highest level of the standard.

With the help of Little Green Homes, the Batchelders are close to finalizing construction on the single-family residence at 35 Lawrence St., and they got a chance to welcome Shea-Porter along with several members of the Green Alliance, a self-described union of green business, into their home during the afternoon event.

Shea-Porter said she was amazed at the many factors that went into making the home a "net-zero building," meaning it will generate all of its energy from sustainable sources.

"This is every person's dream," said Shea-Porter.

Because solar panels will power the electricity as well as provide domestic hot water and heat through radiant floor heating, the Batchelders won't necessarily have to pay any more in utility bills for as long as they live in the home.

Marc Batchelder said the only outside source of energy built into the house is a gas hookup for the stove, and he said he expects to be moved in by the end of the week.

Shea-Porter said the Batchelders' home only reinforces the efforts of legislators to create opportunities for people who want to live a sustainable lifestyle.

"We have talked about being energy conscious for decades and it's here now," she said.

Through tax credits and other financial incentives, Shea-Porter said the government will continue to try and help people as well as business owners that want to build similar homes and offer sustainable products.

"It makes a lot of sense to promote this stuff," she added. [LINK](#)

## Shuler

### Hospital receives \$295,000 in funds

#### Times News

Pardee Hospital will receive \$295,000 in federal appropriations to buy equipment and technology for the Intensive Care Unit, Congressman Heath Shuler (D-Waynesville) announced Tuesday at the hospital. "Here's a perfect opportunity, when you see a strapped community hospital that needs assistance in funding — what better way to give back to the community? This is federal tax dollars working for our community," Shuler said.

The Pardee Hospital Foundation applied for the funding through Shuler's office, which requested the money as part of the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations bill. The bill was signed into law in March.

"We take care of the sickest of the sick here and the ICU has the highest technological needs," Hospital CEO Kris Hoce said. "We need to make sure we have the latest and best technology and equipment."

He added that he was surprised and pleased to get the funding, since they haven't had much federal support in the past, and were honored by Shuler's visit. Several members of the Pardee Foundation Board and Hospital Board joined Hoce and Pardee staff for the announcement, and Shuler was also given a tour.

The hospital had submitted the request for a fiscal year 2009 appropriation. It wasn't funded, however, and when the Omnibus Appropriations bill came up, they submitted it once again, said Vice President of Community Accountability and Philanthropy Myra Grant.

The Omnibus Appropriations bill contains nine appropriations bills for the 2009 fiscal year that were not signed into law last year.

Before leaving, Shuler also briefly discussed health care, saying, "We have to change lifestyles to make health care more affordable."

Changes in health care will have to be made, he said, and they can legislate it, but the key is actually changing lifestyles and focusing on preventive care. North Carolina ranks fifth in the nation for childhood obesity, he added, and we need to encourage one another to exercise and get healthy.

#### NEW EQUIPMENT

The money will be received later in the year, possibly September, Grant said. It will be used to pay for a new nurse/patient communication system and for upgrading the patient monitoring system.

Flatscreen TVs will be placed in patient rooms to offer educational programs such as information on congestive heart failure for patients with that condition. Other technology to be purchased for the ICU include video intubation equipment, glucose management equipment and a hypothermia blanket.

A new monitoring unit will be placed in every room. The monitors communicate with the emergency room, meaning nurses only need to push a few buttons when a patient comes to the ICU instead of having to completely reset a patient's monitor. It eliminates a step and allows for better monitoring of a patient during transport to the ICU, said Gayle Sams, director of emergency services and ICU.

"You just don't know how excited we'll be to have that," she added.

The nurse/patient communication system replaces the previous patient call button, which was merely a button on a wire. The ICU is the last department to upgrade this feature, Sams said. Now the call buttons will be built into the bedrails.

The TVs help them promote wellness, Sams said, by providing technology necessary to show educational programs as well as regular TV.

Glucose management technology will allow them to enter a patient's glucose into a computer, which then tells how much insulin the patient should be given every hour. This helps the patient get better more quickly, Sams said.

The hospital has a hypothermia blanket for the Emergency Department, but wanted one for the ICU as well, Sams said. The blankets are used to keep critical patients cool for 48 hours before warming them up to lessen the impact of an injury. Mission Hospitals is using them and has seen a 30 percent improvement in some patients' outcomes, she said.

"I'm extremely excited. I think that as technology progresses, we have to continually upgrade," Sams said. "For us, this is the best way to make sure patients get the best care and outcomes." [LINK](#)

#### Space

##### Aquaculture Research Receives Boost in Ohio

##### TheFishSite.com

The Ohio Aquaculture Research and Development Integration Program will receive about \$580,000 in federal funding for fiscal year 2009 to continue supporting Ohio's \$6 million aquaculture industry through research and Extension outreach.

"We feel very fortunate to have had such great support from both political parties in both the House and the Senate," said Laura Tiu, an Ohio State University aquaculture senior research associate. "As a result of the support from this line of federal funding, we've been able to leverage additional funds to help support our research and Extension efforts for the good of the state's industry. Our success is our ability to show impacts from the monies we've received."

The funds, which will come from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service, were secured by Sens. Sherrod Brown and George Voinovich, and Reps. Marcy Kaptur and Zack Space.

The funds will be used to support OARDIP's five established research program areas: Ohio Genetic Improvement of Farmed-Fish Traits (O'GIFT), Bowling Green Aquaculture Program, Fish Production Improvement Program, Fish Muscle Growth and Nutrition Program, and the Aquaculture Genetics and Breeding Lab. In addition, the funds support the program's Extension outreach and education arm, known as Aquaculture Technology Transfer and Dissemination.

“The long-term support from federal line is essential to achieve the final goals of the long-term programs, such as O'GIFT,” said Han-Ping Wang, director of the Ohio Aquaculture Research and Development Integration Program. “The work we do here is important because the real challenge for the next decade is to get the aquaculture industries to introduce effective genetic improvement program using selective breeding. This has been proved by genetic improvement of other agricultural species such as dairy cattle. The funding we receive keeps the established long-term programs sustainable so we can continue supporting the state’s aquaculture industry.”

Wang, a principal scientist with the OSU South Centers, said the Ohio Aquaculture Research and Development Program focuses on Ohio’s top three aquacultural and recreational fish: yellow perch, bluegill and largemouth bass, and important baitfish species. Research projects include:

Genetically improving yellow perch so they can reach market size over a shorter period of time compared to the traditional farm-raised yellow perch.

Developing all male bluegill populations to capitalize on their fast growth rate compared to females.

Genetically improving largemouth bass to increase their growth rate.

Manipulating spawning cycles of the spotfin shiner to produce multiple batches of fry for indoor culture systems.

“The growth rate of fish has a big impact on production and market efficiency,” said Wang. “It’s advantageous for a farmer to raise fish that reach their market size as quickly as possible.”

In addition to the aforementioned projects, OSU South Centers researchers are also collaborating with colleagues in the Department of Animal Sciences, School of Environment and Natural Resources and Food Science and Technology to analyze fish muscle quality, nutrition and taste.

According to the USDA, aquaculture sales in Ohio have increased 73 percent since 1998, and the state ranks in the top 10 for yellow perch, bluegill and largemouth bass production. Ohio ranks No. 1 in sales of yellow perch for food and is No. 1 for bluegill production. Ohio ranks fourth in baitfish sales and fourth in largemouth bass production sold for sport. The state also ranks sixth in sales of hybrid striped bass sold as a food fish. [LINK](#)

## **Space makes pitch for local projects**

### **Zanesville Times Recorder**

U.S. Rep. Zack Space has made his federal appropriation requests to be included in the 2010 budget, which includes as much as \$59 million for 111 projects across the 18th Congressional District.

Space posted his requests on his Web site this week, a new level of transparency required for the first time this year.

In the past, funding for local projects - or earmarks - sought by lawmakers was publicly disclosed only after it was approved in the budget, so members did not have to reveal what they had requested.

"The effort to bring greater transparency to this process is very much in line with my commitment to make government more open and responsive to the people who elected me," Space said.

Locally, 11 projects in Muskingum County totaling about \$5.3 million and four in Morgan totaling about \$2 million are on the list.

Among the Muskingum County requests are \$500,000 to make improvements to Dillon Falls Road between U.S. 40 and Ohio 146, \$500,000 to renovate the old Maysville Junior High School building to house the Muskingum County Business Incubator and other offices and \$500,000 for a southend sewer project.

There's also a \$500,000 request by the Ohio Central Railroad to fund the rehabilitation of the Muskingum River Swing Bridge in Zanesville and two \$500,000 requests from Genesis HealthCare System for a cardiac lab and also the infrastructure for a regional health information system to link the Zanesville hospitals with Southeastern Ohio Regional Medical Center in Cambridge and Coshocton County Memorial Hospital.

Zane State College also made two \$500,000 requests, for energy and green laboratories at the Newark Road campus and upgrading its communications and network infrastructure.

"Each of these projects represents worthwhile infrastructure and economic development opportunities - and that means jobs," Space said. "I'm pushing the Appropriations Committee to give each of them a thorough look because of what they'll mean in bringing jobs and economic development to Ohio's 18th Congressional District."

While lawmakers must now make their lists public, there is no penalty for non-compliance.

Steve Ellis, vice president of the non partisan watchdog group Taxpayers for Common Sense, said the new system of posting earmarks on lawmakers' Web sites is a vast improvement over the way they were handled in the past, when they were hidden in huge pieces of legislation, not linked to who asked for them and not subject to scrutiny.

But there are still kinks to be worked out. Many lawmakers have buried the links to the funding requests on their Web sites, and not everyone has posted complete descriptions of the projects and why they would be a good use of taxpayer funds.

"We'll have to see how the (House Appropriations) committee responds," Ellis said. "If you make a rule and people ignore it, what good is it?"

Earmarks make up a tiny percentage of federal spending. Despite efforts to limit them and make it easier for the public to see who requested what, they remain controversial.

Earmarks have played a role in lobbying and campaign finance scandals. They're also criticized because project funding is distributed less on comparative merit than on clout, including a lawmaker's committee assignment or leadership post and whether the lawmaker's party is in the majority or he faces a competitive re-election.

[LINK](#)

## Teague

### Last-minute tax help available

#### Silver City Sun News

As the tax filing deadline rapidly approaches, U.S. Rep. Harry Teague, D-N.M., visited the Tax Help NM site at Western New Mexico University on Tuesday in an effort to make residents aware of tax cuts that may be available to them.

"With the layoffs in this area, and the first \$2,400 in unemployment (payments) is tax free, it will help in these tough economic times," Teague told the Sun-News. "It's tremendous that the colleges are working to help residents."

Teague is promoting recent tax cuts and tax benefits provided in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and to let people know about free tax return preparation services offered by Tax Help NM for those whose annual household income is less than \$42,000 or who are age 65 or older. According to recent numbers, about 70 percent of New Mexicans are eligible for the program, yet only 6.5 percent take advantage of it.

"In order to stimulate the economy, we have to make sure that the people of southern New Mexico have some more money in their pockets," Teague said. "One way to do that is to make sure that they have every resource available to help them file their taxes on time and get the maximum refund they are entitled to."

The last day to get help at Tax Help NM's WNMU branch is Thursday, but residents can call the Tax Helpline at (877) 212-4TAX or visit Teague's Web site, [teague.house.gov](http://teague.house.gov), for a list of tax cuts available. [LINK](#)

### Teague touts rural

#### KRQE

Rep. Harry Teague said he is working to make sure rural parts of his congressional district don't get left behind as federal stimulus money is spent.

He, on a tour of his district and accompanied by Lt. Gov. Diane Denish, dropped by Los Lunas Wednesday to discuss how rural communities can take advantage of the federal Recovery Act.

Teague said that while the amount of money coming in is huge, it's what's going to create jobs and get people to work.

Teague also said much of rural America gets left behind, which is why he's pushing for part of the stimulus package called Broadband for Rural America.

"To be sure that places like that and places like Reserve and Carrizozo don't wind up left out so that those kids don't have the opportunity to reach the Internet and learn with the kids in the urban centers," Teague said. "We have to be sure that that doesn't happen, and that's what we're pushing for."

Teague also invited residents to call his office with any questions about the Recovery Act. [LINK](#)

### Stimulus money flows to Doña Ana County levees

#### Las Cruces Sun-News

U.S. Sen. Tom Udall and Congressman Harry Teague, both D-N.M., on Monday toured deficient river levees in Doña Ana County that will be upgraded with an estimated \$72 million from the federal economic stimulus bill.

They stopped briefly at sites near the Picacho Avenue bridge and Mesilla Dam, where work to build up the height and solidify the levee structure is already under way using dollars appropriated before the stimulus bill.

Udall and Teague said 300 new jobs will be created during the construction with stimulus money.

"The end result is not only going to be a positive impact on the economy, but we're going to save people from having to buy flood insurance for their homes," Teague said. "It's building up the infrastructure in something that we're going to need for years to come."

Udall had similar thoughts:

"There are many communities on the edge of these levees that would be forced to buy flood insurance," he said. "That would be money out of their pockets that could be used in other, more productive ways."

The deficient levees along the Rio Grande have prompted properties throughout the county to be reclassified as high-risk flood areas. As a result, most homeowners who have mortgages will be forced to buy flood insurance, which can cost hundreds of dollars per year.

Levee repairs resulting from the stimulus bill funding should begin around September and wrap up in January 2011, said Bill Ruth, commissioner for the International Boundary and Water Commission, the federal agency that oversees the levees.

"This stimulus package will allow us to get this work done that probably would have taken us almost 20 years of funding through the normal process," he said. "But this money will allow us to get this done in the next 18 months, so it's a very positive impact for the local community."

But though significant upgrades are in the works, they're not halting a FEMA map certification process that's currently under way. The maps — which include the expanded floodplain created by the deficient levees — will be the basis for determining which property owners will have to begin paying flood insurance.

Also, FEMA has said previously that it wanted upgrades done to the entire length of Doña Ana County levees before it would consider them up to par.

But Al Riera, IBWC principal engineer for the levee repairs, said the commission, once it finishes portions of the work, plans to ask FEMA to consider removing areas behind those levees as being safe, instead of requiring that work along the entire system be completed.

Teague and Udall, who are in the state during recess of Congress, also visited a portion of levee system near Canutillo that will require more money to repair. [LINK](#)

## Homeland Security Secretary Toured NM Border Port Of Entry

KFOXtv.com

COLUMBUS, N.M. -- Secretary of Homeland Janet Napolitano's visit was less than 20 minutes at the Columbus port of entry Wednesday, but she did explain why New Mexico was the last state to get a Border Enforcement Security Task Force or BEST team.

"This is a very safe border overall on the Mexico border. There's a reason that New Mexican's can be glad they were the last state. That's because they were the safest," Napolitano said.

The violence however had heightened in Palomas, just a few steps to the south of the Columbus port.

Napolitano said the message is getting out to Washington.

“This port is slated for some major improvements. They got stimulus money in the bill. The port at Antelope Wells will also be getting major funding,” Napolitano said.

U.S. Rep. Harry Teague said law enforcement agencies along the border also need funding to make sure cities to the north of the border are protected, too.

“That’s one of the reasons **Ciro Rodriguez** (a U.S. representative from Texas) and I, we introduced legislation with eleven other congressmen to get more funds to the local sheriff’s and municipal police departments,” Teague said.

Many in Washington now understand that Customs and Border Protection officials and law enforcers are doing their part, but they are being stretched.

“First of all we want to make sure the border is safe and secure. Secondly we want to make sure that our men and women working there have the best equipment and technology that we can get for them,” Napolitano said.

And when asked about the drugs, the cartels and the violence to the south, Napolitano said in the last two weeks the secretary of state, the U.S. attorney general, Napolitano and the president have all been in Mexico and Mexico City.

“It should give you an inkling how seriously this is being taken on the U.S. side and the recognition that we all have a stake in the success of this battle,” Napolitano said.

From Columbus, Napolitano continued her border tour in Nogales, Arizona. [LINK](#)

## **Titus**

### **Titus seeks federal cash for Mesquite projects**

#### **Desert Valley Times**

Representative **Dina Titus** has listed Interstate 15, Exit 120 interchange reconfiguration and the city’s wastewater treatment plant expansion as projects deserving federal government investment.

Titus, who represents Nevada’s Third District, listed “worthy projects in southern Nevada that need the investment and support of the federal government to become a reality.” She is seeking support for the projects – everything from “greening the economy” to infrastructure – through the appropriations process.

Titus is requesting \$5 million to construct a new four-lane underpass at the Interstate 15, Exit 120 interchange, a project that Mayor **Susan Holecheck** has placed at the top of her capital projects wish list.

“The request is a valuable use of taxpayer funds because it will help relieve congestion and open up additional property in the City of Mesquite for development, creating new job opportunities,” Titus said.

The Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada would be the recipient of the funding.

She also is seeking \$1 million for expansion of the city’s wastewater treatment plant. The project will provide additional capacity to meet the demands of the community and handle a new industrial base that will provide a greater diversity of job opportunities in the city, Titus said. [LINK](#)

### **Stimulus bill paves way for road projects**

#### **Las Vegas Sun**

The state Transportation Department is moving forward with seven area freeway projects — four of which would have remained on the back burner without federal stimulus money. All should be under way this summer.

Even without the stimulus, transportation officials anticipated there would be enough money for a widening of Interstate 15 between Blue Diamond Road and Tropicana Avenue, and a restriping and resurfacing of Cheyenne Avenue from U.S. 95 to Nellis Boulevard, spokesman Scott Magruder said.

But the stimulus money will pay for the resurfacing of a 17-mile stretch of I-15 beginning at the California border, a swath of I-15 near Mesquite, and U.S. 95 from Kyle Canyon Road to Lee Canyon Road. Those projects will cost \$54 million. The federal money also will pay for the landscaping of U.S. 95 from Martin Luther King Boulevard to the Rainbow Boulevard curve, a \$9 million project.

The widening of I-15 between Blue Diamond and Tropicana includes adding a lane in each direction between Blue Diamond and Interstate 215 — aligning with the eight lanes between the Las Vegas Beltway and Tropicana — and paving up to two more lanes both ways along this entire stretch to ease merging at ramps.

The Cheyenne project, which includes a median island between I-15 and Rancho Drive, will cost \$14 million.

The seventh freeway project involves the installation of digital signs on U.S. 95 from the beltway north to Charleston Boulevard that would advise motorists of drive times to interchanges, which will cost \$12 million.

The idea seemed foreign to many Westerners: Share a ride to work with someone I don't know? But the idea suddenly had merit when the price of gas last summer reached unprecedented heights.

A 20-mile round-trip commute alone cost some Las Vegas Valley residents \$30 weekly.

So the number of participants in a government-sponsored alternative commuting program called Club Ride soared. No surprise there. But the number continues to climb, even after gas prices collapsed to more modest levels — and have held steady.

In the first quarter of 2008, about 1,800 residents reported that they — at least occasionally — used alternative commuting options, says Tracy Bower, spokeswoman for the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada. Those options include carpooling, walking, bicycling and mass transit. The number jumped to 2,871 the first quarter of this year.

If that increase holds over the last three quarters of 2009, Club Ride will nearly double its total 2008 participation number of about 6,400.

Gas prices may have been the impetus for carpooling last summer, but other factors, including a deepening recession, can't be overlooked.

RTC, the sponsor of Club Ride, relaunched the free program in August and has marketed it extensively.

Another explanation: More companies are promoting Club Ride — almost 200 valleywide. In the past three months 18 employers signed on, including five casinos. Club Ride's appeal to employers: offering employees a way to save money at a time when companies are reducing benefits.

And RTC is peddling a new perk for Club Ride members: discounts at local businesses, including 10 percent off at local Enterprise Rent-A-Car locations and 20 percent off at Jamba Juice.

Area freeways aren't the only mode of transportation benefiting from stimulus dollars.

The Federal Aviation Administration announced this week that Boulder City Airport will get \$1.25 million to resurface the main runway. Transportation officials believe the resurfacing will extend the life of the runway 15 years.

"This grant from the recovery plan will not only provide an improvement to the Boulder City Airport, but it will put people to work in Southern Nevada by injecting money into our local economy," Rep. Dina Titus, D-Las Vegas, says.

Boulder City Airport served about 200,000 passengers in 2008, according to Titus' office. [LINK](#)

## **Titus separates herself from the pack**

### **Las Vegas Sun**

Moments after being sworn in at the Capitol as Nevada's newest congresswoman three months ago, Dina Titus briskly made the quarter-mile walk back to her office in unexpected discomfort.

Marble halls are not kind on tired feet, especially those in dressy multi-inch heels.

She hustled down the long corridor, past other lawmakers and their families on that festive day. Dozens of guests were waiting to celebrate at her office.

The scene brought to mind another ever-witty Democratic politician with a distinguished Southern drawl: Ann Richards, the former governor of Texas, who joked about women doing everything men do — but, as Ginger Rogers showed, backwards and in high heels.

In the nearly 100-day sprint since, Titus accomplished what she often taught her political science students at the UNLV was impossible for a freshman lawmaker in Washington: She has been noticed.

Titus has been invited to the White House (twice), emerged as spokeswoman for her party on educational issues, had muffins with Bono.

Part of the attention comes with the territory. Titus knocked off the Republican who held the suburban Henderson seat since it was created. She was hand-picked by party leaders in desperate need of a credible candidate and became, as she tells it, election guru Rahm Emanuel's "personal project."

(Which helps now — she has the White House chief of staff's number. He invites her to the West Wing.)

But being the chosen one lasts only so long. At some point you have to show what you were chosen to do.

"Once you're given a chance you have to earn it," Titus said one recent Friday before boarding a plane to Nevada. "I'm not taking any of that lightly."

Titus arrives at an important moment in the nation's history and as Nevada suffers through the recession.

President Barack Obama's own 100-day dash astounds Washington. Not since Ronald Reagan or even FDR has a president sought to so transform the nation.

Lawmakers have kept pace passing landmark legislation — an expansion of children's health care, equal pay protection for women, the massive economic recovery package to prevent a deeper recession.

All easy votes, Titus said.

Only Obama's budget plan to reduce tax deductions for the wealthy elicited her opposition. But that protest also was smart politics. It separates her slightly from the president, helping to shield her from the rubber-stamp label that plagued her predecessor during the Bush administration. Eventually she gave Obama her vote there, too. "People in my district don't want 'no,'" Titus said. "They want to see us do something that can help, and I think we are. It's slow, but the little economic signs we're looking at now seem to maybe suggest things are starting to have a chance to turn around."

Opposition researchers at Republican campaign headquarters are using nearly every vote to mount an attack. She has been surprised at how quickly she must again raise money needed to win reelection.

People wonder why she gave up being the state Senate leader for a lowly freshman congressional seat.

The days and nights have been long. Those early weeks, staff answered 100 constituent letters daily, Titus taking a red pen to each before it went out.

Now this might sound corny. But Titus' response comes in the Mary Tyler Moore look on her face, as if she's ready to toss a hat in the air.

"I just can't think of a place I'd rather be," Titus said. "I came back here to work hard and get things done and, boy, we've done it in the first 100 days." [LINK](#)

## Tonko

### Quick licensing urged for GIPA

#### Albany Times Union

U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer wants the federal government to act quickly on plans to relicense and expand the Green Island Power Authority's hydro plant on the Hudson River in a \$99 million project.

At the very least, Schumer is hoping it doesn't take two years, which is typical for such cases in front of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

"Two years is too long to wait, especially in this economy," said Schumer, who along with other local political and business leaders braved bitterly cold winds sweeping off the river Monday morning. "Once the license is granted, shovels can go in the ground."

Schumer and others, including Rep. Paul Tonko, say they will prod FERC to expedite the relicensing process. The project is expected to create 2,000 jobs, including 300 construction jobs, they said.

"We need to inspire FERC to respond to this issue," Tonko said.

FERC spokeswoman Celeste Miller said the review process for relicensing can vary depending on the circumstances. She did not immediately know how long the GIPA project would take to approve, although she began looking into the issue Monday.

GIPA is a municipal electric authority that serves residents and businesses in the village. Its rates are nearly half that of commercial utilities, and it uses the hydro plant to offset the already cheap power it buys from the New York Power Authority and the New York Municipal Power Agency. The rates are credited with helping to attract manufacturers and high-tech companies to the village's industrial north end, where the power plant is located.

However, the village's contract with NYMPA expires in 2013, and the village wants to expand the hydro plant to ensure that its cheap rates continue and it can develop even more of the north end to attract new businesses to support its tax base.

GIPA's license with FERC expires in 2011, and it filed an application for a new license last month. Plans call for boosting the plant's capacity from 6 megawatts to 48 megawatts and replacing the four existing turbines with eight new 6-megawatt turbines.

The plans also include rehabilitating the historic powerhouse that was built by Ford Motor Co. in 1922 to supply electricity to a plant that once stood nearby. GIPA was established by the state Legislature in 1986 and acquired the plant in 2000 through eminent domain,

The project also includes plans to create a river walk with fishing access.

In the future, the village would locate a public safety building and municipal center and plaza in the same area.

The powerhouse, which currently houses the four existing turbines, would get new windows that would offer views of the Hudson. The building would become a public space for events, since the new turbines would be constructed below where they are now.

More important than creating a tourist destination, however, is the low-cost power for businesses, said Mayor Ellen McNulty-Ryan.

"It's vital to our continued economic development," she said. "The 1,000 jobs in the north end, their future depends on low-cost power. This expansion is vital to our future." [LINK](#)

## Wilson

### Op-Ed: Rep Charlie Wilson: Budget and Recovery Act Puts Us on a Path to Sound Economic Health

Marietta Register

For eight years, President Bush played tricks with the federal budget in an attempt to support his failed fiscal policies. He used gimmicks and "emergency" spending bills to hide the cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. At the same time, he made false promises to balance the budget while quietly doubling the national debt.

Meanwhile, the Bush Administration systemically de-regulated and looked the other way as our banks and our housing industry ran amuck. As the national debt grew off the charts, bad policy choices set us up for the greatest economic downturn in a generation.

The American people have had enough of that sort of irresponsible behavior and so have I. It is time to work toward a budget that takes into account important priorities like healthcare, energy, and education. Our government must step in and do what it can to support our country through these trying times.

The budget we passed in the House this week is honest. It openly accounts for the costs of Iraq and Afghanistan. It is forward looking and realistic about the costs of overhauling our nation's healthcare system. It represents a fair tax code that does not place an unfair burden on the middle class while allowing the wealthiest to get away without paying their share. It reduces non-defense discretionary spending to its lowest level in nearly half a century. It does not make false promises about balanced budgets.

The budget is an important blueprint for our future and will help put us on a path toward long term fiscal sustainability as it ultimately decreases our deficit spending, but the economic crisis of today is the fire that must be put out first. A lot of folks ask whether or not the government should be spending money to stimulate the economy. Growing our economy is the only way out, and right now, the only entity able to spend is the federal government.

We have to spend to get out of debt? I agree; it seems weird. But, economists across the political spectrum agree that reducing our short term spending is exactly the wrong thing to do as we climb back up the cliff that our economy fell off more than a year ago.

Fortunately, there are already tangible benefits from the money we are spending on the American Recovery Reinvestment Act. We've seen jobs saved and created in Ohio's Sixth District, as well as the rest of the country. Working families' taxes have been cut and they'll have more in their paychecks, the unemployed have more benefits.

All in all, I truly believe we are on the right path; the budget and the Recovery Act have helped put us there. Yes, this budget adds to our debt over the next few years, but it decreases the level of annual deficit spending seen in the Bush Administration by nearly two-thirds in just four years. Yes, the Recovery Act was expensive, but experts say it could help our economy begin to recover as early as the end of this year.

I agree that these are tough choices, but I choose to take hard votes to do what is necessary to help our country through these extraordinary times. Extraordinary times demand extraordinary action. What we are doing right now is necessary to ensure our future economic survival. [LINK](#)

### **10K for Meigs in Stimulus award**

#### **The Daily Sentinel**

The U.S. Departments of Homeland Security, Health and Human Services and Environmental Protection Agency are releasing funding to Ohio as specified by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

As part of the release, Meigs County will receive nearly \$10,000 for emergency food and shelter through the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

According to U.S. Rep. Charlie Wilson, D-Bridgeport, Ohio's Sixth District will receive \$308,000 for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program, provided through a FEMA grant. Wilson did not say what agency would receive the Meigs County allocation.

The funds can be used for a broad range of services, including mass shelter, mass feeding, food distribution through food pantries and food banks, one-month assistance with rent, mortgage and utility payments to prevent evictions, and transition assistance from shelters to stable living conditions.

The program's objectives are to allocate funds to the neediest areas, to ensure fast response, to foster public-private sector partnerships, to ensure local decision-making, and to maintain minimal but accountable reporting.

"With families out of work, putting food on the table is tough," Wilson said. "Food pantries and food banks are all seeing an increase in demand and this Recovery money will help meet a lot of need in our community."

The program is governed by a national board composed of representatives of the American Red Cross; Catholic Charities, USA; United Jewish Communities; The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.; The Salvation Army; and United Way of America. The Board is chaired by a representative of FEMA, but additional funds will be given to those organizations, and the national board will allocate these additional

funds to local agencies through an established federal formula based on unemployment, population and poverty data.

Ohio will also receive \$7.5 million for the Immunization Grant Program. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, this funding is for crucial health and human services programs that help to provide care for children and prevent disease.

“This will ensure that more families get the vaccines they need,” Wilson said.

Ohio will also receive \$8,080,000 to clean up leaking underground storage tanks. The U.S. EPA estimates that these funds will create or retain significant numbers of jobs. Nationally, at least 1,600 sites will be cleaned up. [LINK](#)

## **Yarmuth**

### **Volunteers of America gets \$150,000 to aid veterans** **Louisville Courier Journal**

U.S. Rep. John Yarmuth, D-3rd District, presented Volunteers of America with a check for \$150,000 yesterday morning at the Family Emergency Shelter on South Preston Street.

The money, which was funded by the FY09 Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill signed by President Barack Obama earlier this month, will be used for the VOA's Incarcerated Veterans Transitional Program, according to a news release from Yarmuth's office.

The program pairs formerly incarcerated veterans with other veterans in hopes of easing the former inmates back into society. Since it began in 2004, about 90 percent of the veterans in the program have not returned to prison or jail, the release said. [LINK](#)