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## eNews - March 27, 2009

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### The Week just past

"Media reports indicate that 31 million Americans watched President Obama's news conference this week. The President answered 13 questions, and notably made the assertion that his own people at the White House were unaware that senior executives at AIG were about to collect \$165 million in retention bonuses two weeks ago. It is pretty clear that the facts do not support this statement.

"But what was equally notable was something the President did NOT say: he never mentioned our brave young warfighters in Iraq and Afghanistan or their families. Clearly, there are a number of important issues facing America today. But as he prepares to send another 17,000 soldiers and Marines to Afghanistan, their service and sacrifice should not be ignored or taken for granted.

"In my assignment on the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, all we talk about is properly equipping our troops, how best to evacuate them quickly when they are wounded, or how our military efforts must be matched by humanitarian projects that promote stability."

### New Strategy on Afghanistan

Earlier today, the President finally did turn his focus to Afghanistan when he announced "a new strategy" for both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The President announced he was sending an additional 4,000 U.S. troops, whose mission will be to train and expand the Afghan army to take the lead on counterterrorism.

"At first glance, the new direction in Southwest Asia appears to be based on the advice of our military commanders, and it includes objectives that many of us have supported, including a commitment to 'disrupt, dismantle and destroy' al Qaeda and its networks, an expansion of the Afghan Army and National police and an acknowledgment that progress in Afghanistan is dependant on a regional, cross-border approach," said Frelinghuysen.

"However, the Obama Administration needs to do more to get our NATO allies to ramp up their efforts," he said. "We need their 'boots on the ground,' their military assets and their full support of this important mission.

"In addition, this new strategy must not shrink from calling the Taliban what they are – terrorists and our enemy. There are no 'moderates' in the Taliban and as the Taliban have publicly admitted, there is no 'negotiating' with

them.

"In this and all other instances, we need to make sure that our enemies and potential adversaries do not perceive that we are approaching them from a position of weakness."

Last week, the President sent a videotaped message to the "people of Iran," which was summarily rejected by the Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

### **House Prepares to debate Obama Budget**

The House Democratic leadership appears committed to bringing to a vote next week a budget resolution that spends too much, taxes too much and borrows too much. As the debate draws near, here are some questions that Speaker Nancy Pelosi will be asked to answer:

- The White House predicts 7.9% unemployment in 2010. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) predicts 9.2% unemployment in 2010. Where are the jobs you promised?
- CBO predicts that the President's budget will produce \$9.2 trillion worth of red ink over 2010-2019. That is more debt that we have incurred in the history of the United States and is \$2.3 trillion higher than the White House predicted. Can you explain this discrepancy?
- CBO predicts deficits nearing \$1 trillion per year over the next decade. What happens if China stops buying our debt and what impact will these deficits have on our economy?
- If American families need to make tough decisions to cut their spending, why does this budget spend taxpayer dollars at record levels?
- The budget raises revenue for nationalized health care through a series of new taxes, including a "light switch tax" that would cost every American household \$3,128 a year. What effect will this have on Americans already struggling to pay their mortgages?
- Even with some of the optimistic assumptions in this budget, why does it not come close to balancing the budget?
- CBO estimates economic activity (GDP) will fall by 1.5% in 2009 before growing again by 4.1% in 2010 and 2011. GDP in the fourth quarter of 2008 was -6.2%. What happens to long-term deficit estimates if America does not realize the budget's short-term growth estimates?

### **Frelinghuysen Honored With "Spirit of Enterprise" Award**

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has presented Rep. Frelinghuysen with its prestigious "Spirit of Enterprise" award for consistently supporting legislation critical to the American business community.

"I am honored to receive this award," Frelinghuysen said. "At this crucial time in our nation's history, we must do everything we can to support business, large and small. This is where America will find creation of valuable, sustainable jobs for the long-term."

The Chamber awarded the "Spirit of Enterprise" based on rankings it gives members of Congress for key votes during the second session of the 110th Congress. Frelinghuysen earned a perfect score of 100 percent from the chamber for his support of key legislation, including revisions to the Americans with Disabilities Act, improving anti-counterfeiting and piracy laws, the establishment of an enforceable civil nuclear energy agreement with India and others.

"In the face of unprecedented economic challenges, Congress made some historic and courageous decisions that impacted the lives of every American," said Thomas J. Donohue, Chamber President and CEO. "Last year in particular, Congress had to make some tough choices and Rep. Frelinghuysen clearly demonstrated his commitment to the economy and keeping America competitive in an ever-changing global market. The Chamber is proud to present Rep. Frelinghuysen this award on behalf of businesses."

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the world's largest business federation, representing more than three million

businesses and organizations of every size, sector, and region.

### **Words Are Important**

This week the *Washington Post* reported that the Obama Administration is backing away from the phrase "Global War on Terror." In its place, the Administration will apparently use the phrase "Overseas Contingency Operations."

Admittedly, the phrase "global war on terror" was not the perfect description for the dangers that face the United States, but at least it identified a global and violent nature of a very real war that is underway. It is a fact that the U.S. military, in particular the Navy and Marines, have been conducting "overseas contingency operations" for decades, long before al Qaeda or other international extremists ever thought of attacking our homeland.

The first step in solving a problem is to admit that you have one. But if we refuse to admit that we are in an actual war that we did not ask for and did not start, then we risk "taking our eye off the ball" and endangering U.S. citizens and interests here at home and abroad.

### **Bad Idea of the Week**

Some Chinese Muslim detainees at Guantanamo Bay could be released in the United States. *USA Today* reported that Attorney General Eric Holder was asked by reporters whether members of a group of Uighurs at the U.S. military detention facility in Cuba could be released on U.S. soil. "I don't know. We're trying to come up with places for them," he said. "The possibility exists."

The U.S. has cleared 17 of the Uighurs for release from Guantanamo but insists it will not hand them over to China. A federal judge in October ordered that the 17 men be allowed to enter the U.S. but last month, a federal appeals court overruled that decision, saying the 17 must stay at Guantanamo. The men were captured in Pakistan and Afghanistan in 2001.

### **Recommended Reading**

Martin Feldstein in the *Washington Post* on the charitable tax deduction: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/24/AR2009032402462.html>

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