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The Week Just Past

“In February, Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid rushed through Congress a \$1 trillion 'stimulus' bill. Since President Obama signed the bill, 1.96 million jobs have been lost. Unemployment stood at 12.4 million. It's at 14.7 million today. The unemployment rate was 7.5 percent; it's 9.5 percent today, the highest in 26 years. And remarkably, the President last week said that the so-called 'stimulus bill' had 'done its job.' Done its job?”

“And if that weren't enough, Washington this week is abuzz with talk of another 'stimulus' – more government, more debt and more Washington spending.

“As if it did not notice that the budget deficit and national debt are at historical highs, the House this week passed three appropriations bills that contain serious increases in government spending.

“There is no doubt that the American people are hurting. As they struggle to make ends meet, their representatives in Washington must find fiscal discipline. And, it will be tax relief for working families and small businesses that lead us out of this recession, not more government spending, more taxes, and more borrowing.”

Helping Small Businesses Innovate

The House this week passed legislation designed to help small businesses innovate. Approved with Rep Frelinghuysen's support, the “Enhancing Small Business Innovation and Research Act” (H.R. 2965) would update the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program's eligibility requirements. The SBIR program offers competition-based awards to stimulate technology innovation among small firms, while providing government agencies with new, cost-effective, technical and scientific solutions to meet their diverse needs.

"Modernizing the SBIR program is a strong step toward helping our small businesses struggling to find capital during this recession," said Frelinghuysen. "SBIR should be designed with open competition, and allow the small business with the best idea to be granted an award. This is the right approach for our small businesses and our economy."

Bad Idea of the Week:

It looks like House Leaders will propose a surtax on "high-income" Americans to help pay for an overhaul of the health-care system. Media reports this week indicate the tax would be similar to a surtax proposed in 2007 by Ways and Committee Chairman Rangel. That plan would have added at least a 4 percent levy on incomes exceeding \$200,000, and was projected to reap as much as \$832 billion over 10 years. Such a surtax would disproportionately affect America's small businesses at the precise moment we need them to produce more jobs.

"I cannot think of a worse time to raise taxes on anyone than in the midst of one of the worst recessions in recent history," said Frelinghuysen.

Recommended Reading:

Wall Street Journal editorial (7-7-9) on health care in the United Kingdom: "Of NICE and Men."
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124692973435303415.html>

Recommended Reading II:

Wall Street Journal on "the extravaganza of log-rolling, vote-buying, outright corporate bribes, side deals, subsidies and policy loopholes" that allowed the House Majority to pass its 'cap and trade' energy tax legislation two weeks ago today.
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124657758880989227.html>

Shining the Spotlight on the AIG Bonus Amendment

Rep. Frelinghuysen is supporting efforts to force Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner to provide all information to the House of Representatives regarding AIG's use of federal bailout money, including the payment of \$165 million in bonuses.

He has cosponsored House Resolution 215 and endorsed a special petition to force its consideration by the full House. The measure gets to the heart of how a secret provision was added at the last minute to the economic "stimulus" bill that not only allowed \$165 million in AIG bonuses to go forward, but actually safeguarded them. No one has claimed authorship of the 50-word provision that effectively protected bonuses negotiated and agreed to before Feb. 11.

"The 1,100 page 'stimulus' bill was rushed to the Floor for a vote in February before anyone on either side of the aisle could read it," said Frelinghuysen. "With a handful of people finalizing the bill in secret it's no surprise that embarrassing bonus language was tucked into the bill. The House resolution will help us understand how this happened and who is responsible." This week, AIG reported that it had asked the White House's "salary czar" for approval to distribute millions of dollars in new bonuses to AIG executives.

A Civics Lesson for the Administration

President Obama's efforts to ignore provisions of laws passed by Congress received a strong rebuke on Thursday. By a vote of 429-2, the House adopted an amendment to the Department of State appropriations bill that would roll back a "signing statement" the President released June 26 after he signed the fiscal 2009 supplemental spending law. In it, he asserted "constitutional authority" to overlook conditions imposed by Congress on how World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) monies are spent.

"This fifth-grade civics," said Frelinghuysen. "The President cannot pick and choose which parts of bills passed by Congress he will abide by. This 'my-way-or-the-highway' unilateralism is not acceptable and I am pleased that Congress is standing its ground. In light of past condemnation of President Bush's 'signing statements,' President Obama's actions appear hypocritical."

House Assures Veterans Medical funding

The House this week approved the Military Construction-Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act for fiscal year that begins on October 1.

The bill provides an overall 15% increase in funding for programs administered by the Veterans Administration (VA) and a significant budget process change designed to ensure that the VA's medical programs and services continue uninterrupted. While providing generous increases in funding since 2001, the VA budget still has been delayed 17 out of the last 22 years, disrupting the lives of our veterans. By adopting "advanced funding," the Appropriations Committee, on which Frelinghuysen serves, will ensure that the next year's veterans medical care budget is not "held hostage" to political disputes unrelated to veterans.

Key Laboratory Improvements at Picatinny Arsenal

Also included in the Military Construction-Veterans Affairs bill was \$10.2 million to fund Phase 2 of the construction of a new state-of-the-art Ballistic Evaluation Facility (BEF) at Picatinny Arsenal. When completed, the BEF will result in a "one-of-kind" research and testing facility which will reduce Army operational overhead and maintenance costs and improve safety for workers on the base. The facility will provide near-term and long-range benefits to the Army, Marines, Navy and Air Force.

In recent years, Rep. Frelinghuysen has secured over \$80 million for laboratory, testing, and infrastructure modernization projects at Picatinny. "State-of-the-art facilities help the people of Picatinny produce hugely successful systems for our warfighters. Modern facilities maximize the efficiency and safety of the people of Picatinny."

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