



Fact Sheet

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The Road to Recovery for the Middle Class: Democratic Accomplishments in the 111th Congress

After the Bush Administration largely ignored our most important domestic priorities and weakened regulations that led to the near collapse of our financial system Democrats began the 111th Congress by acting swiftly to stabilize the nation's economy and keep the country from entering a deep and protracted depression.

In just one year, Senate Democrats helped more families stay in their homes, provided more children with health care, cut taxes cuts for middle-class families and small businesses, restored equal pay for equal work, took on the credit card companies and extended vital safety net programs. Looking forward, Senate Democrats will continue to focus on creating jobs, reform the way Wall Street does business, restore fiscal discipline, and finish our historic push to enact health insurance reform that benefits all American families – all in a fiscally-responsible manner.

Democrats have worked with the Obama Administration to advance a bold, positive agenda that rebuilds and reinvests in America, beginning with restoring a healthy economy. Years of misplaced priorities and failed fiscal policies under Republican leadership in Washington brought the nation's economy to the brink of disaster. Since the start of the 111th Congress, Democrats have enacted several pieces of legislation to help the nation recover from the Great Recession, including:

- ✓ *The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act*, which:
 - Stabilized the economy and protected millions of jobs;
 - Provided tax relief for the middle class; and
 - Provided enhanced safety net programs for Americans suffering the most.
- ✓ *The Helping Families Save Their Homes Act*, which strengthened the housing market and prevented unnecessary foreclosures;
- ✓ Legislation that would ensure the continuation of critical safety net and economic recovery programs;
- ✓ Legislation creating the “Cash for Clunkers” program;
- ✓ *The SBIR/STTR Reauthorization Act of 2009*, which supports the growth of small businesses;
- ✓ *The Credit Card Accountability Responsibility and Disclosure Act of 2009*, which protects consumers from abusive credit card practices; and

- ✓ The *Fraud Enforcement and Recovery Act of 2009*, which combats mortgage and corporate fraud;
- ✓ Legislation to ensure fair pay; and
- ✓ Legislation to improve opportunities for service.

Congress also began to responsibly rebuild the nation's domestic agenda after years of neglect by the Bush Administration. With appropriations for Fiscal Year 2009 and 2010, Congress invested in America – infrastructure, labor, energy, health care, education and more – to address not only our short-term economic concerns, but lay the groundwork for long-term economic prosperity.

Democrats are Working to Help the Nation Recover from the Great Recession

Senate Democrats passed economic recovery legislation to pull the nation's economy back from the brink of disaster and onto the road to recovery.

On February 13, 2009, by a supermajority vote of 60, Congress passed the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-5)*. On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed the bill into law. The *Recovery Act* took steps to:

- Save or create an estimated 3.5 million jobs through investments in transportation, federal, housing, broadband, and environmental infrastructure; investments in state fiscal relief; investments in energy innovation; investments in health-care modernization, and tax incentives for small businesses;
- Provide the Making Work Pay tax credit for 95 percent of working families; expand the Child Tax Credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit; expand the First Time Homebuyer Tax Credit; and extend tax relief for small businesses;
- Make long-term investments in our economy to ensure competitiveness in a 21st Century global economy, including investments in science, education, and the development of clean, efficient, alternative, and renewable energy; and
- Extend a hand of help to those Americans hardest hit by the economic crisis, investing billions in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), extension of federal emergency unemployment benefits, state fiscal relief to ensure continuation of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, subsidies for COBRA Continuation Coverage for unemployed workers, and relief payments for seniors, veterans and other Americans in need.

Moreover, the *Recovery Act* is providing transparency and accountability to guarantee that all taxpayer money is invested responsibly.

The Recovery Act is working. While it took years to create our current economic mess, the *Recovery Act* has made a difference even though only about half of the investments have been distributed thus far. The measure staved off an even more severe recession, prevented further job loss, generated economic activity, and laid a foundation for sustainable growth.

- According to non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projections, “an additional 600,000 to 1.6 million people were employed in the United States, and real (inflation-adjusted) gross domestic product (GDP) was 1.2 percent to 3.2 percent higher, than would have been the case in the absence of ARRA.” [CBO, 11/09]
- The Commerce Department reported that the nation’s gross domestic product grew by 2.2 percent in the third quarter of 2009, the first expansion in more than a year. Economists are projecting 4 percent growth in the fourth quarter. [Commerce Department, 11/24/09; testimony of Martin Baily before the Senate Democratic Policy Committee, 12/16/09].
- According to economist Mark Zandi, “the stimulus has mainly helped by forestalling bigger job and program cuts by state and local governments. Increased aid to unemployed workers is contributing to the recent firming in consumer confidence (which hit an all-time low in February, just before the stimulus took effect) and helping to stabilize retail sales.” “It may be hard to tell when hundreds of thousands of jobs are vanishing each month, but without the stimulus, job losses would be measurably worse.” [Economy.com, 7/7/09]
- Moreover, federal assistance for Americans in need is not only the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do in an effort to stimulate the economy. “Starting in April, a family of four on food stamps received an average of \$80 extra. Money from the program – officially known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – percolates quickly through the economy. The U.S. Department of Agriculture calculates that for every \$5 of food-stamp spending, there is \$9.20 of total economic activity, as grocers and farmers pay their employees and suppliers, who in turn shop and pay their bills.” [Wall Street Journal, 7/7/09]

Congress passed legislation to stabilize the housing market for homeowners, renters, and lenders.

As Democrats work to get the economy growing again by making long-term investments, creating jobs, and providing middle-class tax relief, we have not forgotten the origin of the current recession: the crash of the home mortgage market. Building upon legislation passed in the 110th Congress, the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and President Obama’s “*Making Home Affordable*” program, on March 19, 2009, the 111th Congress passed the *Helping Families Save Their Homes Act* to prevent unnecessary foreclosures, improve access to affordable home loans, increase the availability of credit, protect renters, and prevent homelessness. President Obama signed this legislation into law on May 20, 2009 (**P.L. 111-22**).

The new law:

- Encourages participation in the HOPE for Homeowners program, including by offering new incentives for lenders to negotiate loan modifications with borrowers at risk of foreclosure and reducing fees for homeowners and lenders that have previously discouraged them from participating;
- Gives FHA and USDA’s Rural Housing Service (RHS) the flexibility needed to modify loans consistent with the Obama Administration’s loan modification program;
- Protects lenders from frivolous lawsuits when they make loan modifications consistent with the President’s program or done through the Hope for Homeowners program;

- Increases funding for foreclosure prevention including counseling, additional fair housing employees, and education programs to warn Americans about foreclosure scams;
- Strengthens tools to ensure that predatory lenders cannot act as lenders or servicers in the FHA programs;
- Establishes the right of a homeowner to know who owns their mortgage;
- Provides renters who live in foreclosed properties with at least a 90-day notice for eviction;
- Protects the bank deposits and savings of consumers with a four-year extension of the increase in deposit insurance to \$250,000;
- Increases the borrowing authority of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) to reduce the financial burden on small community banks;
- Provides new resources to respond to the nation's homelessness crisis and prevent additional homelessness; and
- Expands accountability of financial rescue funds.

[Congress has passed legislation to ensure the continuation of critical safety-net and economic recovery programs.](#)

The Great Recession inherited by the Bush Administration was deeper and more severe than anyone – economists and elected officials alike – could have predicted. Programs that were originally set to expire have been extended to ensure that American families survive these difficult times, the economic recovery gains of the past few months are sustained, and the economy is stable. To this end, Congress has taken steps to ensure the continuation of:

- **The Highway Trust Fund, Federal Unemployment Trust Fund, and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and Government National Mortgage Association (GNMA).** Economists and industry experts reported earlier this year that, if Congress did not act, these programs would face funding shortfalls resulting in the loss of nearly 240,000 jobs, 4.6 million American losing unemployment insurance benefits, and a tightening of the mortgage-lending market. To avoid this, Congress enacted a *bill to Restore Sums to the Highway Trust Fund and for Other Purposes (P.L. 111-46)*. The legislation transferred \$7 billion to the Highway Account of the Highway Trust Fund to ensure the continuation of state highway projects; provide funds to the Federal Unemployment Fund for the purposes of repayable advances to states in an effort to ensure the availability of unemployment benefits for the nation's out-of-work workers; and increase the mortgage commitment authority of the FHA and GNMA to ensure continued mortgage lending and the recovery of the housing market.
- **Unemployment Insurance, the Homebuyer Tax Credit, and Certain Business Tax Credits.** Congress passed the fully-offset *Worker, Homeownership, and Business Assistance Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-92)* to: 1) extend unemployment insurance by up to 14 additional weeks for jobless workers across the nation; 2) continue the \$8,000 first-time homebuyer credit through April 30, 2010, but with 60 days to close after that date; 3)

provide a \$6,500 credit to new purchasers who have lived in their current residence for five or more years; and 4) extend and expand the carry back provision to allow all businesses to carry back losses incurred in 2008 or 2009 for five years.

Congress passed the landmark “Cash for Clunkers” program to boost auto sales and promote higher fuel economy.

On August 7, 2009, Congress passed legislation, entitled *Making Supplemental Appropriations for the Consumer Assistance to Recycle and Save Program*, also known as the Car Allowance Rebate System (CARS) or “Cash for Clunkers” (**P.L. 111-47**). In an effort to boost auto sales and promote higher vehicle fuel economy, the CARS program provided consumers who trade-in an old, less fuel efficient vehicle with a rebate of \$3,500 or \$4,500 toward the purchase of a new, more fuel-efficient vehicle, provided the trade-in is scrapped by the dealer. Sales must have been made before November 1, and the rebate amount determined by fuel economy and fuel savings of the new car relative to the old car, as well as vehicle class. The program was originally established as part of the *Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2009* (**P.L. 111-32**). The initial appropriation was \$1 billion, enough for between 222,000 and 286,000 rebates. Due to an overwhelming response from consumers and dealerships, the Obama Administration notified Congress within the first week that the initial appropriation would soon be exhausted. After deliberating about the effectiveness of the CARS program in helping the nation recover from economic recession and in addressing our environmental challenges, Congress provided an additional \$2 billion for the program.

Congress approved a program to give entrepreneurs the resources they need to grow and innovate.

In October, the Senate passed a bipartisan bill to temporarily extend the Small Business Administration’s Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program. The legislation was signed into law on October 30, 2009 (**P.L. 111-43**). This temporary reauthorization, which extends SBIR and other programs through April 30, 2010, gives Congress more time to pass a comprehensive bipartisan bill that will strengthen and improve the SBIR program and provide long-term stability for the program.

On July 13, the Senate took a step toward that comprehensive reauthorization by passing **H.R. 2965**, the *SBIR/STTR Reauthorization Act of 2009* (STTR refers to the Small Business Technology Transfer program). SBIR and STTR stimulate technological innovation, allow small businesses to meet federal research and development needs and provide seed capital for small businesses to develop ideas until they attract outside investment.

Although small firms employ 41 percent of the nation’s high-tech workers and generate 13 to 14 times more patents per employee than large firms, they have received a disproportionately low share of federal R&D dollars. The SBIR program was designed in 1982 to harness the innovative capacity of America’s small businesses to meet the needs of our federal agencies and to help grow small, high-tech firms that, in turn, grow local economies all across the nation. Since then, the SBIR program has generated more than 84,000 patents and millions of jobs. Eleven federal agencies participate in the SBIR program - including the Department of Defense and National Science Foundation – allocating 2.5 percent of their extramural research and development dollars for the program.

If passed, this bill would reauthorize the programs for eight years, giving small businesses and government the stability it needs to plan for and transition important technologies for our

country and make improvements to the program to expand and enhance participation. ; 2) amend the eligibility requirements to allow businesses owned and controlled by multiple venture capital firms to compete for a certain percentage of SBIR projects while making sure that there's a fair playing field for the small businesses that are independently owned and operated; 3) adjust the amount of SBIR and STTR awards to reflect inflation costs while taking a measured approach to increasing the allocation dedicated to these important small business research and development programs; and 4) improve the diversity of the programs, geographically and otherwise, by reauthorizing the Federal and State Technology (FAST) program and Rural Outreach Program for five years.

Senate Democrats voted to protect millions of Americans from unfair, unjust, and unacceptable credit card industry practices.

On May 19, 2009, the Senate approved the *Credit Card Accountability Responsibility and Disclosure Act of 2009* (**H.R. 627**, as amended) (the "CARD act") by a vote of 90-5. This bipartisan legislation will stop credit card companies from misleading their customers with hidden charges and confusing terms. The legislation was signed into law on May 22, 2009 (**P.L. 111-24**). Specifically, the *CARD Act* will:

- Establish strong consumer protections by preventing unfair increases in interest rates and changes in terms, prohibiting exorbitant and unnecessary fees, requiring fairness in application and timing of card payments, and protecting the rights of financially-responsible credit card users;
- Enhance consumer disclosures by requiring disclosures related to payoff timing, late payment deadlines and penalties, card renewal terms, and requiring each credit issuer to post their credit card agreements;
- Protect young consumers targeted by aggressive and irresponsible credit card marketing offers;
- Strengthen oversight of credit card industry practices by requiring credit card issuers to post the credit card agreements on the Internet and provide those agreements to the Federal Reserve Board, requiring the Federal Reserve Board to review the consumer credit card market, including: terms of credit card agreements, practices of credit card issuers and the cost and availability of consumer credit, and increasing penalties for card companies that violate the *Truth in Lending Act* as it applies to credit card costumers;
- Protect recipients of gift cards by eliminating declining values and hidden fees in gift cards and requiring that gift cards have a five-year life span.
- Protect small businesses by requiring a study on the use of credit cards by small businesses and establishing a Small Business Information Security Task Force to address the information technology security needs of small businesses and help prevent the loss of credit card data; and
- Promote financial literacy by requiring comprehensive summary of existing financial literacy programs and development of strategic plans to improve financial literacy education.

[Senate Democrats passed legislation to improve law enforcement's ability to prosecute financial and mortgage fraud.](#)

After the September 11th terrorist attacks, the Bush Administration shifted resources and attention away from the investigation of financial fraud, leaving law enforcement under-manned and under-funded and criminal statutes inadequate to deal with modern financial fraud schemes at a time when corporate and mortgage fraud were on the rise due to lax regulation by the Administration and Republican Congress of the housing and banking industries.

As of a result, thousands of fraud allegations went unexamined and many instances of fraud went unchecked. More than 65,000 suspicious activity reports were filed alleging mortgage fraud in 2008, compared with nearly 4,700 in 2001, nearly 13 times as much. This fraud ultimately contributed to the global economic crisis that is threatening the financial health of our nation and the security of American families today. (Senate Judiciary Committee referencing the U.S. Department of Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, available [here](#) and [here](#).)

On May 19, 2009, the Senate passed the *Fraud Enforcement and Recovery Act of 2009* (**S. 386**) to enhance, strengthen, and rebuild the government's ability to investigate and prosecute the increasing instances of mortgage and corporate fraud. President Obama signed this legislation into law on May 20, 2009 (**P.L. 111-21**). Specifically, FERA will:

- Authorize more than \$260 million per year in Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011 to hire hundreds of additional prosecutors, agents, and staff to conduct investigations and prosecutions of financial fraud at the Department of Justice, the FBI, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the U.S. Secret Service, the Office of Inspector General for the Housing and Urban Development Department, the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC), and the Office of the Inspector General for the SEC;
- Improve and modernize fraud and money laundering statutes to strengthen prosecutors' ability to combat fraud, including mortgage and securities fraud, by:
 - Updating the definition of "financial institution" in federal fraud statutes to include mortgage lending businesses that are not directly regulated or insured by the federal government (these businesses account for nearly half of residential mortgages);
 - Amending the major fraud statute to protect funds expended under the economic recovery package and the bank bailout;
 - Strengthening the *False Claims Act* to reverse recent court decisions that have made it more difficult to recover funds and impose penalties for proven frauds; and
 - Filling key statutory gaps to account for modern types of fraud and correct misinterpretations of the law in recent court decisions; and
- Establish a commission to investigate the origins of the economic crisis so that we can avoid similar crisis in the future.

Besides the obvious benefits of combating financial crime and protecting taxpayer dollars from waste, fraud, and abuse, FERA also will recover billions of dollars in restitution, fines, and penalties for the government and victims. For every \$1 spent in the DOJ's Criminal Division to prosecute fraud, more than \$20 is recovered. For every \$1 spent in the DOJ's Civil Division to recover health care funds under the *False Claims Act*, more than \$15 is returned to the government. (Department of Justice and the Taxpayers Against Fraud.)

[After years of incompetent regulation during the Bush Administration, Congressional Democrats worked to rebuild the nation's regulatory system.](#)

As part of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010 (P.L. 111-8)*, Congress funded the financial regulatory agencies that protect consumers, taxpayers, and investors from the types of abuses that lead to our current economic crisis and endangered public safety. The measure provided funds for the:

- **Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).** The law provided \$1.11 billion for the SEC to strengthen and enforce rules that govern investments and financial markets and to detect and prosecute fraudulent schemes.
- **Federal Trade Commission (FTC).** The law provided \$292 million for the FTC to protect consumers and combat anti-competitive behavior. This funding will strengthen the Commission's capacity to investigate and prosecute unfair and deceptive practices in areas such as foreclosure rescue and credit repair services, non-bank mortgage lending, payday loans, and debt collection.
- **Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).** The law provided \$118 million for the CPSC to keep unsafe products from the marketplace. Funds will be used to continue implementing the landmark bi-partisan consumer protection legislation enacted in 2008 in response to massive product recalls, including children's toys from China.
- **Inspector Generals.** To ensure that we have strong oversight in our agencies, the law provided \$23 million for the Special Inspector General for the Troubled Asset Relief Program; \$30 million for the Treasury Inspector General; \$38 million for the FDIC Inspector General; and \$4 million for the SEC Inspector General (a first time independent appropriations as a safeguard against unwarranted interference).

H.R. 3288 would provide \$5.504 billion for IRS tax enforcement. This increased appropriation would fund the Administration's initiative to target wealthy individuals and businesses who avoid U.S. taxes by parking money in overseas tax havens. **H.R. 3288** would also provide \$2.270 billion for tax payer services, including \$685 million for pre-filing taxpayer assistance and education and \$206 million to help individuals solve ongoing tax problems with the IRS.

In addition, the Senate unanimously approved strengthened supervision of the TARP. On February 4, 2009, the Senate passed the *Special Inspector General for the Troubled Asset Relief Program Act of 2009 (S. 383)* by unanimous consent. This bipartisan legislation expands the authority of and adds the tools needed by the Special Inspector General overseeing the \$700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Program that was created last fall. The legislation was signed into law on April 24, 2009 (**P.L. 111-15**). The new law will, among other things, add authority for the Inspector General to audit programs, function with the same law enforcement authority granted to the Inspectors General of major federal agencies, and cooperate with other Inspectors General.

[The 111th Congress passed a law to ensure fair pay for all Americans.](#)

While the battle for equality and civil rights is far from over, in January 2009, all those who believe in the promise of “equality and justice for all” achieved a major victory when President Obama signed the *Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009* into law (**P.L. 111-2**). In doing so, Congress and President Obama ended a nearly two-year battle to overturn a Supreme Court decision that made it more difficult for victims of pay discrimination to seek redress and receive justice.

In *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co., Inc.*, the Court ruled that the 180-day statute of limitations on filing a discrimination claim with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) under Title VII of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* begins to run when the original discriminatory decision is made and conveyed to the employee, regardless of whether the pay discrimination continues beyond the 180-day period. This ruling reversed a long-standing interpretation, used by nine federal circuits and the EEOC in both Democratic and Republican Administrations, under which the statute of limitations began to run each time an employee received a pay check or other form of compensation reflecting the discrimination.

The *Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act* restored the “pay-check accrual” interpretation to ensure that employees who can prove pay discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age or disability will not be forever barred from seeking redress because they did not learn they were victims of pay discrimination within six months after the discriminatory decision was first made.

A previous attempt to pass this legislation in the 110th Congress was obstructed by Senate Republicans, but in the 111th Congress, with a larger majority, Senate Democrats were able to pass the bill on a vote of 61 to 30. The House of Representatives passed the bill on a vote of 250 to 177 and the measure became law on January 29.

[Democrats Are Working to Improve Opportunities for Service](#)

Congress under the leadership of Democrats passed landmark national service legislation. As Americans face the numerous challenges created by the economic crisis, the need for service to our communities is greater than ever. On March 26, 2009, the Senate approved the *Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (H.R. 1388)*. This legislation reauthorizes the *National and Community Service Act of 1990* and the *Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973*, and authorizes nearly \$6 billion over five years to expand opportunities for Americans to engage in service throughout their lives. The bill was signed into law on April 21, 2009 (**P.L. 111-13**).

The new law will expand the mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation) and increase the number of national service participants in the AmeriCorps program from 75,000 current members to 250,000 over the next eight years. An analysis of AmeriCorps shows that every \$1 invested produced returns up to nearly \$4 in direct, measurable benefits. By creating the ServeAmerica Corps, the Corporation will be able to target service in four areas in need of increased assistance in low-income communities, including: Clean Energy, Education, Health Futures, and an Opportunity Corps to boost financial literacy.

Democrats are Working to Responsibly Govern and Invest in Our Nation

Congress began to restore the nation's priorities after years of neglect by the Bush Administration.

With appropriations for Fiscal Year 2009 and 2010, Congress invested in America – infrastructure, labor, energy, health care, education and more – to address not only our short-term economic concerns, but lay the groundwork for long-term economic prosperity.

Congressional Democrats approved a fiscally-responsible budget that addresses the economic crisis that we inherited and lays a new foundation for our nation's economy. On April 29, 2009, the Senate approved the Conference Report to the *Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Resolution (S. Con. Res. 13)*. This budget addressed the fiscal and economic crises that we have inherited and returns the country to a sound fiscal course by cutting the federal budget deficit in half by 2012 and by two-thirds by 2014 – bringing the deficit down to three percent of GDP. The Democratic budget preserved major priorities in President Obama's budget proposal with strategic investments in energy, education, and health care; provide tax relief for the middle class; and supported our troops.

Congress funded critical federal government programs for Fiscal Year 2009.

On March 11, 2009, the *Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009 (H.R. 1105)* was presented to President Obama for signature into law (**P.L. 111-8**). House and Senate Democrats were able to complete important work blocked by Republicans in the previous year to provide the resources, guidance, and new initiatives for federal government programs in Fiscal Year 2009, at a time when they are so desperately needed. This appropriations measure contained nine bills that are essential to keeping the federal government working to enhance the health, safety, and economic security of the American people.

The 111th Congress overcame Republican obstructionism to pass all of the 2010 appropriations bills. In an effort to improve the efficiency and continue the uninterrupted running of the federal government, Congressional Democrats worked to pass all of the 2010 appropriations bills, while navigating Congressional Republican efforts to slow even bipartisan legislation on the floor.

In October 2009, Congress passed Fiscal Year 2010 appropriations to fund the Department of Homeland Security. (**P.L. 111-83**), Fiscal Year 2010 appropriations to fund the Department of Agriculture. (**P.L. 111-80**), Fiscal Year 2010 appropriations to fund the Departments of Energy and Army, Corps of Engineers and related agencies (**P.L. 111-85**); and Fiscal Year 2010 appropriations to fund the Departments of Interior, the Environmental Protection Agency, and related agencies (**P.L. 111-88**). In December 2009, the Congress passed 2010 appropriations to fund the Department of Defense. (**P.L. 111-118**) and the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010*, a bill that included investments for the Departments of Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, Commerce, Justice, Labor, Education, Health and Human Services, Veterans Affairs, and State, financial services agencies, and related agencies (**P.L. 111-117**).

Democrats are Working to Support Our Troops and Keep America Safe

Senate Democrats led passage of a Fiscal Year 2010 defense appropriations bill that puts our troops first. On December 19, the Senate passed the *Department of Defense*

Appropriations Act, 2010 (P.L. 111-118), to provide critical funds in support of our troops and military families; to fund overseas operations in Iraq and Afghanistan; and to make vital investments in the health and readiness of our Armed Forces. The legislation provided \$636.3 billion in new discretionary spending authority for the Department of Defense, including \$128.3 billion in funding for overseas contingency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Congress advanced a bipartisan defense authorization bill to advance critical national security priorities. In October, the President signed the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 (P.L. 111-84)*. The bill authorized a total of \$680.2 billion in budget authority for defense programs in Fiscal Year 2010. This amount includes a total of \$550.2 billion in base budget authority for Department of Defense (DoD) programs and Department of Energy (DOE) national security activities, and \$130 billion in funding for overseas contingency operations, primarily in support of U.S. missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This legislation allocated funding to provide compensation and first-rate health care for our servicemen and women and their families; ensure our troops have the resources, training, technology, and equipment they need to succeed in their missions; enhance the capability of our Armed Forces to conduct counterinsurgency operations and counter non-traditional threats, including terrorism and the proliferation of WMD; restore the readiness of our military forces; terminate underperforming defense programs and apply savings to higher-priority initiatives; and ensure effective oversight of DOD programs.

Senate Democrats passed a Fiscal Year 2010 appropriations bill to bolster our homeland security. On October 28, 2009, the President signed into law the *Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act 2010 (P.L. 111-83)*. The bill appropriated \$42.7 billion in discretionary budget authority for homeland security programs for Fiscal Year 2010, which is a \$2.65 billion, or 6.6 percent, increase over the amount appropriated for Fiscal Year 2009, excluding emergency appropriations provided in the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* and the *Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009*.

The legislation allocated funding to support critical homeland security priorities for securing our borders and enforcing our immigration laws; protecting the American people from terrorist threats and other vulnerabilities, and ensuring the Department is nimble enough to address future threats; preparing for, responding to, and recovering from all-hazards and supporting our state, local, tribal, and private sector partners in homeland security with resources and information; and giving the Department resources to strengthen financial, procurement, IT systems, and other management tools that it needs to succeed; eliminating or reducing programs that are ineffective or duplicative.

Congress passed legislation to support our nation's veterans, service members and their families. As part of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010*, Congress provided \$134.6 billion for veterans affairs programs, military construction, and military family housing. The legislation allocated \$109.6 billion for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) programs, to meet the needs of our nation's veterans, enhance VA services and facilities, and provide for the emerging and long-term needs of veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It included \$45.1 billion for veterans medical care – \$4.1 billion above the Fiscal Year 2009 level – to increase veterans' access to health services; improve veterans mental health care programs; expand services and programs for homeless veterans; and fund medical research initiatives and facilities maintenance. Additionally, the legislation provided \$23.3 billion to fund key military construction initiatives in support of our active duty components, readiness centers and

operational facilities for the Guard and Reserve forces, expanded mortgage relief and housing assistance programs to military families, base realignment and closure activities, and military construction funding in support of overseas contingency operations in Afghanistan. For the first time, the bill included advance appropriations to fund medical programs for the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure a stable and uninterrupted source of funding for medical care for veterans, providing a total of \$48.2 billion for VA Medical Services, Medical Support and Compliance, and Medical Facilities for Fiscal Year 2011

Under Democratic leadership, the 111th Congress is investing in efforts to protect our national security through effective international diplomacy and development.

As part of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010*, Congress made key investments in Department of State and Foreign Operations programs, providing critical assistance in four priority areas: 1) rebuilding our diplomatic and development capacity at the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to meet 21st Century requirements; 2) assisting key allies in the Middle East as well as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq, combating terrorism and narcotics, and other national security priorities; 3) ensuring effective oversight of assistance programs and diplomatic and development operations; and 4) responding to HIV/AIDS, poverty, food security, education, humanitarian crises, climate change, and other global challenges. The bill reflects the President's decision to end the past practice of relying on supplemental appropriations for many of these programs.

Senate Democrats passed a supplemental appropriations bill to meet critical national security needs. On June 18, 2009, the Senate passed the *Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2009*, providing a total of \$105.9 billion for Fiscal Year 2009 to meet the needs of our troops and strengthen our military; begin to end the war in Iraq and transition responsibility to the Iraqis; support a comprehensive strategy for addressing terrorist threats in Afghanistan and Pakistan; bolster pandemic flu response; mitigate grave threats to global economic stability; address the growing violence along the U.S.-Mexico border; ensure oversight and accountability of U.S. efforts in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan; and provide vital humanitarian assistance, HIV/AIDS funding, and support for peacekeeping operations. The legislation was signed by President Obama on June 24 (**P.L. 111-32**).

Congress enacted a law to ensure fair treatment of military spouses. On Veterans Day 2009, President Obama signed the *Military Spouses Residency Relief Act (P.L. 111-84)*. The legislation amended the *Servicemembers Civil Relief Act of 1940 (SCRA)* to guarantee the equitable treatment of military spouses for the purposes of property, taxes, voting and residency by allowing them to claim the same state of domicile as their active duty spouse. Previously, military spouses who accompanied their active duty spouse would experience impediments in voting and property ownership as well as deterrents in employment and education because they could not claim residency in their new location.

Senate Democrats passed legislation to curtail waste and inefficiency in the defense acquisition system. In an effort to address the growing cost overruns in the Department of Defense acquisition system – and alleviate the enormous burden they have imposed on our defense budget and unacceptable costs they have imposed on American taxpayers – the Senate passed the *Weapons Acquisition Reform Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-23)* on May 20, 2009. Two days later, President Obama signed the bill into law. Specifically, the legislation included provisions to: ensure that the defense acquisition process is structured to support the war-fighter; place defense acquisition systems on a sound footing at the outset and catch costly design flaws and technology risks in weapons systems before we start to build them; reduce risk, promote competition, and prevent conflicts of interest by instituting better

management practices at DOD; provide increased oversight and accountability to ensure that programs are properly managed; and provide DOD with additional tools to hold accountable the worst-performing programs. The legislation is expected to lead to billions in taxpayer savings.

The Senate passed a sweeping reform bill to care for our wounded veterans.

Overcoming months of Republican obstructionism, the Senate passed nearly unanimously the *Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2009 (S. 1963)*. The legislation merges two veterans' health bills to establish an unprecedented permanent program to train, support, and assist the caregivers of disabled veterans; improve care for veterans in rural areas, reduce veteran homelessness, improve care for women veterans; and improve VA's ability to recruit and retain a strong workforce and provide quality assurance at its medical facilities.

[Democrats are Working to Ensure a Healthy America](#)

Congress strongly supported legislation to protect our children and the public from the harmful effects of tobacco use. Tobacco use in the United States is killing our citizens, adding billions of dollars to our health care costs, and reducing our economic productivity. Due to the commitment of Senate Democrats and more than ten years of hard work, legislation granting the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) the authority to regulate the manufacture, marketing, and sale of tobacco was signed into law by the President on June 22, 2009 (**P.L. 111-31**). The Senate approved the legislation (H.R. 1256, as amended) on June 11, 2009.

Senate Democrats persisted for more than ten years to ensure that tobacco, one of the most dangerous products available in the United States, is subject to the same regulation as all other consumer products. This new law, supported by more than 1,000 public health, faith, and other organizations across the country, gives the FDA the legal authority necessary to reduce youth smoking, prevent the sale of tobacco to minors, help current smokers quit, reduce the toxicity of tobacco products, and stop the tobacco industry from deceiving the public with their misleading claims about the dangers of using tobacco products.

Congress overwhelmingly approved critical legislation to renew and expand the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). For the past twelve years, CHIP has played a crucial role in helping to reduce the rate of uninsured children from lower-income families. The program was set to expire in March 2009. Despite overwhelming bipartisan support for similar legislation passed by the Senate and House in the 110th Congress, President Bush twice vetoed bills to expand the program. After two years of hard work by Democrats to improve and expand health care for children, in February, the 111th Congress passed and the President signed the *Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-3)*, a bipartisan bill that authorized \$32.8 billion in new funding for CHIP to provide quality health care coverage for almost 11 million children. The legislation will allow 6.7 million children to continue to receive health care coverage and extend coverage to 4.1 million children who are currently uninsured. The program has been renewed through Fiscal Year 2013. This legislation provides a new option to states to remove the 5-year waiting period for legal immigrant children and pregnant women, providing those who qualify with immediate access to Medicaid and CHIP.

The 111th Congress reauthorized the largest federal program for HIV/AIDS care and treatment. In October, President Obama signed into law the *Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Extension Act (P.L. 111-87)*. The legislation, originally passed in August 1990, was named after Indiana teenager, Ryan White, who died a few months prior from complications

due to AIDS. White, who was infected with HIV by a contaminated blood treatment for his hemophilia, became the national poster child for HIV/AIDS at a time when little was known about the disease and discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS was at its peak. Ryan and his family gained national attention after he challenged his school for expelling him due to his illness. The extension of Ryan's law not only honors him and all those who have died from AIDS, but gives hope, care, and treatment to those living with the disease. The legislation provides funding to heavily impacted metropolitan areas, states, and local community-based organizations to provide life-saving medical care, medications, and support services to more than half a million people each year.

Even before the passage of health insurance reform, Congressional Democrats made a down payment on improving our nation's health care system by investing in health programs. As part of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010*, Congress provided increased funding for programs under the Department of Health and Human Service.

The bill provided funding for the expansion of access to quality health care; critical medical research; health promotion programs; training for health professionals; mental health services; head start services; child care assistance to help parents keep working; and community and social services.

Democrats are Working to Rebuild America and Restore the American Dream

Congress invested in the nation's transportation system to keep the nation moving. As part of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010*, Congressional Democrats provided funding for the Department of Transportation to support the nation's road construction projects, mass transit, rail, and airports.

Congress passed critical legislation to rebuild America's communities, restore the American dream of homeownership, and provide housing assistance to Americans in need. As part of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010*, Congressional Democrats provided funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The bill provided funding for housing assistance for Americans in need; community development; and housing counseling assistance, the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, and limitations on Federal Housing Administration commitments and new Government National Mortgage Association commitments.

Senate Democrats made critical investments in transportation, housing, and urban development. On December 16, 2009, President Obama signed the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010*, which included funding for the Departments of Transportation and Housing and Urban Development. The legislation provided funding for investments in mass transit and economic development as well as improvements to public housing units.

Democrats are Working to Educate Our Children and Train Our Workforce

Congressional Democrats made a down-payment on educational reform by investing in our nation's most critical education programs. As part of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010*, Congress provided increased funding for programs under the Department of Education. The bill included investments to make college more affordable; provide grants for disadvantaged students; and support afterschool programs.

Congress invested in labor training programs aimed at helping unemployed workers survive during the economic recession and, ultimately, getting Americans back to work. As part of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010*, Congress provided increased funding for programs under the Department of Labor, including investments for the Employment and Training Administration; Office of Job Corps; veterans employment and training; community service employment for older Americans; and State Unemployment Insurance and Employment Service Operations.

[Democrats are Working to Advance Justice and Enforce the Laws of the United States](#)

The Democratic Congress passed legislation to retool the Department of Justice, protect the public, combat crime, fight terrorism, and curb the transfer of illegal narcotics. As part of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010*, Congress provided increased funding for programs under the Department of Justice and related agencies. The legislation provided for state and local law enforcement and crime prevention grants; the FBI, the U.S. Marshals Service; the Drug Enforcement Administration; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; the Southwest Border Initiative; the Federal Bureau of Prisons; and investments for the Adam Walsh and Child Exploitation program; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; and Legal Services Corporation.

The 111th Congress confirmed the 111th Justice on the Supreme Court. On August 7, 2009 Senate Democrats confirmed Second Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Sonia Sotomayor – perhaps the most judicially-qualified nominee in 70 years – to be an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. With 17 distinguished years on the bench, Justice Sotomayor, is now serving as the nation’s 111th Justice – and only the third woman and first Latino to serve on the Court.

Congress, under the leadership of Democrats, passed legislation to strengthen law enforcement’s ability to monitor, investigate, prosecute, and protect Americans from hate crimes. As part of the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 (P.L. 111-84)*, Congress passed the *Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009*. The *Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Prevention Act* will strengthen the ability of federal, state, local, and tribal governments to investigate and prosecute hate crimes based on race, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability. Though already protected by the Constitution, the legislation explicitly protects first amendment rights to speech and expressive conduct. The bill would also authorize grants to meet state, local, and tribal expenses involved in investigating and prosecuting hate crimes. Moreover, the law would increase the federal government’s ability to monitor hate crimes by expanding the hate crimes statistics collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Congress passed legislation to improve access to the ballot for military and overseas voters. As part of the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 (P.L. 111-84)*, Congress passed *Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act (MOVE Act)*. The legislation makes it easier for absentee military troops and other overseas voters to register, vote, and have their ballots counted on time. Currently, military and overseas voters have one of the lowest turnout rates because it’s so difficult for them to register and vote. A study of 2008 election results in seven key states found that one in four military ballots went uncounted last year. This legislation would require the use of electronic transmission methods to help voters obtain voting material more quickly; requires states to send out ballots to these voters not less

than 45 days before an election; and facilitate cooperation among governmental entities to allow military and overseas citizens to successfully have their ballots cast and counted.

Congress passed bipartisan legislation to enhance the Justice Department's ability to hold human rights violators accountable. In December 2009, the President signed into law the *Human Rights Enforcement Act (P.L. 111-122)*. The legislation merges two offices in the Department of Justice to create one, stronger, more efficient human rights section. Currently, the federal government has over 1,000 open cases involving suspected perpetrators of serious human rights abuses from approximately 95 countries who are now in the United States. While no one knows the total number of human rights abusers living in the United States, the number of open cases likely represents only a small portion of the total number of such perpetrators. This new section will improve the Justice Department's ability to locate, investigate, prosecute, and/or denaturalize these perpetrators, ensuring that they do not find safe haven in the United States.

The Senate passed landmark voting rights legislation for the District of Columbia. Since 1801, the year after DC was established as the seat of the national government, its residents have been seeking representation in the House and Senate. On February 26, 2009 the Senate passed **S. 160**, the *District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act of 2009*, a landmark measure to provide the District of Columbia with one voting seat in the House of Representatives and Utah – the next state in line to receive an additional representative based on the 2000 census – a fourth seat in the House, which would bring membership in the House from 435 to 437. The bipartisan bill was passed by a margin of 61 to 37. The House of Representatives passed a similar measure earlier this year. As Congress charts a path to enact this legislation, it is important to remember that the bill reflects Democrats' efforts to ensure democracy for all Americans, including those in the nation's capital, who, at present, do not enjoy the most basic right of citizenship: to choose who governs them.

The Senate, under the leadership of Democrats, took the historic step of formally apologizing for the enslavement and racial segregation of African Americans. In June 2009, the Senate passed a bipartisan, bicameral resolution to apologize for slavery and the Jim Crow Era (**S.Con.Res. 26**). Recognizing that a collective apology on behalf of the United States for a collective wrong was appropriate, necessary, and long-overdue, the Senate formally:

- “Acknowledged the fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality, and inhumanity of slavery and Jim Crow laws;
- Apologized to African-Americans on behalf of the people of the United States, for the wrongs committed against them and their ancestors who suffered under slavery and Jim Crow laws; and
- Expressed its recommitment to the principle that all people are created equal and endowed with inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and calls on all people of the United States to work toward eliminating racial prejudices, injustices, and discrimination from our society.”

The Democratic-led Senate is working to combat illicit methamphetamine production. Continuing work begun in the 110th Congress to curtail methamphetamine abuse, on June 9, 2009, the Senate passed unanimously **S. 256**, the *Combat Methamphetamine Enhancement Act of 2009*, which will enhance regulation requirements for sellers and persons dealing in certain listed chemicals used to produce meth. The bill will require all retail sellers of

these products to submit self-certifications of compliance with the *Controlled Substances Act* and create a civil penalty for the negligent failure to do so. The Attorney General will be required to develop and make public a list of all self-certified individuals on the Drug Enforcement Administration's website. The bill will then prohibit distributors from selling meth-producing products to persons not listed.

[Democrats are Working to Protect Our Nation's Environment and Natural Resources](#)

The Democratic Congress made critical water infrastructure and clean energy investments. On October 28, 2009, President Obama signed *the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010 (P.L. 111-85)*. The legislation provides \$34.27 billion to help the Army Corps of Engineers manage many of the nation's water resources and help allow the Department of Energy to make clean energy investments. The legislation invests in renewable energy and energy efficiency; science; fossil energy research; and supports the Army Corps of Engineers.

Congress passed landmark legislation to protect the American wilderness. On March 30, 2009, President Obama signed into law the *Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-11)*. The legislation represents the most significant conservation legislation passed by Congress in 15 years. The legislation designated over two million acres of wilderness; adds over 1,000 miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers; 2,800 miles of National Trails; 330,000 acres of National Conservation Areas; codifies the National Landscape Conservation System; and authorizes the Forest Landscape Conservation Service and measures to improve our oceans, coasts, Great Lakes, and water resources. The legislation:

- Designated over two million acres of wilderness surpassing the combined wilderness acreage designated by the 108th, 109th, and 110th Congresses (Congressional Research Service). The designation of the two million plus acres of new wilderness areas spans nine states (West Virginia, Virginia, Oregon, Idaho, New Mexico, Colorado, Michigan, Utah, and California). The designation of wilderness allows Congress to protect our nation's most pristine lands and best wildlife habitats for the current and future generations.
- Added over 1,000 miles to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System in seven states (Oregon, Idaho, California, Utah, Arizona, Wyoming, and Massachusetts). Wild and Scenic Rivers are designated by Congress to preserve free flowing rivers that possess outstandingly remarkable environmental, scenic, and recreational features.
- Added more than 2,800 miles into the National Trails System through the creation of new national trails in New England, the Mid-Atlantic, the Pacific Northwest and the Southwest. The National Trails System is designed to preserve public access to trails so that they can continue to be valuable resources for our country.
- Created more than 330,000 acres of new National Conservation Areas in Utah, New Mexico and Colorado. National Conservation Areas provide important protections from development while also improving those areas recreational opportunities.
- Codified the National Landscape Conservation System currently operating administratively within the Department of Interior. In 2000, the Department of Interior administratively established the National Landscape Conservation System so that public

awareness of the various natural areas managed by the Department of Interior might be increased. The codification of the National Landscape Conservation System will help ensure that sustained funding will be available for the Department of Interior to protect its most exceptional areas while also keeping environmental protection a high priority at the Department of Interior for years to come.

- Will improve our nation's understanding of the oceans, coasts, and the Great Lakes by authorizing coordinated federal research programs.

Democrats Passed Legislation that Invests in Water Infrastructure and Clean Energy

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Senate Democrats made critical investments in child nutrition, conservation, and rural investments.

On October 16, 2009, President Obama signed the *Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010 (P.L. 111-80)*. The legislation provides \$121.1 billion to help fund domestic food programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, as well as rural development and conservation investments.

Democrats Passed Legislation that Invests in Firefighting, Clean Water, and National Parks

On October 30, 2009, President Obama signed the *Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010 (P.L. 111-88)*. The legislation provides \$32.24 billion to help maintain and improve our national parks, support clean and drinking water improvements, and funding for fighting fires on public lands including budget reforms to help create a dedicated, steady and predictable funding stream for wildfire suppression activities.

Democrats Passed Legislation that Invests in Law Enforcement, Science, and the Environment

The *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010*, included funding for the Departments of Commerce, Justice, and related agencies. The legislation provided funding for state and local law enforcement and crime prevention grants as well as the nation's criminal law enforcement priorities and national security needs. The legislation also provides funding for agencies like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and NASA which play a critical role in advancing science and predicting changes in the Earth's environment.