

February 27, 2009: Weekly Washington Update

On Tuesday evening, I attended a Joint Session of Congress where President Obama briefed us on the state of the economy, troop removal from Iraq, and his future plans for other government programs. Additionally, we saw the release of the President's 2010 budget on Thursday. Many of you followed along with me during the speech on my twitter.com page, and if you haven't checked it out, it's a great way to keep track of what I'm doing on your behalf in Congress.

I was pleased to have the opportunity to hear our President speak on Tuesday. No matter what our party may be, we can all agree that we want to work to see America return to economic prosperity and continue to lead as the world's economic engine. President Obama acknowledged that we have a steep road ahead to tackle our mounting deficits and our debt obligations. I wholeheartedly agree that we must cut our budget deficit, and I believe that we must be doing so immediately. Balancing our budget, just as every American family does, is one thing we can do today that will stop the hemorrhaging of dollars from our Treasury. It is only after we get our annual spending under control that we can begin to work on eliminating the deficit.

The President also highlighted his plans for troop withdrawals from Iraq, in accordance with the Status of Forces Agreement we signed with Iraq this past fall. I join the President in sharing my pride and gratitude for our service men and women serving overseas, who put themselves in harm's way everyday. They have done a wonderful job, and represent the best of what America has to offer. I see this as an opportunity to begin to refocus on the war in Afghanistan, where the Taliban has seen resurgence in the southwestern region, and Al Qaeda continues to operate in the border area of Pakistan. But as we shift our forces, we must remain vigilant and flexible to ensure the effects of the surge in Iraq remain permanent, and heed the advice of our military leaders on the ground.

Lastly, as we completed the funding for the government for the remainder of 2009, the President released his proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2010. The President's budget forecasts the largest U.S. deficit since World War II, and I look forward to examining his proposals with a close eye on fiscal discipline and maintaining a strong defense. The document we have in hand today is a \$3.55 trillion spending blueprint, and provides the broad outlines for a more detailed budget to be released in April.

We have a lot of work ahead of us in the coming months as we seek to right a faltering economy and place our government on the path to fiscal discipline and long-term health. I am encouraged by the President's words this week and truly hope that we can work together to find the solutions to the problems we as Americans are faced with. I remain confident that the nation which has won two World Wars, recovered from the Great Depression, and went to the moon, has all the tools to overcome this financial crisis. It is our entrepreneurial spirit and eternal optimism in the ideals of democracy that will ultimately lead this nation out of this economic challenge into a new age of prosperity. I have an unyielding faith in the resilience and work ethic of all Americans as we toil together for a brighter tomorrow.