

Health Care



Major Health Care Accomplishments of the U.S. Senate During the 109th Congress



HELPING TO ENSURE QUALITY HEALTHCARE FOR ALL AMERICANS

State High Risk Pool Funding Extension Act of 2006 – P.L. 109-172

This provision reauthorizes funding for grants to each state that has not created a qualified high risk pool for the state's cost of creation and initial operation of a high risk health insurance pool. The legislation also provides relief to certain states that experience losses in connection with the operation of existing high risk pools and sets forth reporting requirements for the Secretary of Health and Human Services relating to high risk pool funding.

Pandemic Flu Preparedness (Provision in the Department of Defense Appropriations, FY 2006) – P.L. 109-148

This provision provides \$3.8 billion for pandemic flu preparedness. It will help the United States prepare for a potential outbreak of pandemic flu by authorizing funding for stockpiling antivirals and medical supplies, promoting vaccine development and research, monitoring global avian influenza, providing grants for local public health centers, and providing additional funds for risk communication and outreach.

Pandemic Counter Measure Protections (Provision in the Department of Defense Appropriations, FY 2006) – P.L. 109-148

The provision provides targeted liability protections under State and Federal law for manufacturers and distributors of pandemic and epidemic products (including vaccines) and security countermeasures, in the event that the Secretary of Health and Human Services makes a declaration of a public health emergency as a result of a disease or other health condition. The provision also provides a process for providing compensation for any cases in which the administration or use of a product covered by the emergency declaration caused injury or death.

Stem Cell Therapeutic and Research Act of 2005 – P.L. 109-129

This law provides for the collection of human umbilical cord blood to be used for treatment, transplant, and research, and creates the C.W. Bill Young Cell Transplantation Program, an umbrella program containing activities related to the National Bone Marrow Donor Registry and the new Cord Blood program. An advisory council will be created to coordinate with the Secretary of Health and Human Services to oversee this program and ensure that donated cord blood not appropriate for transplant use will be made available for use in peer-reviewed research. The collection of umbilical-cord-blood stem cells after child birth causes no harm to mother or child, and research has shown that cord-blood stem cells can be effectively used to treat several diseases, including leukemia, Fanconi anemia, and sickle cell disease.

Fetus Farming Prohibition Act of 2006 – P.L. 109-242

This law prohibits any person or entity from soliciting or knowingly acquiring, receiving, or accepting a donation of human fetal tissue knowing that a human pregnancy was deliberately initiated to provide such tissue. The law also prohibits knowingly acquiring, receiving, or accepting tissue or cells obtained from a human embryo or fetus that was gestated in the uterus of a nonhuman animal.

Alternative Pluripotent Stem Cell Therapies Enhancement Act (S. 2754) – Passed Senate

This bill would direct the Secretary of HHS to conduct and support basic and applied research to develop alternative techniques for the isolation, derivation, production, or testing of pluripotent stem cells. However, research authorized under this bill could not derive such cells from a human embryo, but is intended to encourage the derivation of pluripotent cells from alternative sources or techniques.

Medicare Cost Sharing, TMA, and Abstinence Programs Extension – P.L. 109-91

This law extends the qualified individual Medicare program through September 2007. This program provides medical assistance for Medicare cost-sharing for individuals who would be qualified Medicaid beneficiaries but for the fact that their income exceeds the state-established income level, and is between 120% and 135% of the official poverty line. The law also provided a three-month extension of Transitional Medical Assistance and the abstinence education program through December 31, 2005.

Veterans Medical Services Supplemental, FY 2005 (Section 601 of the Interior Appropriations, FY 2006) – P.L. 109-54

This provision provides an additional \$1.5 billion in funding to the Department of Veterans Affairs to cover budget shortfalls in veterans' healthcare. This funding reflects our commitment to supporting the troops both overseas and at home, and will ensure that our returning service members receive the quality care that they deserve.

Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act – P.L. 109-41

This law creates and implements a voluntary system of medical error reporting, so that preventable medical errors can be identified and actions can be taken to ensure that they do not continue to occur. The confidentiality protections provided in this law give more incentives for providers to voluntarily report errors. Such reporting is critical to efforts to ensure patient safety and improve the quality of patient care.

Wired for Health Care Quality Act (S. 1418) – Passed Senate

This bill formally establishes the Office of the National Coordinator of Health Information Technology (ONCHIT), previously organized by Executive Order. The National Coordinator, through ONCHIT, serves as the principle advisor to the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the President for federal health information technology programs. ONCHIT is responsible for developing, implementing, and overseeing national health information programs that protect the privacy of health information, facilitating patient access to information while protecting it against unauthorized access. The bill also requires the Secretary to develop or adopt a system to measure the quality of care that patients receive.

Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (S. 306) – Passed Senate

This bill would prohibit discrimination on the basis of genetic information with respect to health insurance and employment. It would prohibit a group health plan or other provider of health insurance from adjusting premiums on the basis of genetic information and requesting or requiring an individual or a family member of such individual to undergo a genetic test. In the employment context, it prohibits the use of genetic information for employment decisions, such as hiring, firing, job assignments, and promotions.

**Medicare-
state-specific page...**

The Vast Majority of Beneficiaries are Not Exposed to the Medicare Drug Benefit's Coverage Gap



Contrary to earlier estimates reported, most Medicare beneficiaries will not be exposed to the coverage gap. According to new data from PriceWaterhouseCoopers, only 8 percent of beneficiaries are likely to reach the coverage gap.¹

PriceWaterhouseCoopers research shows that 92% of Medicare beneficiaries will not enter the Medicare drug benefit's coverage gap.²

- 45% of all Medicare beneficiaries will not be exposed to the coverage gap because: they are eligible for low-income subsidies and therefore are not affected by the coverage gap; they have annual drug spending below \$2,250 and will not reach the coverage gap; or they have chosen “enhanced” Part D plans that provide some prescription drug coverage in the coverage gap.
- 47% have prescription drug coverage from plans outside of Medicare Part D or have not yet enrolled. (37.5% are enrolled in Veterans Affairs and other federal programs, or employer sponsored programs, etc., and 9.7% have not yet enrolled in a Part D program.)

The majority of Medicare beneficiaries who enter the coverage gap spend \$1750 or less in the gap. Of those who reach the gap:

- 34% will spend under \$750 in the gap;
- 58% will spend under \$1,750;
- 30% spend through the gap to reach catastrophic coverage³

Those who are exposed to the coverage gap will benefit from discounted prices for drugs because plans have negotiated substantial discounts from retail prices. Plan sponsors negotiate with manufacturers to obtain price concessions in order to achieve lower costs for prescription drug coverage.

- On average, CMS found that beneficiaries would save up to 23% in the PDP with the lowest prices – off the prices they would have paid without coverage.⁴
- CMS found that the PDP with the lowest premium offered drug prices averaging 13% below the price for a cash paying customer.⁵

Every Medicare beneficiary enrolling in a drug plan is protected against catastrophic expenditures. Although many prescription drug plans have a coverage gap, every plan is required to protect beneficiaries against catastrophic drug costs. Every plan covers at least 95% of all drug costs above \$5,100 per year for every beneficiary. For those who qualify for low-income subsidies, the out-of-pocket costs are much less.

Beneficiaries have access to plans that reduce or eliminate the coverage gap.

According to CMS data, four of the 10 sponsors of national stand-alone prescription drug plans offered coverage in the gap. In addition if a beneficiary finds themselves exposed the gap, they will have a chance during the next annual enrollment period to select a plan that best meets their needs.⁶

1 PriceWaterhouse Coopers, June 2006; “Significance of the Coverage Gap Under Medicare Part D”; <http://www.medicaretoday.org/pdfs/HLCBrief.pdf>

2 Ibid

3 Ibid

4 Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS News, “Medicare Advantage Plans Provide Lower Costs and Substantial Savings,” April 3rd, 2006 (found at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/media/press/release.asp?Counter=1825>)

5 Ibid.

6 Medicare Drug Focus Weekly Business Intelligence, “A Closer Look: Drug Plan Designs of the 10 National Part D Sponsors”; October 17, 2005, Volume 01, Number 005

The Alternative Pluripotent Stem Cell Therapies Enhancement Act, S. 2754

Background:

The issue of embryonic stem cell research is fraught with strong passions and sharp disagreements. But this need not be the case. A commitment to curing disease, promoting scientific progress and respect for life are not mutually exclusive. Despite differing opinions on whether taxpayer dollars should be used to support stem cell research that is dependent on the destruction of a human embryo, there is non-controversial common ground on this issue. This bill finds such common ground.

A year ago, the President's Council on Bioethics issued a white paper reviewing several proposed ways of deriving pluripotent stem cells in ways that are ethically non-controversial. Since then, there have been numerous reports of scientists potentially deriving embryonic-like (or pluripotent) stem cells in ways that have not required the destruction of a human embryo, using a variety of sources of cells, both animal and human.

Bill Summary:

The Alternative Pluripotent Stem Cell Therapies Enhancement Act (S. 2754) is intended to intensify such research into alternative ways of deriving pluripotent stem cells. Study of these cells may lead to improved understanding of or treatments for diseases. Recognizing the ethical issues surrounding embryonic stem cell research and the potential scientific advances that may alleviate these issues, S. 2754 seeks to promote the derivation of pluripotent stem cell lines from alternative sources that do not require the creation of human embryos for research purposes or discarding, destroying, or knowingly harming a human embryo or fetus.

This bill would amend the Public Health Service Act to require NIH to conduct and support basic and applied research to develop techniques for the isolation, derivation, production, or testing of stem cells that have pluripotent or embryonic-like qualities. Specifically, this refers to stem cells that have the capability of producing all or almost all of the cell types of the developing body and that may result in improved understanding of or treatments for diseases and other adverse health conditions. However, recognizing that there are real ethical concerns with research requiring the destruction of a human embryo and seeking to encourage research into alternative ways of deriving these cells, the bill prohibits these funds from being used for techniques or research that derives such cells from a human embryo.

To implement this research, the Secretary of HHS, in consultation with the Director of NIH, will issue guidelines on research under this provision. They will provide guidance concerning:

- The next steps required for additional research, including the determination of the extent to which specific techniques may require additional basic or animal research to ensure that any research involving human cells is consistent with the purpose of the bill.

- Prioritizing research with the greatest potential for near-term clinical benefit.
- Taking into account the techniques outlined by the President's Council on Bioethics and any other techniques and research. This would include variations on altered nuclear transfer, reprogramming of differentiated somatic cells, and other techniques being used to isolate these pluripotent cells.

The bill authorizes for this research such sums as may be necessary for fiscal years 2007 through 2009. S. 2754 requires a yearly report to Congress on the activities being carried out and research being conducted during the fiscal year.

In this bill, the term "human embryo" has the meaning given in the applicable appropriations act. The applicable appropriations act is defined as the appropriations act providing funding for HHS in the fiscal year the research is conducted or supported. If there were no definition in that year's appropriation act, then the applicable appropriations act would be the act of the previous fiscal year.

Recognizing that supporters of the bill come from varying perspectives on the legitimacy of embryonic stem cell research, S. 2754 contains a rule of construction saying that nothing in this bill shall be construed to affect any policy, guideline, or regulation regarding embryonic stem cell research, human cloning by somatic cell nuclear transfer, or any other research not specifically authorized by this section.

The Fetus Farming Prohibition Act, S. 3504

S. 3504, the Fetus Farming Prohibition Act, is a simple safeguard on research practices. This bill amends the current fetal tissue code to prohibit the solicitation or acceptance of tissue from fetuses gestated for research purposes. It would prevent persons or entities engaged in interstate commerce from acquiring tissue resulting from the deliberate implantation of a human embryo into a woman's uterus or an animal uterus in order to grow the embryo or fetus to a later stage of development before destroying the fetus for research purposes.

Researchers have found that embryonic stem cells are inherently unstable, but that the cells become more stable to work with the further the embryo or fetus develops. This bill simply ensures that we don't cross the line of actually implanting embryos and growing them in a purely utilitarian way just to get their cells for research.

This bill is cosponsored by Senator Sam Brownback.

Background

In 1993, Congress passed fetal tissue regulations authored by Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA). These regulations were part of legislation that overturned an existing presidential moratorium on fetal tissue research. They were intended to be a compromise to allow fetal tissue research, but prevent potential abuses. Among other things, the law (42 USC 289g-2) forbids the use of fetal tissue from an abortion if the researcher paid the woman to have the abortion. The language is carefully drafted to put the responsibility and regulation on the researcher, not the woman. However, this language did not anticipate the potential for creating and gestating embryos (cloned or otherwise) for the purpose of growing organs.

Setting The Record Straight: President Bush's Stem Cell Policy Is Working

TIME Magazine: "The 'presidential lines' were of limited value; there were not nearly as many as scientists initially thought would be available ^ more like 21 than 62, and they were old, in some cases damaged and most likely contaminated with the mouse feeder cells and calf serum used to grow them." (*Nancy Gibbs, Alice Park, Mike Allen, and Massimo Calabresi, "What A Bush Veto Would Mean For Stem Cells," TIME, 7/24/06*)

The Washington Post: "When Mr. Bush announced that he would permit the use of existing stem cell lines almost five years ago, that compromise made sense. But instead of the 78 lines originally foreseen by the administration, only 22 are available, and some of those are deteriorating or contaminated." (*Editorial, "Stem Cell Showdown," The Washington Post, 7/17/06*)

President Bush's Stem Cell Policy Is Significantly Advancing Research In An Ethical Way

President Bush Is The First President To Ever Fund Embryonic Stem Cell Research. Over \$90 million in Federal funding has been devoted to research on approved lines since 2001.

President Bush's Stem Cell Policy Has Made Federally Funded Stem Cell Lines Widely Available To Scientists. The NIH has sent more than 700 shipments of cells to researchers, and has thousands more available upon request.

85 Percent Of All The Human Embryonic Stem Cell Science Done In The World Has Been Done With The Lines Now Approved For Funding By The NIH. (*Jason Owen-Smith and Jennifer McCormick, "An International Gap In Human ES Cell Research," Nature Biotechnology, April 2006*)

- **The Vast Majority Of This Work Has Been In The Past Five Years.**

The Eligible Lines Are Not Contaminated, And Are Very Widely Used By Researchers. The use of mouse cells is standard scientific practice. As the FDA has indicated, the resulting stem cell lines can be carefully screened to ensure they are safe for use in any future clinical trials. Drug and biological products are routinely co-cultured with animal cells with no adverse consequences for the millions of people who have benefited from them. The FDA has proven itself time and again to be fully capable of ensuring the safety and efficacy of such products.

- **Tom Okarma, CEO Of The Stem Cell Company Geron:** "So the stuff you hear published that all of those lines are irrevocably contaminated with mouse materials and could never be used in people ^ hogwash. If you know how to grow them, they're fine." (*Steven Edwards, "Scrutinizing A Stem Cell Trial," Wired News, 3/29/06*)

Several Scientific Publications Have Now Demonstrated Techniques For Removing All Animal Materials From The Existing Cell Cultures. This helps further alleviate concerns about animal material issues. (*James Thomson et al., "Derivation Of Human Embryonic Stem Cells In Defined Conditions," Nature Biotechnology, February 2006*)

Even *TIME* Magazine Says The "Science Has Outrun The Politics" And Adult Stem Cells May Be More Valuable Than Previously Thought. "The good news for all sides is that over the course of this long argument, researchers have learned more about how stem cells work, and the science has outrun the politics. Adult cells, such as those found in bone marrow, were thought to be less valuable than embryonic cells, which are 'pluripotent' master cells that can turn into anything from a brain cell to a toenail. But adult cells may be more elastic than scientists thought, and could offer shortcuts to treatment that embryonic cells can't match." (*Nancy Gibbs, Alice Park, Mike Allen, and Massimo Calabresi, "What A Bush Veto Would Mean For Stem Cells," TIME, 7/24/06*)

Democrats Obstruct Medical Liability Reform and Small Business Health Plans Block key provisions that would improve access to quality, affordable health care



Democrats have once again blocked urgently-needed medical liability reform from even reaching the floor of the Senate for an up or down vote.

Senate Republicans are committed to delivering a balanced approach to medical liability reform that improves access to quality health care and reduces health costs:

- Medical Care Access Protection Act of 2006 (S.22), a comprehensive medical liability reform bill, and
- Healthy Mothers and Healthy Babies Access to Care Act (S.23), a targeted ob/gyn medical liability reform bill.
- Both bills address our nation’s current medical liability crisis which is forcing physicians, hospitals, and other health care providers to move out of high-liability states, limit the scope of their practices, and even close their doors permanently.

Republicans seek to implement reasonable, comprehensive, and effective reforms to:

- Reduce the incidence of costly “defensive medicine,”
- Provide appropriate financial relief to the injured,
- Improve the fairness and cost-effectiveness of our current liability system, and
- Lower the premiums and reduce health costs.

Senate Republicans will work to overcome Democrat obstruction of medical liability reform to deliver a solution that protects patients, access, and quality.

- Patients are the #1 priority.
- Patients have lost their doctors and the care they provided.
- Patients have been forced to travel great distances because doctors have been driven out of their communities by unnecessary costs.
- Every time another \$100 million verdict is awarded:
- Patients’ monthly premiums and deductibles will increase,
- Patients’ health care costs will increase, and
- Patients even less fortunate won’t be able to afford the medical care they need.

Democrats refused to allow a vote on Small Business Health Plan legislation that would help America's small business owners and working families.

Senate Republicans will consider legislation that will make health insurance more affordable for America's small business owners and working families.

- Small Business Health Plans (SBHP) would give a small or family-owned business the opportunity to choose the health plan that is best for the owners, their families, and their employees.
- SBHP legislation will also cover more than one million uninsured Americans in working families.
- This bill will reduce the cost of health insurance for small employers by 12 percent – that's \$1,000 per employee – according to a respected actuarial firm.

Senate Republicans are working to make health care more affordable, portable, transparent and efficient.

- Republicans passed the Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act which created a voluntary system of medical error reporting to identify and resolve preventable medical errors.
- Republicans passed legislation to encourage adoption of information technologies in health care to reduce medical errors, improve quality of care, and lower health care costs.
- Republicans passed legislation to continue federal support for bone marrow and umbilical cord blood research that will make profound difference in the lives of thousands of patients.

Energy/Conservation



Reducing Gas Prices & Securing America's Energy Independence

Republicans understand the problem of high energy costs and are working on solutions to lower energy costs and reduce our dependence on foreign oil...

The current energy/gas price problem is a global supply-demand problem, largely caused by geopolitical instability in key producing countries Iran, Venezuela and Nigeria.

Republicans care about consumers and are working on energy security proposals to ease consumers' pain at the pump and reduce America's dependence on unstable foreign oil.

Republicans have pushed for environmentally friendly domestic energy production for decades. The only sure way to reduce our dependence on foreign oil is to develop affordable and reliable American energy resources, such as oil and gas exploration on the Coastal Plain of ANWR and in the Gulf of Mexico.

Senate Republicans held a vote to expand America's environmentally sensitive offshore drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf in the Gulf of Mexico, which opens an area estimated to contain 1.26 billion barrels of oil and 5.8 trillion cubic feet of natural gas – enough natural gas to heat and cool nearly 6 million homes for 15 years.

Republicans have made progress toward securing America's energy independence and affordable energy through the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which marked its first anniversary in July with a number of important accomplishments, and more are expected.

Republicans recognize the importance of promoting conservation and cleaner, more efficient technologies. America needs to diversify its energy supplies through expanded use of clean renewables and biofuels, clean coal technology and nuclear energy. Republicans are making progress on alternative energy and conservation through the Energy Policy Act and increased funding for the President's Advanced Energy Initiative.

Democrats have no energy agenda except blocking sensible supply and infrastructure development and raising taxes, which increase consumer prices...

Democrats' tough rhetoric on energy prices does not match their record. Democrats are trying to blame Republicans for a gas price crisis that Democrats largely created through decades of blocking sensible domestic energy supply and infrastructure development that would have stabilized supply.

Democrats' only energy plan is to block production, increase regulations and raise taxes, which increase consumers' prices. For example, if President Clinton hadn't vetoed legislation allowing environmentally sensitive exploration on the Coastal Plain of ANWR 10 years ago, today we would have 1 million additional barrels of oil a day coming from ANWR. And many Senate Democrats continue to oppose environmentally friendly offshore drilling.

109th Senate Accomplishments:

Securing America's Energy Independence and Reducing Gas Prices

- Comprehensive energy policy (alternative energy sources, efficiency/conservation)
- American oil and natural gas offshore drilling (Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act)

Offshore Drilling: Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (S. 3711/Lease Sale 181)

American energy production:

This bill is the strongest energy-producing legislation filed in the Senate this year, directing new oil and gas leasing in 8.3 million acres of the Gulf of Mexico. The area contains an estimated 1.26 billion barrels of recoverable oil and 5.8 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. The natural gas supply made available through this bill is enough to heat and cool nearly 6 million homes for 15 years.

Leasing Prohibitions:

- No oil and gas leasing, pre-leasing and other activities within 125 miles of State of Florida in the New Eastern Gulf of Mexico Planning Area until June 30, 2022.
- No oil and gas leasing, pre-leasing and other activities within 100 miles of the State of Florida in the New Central Gulf of Mexico Planning Area, and east of the western boundary of the 181 Area until June 30, 2022.
- No oil and gas leasing, pre-leasing and other activities east of the Military Mission Line until June 30, 2022, after which the Department of Defense may veto leasing.
- Secretary of the Interior to establish within one year of enactment a regulation that provides for an option to exchange leases in areas unavailable for leases within 125 miles of Florida coastline in New Eastern Gulf Planning Area for leases in areas available for leasing in the Gulf of Mexico.

Revenue sharing:

- Revenue sharing on new areas of production made available by this agreement beginning in FY 2007 and each fiscal year thereafter (181 Area on the eastern Gulf side and 181 South Area):
 - 37.5 % to Gulf producing states
 - 12.5 % to Stateside LWCF
 - 50 % to Federal Treasury
- Revenue sharing on new leases after date of enactment in existing planning areas beginning in FY 2016 and each fiscal year thereafter (Gulf of Mexico planning areas):
 - 37.5 % to Gulf producing states
 - 12.5 % to Stateside LWCF
 - 50 % to Federal Treasury

There is a \$500 million annual net spending cap on revenue. Net is spending in excess of receipts coming in from new areas opened up under this bill.

By the Numbers – Energy Policy Act of 2005

Because Congress passed the Energy Policy Act last July:

27	New ethanol plants that have broken ground
500 million	Gallons of new annual ethanol production online
1.4 billion	Gallons of annual ethanol production online by end of 2006
401	E-85 pumps installed
25	New nuclear reactors planned
34,000	Megawatts of electricity will be generated by 2020 if all 25 plants are built
15 million	Households can be powered by the electricity from the 25 plants
0	Airborne emissions will be generated by the 25 plants
116,871	New hybrid vehicles purchased since Jan. 1, 2006
1.34	Billion cubic feet/day of new Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) capacity online
9.7	Billion cubic feet/day of new LNG capacity approved by FERC
7	New LNG terminals or terminal expansions approved by FERC
30	Emergency fuel waivers granted following Hurricane Katrina
2,000	Megawatts of new wind power online
493,000	Homes that can be powered by new wind power
3 billion	Dollars in economic activity spurred by new wind power production
7 billion	Pounds of CO2 offset by new wind power production
4,200	Megawatts of new wind power slated to be online by end of 2006
1 million	Homes that can be powered by new wind power by end of 2006
100	Percent increase in CA and NJ applications for photovoltaic systems
30	Percent increase nationwide of solar thermal collectors installations
15	New efficiency standards implemented for large appliances
50,000	Megawatts of energy saved by 2020 because of the 15 new efficiency standards
80	600-watt power plants won't be needed because of the new efficiency standards
120	New coal-based facilities in various stages of planning
2 million	Barrels of oil daily that can be replaced by clean, synthetic fuel from coal by 2025
5 trillion	Cubic feet of natural gas that can be replaced by coal fuels by 2025
55,000	Coal miners expected to join workforce over next five years

Senate Republican Energy and Conservation Working Group Gas Price Relief Proposals



Refinery Capacity

Encourages the construction of new and the expansion of existing refineries, biorefineries (ethanol, biodiesel), and coal-to-liquids facilities to meet the domestic motor fuels needs of today and tomorrow.

Domestic Oil and Gas Production

Opens an area in the Gulf of Mexico known as Lease Sale 181, which is estimated to contain 930 million barrels of oil and six trillion cubic feet of natural gas—enough to heat six million homes for the next 15 years.

Drilling on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Opens a portion of the Coastal Plain of ANWR for environmentally sensitive oil exploration and production to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. If President Clinton had not vetoed ANWR drilling legislation 10 years ago, today we would have 1 million barrels of oil a day coming from ANWR, which would mean lower gas prices.

Natural Gas Supply

Facilitates construction of an LNG facility that will reduce natural gas prices in the Northeast by up to 20 percent.

Tax Incentives

Expands tax incentives to increase refinery capacity, build new pipelines, bring more fuel to market faster and promote the use of hybrid vehicles, partially paid for by rolling back a tax incentive for big oil companies.

Advanced Energy Initiative

Encourages research and development into alternative fuels and advanced technology vehicles to diversify our domestic energy supply and reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

Boutique Fuels

Reduces the number of fuel types, making a more flexible and competitive fuel supply and distribution system to lower prices at the pump.

Fuel Economy Standards

Gives the Secretary of Transportation the authority to issue a rule governing fuel efficiency standards for passenger vehicles.

Alternative Energy Refueling Systems

Encourages gas station owners to install E-85, bio-diesel and other alternative energy refueling systems to increase the availability of alternative fuels for consumers.

Strategic Petroleum Reserve

Urges the Administration to suspend deposits into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve for six months to ensure our entire oil supply is available for consumer use.

Consumer Anti-Price Gouging Protection

Gives the Federal Trade Commission, as well as the Justice Department and state attorneys general, the authority to bring enforcement actions against any supplier unlawfully inflating the price of gas to protect consumers from abuse.

Education



Major Education Accomplishments of the U.S. Senate During the 109th Congress



ENSURING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

Increasing Grant Aid for Students Studying Math and Science (Provision in the Deficit Reduction Act) – P.L. 109-171

This provision authorizes \$4.53 billion in spending over five years to create a new program that awards Academic Competitiveness Grants (for first or second academic year) and SMART grants (for third and fourth academic years) to Pell-eligible students in an undergraduate program of study. Students in their first and second years may receive awards of \$700 and \$1300 respectively, provided that they have completed a rigorous program of study at the secondary level. Undergraduate students in their third and fourth years may receive up to \$4,000 in grant aid if they major in a math or science subject or foreign language determined to be critical for national security and make progress toward a degree.

Student Loan Loophole (Provision in the Deficit Reduction Act) – P.L. 109-171

This provision closes loopholes in existing law that made the student loan program too expensive for taxpayers. Provisions include the elimination of the guaranteed 9.5 percent floor rate for student loans, which was instituted in 1980 when interest rates were much higher. The bill would fix the borrower interest rate at 6.8 percent, and fix the parent interest rate at 8.5 percent. The law also increases loan limits for first and second year students to \$3,500 and \$4,500 respectively, and increases graduate borrowing limits to \$12,000.

Teacher Incentive Fund (Provision in the Departments of Labor, HHS, and Education Appropriations, FY 2006) – P.L. 109-149

This law provides \$100 million for the Teacher Incentive Fund, a pilot program for states and school districts to provide additional compensation to teachers who make a measurable impact on raising student achievement, and to provide an incentive to attract effective teachers to what the Department of Education calls “high-need” schools – schools with high poverty rates and poor performance on state assessments. The Teacher Incentive Fund was first proposed in the President’s FY 2006 Budget, and offers an appropriate incentive to states and local education agencies to advance the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act (S. 250) – Passed Senate

This bill would reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins vocational education program with a number of reforms. These reforms would improve the academic focus and performance of all students, create a more effective and accountable system, build stronger partnerships between technical education and related businesses, and require states to develop an integrated curriculum of high school, college, and technical coursework to create an industry-recognized degree.

Workforce Investment Act Amendments of 2005 (S. 1021) – Passed Senate

This bill would give states and local areas the flexibility to provide training for jobs in high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand occupations needed to ensure America’s competitiveness in the global economy. Specifically, the bill would do the following: improve the existing One-Stop Career Center delivery system; remove barriers that have discouraged business involvement in workforce training, while finding new mechanisms to increase and improve local business and industry participation in job training decisions across the nation; improve access to services; and improve youth job training activities by directing more resources to those out-of-school youth who are most in need of assistance.

Schools Safely Acquiring Faculty Excellence (SAFE) Act (Provision of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety bill) (H.R. 4472) – Passed Senate

This provision would allow schools to access existing national databases of child predators when making hiring decisions. Allowing schools to access this information would provide another tool to help ensure that our nation's classrooms are secure and our children are protected from those who might seek to do them harm.

“WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT”

The “Workforce Reinvestment and Adult Education Act,” S. 1021, reauthorizes the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to give states and local areas the flexibility to provide training for jobs in high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand occupations needed to ensure America’s competitiveness in the global economy. S. 1021 passed in the Senate, and the House of Representatives passed similar legislation. The bill is expected to go to conference soon.

Key provisions of the bill include:

- Improving the existing One-Stop Career Center delivery system to ensure that it can respond quickly and effectively to the changing needs of employers and workers in the new economy and can address the needs of special populations, including individuals with disabilities;
- Strengthening the partnership between job training programs and the private sector, with post-secondary education and training, social services, and economic development systems to prepare the 21st century workforce for career opportunities and skills in high growth sectors;
- Removing barriers that have discouraged business involvement in workforce training, while finding new methods to increase and improve local business and industry influence in job training decisions across the nation;
- Improving access to services in all areas, including rural areas;
- Ensuring that individuals with disabilities have access to workforce activities at one-stop centers and approved training providers;
- Expanding services to the business sector to make job training more demand-driven and responsive to employers’ needs, including small employers;
- Improving youth job training activities by directing more resources to those out-of-school youth who are most in need of assistance;
- Enhancing assistance for youth, between 16 to 21 years of age, seeking employment;
- Amending the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act to improve adult literary services, including workplace literary services, services for adults with limited English proficiency, and services for those with learning disabilities; and to hold states and eligible providers of adult education more accountable for student performance; and,
- Amending the Rehabilitation Act to improve coordination with other employment, education, and technology-based programs for individuals with disabilities; to strengthen individual choice; and to improve transition planning services for youth moving from high school to postsecondary education and the workforce.

Talking Points:

- We are facing an economic challenge that threatens our ability as a nation to compete on the world stage. This bill sends a clear message that we are serious about helping our workers and employers remain competitive and about closing the skills gap that is putting America’s long-term competitiveness in jeopardy.
- About half of our current workforce does not have a postsecondary education degree or credential, even though our best projections suggest that job growth over the next decade will center on jobs requiring

some postsecondary education or training. By passing this measure, more and more Americans likely will be able to meet the skill demands of today's workplace.

- Some estimates suggest that 60 percent of the jobs created in the next decade will require skills that only 20 percent of workers today possess, and that 80 percent of jobs will require education or training beyond high school. The Workforce Investment Act is a critical piece of a comprehensive effort, which includes the Perkins Act, the Higher Education Amendments Act, and Youthbuild, to train American workers to fill the good jobs being created.

Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Act

The Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, S. 250, provides federal support for high schools and non-profit postsecondary institutions to offer career and technical education and training programs to prepare America's young people for high-skill, high-paying jobs and to address the needs of the nation's changing workforce. The conference agreement on the Perkins act has been approved by the Senate and the House of Representatives, and the bill now awaits the President's signature.

Key provisions of the bill include:

- Creating a more effective accountability system at the state and local levels that aligns accountability requirements with other federal education and training programs;
- Establishing stronger links to businesses to build stronger partnerships between high schools, colleges, and businesses, so they can better meet the needs of the workforce, including small businesses;
- Providing better links from high school to college by supporting high school and college courses that will lead to an industry recognized credential, certificate, or postsecondary degree;
- Maintaining a separate authorization for the Tech-Prep program;
- Providing additional opportunities for teacher recruitment and retention, including through the use of adjunct faculty arrangements; and,
- Ensuring a stronger academic focus that promotes an enhanced emphasis on academic instruction for federally supported career and technical education programs consistent with other federal education programs such as "No Child Left Behind."

Talking Points:

- This bill will help close the gap that threatens America's long-term competitiveness by addressing the needs of the nation's changing workforce and preparing Americans for high skills, high-paying jobs.
- This bill will help support lifelong learning opportunities for students to gain technical skills and knowledge that will help them find and hold a high skill, high wage job. For others, participation in these programs can mean the difference between a job with no possibility of advancement and a successful career.
- Some estimates suggest that 60 percent of the jobs created in the next decade will require skills that only 20 percent of workers today possess, and that 80 percent of jobs will require education or training beyond high school. The Perkins Act, S. 250, is a critical piece of a comprehensive effort, which includes the Workforce Investment Act, the Higher Education Amendments Act, and Youthbuild, to train American workers to fill the good jobs being created and become leaders in the global economy.

Five Pillars of the President's Education Agenda



1. We will achieve our primary goal of every child reading and doing math at grade-level by 2014—by working with states to implement the No Child Left Behind Act in a student-centered, results-oriented way.
2. We will remain committed to narrowing the achievement gap across the country—by reauthorizing No Child Left Behind.
3. We will run faster to stay competitive with the world—by offering rigorous high school coursework and targeted interventions to at-risk students struggling with reading and math.
4. We will ensure that college graduates are equipped with the skills to succeed in the 21st century workforce—by focusing on the vital issues of access, affordability, accountability, quality and innovation.
5. We will provide more choices and opportunities for aspiring families—by expanding charter schools, opportunity scholarships and supplemental educational services.

Helpful Tips for Planning a School Visit



1. Choose the focus of your school visit.
 - a. Elementary, Middle or High School focused?
2. Choose a school to visit in your district. Good questions to ask include:
 - a. Has the school made AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) meaning are they on the path to having every student on or above grade level by 2014?
 - i. To find AYP: http://www.nasbe.org/SEA_Links/SEA_Links.html.
This website will direct you to the each individual state's website. The most official/up-to-date AYP information is found at State websites, but you can also visit www.greatschools.net for AYP information. Or call your contact at the U.S. Department of Education and we can help you find the information (see attached map listing the contact person for your state).
 - b. Does the school have any other newsworthy issues (i.e. recent positive or negative press)?
3. Call the principal to propose time, date, purpose of visit, and participants.
 - a. Time of day (try not to disrupt lunchtime)
 - b. Purpose of visit: Explain what your Member would like to accomplish with the visit (ie: welcome students back to school in an assembly or out in front of school, highlight a grant (new or on-going), meet with teachers, parents, or business leaders to gather information)
 - c. Participants can include: teachers, parents, students, superintendent, reading or math coaches, business leaders
4. Ask the principal what he/she would like to highlight at the school and propose structure of visit.
 - a. Greet principal
 - b. Visit several classrooms
 - c. Participate in a roundtable or participate in an assembly with students
 - d. Have a media availability
5. Other helpful notes
 - a. It's a good idea to notify the district superintendent's office, unless the principal would prefer to do this.
 - b. It helps to work with the Superintendent's press and communications office to maximize media coverage.
 - c. If you plan to invite media to attend the event, it's important to ask the principal about parental notification and approval for photographers.

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