
CAPITOL CONNECTION

A Weekly Update of News and Views
For Opinion Shapers and Policy Makers

Congressman Gary G. Miller
42nd District, California



February 9, 2007

President Submits Fiscal Year 2008 Budget to Congress

On Monday, the Fiscal Year 2008 appropriations process began as President Bush delivered his annual budget proposal to Congress. This \$2.9 trillion budgetary blueprint is focused on reducing the federal deficit each year and reaching a balanced budget by 2012. As Congress considers the details of this more than 2,100 page document, Congressman Miller will continue to support pro-growth policies such as making tax relief permanent, reforming costly and mismanaged entitlement programs, and holding the line on non-security spending. Local highlights of the budget include:

Border Security: The President's budget proposes \$1 billion for fencing and virtual barriers along the border and another \$778 million to add 3,000 new Border Patrol agents. To ensure criminal aliens are not released back into the community after serving their sentence, the President requested \$28.7 million to identify and remove these aliens. In addition, \$30 million has been requested to expand the Employment Eligibility Verification program to provide stronger interior and worksite enforcement to ensure employers are not hiring illegal aliens. Congressman Miller is pleased that the President has requested funding for these important programs.

Housing: In his budget for the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the President has called for an increase in loan limits for the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to provide consumers in high cost areas the ability to purchase a home with FHA mortgage insurance. Congressman Miller has championed this loan limit increase because of the importance of this change to home buyers in California, where home prices and new home construction have eclipsed FHA's current limit of \$362,790. California's drop in FHA volume, largely due to the unrealistic loan limit, has been nothing short of stunning. In the 42nd District alone, FHA insured over 7,000 mortgages in 2000 and only 80 in 2005.

Telephone Tax: The President's budget proposes to repeal the federal excise tax on telecommunications services. While Congressman Miller is pleased that his efforts to repeal the telephone tax resulted in this year's tax refund for long-distance services, local telecommunication services unfortunately will still be taxed. Congressman Miller has led legislative efforts to fully repeal the telephone tax since coming to Congress, and he will continue working to entirely eliminate this and other unnecessary, burdensome taxes.

Border Patrol Agent Attacked in Prison

Despite Congressman Miller's plea to the Department of Justice to allow Border Patrol Agents Ramos and Compean to stay out of prison during the appeal of their convictions for shooting an illegal alien drug smuggler, they were ordered to report to prison on January 17, 2007. On Saturday, after the airing of the agents' case on America's Most Wanted, Agent Ramos was attacked by his fellow inmates. Ramos was treated for his injuries and was placed in a special housing unit. In response to this appalling turn of events, Congressman Miller joined 29 of his colleagues in sending a letter to the President requesting the immediate release of Ramos and Compean as they appeal their case through the judicial system.

Testing Underway in Cleveland National Forest

The drilling of two holes in the Cleveland National Forest began this week to test the possibility of transporting water between Orange and Riverside Counties for the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. If deemed viable, a twelve mile tunnel could be constructed to transport water from Northern California and the Colorado River. Congressman Miller helped secure \$15.8 million in the SAFETEA-LU Act so the Orange County Transportation Authority along with the Riverside County Transportation Commission can begin geotechnical test drilling. These tests, which will start at the end of the year, could help determine the viability of building a vehicle tunnel through the Cleveland National Forest. These projects could bring much-needed water to Southern California and also provide congestion relief for our busy freeways.

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