
CAPITOL CONNECTION

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

Congressman Gary G. Miller
42nd District, California



January 12, 2007

Congressman Miller Named Ranking Member of Oversight Subcommittee

On Tuesday, Congressman Miller was tapped to serve as the Ranking Member of the House Financial Services Committee's Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. He now becomes the senior-most Republican on the panel, which is charged with conducting oversight of the agencies, departments, and programs under the Committee's jurisdiction, including the Department of the Treasury, HUD, the SEC, and the Federal Reserve. The Subcommittee is also responsible for conducting investigations into any matter that falls within the Committee's jurisdiction.

Minimum Wage Increase Passes, Fails to Consider Impact on Small Businesses

On Wednesday, Congress passed a bill to increase the federal minimum wage by forty percent over two years. This mandate will disproportionately affect small businesses, and is expected to have a similar impact as the experience in the 1990s when more than 150,000 jobs were lost after a minimum wage increase. While a proposal was offered to minimize the impact of the increase on the ability of small businesses to create and sustain job opportunities, obstructionist rules of debate blocked serious consideration of this proposal. Specifically, the alternative would have coupled the minimum wage increase with relief to small businesses through tax incentives and by helping them obtain health insurance for their employees. In a surprising twist, the bill extends, for the first time, the minimum wage requirement to all U.S. territories; strangely, American Samoa was excluded from this list. Such an exclusion will largely benefit Del Monte Corporation, which is based in newly-elected Speaker Nancy Pelosi's district. StarKist, a subsidiary of the San Francisco-based Del Monte Corporation, owns a tuna plant on the island that employs nearly 5,000 Samoans.

House Votes to Socialize Medicare Prescription Drug Program

On Friday, the House passed a bill to impose government price controls on the Medicare Prescription Drug Program. While the bill purports to save Medicare beneficiaries money on their prescription drugs, all this legislation stands to do is to impose a restrictive drug formulary, limit the pharmacies seniors can utilize, and stifle medical advancements. Indeed, the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office affirms that government negotiation of drug prices will only yield savings if access to medicines is restricted. In stark contrast, recent data indicates that the current system of incorporating private sector principles into the prescription drug plan is working to control costs, while providing prescription drug coverage to millions of seniors who did not have it previously. Based on strong, competitive bids by health care plans for 2007, average monthly premiums will be lower than last year's average premium and well below initial premium estimates.

Congressman Miller Supports Border Agents' Appeal

This week, Congressman Miller met with Border Agent Jose Compean who was convicted of shooting and wounding an illegal alien that was attempting to smuggle 700 pounds of marijuana across the border. After the U.S. government gave immunity to the illegal alien to testify against Agent Compean and his partner, the two agents were sentenced to 12 and 11 years in federal prison, respectively. Agent Compean and his partner, Agent Ramos, are appealing their convictions. On Monday, Congressman Miller joined 37 of his House colleagues in sending a letter to Attorney General Gonzales urging him to allow Agents Compean and Ramos to remain free on bond pending their appeal. This is the sixth letter Congressman Miller has sent to administration officials on the agents' behalf, including a request for a presidential pardon. The agents have been ordered to report to prison by January 17, 2007.

2007 Application for Federal College Financial Aid Now Available

January marks the beginning of the season for new and continuing college students to apply for financial aid. This aid includes federal grants, loans, and work-study programs. Almost all students will qualify for at least an unsubsidized student loan, which provides a favorable rate to borrowers. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid, known as FAFSA, is the form from the Department of Education that must be filled out to determine a student's eligibility for assistance. The form can be found at <http://federalstudentaid.ed.gov>. Please feel free to contact Congressman Miller's Brea office at (714) 257-1142 if you need any assistance.

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