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Thank you for reading The Conaway Chronicle, a weekly review of my activities in Congress. This newsletter is to let you know what's going on in Washington and what important issues are being debated in Congress.

H.R. 6234: The "Bridge Life Extension Act of 2008"

Last week, I introduced legislation to protect and secure America's bridges. The recent bridge collapses and closures should be a wakeup call for lawmakers.

The "Bridge Life Extension Act of 2008" sets new standards for bridges that receive federal funding by requiring states to develop corrosion mitigation and prevention plans for all bridges undergoing repair, rehabilitation or construction. The states will be required to submit the outlined plans to the Secretary of Transportation for approval before Federal funds are granted. The plans must contain expected useful life of the bridge, details of corrosion mitigation and prevention methods in construction and maintenance of the bridge, certification and approval by a corrosion expert and corrosion training for all bridge inspectors.

The cost of not mitigating corrosion on US bridges represents a waste of taxpayer dollars. I introduced this bill in an effort to force Congress to understand the importance of taking a proactive initiative to solving this problem. We cannot ignore the fact that lives have been lost due to past inattention, and more will be if we don't address our nation's aging infrastructure.

On August 2, 2007, the Interstate 35 bridge in Minneapolis collapsed, killing 13 people and injuring 125. The bridge had been found in "poor" condition for 17 consecutive years before the collapse.

Last week, Highway 43 in Winona, Minnesota closed abruptly, leaving commuters to cross the Mississippi River by ferry after corrosion in the gusset plates was discovered.

Unemployment benefits extension

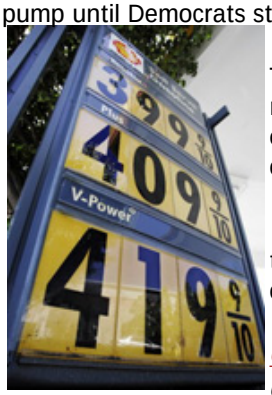
Last week, the House passed an extension of unemployment insurance benefits from 13 weeks to 26 weeks. The measure passed, but the President is threatening to veto it. I voted against this bill for two reasons. First, it eliminates the work requirement to get unemployment benefits. Today, you have to work at least 20 weeks in order to be covered by unemployment insurance. This bill extends unemployment benefits of up to 26 weeks to Americans who, in some cases, worked as little as one or two weeks. This is clearly not how unemployment insurance was designed to work. And second, it is not targeted to stay where unemployment is a problem.

In addition, the CBO (Congressional Budget Office) estimates that this bill will increase the federal budget deficit by $6.2 billion in 2008 and $8.5 billion over a ten year period. As I have stated in the past, we should not tend to today's problems by placing the burden square on the backs of our children and grandchildren.

Click here to listen to this week's podcast on this issue.

Gas prices continue to rise

As hardworking Americans continue to suffer because of the rising costs of gasoline and energy, Democrats in Congress continue to ignore the issue in spite of the efforts of Republicans in the House. There is no silver bullet in the short term, but Republicans have developed a common sense energy plan that will ultimately provide relief to high prices and lead us to greater energy security. Unfortunately, Americans will continue to be pinched at the pump until Democrats stop their political rhetoric and get serious about solving this crisis.



The Republican Energy Plan will increase the production of American-made, clean, reliable energy by cutting through the bureaucratic red tape. The plan encourages energy efficiency by offering conservation tax incentives to Americans who make their home, car, and workplace more efficient.

I support actions that reduce our nation's dependence on foreign energy by increasing the environmentally-safe production of oil and natural gas in areas such as the arctic coastal plains and offshore, deep water energy exploration.

Click here for a more detailed description of the House Republican Energy plan.

Click here to sign a petition to lower gas prices.

The Conaway Chronicle will be issued every week when Congress is in session. I hope that you will find it informative and will continue to stay informed with my recent legislative activities in Washington. In the meantime, if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions for future issues of the Conaway Chronicle, please visit the website at **www.house.gov/conaway** or don't hesitate to call me at (202) 225-3605. Check out my blog at **www.conawayblog.com**!

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