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LETTER FROM THE CONGRESSMAN

Dear Friends,

I was pleased to visit with several of you in the 31st District during the President's Day recess. Every opportunity I get to meet our citizens and spend time at home in Central Texas helps me represent you better.

Inside this week's newsletter, I am happy to share with you a few of the events I participated in, including, a land exchange in Copperas Cove, and a tour of the Hutto Family Residential Center. Also, I have included my thoughts regarding H.R. 800, the Employee Free Choice Act.

In addition, this week Congress unanimously passed H.R. 556, the National Security Foreign Investment Reform and Strengthened Transparency Act of 2007. This measure will create greater transparency and accountability in the way that our nation conducts its investments with foreign nations.

I hope this newsletter finds each of you happy and well. As always, if I may be of any assistance to you please do not hesitate to contact any of my offices.

Until next week,



SUPPORTING REAL CHOICE FOR THE AMERICAN WORKER

Preserving the right to free and fair elections is a basic tenet of democracy. In providing this assurance, it is vital that privacy be guarded to protect citizens from harassment and retribution for their beliefs. But basic democracy is not good enough for Democrats in Congress who required a vote on H.R. 800, the misnamed "Employee Free Choice Act" this week.

Unfortunately, this legislation will eliminate secret ballots in organizing elections, making it easier for union bosses to pressure workers to support the formation of a union. This legislation enables union bosses to form a union if they are able to "compel" enough workers to sign a card – not by a secret ballot of workers voting their consciences.

In a recent poll of union workers conducted by Zogby International, 63% of union workers expressed their belief that stronger laws are needed to protect the secret ballot elections and to ensure workers can make their decisions about union membership in private, without the union, their employer, or anyone else knowing how they voted. However, labor union bosses, along with Democrats in Congress, are aggressively working against the wishes of their members in an effort to increase their membership rolls. These efforts are at the expense of the traditional secret ballot election, by promoting card-check recognition. In

CONTENTS

*Supporting American
Workers*
1-2

Small Business Tax Breaks
2

Weekly Radio Address
3

*Copperas Cove Land
Exchange*
3

*Touring the Hutto Family
Residential Center*
3





the card-check process, a union gathers “authorization cards” signed by workers expressing their desire for the union to represent them.

During the card-check election process, workers are required to sign cards in front of organizers, fellow employees and sometimes employers; a process that invites coercion, intimidation and threats in the workplace. At the same time, organized labor operatives are increasingly pressuring employers (by way of threat, boycott, or public relations and public pressure) to recognize unions based on a card-check agreement rather than the customary secret ballot election supervised by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

While employers may voluntarily recognize unions based on card-checks under current law, they are not required to do so (current law allows employers to insist upon an election administered by the NLRB). Yet an employee’s right to vote in a secret ballot election, and an employer’s right to demand a secret ballot vote to protect their workers’ rights, was eliminated by this legislation.

American workers deserve legislation that guarantees the right to a secret ballot election. Instead of the flawed Democratic measure, an obvious pay-off to the labor bosses who funded their campaign efforts in last fall’s elections, Republicans introduced H.R. 866, the Secret Ballot Protection Act. This bill, instead of removing choice, will lock in critical employee rights by preserving worker free choice and protecting workers from intimidation, threats, misinformation, or coercion when making decisions regarding union representation.

Only 12 percent of the nation’s workforce and only 7 percent of private sector workers are unionized. It is no wonder that union leaders view this as the final push to increase their membership rolls and the dues that accompany greater participation. Rest assured that I will stand behind our American workers – the best in the world. In the future, I will work with my colleagues to pass legislation which actually protects the American worker without removing their basic rights.

TAX BREAKS TO SMALL BUSINESSES \$2 BILLION IN TAX CUTS IN BIPARTISAN BILL

On February 16th I voted along with a majority of the House to pass H.R. 976, the Small Business Tax Relief Act of 2007. The package is likely to be paired with the Senate-passed version of H.R. 2, which calls for an increase in the minimum wage.

This tax package will make a difference in the coffers of small businesses across the country to help offset the cost of an increased minimum wage. Small businesses are the engine that drives our economy. I hope the \$2 billion of tax relief provided will be a starting point for the final version of the bill negotiated with the Senate.

The House-passed package includes provisions that:

- Increase the amount of purchases that can be expensed from \$125,000 and \$500,000;
- Extend the Work Opportunities Tax Credit (WOTC) for one year (through the end of 2008) with modifications;
- Extend the restaurant FICA tip income tax credit at the current level of \$5.15 per hour;
- Allow spouses that are the only active participants in a business who file a joint return to elect not to be treated as a partnership for Federal income tax purposes;
- Close a loophole related to lower tax rates on dividends/cap gains; and
- Extends the length of time before interest suspension occurs for those who underpay their taxes to 22 months.

LISTEN TO THE WEEKLY RADIO ADDRESS

Please click on the link below to listen to my most recent weekly radio address that was sent to local radio and television stations. This installment covers my continued support for the war in Iraq and the need to fully fund our servicemen and women.

<http://carter.house.gov/multimedia/>

LAND EXCHANGE IN COPPERAS COVE

Last week, I was proud to announce a concept approval from the U.S. Army for a land exchange between Fort Hood and the City of Copperas Cove. The requested swap will convey approximately 200 acres from Fort Hood to Copperas Cove in exchange for a parcel of land of equal value adjacent to Fort Hood. Copperas Cove will purchase this parcel upon determination of the value of Fort Hood's land based upon a survey and value appraisal.

This exchange should prove beneficial for Copperas Cove, Fort Hood, and the residents of both. This deal is an example of how parties can work together to achieve a common goal that results in greater opportunity for all. I am proud that I was able to work on behalf of Fort Hood and Copperas Cove to facilitate the approval for this swap within the Department of the Army Headquarters.

Conveyance of the land will facilitate construction of a reliever route around the south side of Copperas Cove to re-route traffic coming off of US HWY 190, thereby mitigating the resulting traffic at stop lights and intersections through Copperas Cove.

TOURING THE HUTTO FAMILY RESIDENTIAL FACILITY

On February 23rd I joined Congressional Members and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on a tour of the T. Don Hutto Family Residential Facility, located in the 31st Congressional district. The facility provides an effective and humane alternative to the old policy of "catch and release" while maintaining the unity of alien families as they await the outcome of their immigration hearings or the return to their home countries.

I was concerned about news reports of treatment at this facility, so I wanted to visit the facility to see for myself. I am happy to report the dedicated employees at this facility are providing a humane and safe alternative to 'catch and release'.

The event, hosted by ICE, provided us with an opportunity to learn about the center and its role in the Department of Homeland Security's Secure Border Initiative. The tour included stops at the facility's intake processing site, elementary classroom, medical unit, dormitory area, dining facility and outside recreational area.

This is one of the first steps in ending the ineffective 'catch and release' procedure of illegal immigrants at our southern border. This, combined with tighter border security and punishments for those that knowingly employ illegal aliens, will bring much-needed meaningful reform to our country's immigration policy.

Before the Hutto facility opened, families caught crossing the border illegally were often freed with notices to appear before immigration judges; these families rarely appeared for these hearings, however. This policy was often exploited by alien smugglers by bringing children and strangers across the border, attempting to appear as family units. By bringing children, smugglers likely avoided detention if captured. ICE consequently opened the state-of-the-art Hutto facility in May 2006 in order to provide a place where families could remain together while awaiting immigration proceedings.