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Major Accomplishments of the U.S. Senate During the 109th Congress, First Session

This paper lists major accomplishments of the Senate during the First Session of the 109th Congress. (This listing will be updated and re-issued periodically throughout the remainder of the Congress). Items are listed under the following nine categories:

Promoting Jobs and a Strong Economy	2
Reducing Spending and Keeping Taxes Low	3
Defending America and Promoting Freedom	5
Providing Relief to Americans in Gulf States Affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita	9
Helping to Ensure Quality Healthcare for all Americans	14
Assuring Opportunities for Lifelong Learning	15
Providing Affordable and Dependable Energy	16
Ending Frivolous Lawsuits	17
Confirming Fair Judges through a Fair Process	17

Note: For organizational purposes, each category lists the accomplishments in numerical order, by public law number (if enacted), from most recent to oldest, and by bill number if not enacted.

PROMOTING JOBS AND A STRONG ECONOMY

United States-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act – P.L. 109-169

This law strengthens the economic and diplomatic ties between the United States and the State of Bahrain. Bahrain is one of America's closest allies in the Middle East. This law affirms the United States' commitment to supporting allies overseas and encouraging reform by promoting open markets.

Terrorism Risk Insurance Revision Act of 2005 – P.L. 109-144

This law extends the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act (TRIA) through FY 2007, providing a reinsurance "backstop" for insurers in exchange for a requirement that they provide terrorism risk insurance to commercial firms at reasonable rates. This law will help shift the burden from the taxpayer to the private sector by increasing the property and casualty insurance loss threshold that would trigger federal assistance, increasing the amounts of terrorism losses retained by the insurance industry, and reducing the federal share of insured loss compensation in 2007. The law also instructs the Presidential Working Group on Financial Markets to recommend to Congress legislation to address the long-term availability and affordability of terrorism risk insurance.

Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – P.L. 109-59

This law authorizes \$286.5 billion in funding for federal-aid highways, federal transit programs, and motor carriers safety programs for five years. It provides financing for vital highway construction and repair projects, and provides states with the financing certainty necessary for longer-term infrastructure investment. Based on employment estimates produced by the Department of Transportation, this funding level will support more than 13 million American jobs. The Act also makes a number of changes in federal law to provide states with more flexibility in both revenue and expenditure by ensuring a minimum guarantee for the Highway Account of 90.5 percent for 2005-2006, increasing to 92 percent for years 2008 and 2009, thus ensuring all states receive a more equitable percentage of the funding they contribute.

Dominican Republic – Central America – United States Free Trade Implementation Act (DR-CAFTA) – P.L. 109-53

This law implements the United States-Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade agreement. This is the first free trade agreement between the United States and the Central American countries of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, as well as the Dominican Republic. This agreement benefits U.S. businesses by leveling the playing field with America's 12th largest market for exported goods; 80 percent of U.S. exports to this region are immediately duty-free with the remaining 20 percent becoming free by 2010. This "win-win" agreement also benefits Central American countries by helping to provide economic stability in these democracies, an issue vital to our national security interests.

Junk Fax Prevention Act – P.L. 109-21

This law protects Americans from receiving unsolicited advertisements through fax machines. It amends the Communications Act of 1934 to prohibit faxed advertisements unless the sender has an established relationship with the recipient or the advertisement contains a notice that the recipient may request that such transmissions desist.

Family Entertainment and Copyright Act – P.L. 109-9

This law makes it a crime to use a video recorder in a movie theater or to distribute a copyrighted work before its release or commercial distribution. It also legalizes movie-filtering technology that blocks sexually graphic and violent content, and it encourages the preservation and restoration of scholarly works. The movie industry believes that in-theater video recording of movies is a significant factor in approximately \$3.5 billion in piracy losses.

Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act – P.L. 109-8

This law, the first major revision to the U.S. Bankruptcy Code since 1978, makes improvements to the bankruptcy code in consumer, small business, and corporate contexts. In particular, the law ensures that only those individuals who earn less than their state's median income or those who are otherwise unable to pay their debts are able to wholly discharge them. At the same time, it ensures that those who have the ability to pay back some of their debt actually do so, rather than abuse the system. This law will save approximately \$3 billion annually for consumers through lower interest rates and better products and services.

Pension Security and Transparency Act of 2005 (S. 1783) – Passed Senate

This bill would increase the retirement security for American workers by helping to ensure the solvency of American pension plans. The bill also adjusts Pension Benefits Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) insurance premiums and establishes minimum funding standards to strengthen private pension plans, including multiemployer pension plans.

Nomination of Christopher Cox to be Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) – Confirmed by Unanimous Consent

As the President's choice to be the country's lead securities regulator, Christopher Cox will continue to promote the values of free enterprise while increasing the transparency of our financial institutions. During his nine terms in Congress representing California's 48th District, Cox earned a reputation as a fair-minded protector of both taxpayers and investors. Cox was unanimously confirmed to serve the remainder of a five-year term, which expires June 2009.

REDUCING SPENDING AND KEEPING TAXES LOW

Departments of Labor, Health, and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations, FY 2006 – P.L. 109-149

This law provides \$601.64 billion in total budgetary resources for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies. The Conference Report for this bill included no member-specific projects (earmarks), which demonstrates the Republican Senate's willingness to make tough choices in exercising budget discipline.

Discretionary Spending Reduction (Provision in the Department of Defense Appropriations bill, FY 2006) – P.L. 109-148

This provision will cut most discretionary spending by one percent. Veterans Affairs funding and combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are exempt from the across-the-board cut. It is estimated that this cut will save \$8.5 billion for fiscal year 2006. This represents Republicans' commitment to exercising fiscal discipline even while responding to the necessary rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina.

Transportation, Treasury, the Judiciary, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies Appropriations, FY 2006 – P.L. 109-115

This law provides \$89.14 billion in new obligational budget authority for the Departments of Transportation, Treasury, the Judiciary, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies. The increase in funding for FY 2006 was kept to a level lower than the rate of inflation.

Science, State, Justice, Commerce and Related Agencies Appropriations, FY 2006 – P.L. 109-108

This law provides \$61.80 billion in new obligational authority for the Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce and related agencies. This level is a 1.8-percent decrease in funding from the FY05 enacted level.

Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations, FY 2006 – P.L. 109-102

This law provides \$20.98 billion in total funding for foreign operations. It provides economic assistance and humanitarian aid, including \$2.82 billion to help combat HIV/AIDS, among other infectious diseases, and \$1.77 billion for the Millennium Challenge Corporation to reduce poverty in developing countries through economic growth. This funding affirms the United States' commitment to helping other nations in need, improving global health, and promoting freedom.

Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations, FY 2006 – P.L. 109-97

This law provides \$100.098 billion in new budget authority for Agriculture, Rural Development, the Food and Drug Administration, and a wide array of Federal programs, mostly under the U.S. Department of Agriculture. During the bill's consideration in conference, language that would have allowed prescription drug reimportation was dropped.

Tax Relief Act of 2005 (Tax Reconciliation) (S. 2020) – Passed Senate

This bill would prevent a number of scheduled tax increases from going into effect, and also would assure that more middle-class, working Americans do not become subject to the Alternative Minimum Tax. America's economy grew by more than 3 percent for 10 consecutive quarters through 2005, and the bill will help to ensure this pro-growth environment. Several important provisions of this bill include small-business expensing provisions, a research and experimentation tax credit, deductions for tuition to help students and families afford college, deductions for state and local taxes, and the low-income savers credit.

Deficit Reduction Act (Spending Reconciliation) (S. 1932) – Passed Senate

This bill would reduce federal outlays by \$39.675 billion for FY 2006-2010 (and \$101.6 billion over the 2006-2015 period). The bill includes provisions that would provide net savings in Medicaid of \$4.76 billion over five years and Medicare savings of \$6.41 billion over five years. This bill is the first deficit reduction reconciliation bill since 1997; it confirms Republicans' commitment to controlling spending even while rebuilding the Gulf Coast following Hurricane Katrina.

Welfare Reauthorization (Provision in S. 1932, the Deficit Reduction Act) – Passed Senate

This bill would reauthorize several provisions that have been successful in lowering the number of individuals who collect welfare payments and increasing the number of individuals who have moved into gainful employment. These provisions include the following: authorize Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) through FY 2010 at its current funding level (\$16.9 billion annually) and provide an additional \$1 billion for child care over five years; readjust the work participation rate to conform with the intent of the landmark 1996 Welfare Reform Act (P.L. 104-193); and provide grants, including \$100 million annually for the promotion of healthy marriage initiatives, and \$50 million annually for responsible fatherhood programs to strengthen two-parent marriages, reduce poverty, and improve child well-being.

The Digital Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005 (Provision in S. 1932, the Deficit Reduction Act) – Passed Senate

This law requires television broadcasters to vacate the analog portion of the public spectrum by February 17, 2009, and directs the FCC to conduct an advance auction of those licenses on January 28, 2008. This auction, which is expected to generate \$10 billion, will be used to reduce the deficit by \$7.3 billion, with the remaining proceeds going towards programs that would advance the DTV transition and strengthen public safety communications. Additionally, 24 megahertz of spectrum recovered from the digital transition will go to public safety personnel.

FY 06 Concurrent Budget Resolution (H. Con. Res. 95) – Conference Report Agreed To

This budget resolution set total spending at \$2.58 trillion and total revenues at \$2.19 trillion. It met the President's goal of cutting the deficit in half within five years. With the exception of high-priority areas such as defense and homeland security, most spending programs were frozen at fiscal year 2005 levels. Notably, reconciliation instructions within the budget will achieve a \$34.7 billion net reduction in mandatory spending and a reduction in taxes by \$70 billion over the five-year budget window.

DEFENDING AMERICA AND PROMOTING FREEDOM

Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization of 2005 – P.L. 109-164

This law reflects America's commitment to fighting human trafficking, a crime in which human beings, including children, are essentially bought and sold as slaves. This bill will assist authorities in investigating and prosecuting traffickers and customers, provide grants to state and local law enforcement, and provide services to victims.

Department of Defense Authorization – P.L. 109-163

This law authorizes defense programs in FY 2006 including an additional \$50.0 billion supplemental for ongoing military operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and operations in the global war on terrorism. The Act authorizes an across-the-board military pay raise of 3.1 percent and an increase in the death gratuity payable to survivors of military decedents to \$100,000 for deaths that occur under combat-related conditions and in designated combat operations or areas. It also authorizes additional funds for combating terrorism and protective equipment for soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Department of Justice Reauthorization (Provision included in the Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005) – P.L. 109-162

This provision authorizes appropriations for law enforcement programs in the Department of Justice, including the FBI, the DEA, the ATF, the Office on Violence Against Women, and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. The law establishes the United States-Mexico Border Violence Task Force to combat drug and firearms trafficking, violence, and kidnapping along the border between the United States and Mexico. The law also authorizes the establishment of a National Gang Intelligence Center and gang information database to increase state-federal cooperation.

Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization (Provision included in the Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005) – P.L. 109-162

This provision ensures that the protections of the Violence Against Women Act continue in force. It authorizes grant monies to combat domestic violence, stalking, and domestic violence against children through services to victims and increased public education. The law also adds regulations of international marriage brokers and increases protections for American Indian women through grants and better coordination between Indian and federal law enforcement.

DNA Fingerprint Act of 2005 (Provision included in the Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005) — P.L. 109-162

This provision amends the DNA Identification Act of 1994 to expand the ability of states to add DNA analyses to the National DNA Index. Those profiles can be compared to evidence from crime scenes in order to solve rapes and other serious crimes. In addition, the law authorizes the Attorney General to prescribe regulations for the collection of DNA samples from individuals who are arrested or from foreign aliens who are detained under the authority of the United States.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2005 – P.L. 109-155

This law authorizes the funding for National Aeronautics and Space Administration to continue the agency's important work in science, aeronautics, and the exploration of space. The Act requires increased reporting and accountability by NASA and provides for a program for a permanently sustained presence on the Moon, the development of a space commercialization plan, and a competitive prize program to encourage private-sector development of space exploration and aeronautical technology.

Department of Defense Appropriations, FY 2006 – P.L. 109-148

This law provides \$453.28 billion in new obligational authority for the Department of Defense for FY 2006. This Act provides \$50.0 billion in supplemental funds for the Global War on Terror, fully funds key readiness programs critical to the Global War on Terrorism, and also provides funding for a 3.1-percent across-the-board pay raise for military personnel. This law also establishes uniform standards for interrogation and prohibits cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment of individuals under the control of the Department of Defense.

Water for the Poor Act of 2005 – P.L. 109-121

This law reflects America's compassion for our neighbors around the world, by addressing an issue that affects 1.2 billion people worldwide, and is responsible for the death of one child every 15 seconds. It would establish that providing safe, clean, and renewable water for poor countries should be part of America's foreign policy. Specifically, it authorizes the President to provide increased assistance to developing countries, and directs the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to develop a strategy to increase people's access to safe water.

Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations, FY 2006 – P.L. 109-114

This law provides \$82.57 billion in new budget authority for FY 2006, including funding for military construction for the active and reserve component accounts; family housing construction and improvement, operations and maintenance; and the base realignment and closure account (BRAC). It also provides \$70.25 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs, which includes \$23.55 billion for medical services to provide care for veterans whose service has kept all Americans safe.

Reducing the Number of Alien Absconders (Provision included in the Conference Report to Accompany the Science, State, Justice, Commerce and Related Agencies Appropriations, FY 2006) – P.L. 109-108

This provision directs the Departments of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security to work together to study existing apprehension, detention, appeal, and removal policies of illegal aliens and to supply a report to Congress of effective means of reducing the absconder rate.

Automated Biometric Identification System/Fingerprint Identification System (Provision included in the Conference Report to Accompany the Science, State, Justice, Commerce and Related Agencies Appropriations, FY 2006) – P.L. 109-108

This provision directs the Department of Justice to update Congress on its efforts to fully integrate the databases at the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) with regard to fingerprint scans at U.S. ports of entry. The use of biometric identifiers such as fingerprints is an important tool to ensure that terrorists or criminals monitored by the FBI or DHS are identified and stopped before they are able to enter the country.

Assistance for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children in Developing Countries Act of 2005 – P.L. 109-95

This law provides increased assistance to vulnerable children in developing countries through both governmental and non-governmental organizations. The law also directs the President to establish a system for monitoring this effort, and directs the Secretary of State to appoint a Special Advisor for Assistance to Vulnerable Populations.

Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, FY 2006 – P.L. 109-90

This law provides \$31.86 billion in new budget authority for the Department of Homeland Security. Significant initiatives include the following: increasing funding for border security to provide an additional 1,000 border patrol agents, expanding Border Patrol Stations, and improving customs and border protection; implementing proactive steps to combat the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction; preventing terrorist attacks in the U.S through risk assessment and improving intelligence gathering; and improve security and readiness programs to respond to both natural and manmade crises through emergency planning.

Service Members Group Life Insurance Act of 2005 – P.L. 109-80

This law allows for an increase in the maximum life insurance coverage allowed for an insured veteran or service member from \$250,000 to \$400,000. It also directs the Secretary of Defense to make a good faith effort to inform the spouse of an active duty service member if the member chooses to reduce coverage or designate another person as beneficiary of benefit. This law affirms the Senate’s commitment to ensuring that military survivors are cared for after their loved ones make the greatest sacrifice for our country and our freedom.

Renewal of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act – P.L. 109-39

As a means of promoting democratic rule and freedom of expression in Burma, this law places sanctions on the ruling Burmese military junta and supports and recognizes the National League of Democracy as the legitimate representative of the Burmese people.

Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief, FY 2005 – P.L. 109-13

This law provides \$82.04 billion for ongoing military operations, postwar reconstruction and relief in Iraq and Afghanistan, aid for international partners in the war on terrorism, and homeland security needs. It includes \$907.3 million in relief for victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami, including \$656 million for the Recovery and Reconstruction Fund.

USA PATRIOT Improvement and Reauthorization Act (H.R. 3199) – Conference Report Pending Senate Action

This bill would permanently renew 14 provisions of the USA Patriot Act and temporarily extend two provisions previously set to expire. This renewal is essential to prevent future terrorist attacks by providing law enforcement and intelligence agencies with the tools necessary to detect, apprehend, and prosecute terrorists and criminals. The Senate has also passed a temporary extension of the USA Patriot Act (P.L. 109-160), which extend all expiring provisions through February 3, 2006.

Tsunami Preparedness Act (Provision in S. 1932, the Deficit Reduction Act) – Passed Senate

This bill would provide for the improved operation of a tsunami warning detection system, under the Direction of the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), for America’s coastal regions. The bill also directs the Administrator to do the following: establish community-based “tsunami hazard mitigation” programs in high-risk areas; provide support to the international entities to work with other participating nations to provide funding for a global tsunami warning system; and establish a program to improve the resilience of coastal communities to natural disasters.

Marine Debris Research, Prevention, and Reduction Act (S. 362) – Passed Senate

This bill would establish within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) and the United States Coast Guard a program to identify, reduce, and remove ocean debris to mitigate the harmful effects of debris on marine and coastal environments and to improve navigation.

Ocean and Coastal Observation System Act of 2005 (S. 361) – Passed Senate

Under the direction of the National Oceanic Research Leadership Council, this bill will establish an advanced warning system along the coastlines of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and the Great Lakes to improve early warning and detection systems for tsunamis and other maritime natural disasters.

State Criminal Alien Assistance Program Reauthorization (S. 188) – Passed Senate

This bill reauthorizes the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP). SCAAP provides financial assistance to states and local governments with authority over correctional facilities that incarcerate or detain undocumented criminal aliens. This bill reflects Republicans' commitment to provide the necessary federal support to keep our homeland safe.

National Ocean Exploration Program Act (S. 39) – Passed Senate

This bill would provide for the establishment of a national ocean exploration program under the direction of the Secretary of Commerce and within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA). This program will do the following: conduct archeological and scientific explorations of ocean environments including historic shipwrecks and little-known undersea regions; promote public education and discourse of ocean science; and work to improve the technical capability of U.S. oceanographic research.

**PROVIDING RELIEF TO AMERICANS IN GULF STATES
AFFECTED BY HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA**

Third Emergency Katrina Supplemental (Provision in the Department of Defense Appropriations, FY 2006) –P.L. 109-148

This law provides \$29 billion in aid for victims of Hurricane Katrina, including \$3 billion in funding to help strengthen Louisiana levees, \$6.2 billion in Community Development Block Grants to help Gulf Coast communities rebuild, and \$1.6 billion in funding to school districts educating students displaced by hurricanes. Of this funding, \$23.40 billion is offset by reallocations from the Federal Emergency Management Disaster Relief Fund, and the remaining Katrina funding is offset by various rescissions and an across-the-board-cut of one percent that applies to most discretionary accounts.

Elementary and Secondary Education Recovery Act (Provision in the Department of Defense Appropriations, FY 2006) – P.L. 109-148

This provision authorizes \$1.66 billion in funds to provide aid for states affected by Hurricane Katrina to restart school operations, provide temporary emergency aid for displaced students, and assist homeless youth. This law also permits the Secretary of Education to extend deadlines under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for those affected by Katrina or Rita.

Katrina Higher Education Relief (Provision in the Department of Defense Appropriations, FY 2006) – P.L. 109-148

This provision would provide waivers for certain student loans for students who were attending institutions of higher learning in the Gulf Coast region affected by Hurricane Katrina. It also provides assistance under the Higher Education Act to students and institutions affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Coast Guard Hurricane Relief Act of 2005 – P.L. 109-141

This law authorizes the Coast Guard to extend the duration of a license or certificate for Merchant Seamen in Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi, or those whose records were destroyed due to flooding in New Orleans. It also extends inspection compliance certificates for vessels last inspected in Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi, and it allows Coast Guard personnel who served on active duty for 30 days in areas affected by Katrina to retain accumulated leave, which otherwise would have been forfeited.

Gulf Opportunity Zone Act of 2005 – P.L. 109-135

This law creates a Gulf Opportunity Zone in the region affected by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma to encourage businesses to rebuild in the region and provide employment opportunities. In particular the law provides tax provisions such as a bonus depreciation and enhanced small business expensing, and it also provides for the issuance of tax exempt bonds to help finance reconstruction costs.

Study and Report on Catastrophic Hurricane Evacuation Plans (S.A. 2168, to H.R. 3058, the Transportation, Treasury, Judiciary, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations, FY 2006) – P.L. 109-115

This law provides \$1 million in funding for the Departments of Transportation and Homeland Security to conduct a joint review to assess catastrophic hurricane evacuation plans and submit their findings to Congress by June 1, 2006.

Funds for Louisiana for Increased Traffic due to Hurricanes (Provision included in the Conference Report to Accompany the Transportation, Treasury, Judiciary, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations, FY 2006) – P.L. 109-115

The conference agreement provides \$1.5 million to the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development to establish a grant program for implementation of plans to alleviate traffic congestion and address increased transportation demands for parish and municipal governments that experienced a significant spike in population due to an influx of hurricane evacuees.

Additional Forecasters for the National Hurricane Center (Provision included in the Conference Report to accompany the Science, State, Justice, Commerce Appropriations bill, FY 2006) – P.L. 109-108

This provision provides \$500,000 in funding to the National Hurricane Center for the purpose of hiring four new hurricane forecasters.

National Flood Insurance Program Further Enhanced Borrowing Authority Act of 2005 – P.L. 109-106

This law increases the borrowing authority of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) from \$3.5 billion to \$18.5 billion through FY 2008 to pay the National Flood Insurance Program's flood damage claims through the next few months.

Hurricane Katrina Unemployment Relief (Provision in the QI, TMA & Abstinence Programs Extension and Hurricane Katrina Unemployment Relief Act) – P.L. 109-91

This law transfers money from the federal trust fund to the Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama unemployment trust funds to help those states pay unemployment benefits.

Community Disaster Loan Act of 2005 – P.L. 109-88

This law will allow up to \$750 million of the funds appropriated under P.L. 109-62, the Second Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Hurricane Katrina, to be transferred to the Disaster Assistance Direct Loan Program to be used to assist local governments in providing essential services.

Emergency Airport Improvement Project Grants in Aid – P.L. 109-87

This law authorizes the Secretary of Transportation to provide airport development project grants to support infrastructure repair projects for public-use airports in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas that were damaged by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Natural Disaster Student Aid Fairness Act – P.L. 109-86

This law authorizes the Secretary of Education during FY 2006 to reallocate campus-based student aid funds to institutions of higher learning in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Texas, or institutions that have accepted students displaced by Hurricanes Katrina or Rita. The law also waives requirements for matching funds that are normally imposed on institutions and students.

Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Act of 2005 – P.L. 109-82

This law empowers the Department of Education to waive the non-federal share for states affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita that seek unused FY 2005 funds for vocational rehabilitation. Additional funds may be used for supplemental training to help individuals with disabilities gain the necessary skills to help with the reconstruction and redevelopment of impacted communities.

Student Aid Waiver – P.L. 109-78

This law extends the authority of the Secretary of the Department of Education to waive student loan rules during a war or national emergency until September 30, 2007.

Katrina Emergency Tax Relief Act of 2005 – P.L. 109-73

This law provides tax relief for victims of Hurricane Katrina and contains provisions to encourage charitable contributions toward the relief effort in the affected region. Specifically, the law allows affected individuals to access their retirement savings without incurring penalties for early withdrawals, to deduct 100 percent of casualty losses, and to exclude from tax certain relief assistance. The act also provides incentives for businesses in the region to hire displaced workers and additional tax incentives to support regional employment and reconstruction, with an emphasis on encouraging displaced residents to return to the affected areas.

Flexibility for Displaced Workers Act – P.L. 109-72

This law allows for greater flexibility in the use of National Emergency Grants to provide temporary disaster relief and training for individuals who have relocated to regions outside of the Katrina-affected areas and to those who assist in disaster recovery.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Emergency Response and Recovery Act of 2005 – P.L. 109-68

This law makes immediate payment of TANF funds for the first quarter of FY 2006 to all states, and makes additional TANF funds available to states devastated by Hurricane Katrina by converting an existing loan fund into a contingency fund for Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. It holds states harmless for costs incurred to immediately assist evacuees, provides states with flexibility to spend unused TANF funds for families impacted by the hurricane, waives program rules for hurricane victims receiving short-term TANF assistance, and waives penalties on states that resulted from efforts to support families impacted by the hurricane.

Student Grant Hurricane and Disaster Relief Act – P.L. 109-67

This law authorizes the Secretary of Education to waive certain repayment requirements for students receiving campus-based federal grant assistance efforts if they were residing in, employed in, or attending an institution of higher education located in a major disaster area, or their attendance was interrupted because of the disaster.

Pell Grant Hurricane and Disaster Relief Act – P.L. 109-66

This law authorizes the Secretary of Education to waive certain repayment requirements for hurricane-affected students receiving federal Pell Grants. This waiver is necessary because under current law, Pell Grant recipients who are forced to withdraw from classes due to a natural disaster are required to repay any Pell Grant funds used to pay for school expenses, or they will be barred from enrolling in future classes.

Income Exclusion of Flood Insurance Mitigation Payments – P.L. 109-64

This law allows for the exclusion of federal flood mitigation assistance from consideration as income or a resource for purposes of determining an applicant's eligibility for certain federal income-assistance or resourced-based programs.

Federal Judiciary Emergency Special Sessions Act of 2005 – P.L. 109-63

This law authorizes courts displaced by Hurricane Katrina to operate outside of the courts' regular circuit or district.

Second Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act to Meet Immediate Needs Arising From the Consequences of Hurricane Katrina, 2005 – P.L. 109-62

This law provides an additional \$51.8 billion in emergency funding to continue recovery and relief efforts in the areas impacted by Hurricane Katrina.

Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act to Meet Immediate Needs Arising From the Consequences of Hurricane Katrina, 2005 – P.L. 109-61

This law provides \$10.5 billion in emergency funding to provide immediate assistance to Gulf States affected by Hurricane Katrina. Specifically, this law provides \$10 billion to the Department of Homeland Security for disaster relief and \$500 million to the Department of Defense for operations and maintenance.

Temporary Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) for Katrina Areas (Provision in S. 1932, Deficit Reduction Act) – Passed Senate

This provision would provide a temporary increase in FMAP percentages for states affected by Hurricane Katrina. States would receive 100-percent FMAP reimbursement for Medicaid and SCHIP assistance for individuals who, during the week prior to Hurricane Katrina, were living in one of the parishes of Louisiana or counties of Mississippi and Alabama specified in the bill. Costs directly attributable to related administrative activities would also be fully reimbursed.

Coastal Disaster Assistance (Provision in S. 1932, Deficit Reduction Act) – Passed Senate

This provision would provide an additional \$200 million to assist states and local Indian tribes affected by hurricanes and other coastal disasters.

Katrina Education Reimbursement (S. 1764) – Passed Senate

This bill would allow the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to transfer funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to the Department of Education in order to provide assistance to schools that have accepted students displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

Judicial Branch Employee Participation in Federal Leave Transfer Program for Disasters and Emergencies (S. 1736) – Passed Senate

This bill would allow employees of the Federal Judiciary branch of government to participate in emergency-leave transfer programs for disasters and emergencies.

Gulf Coast Emergency Water Infrastructure Assistance Act (S. 1709) – Passed Senate

This bill would allow states to provide subsidies and loan forgiveness for water treatment and water quality projects related to Hurricane Katrina, for a two-year period, from funds allocated to states from the revolving loans under the Federal Water Pollution Control Act. The bill also allows states to provide funds to water treatment plants that are not included under the Safe Drinking Water Act for up to two years, and authorizes the Environmental Protection Agency to test drinking water from private wells that may be contaminated as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

Disaster Recovery and Debris Removal Act of 2005 (S. 939) – Passed Senate

This bill would authorize the payment to disaster relief applicants of up to 50 percent of the Federal share for which that applicant is eligible. This assistance will expedite the process of clearing and removing hurricane-related debris from public access roads and private property.

A resolution to permit the solicitation of donations in Senate buildings for the relief of victims of Hurricane Katrina (S. Res. 235) – Passed Senate

This bill allows Senators or Senate employees to solicit another Senator or Senate employee for non-monetary donations for the relief of victims of Hurricane Katrina and to work with nonprofit organizations to deliver those donations.

HELPING TO ENSURE QUALITY HEALTHCARE FOR ALL AMERICANS

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.

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.

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.

ASSURING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

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.

Increasing Grant Aid for Students Studying Math and Science (Provision in S. 1932, Deficit Reduction Act) – Passed Senate

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 S. 1932, the Deficit Reduction Act) – Passed Senate

This provision would close 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 bill would also increase loan limits for first and second year students to \$3,500 and \$4,500 respectively, and increases graduate borrowing limits to \$12,000.

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.

PROVIDING AFFORDABLE AND DEPENDABLE ENERGY

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) (Provision in the Departments of Labor, HHS, and Education Appropriations, FY 2006) – P.L. 109-149

This provision would add \$2.18 billion for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). This additional funding will help to ensure that the elderly and those on low incomes will not have to face a cold winter without being able to pay their heating bills.

Energy and Water Development Appropriations, FY 2006 – P.L. 109-103

This law provides more than \$31 billion for fiscal year 2006. It supplies funds for water resources development programs and related activities of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Civil Works Program and for the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation. It also supplies funds for the Department of Energy's energy research activities, including environmental restoration and waste management, and atomic energy defense activities of the National Nuclear Security.

Energy Policy Act – P.L. 109-58

This law provides a comprehensive national energy policy that will help meet America's long-term energy demands by encouraging greater domestic production, greater fuel diversity, and improved energy infrastructure. It also provides funds for the research and development of new energy technologies and encourages energy efficiency.

Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, FY 2006 – P.L. 109-54

This law provides more than \$26.20 billion in discretionary funding for fiscal year 2006. It includes the following: funding for the Department of Interior, the Environmental Protection Agency; Clean Water State Revolving Fund; cultural agencies; and various other agencies. This law significantly increases funding for wildland fire management activities.

Mercury Rule Allowed to Stand (Senate failed to pass S.J. Res. 20, resolution of disapproval)

This Senate resolution would have expressed disapproval with the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) proposal to allow a cap-and-trade regulatory system for mercury-emitting, coal-fired power plants. If passed, this resolution would have effectively repealed the EPA's Clean Air Mercury Rule to reduce mercury emissions by 70 percent over 12 years. The Mercury Rule also provides incentives to the power sector to invest in the development of mercury-control technologies. The United States currently produces approximately one percent of the world's mercury, and the Mercury Rule represents the first-ever attempt by any country to restrict mercury emissions. In 2003, the EPA's analysis concluded that the public health threat caused by mercury could be adequately addressed with a 70-percent reduction over 12 years (rather than the 90 percent as had been required), a change which will save an estimated \$356 billion over 20 years.

ENDING FRIVOLOUS LAWSUITS

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.

The Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act – P.L. 109-92

This law addresses the politicization of our court system by a small number of anti-gun activists who have attempted to hold the firearm industry legally responsible for the criminal conduct of others. These frivolous lawsuits have forced the firearms industry to spend nearly \$200 million defending the right to produce a legal product. In the event of a large verdict, this relatively small industry could be destroyed, and Americans' ability to exercise their Second Amendment rights could be dramatically curtailed.

Class Action Fairness Act – P.L. 109-2

The law curbs abuses in our courts that have driven up costs to consumers without benefiting the public. Over the past decade, class action lawsuits have grown over 1,000 percent nationwide, leading to increasingly unjust settlements that enrich a select few lawyers, while hurting plaintiffs and businesses in virtually every sector of America's economy. This law addresses these abuses by moving certain large, interstate class actions from state courts into federal courts and creates a consumer bill of rights to ensure that the class-action legal process protects the rights of plaintiffs.

CONFIRMING FAIR JUDGES THROUGH A FAIR PROCESS

Nomination of John G. Roberts, of Maryland, to be Chief Justice of the United States – Confirmed 78-22

Chief Justice Roberts was nominated after extensive consultation between the President and the Senate. After a confirmation process that was both rigorous and fair, he was confirmed by a bipartisan majority of Senators.

Nomination of Priscilla Owen, of Texas, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit – Confirmed 56-43

Justice Owen's nomination was filibustered by a partisan minority for more than four years before she received an up or down vote on the Senate Floor.

Nomination of Janice Rogers Brown, of California, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit – Confirmed 56-43

Justice Brown's nomination was filibustered by a partisan minority for 22 months before she received an up or down vote on the Senate Floor.

Nomination of William H. Pryor, Jr., of Alabama, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the 11th Circuit – Confirmed 53-45

Justice Pryor's nomination was filibustered by a partisan minority for more than two years before he received an up or down vote on the Senate Floor.

Nomination of David W. McKeague, of Michigan, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the 6th Circuit – Confirmed 96-0

Justice McKeague's nomination was filibustered by a partisan minority for three years and six months before he finally received an up or down vote on the Senate Floor.

Nomination of Richard Griffin, of Michigan, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for 6th Circuit – Confirmed 96-0

Justice Griffin's nomination was filibustered by a partisan minority for nearly three years before he received an up or down vote on the Senate Floor.

Nomination of Thomas Griffith, of Utah, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit – Confirmed 73-24

Democrats had threatened a filibuster of Mr. Griffith's nomination during the 108th Congress and refused to allow his nomination to come to a vote.

Nomination of Susan Neilson, of Michigan to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit – Confirmed 97-0

Justice Neilson's nomination was unanimously confirmed by the Senate.

Nomination of Judges to District Courts

The Senate has approved the nomination of six District Court Judges.