



**Rodney Alexander** / Louisiana's 5th District  
THOUGHTS FROM THE HILL

December 17, 2007

## **Remaining Steadfast Secured Noteworthy Progress This Session**

Congress is closing in on the end of the session this week, and it's going to be a legislative sprint to the finish line.

Yet despite the hectic conclusion to the year, I do believe the steadier progress we have made on many issues will pay off in the long run.

A part of this progress was accomplished not through the bills that passed but rather through the ones that didn't – or haven't yet. As I first learned years ago in the state legislature – in many cases, serving the public does not mean pushing more government upon the people; it means protecting them from it.

This year I have had many opportunities to put this belief into practice, and, thankfully, most of the outcomes seem to have worked out for the best.

At the start of the year, immigration reform was at the forefront of national concern. As a member of the House Immigration Reform Caucus, I have cosponsored and advocated many bills that address specific aspects of illegal immigration.

Though majority leaders have not brought any of these bills to the floor, I consider the failure of their "amnesty bill" earlier this year a success.

In my opinion, it is far better for Congress to continue debating comprehensive immigration reform than to pass a bill that would grant citizenship to the nearly 13 million illegal immigrants living in our nation. In the meantime, we should do what we should have done from the get-go – enforce the laws already in place.

Another issue that has taken up much of Congress' attention this year is the majority's effort to end the war in Iraq by including timetables for troop withdrawal into legislation to fund our troops and veterans. It seems as though every time a must-pass bill hit the floor, leadership tried to slip in a timetable.

My colleagues and I stood firm against this effort to undermine our generals on the ground and to use funding for our troops as a bargaining chip.

Though I had my initial concerns over whether the troop surge would work at the late stage we were initiating it, recently we have all seen that increasing troop numbers has lead to a more stable Iraq.

Often, as a way of standing up against bad policy, I have to vote “no” on legislation that I would gladly support if not for certain measures attached to the bill. Two examples from this session are my votes on the energy bill and the bill to expand the State Children’s Health Insurance (SCHIP).

In voting against H.R. 6, the Energy Independence and Security Act, I voiced my opposition to a measure that would put a strain on Southern states. The bill contains a provision that sets forth requirements for state use of renewable energies, and many Southern states do not have the resources to meet the requirements. As a result, electricity prices would shoot up for consumers.

Additionally, the bill does nothing to create a new energy supply through new forms of alternative or renewable fuel. After the bumper crop of corn produced in the 5<sup>th</sup> District this year, it is evident that our nation has the resources to increase ethanol production. We need an energy bill that will do more to encourage the growth of this industry as a way of decreasing our dependence on foreign oil.

As we move forward on this bill, I will continue to advocate an energy bill that does not contain the state renewable fuels mandate or the additional tax hikes the House version contained.

In regards to the legislation to expand SCHIP, I did not support the major SCHIP reauthorization bill because it would have steered the program away from what it exists to do – help poor children. SCHIP was created to provide health insurance to children in families who cannot afford it, but make too much money to receive Medicaid.

The bill would have given states the right to set their own eligibility standards, which meant families with higher incomes and even adults could receive the federal money set aside for poor children. To pay for the expansion, the bill raised the tax on cigarettes.

Though the bill passed the House and the Senate, the President vetoed the legislation and the House did not have enough votes to override. Much like the failure of the amnesty bill, the failure of the flawed SCHIP expansion bill was a triumph, as it prevented an attempt to open the doors of socialized medicine, protected millions of Americans from being hit by another unnecessary tax hike, and preserved the integrity of the program and its original purpose.

In the news this week, there will be lots of talk about what Congress is accomplishing during this pre-Christmas rush.

Keep in mind, though, that sometimes it’s what doesn’t get reported that is keeping our nation on the right track.

*U.S. Rep. Rodney Alexander, R-Quitman, represents the 5th Congressional District and serves on the House Appropriations Committee and the House Budget Committee. He can be reached at the Monroe District Office (318-322-3500), the Alexandria District Office (318-445-0818) or Washington, D.C. (202-225-8490.) Visit Alexander's Web site at [www.house.gov/alexander](http://www.house.gov/alexander) or write him at 316 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515.*

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