



▲ Rep. Levin speaks with students about legislative issues.

Representing the 12th Congressional District of Michigan

The Congressional Connector

Week of July 21 – July 25, 2008

House Debates Bill to Spur U.S. Oil Production

On July 17, the House debated the Drill Responsibly in Leased Lands (DRILL) Act [[H.R. 6515](#)] to promote domestic production of oil and natural gas. The goal of the bill is to spur oil production on the 68 million acres of federal land already leased by oil companies for energy production that are currently sitting idle. Among its other provisions, the DRILL Act would require oil producers to diligently develop the leases they already have or relinquish them so another company can produce oil there. Also, the bill would speed the development of the 23 million acre National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A) by requiring the Secretary of Interior to offer at least one lease sale annually in the NPR-A. It has been estimated that the Petroleum Reserve holds 10.6 billion barrels of oil.

The House voted 244 to 173 in favor of the DRILL Act. Because [H.R. 6515](#) was considered under a procedure that required a two-thirds majority to approve the bill, the measure came up 34 votes short of the super-majority needed for passage.

Congress Votes to Override Veto of Medicare Bill

On July 15, bipartisan majorities in both the House and Senate voted overwhelmingly to override President Bush's veto of the Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act [[H.R.6331](#)]. The legislation prevents a 10 percent reduction in the payments doctors receive for treating Medicare patients and makes a number of improvements to Medicare coverage. The vote in the House was 383-41; the Senate count was 70-26. Both votes were well above the 2/3 majority needed to override the President's veto, and the bill was enacted into law that same day. In addition to preventing the physician payment cuts, the legislation lowers the co-pays for mental health services from 50% to 20%, the same level required for most other services. This reduction will be phased in over a number of years. The legislation allows preventative services not currently covered under Medicare to be added to the program, and expands and improves programs that help low-income seniors afford their health insurance premiums and prescription drugs. [To view Rep. Levin's Floor remarks in support of this legislation, click here.](#)

Trade Enforcement Bill Introduced in House

On July 17, Rep. Levin and Rep. Rangel of New York introduced legislation to help ensure that U.S. workers, farmers and businesses get a fair shake in the global marketplace and that U.S. consumers have confidence that the products they buy are safe. Their legislation [[H.R. 6530](#)] seeks to open markets by eliminating foreign barriers to U.S. goods and services exports, combat counterfeiting and piracy, restore rights under U.S. trade remedy laws, and strengthen the U.S. ability to address unfair and illegal trade practices.

[For more information on this bill, click here.](#)

The Week Ahead

The House is expected to debate amendments to the American Housing Rescue and Foreclosure Prevention Act [[H.R. 3221](#)] to assist homeowners who are struggling and help strengthen the housing market. The House will also consider legislation [[H.R. 3999](#), the National Highway Bridge Reconstruction and Inspection Act] to strengthen bridge inspection standards and processes. The House is also expected to debate legislation [[H.R. 5501](#)] to fight the global spread of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria.