

The Renzi Report

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Your Direct Link to the News and Events from our Nation's Capital and Rural Arizona

Dear Fellow Arizonan:

In this edition of the Renzi Report, I have included important news on the economy, information about efforts to increase homeownership in Arizona and a story of extraordinary heroism from Iraq.

As always, feel free to tell your family members, friends and neighbors about the Renzi Report. You can view previous editions of the Report or sign up to receive this email at my website, <http://www.house.gov/renzi/newsletter.html>.

If you have any questions or comments about this e-newsletter or anything else taking place in Congress and our nation, please e-mail me at rick.renzi@mail.house.gov. I will get back to you as quickly as possible. You can find additional information about developments in Congress on my website at <http://www.house.gov/renzi>.

I hope you find this Renzi Report informative. Thank you and may God bless America.

Congressman Rick Renzi

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Renzi Receives Award from Seniors

Strengthening Homeownership in Rural Arizona

Office Contact Information

Congressional Mailbag – Questions and Answers

The Soldiers You Never Hear About...

From the Headlines...

248,000 New Jobs Created in May

Seniors Honor Renzi with Lawmaker of the Month Award

Congressman Renzi has received the June Lawmaker of the Month Award from the 60 Plus Association, a national senior citizens organization with more than 10,600 members in Arizona and 5 million seniors nationally.

In announcing Renzi as the June winner of the award, 60 Plus Association President Jim Martin praised the Congressman for his “pro-senior voting record.”

“Congressman Renzi has always been someone seniors can count on. His support for our aging veteran population, his ability to win concessions to improve rural healthcare services in the Medicare reform bill, and his interest in matters important to seniors all across America is clear. Seniors know that Rick Renzi can be depended upon,” he said.

Martin cited Renzi's votes to:

- ✓ Reform Medicare by giving seniors more choices of coverage, including a voluntary prescription drug benefit.
- ✓ Secure over \$69 million for healthcare facilities in rural Arizona
- ✓ Repeal the death tax, which hurts small businesses and family farms
- ✓ Repeal the Earnings Limit for seniors 65 to 69
- ✓ Oppose taxes on Social Security benefits

“Congressman Renzi deserves credit for voting right whenever an issue important to seniors is before Congress. That's why he has been chosen as Lawmaker of the Month for June,” Martin said.

For more information visit: www.60plus.org

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Strengthening Homeownership in Rural Arizona

Homeownership is a key part of the American Dream. It fosters healthy families and productive households. Studies show that math achievement and reading recognition scores are 7% higher for young children, and high school graduation rates are 13% higher for families whose parents own their own home. In addition, equity in a home is the primary asset used by most families to help their kids go to college, and many small business owners use the equity from their first home to borrow and provide the start up costs for their business ventures.

Today's strong housing market and modest interest rates make for an ideal environment to purchase a first home. However, many families and first-time homebuyers find the pathway to homeownership blocked by persistent and difficult-to-scale barriers: Meeting the up-front costs of homeownership is the barrier cited most frequently.

The average working family can have difficulty finding a house within their price range. Some families cannot obtain an affordable mortgage because they lack credit history or have a poor credit record. Other prospective homebuyers have trouble finding financing options that fit within their budget. Across our country, fewer than half of Hispanics and less than one-third of Native American families own their own homes. I am dedicated to eliminating this minority homeownership gap.

In Congress, my colleagues and I on the Housing Subcommittee are working to enact legislation that breaks down the barriers to homeownership in rural America. The American Dream Downpayment Act brings \$200 million in federal assistance to low income families to help cover the downpayment costs for a first home. The \$200 million in homeownership grants would be distributed through the Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) HOME Investment Program. HOME helps communities expand the supply of decent, affordable housing. For years, HOME has been widely successful in assisting states and local governments distribute homeownership assistance. This legislation was signed into law by President Bush last year.

Just recently, the House passed a bill I introduced to giving Native American populations nationwide improved access to financing for new homes. The Homeownership Opportunities for Native Americans Act increases home loan guarantee rates to 95% for banks covering Native American home loans, increasing Native American participation in HUD's loan program by decreasing lender risk. This bill comes as a direct result of a Housing Subcommittee field hearing held on the Navajo Nation in Tuba City where my colleagues and I witnessed first hand the severe housing problems facing Native Americans in rural Arizona and returned to Washington with a mission to alleviate this crisis. This bill is a strong first step towards this goal.

My office has also introduced legislation to strengthen the USDA Rural Housing Service loan program to allow first-time home buyers to roll the up-front guarantee fees into their monthly payments. This would decrease the up-front cost barriers and bring low-income first-time buyers in rural Arizona into the housing market.

With the help of homebuyer education programs and down payment assistance from HUD and USDA, families are learning how to navigate the home-buying process and realizing their homeownership dreams. It is important for Congress to continue to provide additional homeownership opportunities to low-income families in rural Arizona. I will work with my colleagues to introduce future legislation that achieves these goals and puts the American Dream of homeownership in reach for every member of our community.

Congressional Mailbag

Answers to Your Questions on Important Issues



Congressman Renzi,

For the past 35 years, I have owned and operated a small restaurant in Flagstaff. Both of my children work with me, and hope to continue the family business into the next generation. I am concerned that in the event of my passing, my family would have to sell the restaurant to cover the federal death tax. What are you doing to help my family keep our business?
Flagstaff, Arizona

Small businesses and family-owned microenterprises make up the backbone of our communities, building a strong and prosperous Arizona for future generations. Your sweat and personal sacrifice moves our communities forward and preserves our traditions and rural way of life.

The death tax seriously threatens the survival of our rural Arizona way of life. Family-owned, Arizona-based businesses, like your restaurant, risk going out of business when surviving business inheritors are forced to sell assets in order to pay the death tax. The death tax penalizes individuals for saving their money, investing in their children's future and building successful companies, farms and businesses.

According to the National Federation of Independent Businesses, one-third of small-business owners today will have to sell outright or liquidate a part of their business to pay death taxes. Half of those businesses will have to each eliminate 30 or more jobs. In addition, more than 70 percent of small family businesses will not survive into the second generation after death taxes are collected.

I am proud to have cosponsored legislation that will repeal the death tax. H.R. 8, *The Death Tax Repeal Permanency Act of 2003*, passed the House on June 18, 2003, by a vote of 264 to 163. The repeal of this tax will help perpetuate small and family-owned businesses and give them greater means to compete with large national businesses. The Senate has yet to take action to pass this important bill.

Uncertainty about full death tax repeal requires continuous estate-planning strategies that are costly, time-consuming and cumbersome to small-business owners. While it often devastates small businesses, the economic engine of our country, the estate tax generates only 1.5 percent of federal revenue. We need to permanently repeal the death tax so that families can pass on their family farms, ranches and small businesses to their children and sustain their legacies for generations forward.

Sincerely,
Congressman Rick Renzi

To write a letter to Congressman Renzi send your mail to 418 Cannon HOB, Washington D.C. 20515 or send your letter via email to rick.renzi@mail.house.gov

The Soldiers You Never Hear About...

Marine Captain Brian Chontosh, 29, from Rochester, N.Y., was awarded the Navy Cross, an award second only to the Medal of Honor, for extraordinary heroism, while serving as Combined Anti-Armor Platoon Commander, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom on March 25, 2003.

Chontosh was leading his platoon on Highway 1 south of Baghdad when he encountered a coordinated ambush of mortars, rocket-propelled grenades, and automatic-weapons fire. Immediately, Chontosh realized his men were caught in a kill zone. He ordered his driver to advance directly at the enemy trench enabling his .50 caliber machine gunner to silence fortified Iraqi positions.

Chontosh then exited his vehicle and began to clear the trench with an M16A2 service rifle and 9 millimeter pistol, until his ammunition ran out. "With complete disregard for his safety," according to the citation, "he twice picked up discarded enemy rifles and continued to mount an audacious offensive. . . When a Marine following him found an enemy rocket propelled grenade launcher, Chontosh used it to destroy yet another group of enemy soldiers."

At the conclusion of the maneuver, "he had cleared over 200 meters of the enemy trench, killing more than 20 enemy soldiers and wounding several others."

At his Navy Cross Medal Ceremony, Capt. Chontosh humbly remarked, "I was just doing my job, I did the same thing every other Marine would have done, it was just a passion and love for my Marines, the experience put a lot into perspective."



Marine Capt. Brian R. Chontosh received the Navy Cross Medal from the Commandant of the United States Marine Corps, Gen. Michael W. Hagee, Photo by: Cpl. Jeremy Vought

From the Headlines...

Renzi wants US-made Border Patrol Uniforms

Arizona Republic

<http://www.azcentral.com/news/articles/0617uniformbill17.html>

Congressman defends funding for Gila County

The Payson Roundup

http://www.paysonroundup.com/section/frontpage_lead/story/15528

Officials promise mail service improvements

The Prescott Daily Courier

<http://www.communitypapers.com/DAILYCOURIER/viewsearchresults.asp?infoid=125815145&moduleid=18923438¤t>

Renzi pledges aid to Navajo Nation; Congressman stops in LeChee, Page during one-day trip through local region

The Lake Powell Chronicle

http://www.lakepowellchronicle.com/main.php?story_id=852&page=23



Strong Job Growth Continues Across the Country

248,000 new jobs created in May

Nearly 1 million new jobs have been created in the last 100 days!!!

Nationwide, the economy has posted steady job gains for each of the last nine months. The national unemployment rate stood at 5.6 percent in May - below the average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. This rate is exactly the same as it was in May of 1996.

Widespread evidence of growth across major sectors of the economy – including the robust jobs gains of recent months – confirms Federal Reserve Chairman Greenspan’s recent observation that “the economy is growing in a solid fashion.” Strong jobs gains for all major industry groups, and falling unemployment, reveal employers’ increased confidence in the economy’s prospects. At the same time, various measures of real growth and activity have reached their strongest paces in 20 years, and benefits of the expansion are spreading throughout the sectors and industries of the economy. The continued optimism of consumers and businesses is supporting strong growth in consumption and investment spending, as well.

Key Economic Data for Arizona

Employment is up, Homeownership is on the rise, Arizona products attract worldwide attention

Unemployment

May Unemployment rate (%).....	5.1
Change from April (percentage point).....	-0.3

Employment

Jobs have been coming back since.....	June, 2003
Number of jobs gained since Jun-03.....	+63,200
Payroll jobs change from April.....	+8,400

Other important indicators

- International exports from Arizona increased 12.2 percent in 2003. Manufacturing exports, which made up 83 percent of Arizona’s total international exports in 2003, increased 11.4 percent.
- Homeownership in Arizona in 2003 was at 67 percent, close to the record national level of 68.3 percent.

Businesses Project Optimistic Employment Outlook

Approximately 30 percent of U.S. employers expect to add workers to their payrolls in the third quarter, according to the latest Manpower Employment Outlook Survey. This is the “strongest employment outlook since early 2001 ... this is good news for job seekers across the country ... When it comes to hiring, we are clearly in a phase of recovery,” said Jeffrey A. Joerres, Chairman and CEO of Manpower, Inc. (Source: *Wall Street Journal* , 6/15/04).