

Last year, when the House prohibited Members of Congress from seeking earmarks for private companies, I worried about the effect this would have on small high technology companies in Hawaii and throughout the country. I've been so impressed by the innovative scientists and engineers I've met and have proudly sought earmarks in the past to further their work. In the absence of earmarks, I believe that strengthening the SBIR and SBTB programs is our best chance to provide the opportunities these creative entrepreneurs need to create new businesses and products that will provide good jobs, strengthen our economy, and improve our quality of life.

In his State of the Union address last night, President Obama highlighted the importance of encouraging private sector innovation to spur economic growth and exports. Passing my bills to strengthen SBIR and SBTB would be a good first step.

INTRODUCTION OF THE ASSESSMENT ACCURACY AND IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2011

HON. THOMAS E. PETRI

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 26, 2011

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, as Congress considers the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act this year, we have an obligation to listen closely to the students, parents, and educators that we represent to ensure that our efforts result in responsible and pragmatic improvements. While we have made great strides in the areas of assessment and accountability over the last nine years, this reauthorization provides a critical opportunity to learn from our experiences and fine-tune the law.

One example of a lesson my constituents have learned, and have vigorously shared with me, is that we should be encouraging states to move towards better assessment models. As I have met with educators over the past several years, one of the primary concerns that I have heard is that the state assessment fails to provide information of value to educators and administrators. Even more disturbing, it often takes four to six months before scores are returned to schools, which leaves little or no time for teachers to use the information to address student performance before they advance to the next grade.

However, I believe there is a sensible solution that Congress can adopt to address these concerns and give states more options in assessment design. Today, Rep. DAVID WU and I are introducing the bipartisan Assessment Accuracy and Improvement Act of 2011 to give states the option to use adaptive testing as their statewide assessment measuring reading, math, and science to fulfill No Child Left Behind requirements. I believe that this legislation will give states the ability to truly track the academic growth of every child and provide more accurate information to teachers, parents and school administrators through the use of an adaptive test.

For those who may be unfamiliar with adaptive testing, it is a test that changes in response to previously-asked questions. For example, if a student answers a question correctly, the test presents a question of in-

creased difficulty. If a student answers incorrectly, the test presents a question of decreased difficulty. As you can see, an adaptive test customizes itself to a student's actual level of performance with a great degree of accuracy.

Giving states the flexibility to use an adaptive test and to ask questions outside of grade level will improve the accuracy of student assessment and enable educators to target appropriate instruction for each child based on performance at, above, or below grade level. In addition, using an adaptive test over time will allow accurate measurement of the performance growth of each individual student.

In Wisconsin, hundreds of school districts currently use their own funds to participate in adaptive testing in addition to the state assessment required by NCLB. Educators and administrators appreciate the diagnostic information it yields and the efficiency that it provides. I believe that school districts nationally are already "speaking with their wallets" by spending scarce resources to voluntarily participate in this testing because it provides valuable information that the state assessment does not.

Additionally, 30 states are currently participating in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, SBAC, one of the two state assessment consortia to receive funding under Race to the Top. SBAC is developing a researched-based computer adaptive test aligned to the common core standards. This legislation will ensure that these states will be able to fully utilize the capabilities of this next assessment.

Mr. Speaker, adaptive testing is one of the keys to putting the 'child' back into No Child Left Behind. I hope that our colleagues will join us in this pragmatic and responsible improvement to the law as we work towards a bipartisan reauthorization this year.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 242

HON. WALLY HERGER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 26, 2011

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, for the last few years, national forests throughout California have been in the process of implementing the Forest Service's 2005 Travel Management Rule, TMR. As a result, many national forests have proposed to reduce off-highway vehicle, OHV, access by 90 percent or more, in addition to restricting use on so-called maintenance-level 3, ML-3, roads by classifying them as "highways."

Throughout the travel management process, recreational users and local governments provided substantive documentation and comments to address safety issues and other concerns with this flawed policy. Despite the best efforts of these elected officials and pro-access groups, their comments were all but ignored as the Forest Service moved forward with the TMR. For these reasons, and given the significant economic damage this rule will cause to recreational communities throughout California, I have introduced legislation, H.R. 242, to restrict funding to the Forest Service to continue implementing the TMR in the State of California until the agency develops a more balanced and workable OHV policy.

Repeated requests for the Forest Service to change course within its own authority have gone unanswered. This legislation will help ensure that this agency is being held accountable to the public it is required to serve instead of using their tax dollars to restrict access to their Federal lands. I would encourage you to support H.R. 242.

JOB CREATION, ECONOMIC RECOVERY, AND DEBT REDUCTION

HON. LAURA RICHARDSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 26, 2011

Ms. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, as the 112th Congress goes to work on the policies and actions needed to move America forward, Democrats continue to make job creation, economic recovery and debt reduction the top priorities. Unfortunately, the first actions by the new Republican Majority are not consistent with these priorities.

These goals should be accomplished in a way that is aligned with the needs of working families—what will generate good jobs for working people; what will ease the burden for middle class families; what will create long-term economic growth for everyone. Democrats measure everything Congress does by these goals.

In the 37th district of California, things are improving, but unemployment and foreclosure rates are still well above the national average; this is the time to keep moving forward with policies tailored to help working families. Now is not the time to move backwards to policies that got us into this recession in the first place.

The Republicans have employed a lot of rhetoric about jobs and the economy; however, their first actions in control of the House show no follow through. The initial issues being pursued by the GOP are:

The repeal of Health Care Reform. Republicans knew the repeal would go nowhere in the Senate, but still insisted upon wasting valuable time that could have been spent on job creation.

The Republicans have offered what they call a "Budget Resolution"—but what should be called a "Budgetless Resolution" because it contains no numbers, no specifics and, worst of all, no ideas for job creation or economic recovery.

The Budgetless Resolution is a one-page document that makes the vague goal of reducing federal spending to 2008 levels. This budgetless resolution opens the door to reckless slashes in funding to programs that are critical to our fragile economic recovery.

In California alone, Republicans' blind budget slashing would cut 237 million from Title I funding for poor students. The cuts would leave over 332,000 poor students in California without additional academic support that helps them perform to their full potential in school and, ultimately, achieve their dreams and goals; this does not help us stay competitive in the global marketplace. And this is just one example of Republican cuts in one area in one state. Imagine the damage that Republicans' across the board, reckless cuts will do to our economic recovery.

This is not the smart way to manage the budget. It is worse than arbitrary; it is like