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 SBTT 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 SBTT 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 increased 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

budgeting with blindfolds on. It gives no thought, no reasons and no real discussion on how the cuts would be made and what the ramifications would be.

Democrats believe that jobs and the economy should be the top priorities and everything we do is measured against those goals. Republicans are failing the test.

REDUCING NON-SECURITY SPENDING TO FISCAL YEAR 2008 LEVELS OR LESS

SPEECH OF

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 25, 2011

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in opposition to the irresponsible budget resolution under consideration by the House.

My priorities in the new Congress remain supporting middle class families and helping to foster job creation. These goals should be how we in Congress measure every action we take. Unfortunately the budget resolution before us today fails to meet these goals and is little more than a not-so-shrewd act of political theater staged hours before the President delivers the State of the Union in this chamber.

The resolution, which authorizes the Budget Committee chairman to cut non-security federal spending to 2008 levels, is an insincere attempt at fiscal responsibility. Getting our nation's fiscal house in order is a task I and many of my colleagues take seriously. However, rather than setting a concrete plan for how Congress should spend taxpayer dollars, this resolution contains no hard numbers. Moreover, this resolution would take the unprecedented and undemocratic step of empowering one Member of Congress with the ability to identify which programs to cut and by how much.

One example of how this resolution will hurt middle-class Americans is by cutting the Pell Grant program. Pell Grants help working-class Americans afford a college education. Since 2008, Congress increased wisely the Pell Grant to $5,550. Should this ill-conceived resolution pass, Pell Grants could be cut by nearly 25 percent.

For America's economy to remain competitive in the coming years, Congress must make wise investments of taxpayer dollars. Pell Grants are just one of many of these wise investments. Allowing one Member of Congress to cut capriciously from federal programs while claiming to be fiscally responsible is anything but.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this budget resolution.

SENATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Title IV of Senate Resolution 4, agreed to by the Senate on February 4, 1977, calls for establishment of a system for a computerized schedule of all meetings and hearings of Senate committees, subcommittees, joint committees, and committees of conference. This title requires all such committees to notify the Office of the Senate Daily Digest—designated by the Rules Committee—of the time, place, and purpose of the meetings, when scheduled, and any cancellations or changes in the meetings as they occur.

As an additional procedure along with the computerization of this information, the Office of the Senate Daily Digest will prepare this information for printing in the Extensions of Remarks section of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on Monday and Wednesday of each week.

Meetings scheduled for Thursday, January 27, 2011 may be found in the Daily Digest of today's RECORD.

MEETINGS SCHEDULED

FEBRUARY 1

10 a.m.

Budget

To hold hearings to examine the U.S. economic outlook.

SD–608

Energy and Natural Resources

To hold hearings to examine the American Medical Isotopes Production Act of 2011.

SD–366

Foreign Relations

To hold hearings to examine Iraq, focusing on transitioning to a civilian mission.

SD–419

Judiciary

To hold hearings to examine foreclosure mediation programs, focusing on if bankruptcy courts can limit homeowner and investor losses.

SD–226

2:30 p.m.

Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Contracting Oversight Subcommittee

To hold hearings to examine improving Federal contract auditing.

SD–342

FEBRUARY 2

10 a.m.

Budget

To hold hearings to examine tax reform, focusing on fiscal responsibility.

SD–608

Environment and Public Works

To hold an oversight hearing to examine public health and drinking water issues.

SD–406

Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

To hold hearings to examine catastrophic preparedness, focusing on FEMA.

SD–342

Judiciary

To hold hearings to examine the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act.

SD–226

2 p.m.

Judiciary

To hold hearings to examine certain nominations.

SD–226

FEBRUARY 3

9:30 a.m.

Energy and Natural Resources

To hold hearings to examine the energy and oil market outlook for the 112th Congress.

SD–366

FEBRUARY 16

9:30 a.m.

Energy and Natural Resources

To hold hearings to examine the U.S. Department of Energy's budget for fiscal year 2012.

SD–366