



# CONGRESSMAN JIM SENSENBRENNER NEWS FROM CONGRESS

NUMBER 164 -- JANUARY 2004

## At Last -- A Medicare Bill

Reforming our nation's Medicare system and providing individuals with affordable health care coverage have been top priorities of Congress this year. After intense debate, on Saturday, November 22, the House of Representatives passed HR 1, the Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act of 2003, with my support. A few days later, the Senate followed the House's lead, and on December 8, the President signed this legislation into law.

Though not a perfect bill, the agreement is good for seniors in Wisconsin. For the first time in the history of the Medicare program, Congress has provided seniors with access to a voluntary prescription drug benefit -- which will help over 800,000 beneficiaries in our state. Importantly, to help keep costs down and promote competition, private insurance plans will be available to seniors under HR 1, and federal benefits to seniors will be provided according to an income-based formula.

Moreover, although the bill puts a moratorium on specialty hospitals, Wisconsin is one of ten states that qualified to receive extra funds for hospitals that serve Medicaid beneficiaries, who are generally people with low incomes. Also, doctors who serve Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries will be better reimbursed by the government for their services. This is a critical provision of the bill because many physicians have threatened to

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## REMINDER

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## Tax Cuts Working

The President and Congress have been working hard to create solutions to the problems of Americans who are unemployed, and to businesses who have suffered financially since the events of September 11, 2001. When President Bush signed his Jobs and Growth Act into law last June, it put into motion a series of events that have resulted in our present economic outlook, which indicates that America's economy is gaining strength.

Consider the numbers:

Real GDP growth in the third quarter of 2003 was 8.2 percent, the best since the days of former President Reagan. The labor market has begun to rebound -- nearly 300,000 jobs have been created over the past three months, and initial claims of unemployment have fallen markedly over the past two months, going as low as 5.9% in November. Housing starts and permits in October were at their highest levels since the mid-1980s, and retail sales grew at an average of 8.5% over the four month

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In recognition of his work in Congress, Representative Sensenbrenner receives the NAM Award for Manufacturing Legislative Excellence for the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress during a recent meeting in Wisconsin.

## OFFICE HOURS

### Friday, January 16

8:30 a.m. Helenville Fire Hall  
9:15 a.m. Sullivan Village Hall  
10:00 a.m. Palmyra Village Hall  
11:00 a.m. Dousman Village Hall  
11:45 a.m. Genesee Town Hall  
12:30 p.m. Wales Village Hall  
2:00 p.m. Nashotah - Lake Country Fire Station  
2:45 p.m. Merton Town Hall  
3:30 p.m. Merton Village Hall  
4:15 p.m. Pewaukee Village Hall

### Monday, January 19

9:00 a.m. Kewaskum Village Hall  
10:00 a.m. Addison Town Hall  
10:45 a.m. Jackson Village Hall  
11:45 a.m. Sussex Village Hall  
1:00 p.m. Lannon Village Hall  
1:45 p.m. Butler Village Hall

### Friday, January 23

9:00 a.m. Newburg Village Hall  
9:45 a.m. Fredonia Village Hall  
10:30 a.m. Belgium Village Hall  
11:15 a.m. Saukville Village Hall  
1:30 p.m. River Hills Village Hall  
2:15 p.m. Fox Point Village Hall  
3:00 p.m. Bayside Village Hall

*Town Hall Meetings and Office Hours provide me the chance to hear your views on the issues before Congress or to help you with problems you may be experiencing in dealing with a federal agency. I look forward to seeing you at the next meeting nearest your home. Please contact my district office if you require special accommodations to attend.*

## TOWN HALL MEETINGS

### Saturday, January 17

9:00 a.m. Shorewood Village Hall  
1:00 p.m. Delafield City Hall

### Thursday, January 22

7:00 p.m. Menomonee Falls Village Hall

### Sunday, January 25

1:00 p.m. Brookfield Safety Building

### Thursday, February 5

7:00 p.m. West Bend City Hall

### Sunday, February 8

1:00 p.m. Thiensville Village Hall

### Saturday, February 14

9:00 a.m. Cedarburg Police Dept.  
1:00 p.m. Pewaukee City Hall

### Saturday, February 28

9:00 a.m. Richfield Town Hall  
1:00 p.m. Brown Deer Public Library

### Friday, March 19

1:00 p.m. Elm Grove Village Hall

### Sunday, March 21

1:00 p.m. Hartland Village Hall

### Saturday, March 27

9:00 a.m. New Berlin City Hall  
1:00 p.m. Johnson Creek Village Hall

### Sunday, January 18

1:00 p.m. Port Washington Police Dept.

### Saturday, January 24

9:00 a.m. Wauwatosa Public Library  
1:00 p.m. Grafton Village Hall

### Monday, January 26

7:00 p.m. Waukesha Public Library

### Saturday, February 7

9:00 a.m. West Allis Public Library  
1:00 p.m. Glendale North Shore Library

### Monday, February 9

7:00 p.m. Oconomowoc City Hall

### Sunday, February 15

1:00 p.m. Slinger Village Hall

### Sunday, February 29

1:00 p.m. Delafield Town Hall

### Saturday, March 20

9:00 a.m. Germantown Village Hall  
1:00 p.m. Hartford City Hall

### Monday, March 22

7:00 p.m. Whitefish Bay Public Library

### Sunday, March 28

1:00 p.m. Mequon Safety Building

## A Weak Energy Bill

Each spring, motorists in Southeastern Wisconsin experience dramatic spikes in the price of gasoline. One reason for this is that fuel companies have to switch from winter blends of gasoline to summer blends to meet stringent EPA regulations. Moreover, as different regions of the country have begun to use an increased number of specialized blends, the number of these boutique fuels has increased. Since there are only a few refineries that can provide us with our particular blend of fuel, when one of them doesn't work, we experience fuel shortages, and have to dig deeper into our pockets for gas money.

In an effort to eliminate this restriction, Congressman Paul Ryan attempted to insert language in HR 6, the Energy Omnibus Bill, that would have eliminated the restriction of the types and number of boutique fuels authorized for our region. Eliminating this restriction would have enabled Southeastern Wisconsin to use **other blends** of fuel, which would have translated to more fuel being pumped to our region. But his efforts were thwarted by large oil companies, and the elimination of this provision was one of the major reasons why I did not support the Energy Conference Report when it passed the House last November.

Another reason I did not support the Energy bill is because it protects manufacturers of MTBE. MTBE is a chemical fuel additive. Although it produces cleaner emissions, MTBE is a proven carcinogen that has been found to easily contaminate ground water. There are approximately 700,000 underground storage tanks throughout the US, most containing gasoline, diesel fuel and other toxic chemicals. As of last March, there have been over 430,000 confirmed releases from such tanks,

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## Tax Cuts Working

period from July through October.

What do all these numbers mean? It means that the tax cuts are working because the economy has turned the corner. There are fewer unemployed people, there is more demand for American products, and people have more money to spend.

But I realize that these numbers don't apply to everyone, and I am aware of families and businesses in Wisconsin that are still struggling, particularly those in the manufacturing industry. After all, prior to these past few months, the manufacturing sector lost almost 3 million jobs over a period of five years.

My commitment and support of our manufacturers is evident in many ways. I have regularly supported expanding the scope of the Buy American Act, which requires the federal government to purchase domestic "articles, materials, and supplies" unless a specific exemption exists. Last May, I cosponsored the Job Protection Act of 2003, which encourages manufacturers to stay in the US by giving tax breaks to businesses. Moreover, in September, I joined the Congressional Manufacturing Caucus to work with other Members of Congress to address these issues.

I also strongly oppose our nation's current policy of trade with China. Although I am generally a proponent of free trade, when unfairly implemented, free trade can sometimes place American workers and businesses at a competitive disadvantage with their foreign counterparts. In the case of the Chinese, they have engaged in numerous illegal and unfair trade practices that have been severely detrimental to the US.

For example, some economists claim that the Chinese Yuan is artificially undervalued by as much as 40 percent. President Bush recognizes this problem, and last year, admonished China for its practice of currency-tampering. To address this issue in Congress, I cosponsored H.R. 3058, the CHINA Act. This legislation requires the Secretary of the Treasury to analyze whether China is manipulating its currency to achieve an advantage in trade. If manipulation is found, the US would be authorized to impose corrective tariffs on imported goods. In addition, I am a cosponsor of a bill introduced by Congressman Bernie Sanders to repeal China's favorable trade status.

Since Wisconsin's economy is heavily based on skilled manufacturing, the welfare of those who work in this sector is critical. Looking back at the numbers in this article, one should note that they also mean that the President's economic agenda is producing results. Consequently, as in previous economic downturns, it's a matter of time before our state's manufacturing industry experiences some good news of its own, and more Wisconsinites get jobs. ■



Congressman Sensenbrenner talks to Whitefish Bay High School students about Congress, his responsibilities, and the various pieces of legislation that come before the House floor during the course of a year.

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## At Last -- A Medicare Bill

drop Medicare and Medicaid patients, which would hurt these folks even more as they already have limited resources available to them.

HR 1 includes language to create Health Savings Accounts (HSAs). HSAs are sensible and versatile financial planning tools. By offering Americans more control over their healthcare decisions, HSAs will help lower overall health costs. Contributions to HSAs will be tax deductible, as will withdrawals used for deductible medical expenses. Furthermore, due to their low premium costs, HSAs will be attractive to the uninsured.

To help seniors with their steep prescription drug costs, Congress negotiated a compromise, and by definition, a compromise implies that no one will be happy with **everything** that's in the law. To be sure, I am not pleased with every provision in this legislation. But I do believe that by providing much-needed relief, this law will help a **majority** of our seniors as they struggle to meet their escalating medical costs. ■

## The End Of An Era

As the leader of the United States, Americans look toward President Bush for answers and results. On December 14, in a short, nationally televised speech, the President announced the capture of Saddam Hussein, and in doing so, muted some of the criticism directed his way for his decision to liberate Iraq from Saddam's tyrannical rule. This was a momentous day for the world, and it provided our troops and nation with a tremendous boost of morale.

Yet, as the President explained, this is a victory in the War on Terror, not the end. There still remain people bent on destroying our nation, and crushing the American spirit. Consequently, our mission to capture them continues. Though we have captured Saddam, we cannot begin to slow down until we have secured the entire deck of cards. ■

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## A Weak Energy Bill

the vast majority involving gasoline with MTBE. Even if we dramatically step up the current cleanup effort, stopping the leaking tanks will take decades. Yet, this Energy bill does not phase out MTBE until 2015. Moreover, under this legislation, manufacturers of MTBE are provided a liability waiver that also lasts 11 years, effectively transferring the costs of cleaning MTBE from manufacturers to taxpayers during the next decade.

I am also opposed to the subsidies afforded to oil and gas companies in this legislation. Putting hundreds of millions of dollars of corporate welfare into the pockets of major oil companies does not reduce the cost of energy for Americans, and the Energy Conference Report contains a grab bag of tax credits for corporations that has a price tag of more than \$20 billion.

Other than New Hampshire, Wisconsin was the only state of which the entire delegation voted against this Energy bill. It isn't often that the delegation unites on an issue. When it does, it sends a message. In this case, the message should be 'cut the pork.' Our nation needs an Energy bill, not another opportunity for Congress to tax Americans. ■

## Contact Information:

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**TEL: (262) 784-1111**

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