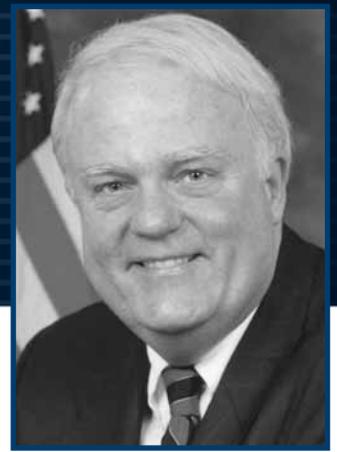


Congressman **Jim Sensenbrenner**

# News From Congress

Number 177 – January 2008



## AMT – The Fix Is In

All year long, Congress has talked, debated, discussed and yes, even voted on legislation to fix the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) -- but never on a proposal that put the American taxpayer first. Each proposal was offset with some other tax increases, under the misguided notion that the revenue from the AMT was money that the government *owned*.

As a result, Congress waited until the week before Christmas to do what it should have done months ago: pass an AMT bill with no strings attached. However, this is only a one-year fix, and it comes under the premise that the issue will be re-visited next year, when once again, efforts will undoubtedly be made to raise taxes someplace else to compensate for the AMT funds.

Moreover, this late action has potentially complicated the tax refunds of as many as 50 million taxpayers. By creating uncertainties about what tax breaks will be available for the 2007 tax year, people can expect delayed refunds, and increased IRS paperwork. In fact, the IRS warned of these difficulties in November in a sternly worded letter to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee.

*(continued on page 2...)*

## Pork And Bad Ideas = Wasteful Spending

There is no getting around it -- Congress loves its pork, and some Members will do anything they can to make sure they secure money for their districts, including vote for the half-trillion dollar behemoth omnibus appropriations bill last month. Standing over a foot tall, this 3,500-plus page document contains 11 of the 12 appropriations bills in one gigantic catch-all package, that was made available to Members less than 24 hours before the vote.

With almost 9,000 earmarks worth more than \$12 billion, the omnibus includes doozies such as a million-dollar earmark for a Woodstock museum, and two million dollars for a nonprofit group researching yoga, bio-energy and alternative medicines. Moreover, even new Members of Congress, who came to Washington, DC well after the deadline for submitting earmarks, managed to siphon some taxpayer money for their respective districts.

It should come as no surprise that I voted against this bill. In addition to the exorbitant pork, this legislation changes some critical priorities of previous Congresses. For example, the omnibus bill dilutes the impact of laws designed to protect our nation by changing the requirements for the construction of 700 miles of fencing along the southwest border.

*(continued on page 2...)*

*Reminder...*

**Office Hours &  
Town Hall Meetings**

*Back page*

(...continued from page 1)

## AMT – The Fix Is In

According to the IRS, it will take seven weeks from the day the President signs the AMT patch into law to reprogram its computers and update tax forms.

Consequently, taxpayers can now expect:

- Delays in processing their tax returns;
- Up to \$89 billion in refunds not issued on time; and
- Prolonged wait times when attempting to contact the IRS as more taxpayers phone in their questions surrounding the confusion of the delayed AMT patch.

Conversely, I am pleased that the nearly 110,000 taxpayers in the 5th Congressional District who would have been affected by the AMT next year will have relief from this unfair tax.

In fact, because of Wisconsin's high property and income taxes, which cannot be deducted under the AMT, the 5th Congressional District of Wisconsin was set to be **the 9th highest district out of 436** to be affected by the AMT next year.

What still frustrates me is that the need for an AMT solution was not a surprise. Congress had **all year** to prevent this increase, but as a result of its inaction, this mess is now left in the hands of the IRS bureaucrats.

(...continued from page 1)

## Pork And Bad Ideas = Wasteful Spending

The bill also delays certain provisions of my Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, by pushing back a requirement for citizens of the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Bermuda and the Caribbean region, to possess a passport or secure travel document when entering the U.S. by land and sea. In this post-9/11 world, it is worth highlighting one of the observations of the 9/11 Commission, that "Fraud in identification documents is no longer just a problem of theft." In the hands of a terrorist, a valid ID accepted for travel in the U.S. can be just as dangerous as a missile or bomb. By pushing back a deadline for secure travel documents, and changing the requirements to strengthen our borders, this Congress has

diminished my efforts in previous Congresses to protect our homeland.

To put it mildly, this is a bad bill. It is a wasteful product that needlessly rolled our domestic spending bills into one vehicle. I hope this is not an omen of what's to come next year, because Americans deserve better -- they deserve a responsible Congress that can get the job done on time.

# U.S. "Obstruction" In Bali Leads To Progress

Last month, in Bali, Indonesia, delegates from around the world gathered at a United Nations convention to start negotiations on a climate change treaty that is more likely to reduce American paychecks than it is to reduce emissions. Being the Ranking Member on the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, I watched these developments closely.

Al Gore, speaking to delegates at the Convention said, "My own country, the United States, is principally responsible for obstructing progress here in Bali." But before we join the chorus of international cheers that greeted his statement, it is worth considering exactly what U.S. negotiators were trying to obstruct.

The Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012. Delegates in Bali convened to produce a roadmap to guide negotiations for a replacement. The U.S. has never ratified Kyoto. Former President Clinton never even sent the treaty to the Senate for ratification, and President Bush rejected the treaty when he took office. Both Presidents knew that the Kyoto Protocol was deeply flawed and against U.S. interests. Our negotiators in Bali worked hard to avoid a treaty that was even worse.

When Kyoto was drafted, an appointee of the Clinton White House testified to the Science and Technology Committee that complying with Kyoto was likely to raise U.S. electric costs by up to 80 percent. We now know that the cost of non-

compliance could be even higher. Japan, Italy, and Spain, which all ratified the Kyoto Protocol, are facing penalties of approximately \$33 billion for their failure to meet their commitments under Kyoto. The bulk of these penalties will be in the form of UN-mandated tax increases.

Even worse, the commitments under Kyoto only apply to developed countries like the United States. Developing countries, including China and India, two of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases in the world, were not covered by Kyoto. In fact, while developed countries have commitments to reduce emissions, developing countries get paid for any reduction efforts they take. Thus, under Kyoto, energy costs in the U.S. would be taxed, while costs in China and India would be subsidized.

Initially, the Bali Roadmap was headed down that same road. It was only the U.S. "obstruction" that finally forced developing countries to concede that a new agreement must include commitments from developing countries. As Americans, we owe a "thank you" to the U.S. negotiators whose "obstruction" could ultimately save taxpayers billions of dollars.



Congressman Sensenbrenner is pictured here in his Brookfield office, presenting Mr. Irving R. Hennings, Sr. of Delafield with a Bronze Star Medal and Presidential Unit Citation. At Mr. Hennings' request, Congressman Sensenbrenner contacted the Department of the Army to help him obtain his medals. Surrounding them are Mr. Hennings' family and friends.

# You're Invited...

I host scores of Town Hall Meetings and Office Hours to provide you the chance to express your views on the issues before Congress or to help you with problems you may be experiencing in dealing with a federal agency. This newsletter includes my schedule of meetings for the next several weeks, and I invite you to attend one or more of them. Whether you need help or not, I hope you'll stop by to say hello and introduce yourself. Please contact my District office if you require special accommodations to attend.

## Office Hours

### Thursday, January 31st

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

### Friday, February 1st

8:30am . . . . . Helenville Fire Hall  
9:15am . . . . . Sullivan Village Hall  
10:00am . . . . . Palmyra Village Hall  
11:00am . . . . . Dousman Village Hall  
11:45am . . . . . Genesee Town Hall  
12:30pm . . . . . Wales Village Hall  
2:00pm . . . . . Nashotah Village Hall  
2:45pm . . . . . Merton Town Hall  
3:30pm . . . . . Merton Village Hall  
4:15pm . . . . . Pewaukee Village Hall

### Monday, February 4th

9:30am . . . . . Butler Village Hall  
10:30am . . . . . Lannon Village Hall  
11:15am . . . . . Sussex Village Hall  
1:15pm . . . . . Jackson Village Hall  
2:15pm . . . . . Addison Town Hall  
3:00pm . . . . . Kewaskum Village Hall

## Town Hall Meetings

### Saturday, January 19th

9:00am Grafton Village Hall  
1:00pm West Allis Public Library

### Sunday, January 20th

1:00pm Oconomowoc City Hall

### Wednesday, January 30th

7:00pm Mequon Public Safety Building

### Thursday, January 31st

7:00pm Port Washington  
Police Department

### Saturday, February 2nd

9:00am Germantown Village Hall  
1:00pm Shorewood Village Hall

### Sunday, February 3rd

12:00pm Slinger Village Hall

### Monday, February 4th

7:00pm Hartford City Hall

### Tuesday, February 5th

7:00pm Cedarburg Police Department

### Saturday, February 9th

9:00am Elm Grove Village Hall  
1:00pm Wauwatosa Public Library

### Sunday, February 10th

7:00pm Pewaukee City Hall

### Saturday, March 1st

9:00am Johnson Creek Village Hall  
1:00pm Whitefish Bay Public Library

### Sunday, March 2nd

1:00pm West Bend City Hall

### Saturday, March 8th

9:00am Richfield Town Hall  
1:00pm Glendale Public Library

### Sunday, March 9th

1:00pm Delafield Town Hall

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### To write about issues or request publications, contact me at:

2449 Rayburn Building, Washington, DC 20515-4905  
TEL: (202) 225-5101

### To get help with federal agencies, contact me at:

120 Bishops Way, #154, Brookfield, WI 53005-6294  
TEL: (262) 784-1111

Outside Metro Calling Area: **(800) 242-1119**

E-Mail: <http://sensenbrenner.house.gov/contactform> Website: <http://sensenbrenner.house.gov>

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515-4905

**PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**OFFICIAL BUSINESS**

This mailing was prepared, published  
and mailed at taxpayer expense.

It is provided as a service to 5th  
Congressional District constituents.



PRESORT STANDARD  
CAR-RT SORT

