



Hastings Remarks at Richland Rotary Club

(as prepared for delivery)

Good afternoon. It's a pleasure to join you for your monthly meeting and I hope that everyone had a relaxing and enjoyable 4th of July. I would like to take this opportunity to update you on Congress, my work on behalf of the Tri-Cities and answer your questions.

With record deficits, massive stimulus spending, new taxes, endless taxpayer-funded bailouts and a trillion dollar government takeover of health care – those who have control over Washington, DC are taking our nation in exactly the wrong direction.

I voted against these bills because of the consequences they will have for every American and for generations to come.

Unfortunately, this Congress is dead set on continuing down the path of more spending, higher taxes and bigger government – and that is bad news for small businesses like yours.

Just before breaking for the Fourth of July, House Democrats announced that they would not write a budget for next year and may raise taxes on middle class families and small businesses.

Instead of writing a budget, they chose to ignore the rules and hide a deeming scheme deep within what was supposed to be a bill to provide for our troops. This is the same type of deeming scheme that they tried to use when they jammed through their government takeover of health care.

I can't say whether they are unwilling or just unable to make the choices necessary to bring fiscal sanity to Congress, but this is the first time since the current budget rules were written in 1974 that the House of Representatives has failed to pass a federal budget blueprint. And, here's why it matters.

By failing to write a budget, they are allowed to keep spending money the federal government doesn't have without any overall budget plan. And, an opportunity to return to the fiscal discipline that economic experts say is needed to create jobs and revive our economy has been lost.

The number one focus must be creating jobs, getting our economy back on track and stopping out-of-control spending.

That means ending the bailouts and using the money to pay down the debt. And, it means lowering taxes, ending the death tax, making the state sales tax deduction permanent and letting small businesses keep more of their money to invest and expand.

It means repealing the trillion-dollar health care law and replacing it with common sense solutions that lower costs and increase choices – without punishing job-creating businesses.

While everyone agrees that improvements must be made to our health care system, I reject the premise that government knows best how to run our health care.

As Americans, you should be aware that this law increases government spending, increases deficits, and increases taxes, without lowering health care costs. It forces every American to purchase only government-approved insurance, cuts Medicare, and reduces health care choices.

As business owners, you should be aware of the costs of this overhaul on employers. If you have more than 50 employees, you must provide government-approved plans to your employees or face a fine of \$2,000 per-employee.

Congress should not be making it more expensive and more difficult for businesses to offer health benefits – Congress should be making it easier.

Instead of imposing new taxes and mandates on small business owners, they should be allowed to band together to purchase health insurance at lower rates like large corporations can.

Frivolous lawsuits that drive up health care costs for everyone must be ended.

Individuals should be allowed the same tax breaks companies currently receive for purchasing health insurance and Americans should be able to purchase health insurance across state lines.

Tax-free health savings accounts should be expanded and portable. Waste, fraud, and abuse must be eliminated and preventative care and home health care, which save money in the long-run, must be made a priority.

Stopping the House-passed cap-and-trade national energy tax and creating a truly all-of-the-above energy plan is another critical part of reviving our economy.

Our nation must move towards a cheaper, cleaner, more efficient energy system, but there is a better path forward that does not involve increasing taxes on every American.

As the top Republican on the House Natural Resources Committee, I'm promoting a comprehensive energy solution that says yes to new alternative renewable energy sources, wind and solar, nuclear power, hydropower and drilling for oil and gas here in America.

The Tri-Cities is already leading the way when it comes to American-made energy with our nuclear, hydro, solar and wind projects – and with world-class energy research at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. And, our community can do even more.

Yet, leaders in Washington DC are focused on locking up America's energy resources, putting dam removal back on the table, and shutting down Yucca Mountain.

For our regional agriculture based economy, Congress must open up new overseas markets and level the playing field by passing fair trade agreements. There are several pending trade agreements simply awaiting an up-or-down vote in Congress. These agreements would create jobs in our trade-dependent state at no cost to taxpayers. For example, if Congress passed the pending Colombian agreements tariffs would immediately disappear on our apples, cherries, potatoes pears.

Here in the Tri-Cities, much of our economy centers around Hanford. Keeping cleanup moving forward is a top priority. That means steady stable funding, ensuring that the federal government's commitments are kept and moving forward on Yucca Mountain.

As you know, Hanford's Waste Treatment Plant is being constructed to treat high level waste, and turn it into glass so that it can be shipped to Yucca Mountain for permanent storage. Unfortunately, these plans are being derailed by the Obama Administration on behalf of one Senator in political trouble.

Under the law Yucca Mountain is the national repository for wastes at Hanford and other sites across the nation. Yet, the Obama Administration is moving forward right now to terminate the project.

The DC Circuit Court has set an expedited time table on legal actions filed by the State of Washington, Tri-Cities community leaders and others and is expected to issue a ruling in September. Last week the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Atomic Safety and Licensing Board ruled that the Department of Energy does not have the legal authority to unilaterally terminate Yucca Mountain.

Yet, termination activities move forward. In fact, it is my understanding that today DOE is holding a force reduction meeting to discuss the ongoing process of cutting the Yucca Mountain workforce with those who are losing their jobs. Unless something is done right now to halt these actions, the work and progress and expertise linked to this project will be lost.

That's just plain wrong. No Administration is above the law.

Our country has spent billions of dollars and spent decades studying the safest place to store this waste – and Yucca Mountain was determined to be the answer. Abandoning this project means waste will be at Hanford longer and could mean changes and additional risks for the Waste Treatment Plant.

Aside from keeping cleanup moving forward, our community must plan for life after Hanford cleanup is complete – especially as the size of the site shrinks.

This means supporting PNNL, HAMMER, WSU and others as they seek to continue and expand their missions.

It means ensuring public access to public lands like the summit of Rattlesnake Mountain and other areas. This is land the American people own and it should be accessible to them. The summit of Rattlesnake Mountain provides unparalleled views of the National Monument, Hanford and the Columbia River that everyone should have the opportunity to enjoy. In fact, the only way to appreciate the entire National Monument is from this vantage point.

And, it means planning now for land use opportunities that should be made available as the size of the Hanford site shrinks. Parts of that land could and should be used for projects like an energy park that will strengthen our economy into the future.

Finally, I want to talk with you about a new tool for all American to make their opinions heard in Washington, DC. One of the most important parts of my job is listening to you. This Congress needs to change its priorities, and that change starts by listening to the American people.

House Republicans have created an online interactive website for people across the nation to submit their ideas about reforming government and engage in discussions about the direction Congress should take. The website is www.AmericaSpeakingOut.com,

Once again, thank you for inviting me to speak with you today and I would like to close by taking your questions.