

Thursday, February 1, 2007

**Delegates:** As most of you probably know, there are 435 voting members of the House of Representatives, and each represents a district of roughly the same size (about 650,000). The only exception to the "equivalent size" rule are the smaller states which get only one "at large" seat because they don't have a large enough population to get two. So, the single Representative from Montana has the greatest population in his at large seat at over 1,000,000 and the Representative from Wyoming has the smallest at about 500,000.

What you may not know is that there are five "delegates" to the House from four U.S. Territories and Washington, DC. The four territories represented are American Samoa, the Virgin Islands, Guam and Puerto Rico. These delegates are allowed to do everything the members of Congress can do (including vote in committees) except vote on the floor. The Democratic leadership passed a rule last week (on a virtually straight party-line vote) to allow these delegates to vote on the floor. However, there is a procedure to revote if their votes affect the outcome.

I think this is a ridiculous idea. First of all, what's the point of voting if it can't make a difference? Secondly, these territories are dramatically different in size. American Samoa (the place that Nancy Pelosi exempted from the minimum wage for Tuna workers) has a population of only 52,000. Puerto Rico, on the other hand, has nearly four million. But both have only one vote. The most compelling reason against this proposal is simply that these places are not states. They do not have the same obligations as states do. For example, these people could be voting on tax increases for everyone in the country except their populations. Bad idea.

This rule will undoubtedly be challenged in court as unconstitutional. So why did the majority put it forward? Four of the five delegates are Democrats. The Republican delegate represents Puerto Rico, which has four times the population of the other four areas combined, but still gets only one vote. Easy to figure out now.

**Budget:** Yesterday, the House passed a 140 page bill to spend \$463 billion on various things for the remainder of this fiscal year, which ends September 30th. I and 139 others voted against it. It increased spending, and therefore the deficit, by \$10 billion more than an alternative I presented. The alternative would have continued government spending basically at last year's

level. Also, the spending bill continued dozens earmarks which would have been eliminated by my proposal. One of these earmarks was \$50 million to construct a rainforest in Iowa. A rainforest in Iowa! I'm having a hard time visualizing that. Other earmarks were millions of dollars in Nevada requested by Senate Majority Leader Reid.

My alternative proposal was defeated in the first committee on a straight party line vote. Here was an opportunity to control spending. Here was a chance to begin further reducing the deficit. Here was a chance to say no to earmarks. But the majority could not resist spending. Color me not surprised.

**Daughters of the Confederacy:** Statuary Hall in the Capitol is the room which used to be the House floor prior to the 1860's, but now is one of the places where each state gets to put a statue of a famous citizen of that state. California has a statue of Father Junipero Serra in statuary hall. Virginia has General Robert E. Lee.

Two weeks ago, as I was walking through this hall on my way to a vote, I noticed three women in Civil War period clothing with baskets of flowers standing in front of the statue of Robert E. Lee. They were calling to those of us walking by come see them. Curiosity got the better of me so I stopped to listen. That day (January 19th) was the 200th anniversary of the birth of General Lee, and these were members of the Daughters of the Confederacy who stand in front of his statue with flowers every year on this date. Wow. 200 years later, and they're still there. You're not likely to see things like that in Laguna Hills.

Lest you think I am being critical of these women, I must confess that I am a member of the Sons of Union Veterans. History and tradition can be great things.

Until next week, I remain respectfully,

Congressman John Campbell