Quote of the Day: "The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings; the inherent virtue of socialism is the equal sharing of miseries." *Sir Winston Churchill.*

The budget, taxes, the economy, stimuli and TARPs: It seems this is all we have talked about and all we have done in DC this year. But there have been a few other interesting and important topics under discussion in the nation's capital. Here are 3 subjects about which you may not have heard much about through the din of the recession, but upon which there has been some movement:

Obama surge: The war in Iraq appears to have largely been won and the troop withdrawals that began under President Bush continue under President Obama. But, somewhat quietly, Obama has agreed to a 'surge' of 21,000 more troops to Afghanistan. Al Qaeda and the Taliban are now regrouping in northern Pakistan and southern Afghanistan, and military officials think that this 'surge' is probably insufficient to do the job and more troops will be necessary later in the year. The President has said that he will consider sending those additional troops on top of the 21,000. So basically, US troops are moving from Iraq to Afghanistan. The war in Afghanistan is likely to be much more difficult from a military standpoint than it was in Iraq. Complications include the difficult terrain in the region; the fact that the Pakistani government is democratic and "friendly," but weak, and not in control of its northern regions; the involvement of NATO which often makes military decision-making more difficult; and the historic inability of foreign forces to succeed in this difficult country and environment. But to abandon the effort would be to allow these groups to again prosper, without disturbance, and to launch more attacks on US interests and US soil. The war on terror (although I guess the administration doesn't call it that anymore) is far from over.

The end of secret ballots?: There is a bill in Congress to eliminate the right of workers to vote in favor or against a union by secret ballot. This bill is being promoted by union interests and is commonly known as the "card check" bill. Right now, union elections are held by secret ballot (just like national elections), in order to avoid intimidation of workers by either the union, or management, since neither will know how any individual person actually voted. Under "card check," workers would vote by filling out a "card" over a period of weeks which makes their vote known to the union and subject to intimidation. Unions want this because they believe they can increase union membership this way. Business hates it because they believe (rightly so), that it is intended to bring back union intimidation. In case you hadn't already guessed, I think that card check is awful, and I can't believe the unions have the gall to eliminate the fundamental democratic right to a secret ballot. But the point here is that this has become a huge fight in Washington with both union and business interests making the vote on this bill a seminal moment in which they determine if a Congressperson is with them or against them. Card check will clearly pass in the House. But House Democrats do not want to anger business interests by

voting for card check, only to have the bill fail in the Senate. So, the bill is supposed to start in the Senate, where it needs 60 votes. So far, they don't have enough votes as no Republicans have declared for it, and several moderate Democrats have come out against it. So, the debate rages behind closed doors, and the bill sits. If it sits for the rest of the year, it is likely that the Democratic leadership will not want to bring it up in either chamber during an election year. I hope the whole idea goes away. By the way, I am not anti-union, but unions have not changed their business model in 70 years and they no longer add any value for workers or anyone else. They are pursuing the wrong path by trying to have government slant the field in their favor, rather than reform themselves. But that is a discussion for another day.

A Member of Congress for DC?: This has been a big priority of Democrats in Congress since they took the majority in 2006. They want DC to have a full voting member of Congress. It is probably unconstitutional since the Constitution says that the House is made up of members chosen by the people of "the several states," and DC is not a state. Also, the District of Columbia was initially created because the founders understood that the area where the national capital existed would have a disproportionate level of influence on the operation of the government by virtue of proximity. But Democrats want it because DC is reliably Democratic. So, why hasn't it passed yet?

DC, up until recently, had instituted a complete ban on handguns. In June of 2008, the Supreme Court found the ban unconstitutional. But the ban still exists as a result of maneuvering by the DC City Council, in the form of very strict regulations, making handgun ownership all but impossible. But Congress has the authority to repeal them, and there seems to be enough Blue Dog Democrats that will vote ‘no’ on the DC vote bill unless it contains a provision to repeal the gun ownership ban. Speaker Pelosi wants the DC representative, but not the gun rights. So they are at a stalemate right now. I support the Second Amendment, but I will not vote in favor of a DC Representative with, or without the gun rights clause. I have cosponsored a separate bill repealing the gun ownership ban.

Until next week, I remain respectfully,

Congressman John Campbell