



# OFFICE OF SPEAKER NANCY PELOSI FACT SHEET

## **DEMOCRATIC-LED CONGRESS IS ADDRESSING URGENT UNMET NEEDS THAT THE REPUBLICAN-LED CONGRESS FAILED TO ACT ON *GOP Congress Adjourned in December, Leaving Several Emergency Needs Unmet***

In December, the Republican-led 109<sup>th</sup> Congress adjourned for the year – having failed to complete much of its work. For example, the Congress left town after passing only two of the 11 FY 2007 appropriations bills. As a result, the Democratic-led Congress had to – four months into the fiscal year -- clean up the mess left by the Republicans and pass a full-year continuing resolution to prevent the government from shutting down and keep programs funded through FY 2007.

Similarly, the Republican-led Congress left town without addressing several emergency needs confronting the country. Now, once again, the Democratic-led Congress is having to deal with the unfinished business of the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress. This fact sheet provides a summary of the following urgent needs that were neglected by the Republicans but are now being addressed in the FY 2007 Supplemental Appropriations Bill:

- Agricultural Disaster Aid
- Katrina Relief and Recovery
- Urgent Homeland Security Needs
- Urgent State Children's Health Insurance Needs
- Urgent Pandemic Flu Preparedness Needs

### **Agricultural Assistance -- \$3.7 Billion**

Throughout the latter part of 2005 and all of 2006, the Republican leadership of Congress blocked vitally-needed agricultural disaster aid for many of the nation's farmers and ranchers.

The need for agricultural disaster aid was clear. Natural disasters, including hurricanes, floods, droughts, wildfires, and other weather-related events caused serious damage to crops and livestock in 2005 and 2006. According to the National Farmers Union, more than 80 percent of U.S. counties were designated as disaster areas in 2005 and more than 60 percent in 2006. Farmers and ranchers in these communities have been struggling and may not be able to stay in business without disaster assistance.

Throughout 2006, a diverse coalition of more than 30 farm and allied organizations, including the National Farmers Union and the American Farm Bureau Federation, called upon Congress to respond to the record number of disasters in farm communities across the country – but to no avail.

Therefore, the Supplemental includes \$3.7 billion, largely for a modest package to meet the most pressing needs for agricultural disaster assistance in 2005, 2006, and 2007. It is a lean response that provides compensation for only one-third of crop losses. Also, producers can only apply for a disaster payment for one of the three years included in the proposal. In addition, the package only assists farmers who have met their responsibility to purchase crop insurance.

## **Katrina Relief and Recovery -- \$2.9 Billion**

Another area where the Republican Leadership of the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress failed to adequately respond to the urgent needs of Americans was Hurricane Katrina, which struck in August 2005. In the aftermath of the disaster, President Bush and congressional Republicans made many promises to the desperate residents of the region, but most have been broken. Largely as a result, much of the Gulf Coast remains devastated and residents continue to suffer from inadequate housing, health care and other basic services. More than a year and a half after Hurricane Katrina struck, the situation in the Gulf Coast remains an emergency.

For example, in New Orleans, critical infrastructure gaps remain, challenging the city's ability to attract and retain families and businesses. New Orleans has only 30 percent of the child care centers, about half the public schools, about 40 percent of the food establishments, and only 17 percent of the buses it had prior to Katrina. Housing is hard to find and increasingly unaffordable, with rents having risen by 39 percent. And unemployment stands at 7.2 percent. And yet the Republican Leadership of Congress failed to act on a series of needed steps for the Gulf Coast region.

Therefore, the Supplemental meets some of the most pressing unmet needs of the residents of the Gulf Coast region, including:

- \$1.3 billion to repair and complete flood and storm damage reduction projects in Louisiana and Mississippi.
- An additional \$910 million for the FEMA Disaster Relief Fund, in order to cover the cost of waiving Stafford Act state and local government matching fund requirements for some FEMA disaster assistance programs already provided in Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida and Texas (the bill provides a total of \$4.3 billion for the Disaster Relief Fund – the President's request of \$3.4 billion plus the additional \$910 million).
- \$140 million for farmers and ranchers affected by the hurricanes.
- \$120 million for disaster relief for /fishing industries on the Louisiana Gulf Coast.
- \$30 million for colleges and universities and \$30 million for schools in the Gulf Coast most severely impacted by the hurricanes to help them recover to normal operations.
- \$25.1 million to allow the Small Business Administration Disaster Loan Program to continue to make and service disaster loans to homeowners and businesses, including those affected by the 2005 Gulf Coast hurricanes.

## **Urgent Homeland Security Needs -- \$2.6 Billion**

Throughout the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Republican Leadership had a poor record on homeland security issues. First of all, the leadership failed to act to implement many of the 9/11 Commission's recommendations. Indeed, in December 2005, in its final report card, the 9/11 Commissioners gave the Administration and Congress many poor grades on implementing the recommendations – including 5 F's, 12 D's, 9 C's, and 2 Incompletes. In addition, the GOP-led Congress underfunded several key homeland security priorities – such as aviation security, port security, border security, and nuclear security – all of which had been highlighted by the 9/11 Commission.

Therefore, in order to make America safer, the Supplemental includes urgently-needed funding to address serious gaps in our homeland security, in the following areas:

- \$1.25 billion for aviation security, including \$1 billion for explosive detection systems at high-priority airports, \$90 million to test and deploy advanced checkpoint explosive detection equipment and screening techniques, and \$160 million to increase air cargo screening on passenger aircraft.

- \$1.25 billion for port, transit and border security, including \$400 million for ports of entry radiation detection; \$515 million for prevention and response capabilities at ports, transit systems, and in our states; and \$250 million for container and northern border security.
- \$150 million for nuclear security, including \$67 million (the President's request) to secure nuclear material in the former Soviet Union, and \$83 million (above the President's request) to accelerate the deployment of radiation detection equipment (for detecting nuclear material) for scanning shipping containers bound for the U.S. at high-priority international seaports.

## **Urgent State Children's Health Insurance Needs -- \$750 Million**

The Republican-led Congress also left town in December without addressing the concerns of several states that, without immediate action by Congress, they would have to begin dropping children from the State Children's Health Insurance Program (S-CHIP) due to funding shortfalls. Both Republican and Democratic Governors had made clear to Congress in the latter part of 2006 that they would not have enough money to keep all children in S-CHIP on the rolls throughout FY 2007. And yet the GOP leadership chose to adjourn the Congress without addressing this urgent need.

By now, the situation has become even more urgent. In February, 13 Governors – 7 Republicans and 6 Democrats – wrote to Congress seeking swift action to protect the hundreds of thousands of children who could lose their health insurance. They wrote: "Health insurance for some of our states' most vulnerable citizens is in jeopardy....Without quick congressional action, our states, all facing federal shortfalls, will be forced to make harsh decisions affecting the lives of thousands of families."

Therefore, the Supplemental provides the urgently-needed \$750 million requested by the Republican and Democratic governors to ensure that they do not have to remove any children from the S-CHIP program in the remaining months of FY 2007.

## **Urgent Needs on Pandemic Flu Preparedness -- \$1 Billion**

Finally, another urgent issue that the Republican Leadership failed to adequately address in the previous Congress was the issue of pandemic flu.

In the winter of 2006, public health experts began to increasingly warn that the bird flu could become the source of a deadly global influenza pandemic – as the bird flu moved out of Asia, across Europe, and down into Africa. All were relieved when a pandemic failed to break out in 2006. However, scientists are warning that the bird flu is as dangerous and unpredictable as ever. It killed more people in 2006 than in did in 2005 or 2004, and its fatality rate is rising. More worrisome is that the disease is out of control in birds in more places than ever, including the Nile delta in Egypt and Nigeria, where public health mechanisms are weak.

It is critical that the United States become much more aggressive in putting in place a plan to deal with a potential pandemic flu outbreak. It is a useful step that the federal government has plans to stockpile enough bird flu vaccine to protect 20 million doctors, nurses, paramedics, and other emergency workers if a pandemic breaks out. However, we are far behind in stockpiling this amount of vaccine and manufacturers need investment now in order to increase their production capacity.

Therefore, the Supplemental provides \$1 billion for urgently needed funding for Pandemic Flu Preparedness. This \$1 billion would be used for the development and purchase of vaccine, antivirals, and other medical supplies that are needed to protect us from the potential pandemic.