

I returned to Washington late last night. And when I got back to the White House, I was disappointed by what Congress had been doing and even more disappointed by what they had not been doing. This week, the majority in the House passed a new SCHIP bill that costs more over the next 5 years than the one I vetoed 3 weeks ago. It still moves millions of American children who now have private health insurance into Government-run health care. It raises taxes to pay for it. And it fails to do what needs to be done: to put poor children first.

After I vetoed their last SCHIP bill, I designated members of my administration to work with Congress to find common ground. Congressional leaders never met with them. Instead, the House once again passed a bill that they knew would not become law. And incredibly enough, the Senate will take up the same bill next week, which wastes valuable time.

As the House was debating SCHIP, the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee unveiled a massive tax package that raises taxes on more than a million small-business owners, among others. Earlier this week, Congress sent me a fiscally irresponsible water resources bill. The House version came in at \$15 billion. The Senate version came in at \$14 billion. So the House and Senate compromised and sent me a bill that costs \$23 billion. In Washington, they call that "splitting the difference."

And today Congress set a record they should not be proud of. October the 26th is the latest date in 20 years that Congress has failed to get a single annual appropri-

tions bill to the President's desk. And that's not the only thing congressional leaders have failed to get done.

They have yet to make the Internet tax moratorium permanent or even extend it, even though this moratorium is set to expire in just a few days. The House and Senate have both passed temporary extensions but have not agreed on a final bill. I urge Congress to keep the Internet tax-free and to get a bill to my desk that I can sign.

They have yet to move Judge Michael Mukasey's nomination to be Attorney General out of the Senate Judiciary Committee, even as Members complain about the lack of leadership at the Department of Justice.

They have yet to act on our emergency war funding supplemental, even though our troops on the frontlines depend on these vital funds to fight our enemies and to keep us safe at home.

This is not what congressional leaders promised when they took control of Congress earlier this year. In January, one congressional leader declared, and I quote, "No longer can we waste time here in the Capitol, while families in America struggle to get ahead." He was right. With only a few weeks left on the legislative calendar, Congress needs to keep their promise to stop wasting time and get essential work done on behalf of the American people.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:32 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.R. 3963, H.R. 976, H.R. 3970, and H.R. 1495.

## **The President's Radio Address** *October 27, 2007*

Good morning. On Thursday, I traveled to California to visit communities ravaged

by wildfires. I walked with a married couple through the charred remains of their

home. I met with emergency responders. I talked with displaced families at a disaster assistance center. And I made a pledge to the people of California on behalf of all Americans: We will help you put out the fires, get through the crisis, and rebuild your lives.

State and local authorities in California were well prepared for this crisis, and they responded quickly and effectively. Officials warned those in danger, moved residents out of the path of the flames, and set up dozens of shelters for thousands of people.

State officials also reached out to the Federal Government for help, and we responded. Shortly after the fires broke out, we started mobilizing and providing assistance, including the deployment of Federal firefighters and aircraft to drop fire retardant on the fires. As high winds spread the fires, Governor Schwarzenegger requested more Federal help. Within 1 hour of that request, we approved an emergency declaration that authorized Federal Agencies across the Government to help State and local responders save lives, protect property, and maintain public health and safety.

On Wednesday, I issued a second declaration. This action made additional Federal funding available to the residents of the counties affected by the wildfires so they can recover and rebuild. This Federal assistance includes grants for temporary housing and home repair, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses, loans for small-business owners, and funding to help clean up debris.

I was impressed by the performance of the first-responders I met in California. Despite the challenges of high winds and dry weather, firefighters are gaining the upper hand and earning the gratitude of their fellow citizens. Many of these brave men and women have battled the blaze in triple-

digit heat. Some have worked around the clock. And more than once, firefighting teams were forced to take emergency shelter in their fire tents when threatened by approaching walls of flame. I was grateful for the opportunity to meet them, and I thank them for their courage.

I was also encouraged by the spirit of the families I met. At one recovery center, I met an amazing young girl named Alyssa Lamborn. Alyssa told me, "I lost my house, but I didn't lose my home because my family and my pets are safe." I saw this same spirit in many others who are grateful for their safety and determined to rebuild.

People like Alyssa and her family are receiving help from their fellow Americans. Some have opened their homes to strangers who were evacuated and could not find a hotel room. Doctors and nurses have answered the call to help seniors who were forced from their nursing homes. And volunteers from every walk of life have come forward to provide food, clothing, and blankets, and a shoulder to lean on.

I went to southern California with a message: We want you to know, the country cares for you. We're concerned about you, your neighborhoods, and your homes. Things may look dismal now, but there is a better day ahead. And we will not forget you in Washington, DC.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on October 26 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on October 27. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 26, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With the House Republican Conference *October 30, 2007*

Thank you all. I just had a very constructive and important meeting with the leadership and the Republican Members of the United States House of Representatives. And I want to thank you all for coming down, and thank you for your leadership.

Congress is not getting its work done. We're near the end of the year, and there really isn't much to show for it. The House of Representatives has wasted valuable time on a constant stream of investigations, and the Senate has wasted valuable time on an endless series of failed votes to pull our troops out of Iraq. And yet there's important work to be done on behalf of the American people.

They have not been able to send a single annual appropriations bill to my desk, and that's the worst record for a Congress in 20 years. One of the important responsibilities of the Congress is to pass appropriations bills, and yet the leadership that's on the Hill now cannot get that job done.

They've also passed an endless series of tax increases. You know, they proposed tax increases in the farm bill, the energy bill, the small-business bill, and of course, the SCHIP bill. They haven't seen a bill they could not solve without shoving a tax hike into it. In other words, they believe in raising taxes, and we don't.

Spending is skyrocketing under their leadership; at least, proposed spending is skyrocketing under their leadership. After all, they're trying to spend an additional \$205 billion over the next 5 years. Some have said, "Well, that doesn't matter much; it's not that much money." Well, 205 billion over the next 5 years in the real world amounts to this: 4.7 million per hour, every hour for every day for the next 5 years. That's a lot of money.

And that doesn't even include spending that would actually pay for 2 million people to move from private health insurance to

an inefficient, lower quality, Government-run program. Despite knowing it does not have a chance of becoming law, the Senate will now take up the second SCHIP bill the House passed last week. I believe the Senate is wasting valuable time. This bill, remarkably, manages to spend more money over 5 years than the first bill did.

After going alone and going nowhere, Congress should instead work with the administration on a bill that puts poor children first, a bill that will take care of the poor children that the initial bill said we got to do, a bill that would stop diverting money to adults. You realize some major States in the United States spend more money on adults than they do on children? We want a bill that enrolls the more than 500,000 poor children currently eligible for the program who are not a part of the program.

We want to sit down in good faith and come up with a bill that is responsible, because Congress has been unable or unwilling to get its basic job done of passing spending bills.

There are now reports that congressional leaders may be considering combining the Veterans and Department of Defense appropriations bills and then add a bloated labor, health, and education spending bill to both of them. It's hard to imagine a more cynical political strategy than trying to hold hostage funding for our troops in combat and our wounded warriors in order to extract \$11 billion in additional social spending. I hope media reports about such a strategy are wrong; I really do. If they're not, if the reports of this strategy are true, I will veto such a three-bill pileup. Congress should pass each bill, one at a time, in a fiscally responsible manner that reflects agreement between the legislative branch and the executive branch.