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www.networklobby.org

Dear *Connection* Reader:

This third edition of our *InterConnection* covers what is happening on Capitol Hill as we approach the midterm elections this November. Typically, many elected officials are reluctant to stand up and be counted on controversial issues as they approach elections, and one of this year's victims of this mindset is – as usual – comprehensive immigration reform.

Continuing economic challenges have contributed to a highly charged partisan atmosphere on the Hill. Meanwhile, legislation designed to address those problems has stalled as legislators are hesitant to approve spending bills, no matter how great the need.

NETWORK
educates, organizes,
and lobbies
for economic and
social transformation.

This month, the U.S. Census Bureau will release the latest statistics on poverty in our nation. Their new findings, combined with NETWORK's recently published TANF report (www.networklobby.org/TANF_Report), are expected to show how desperately we need to address the suffering caused by poverty. Please help us tell our elected officials that it is time to act!

For more detailed information on any of these issues, remember to visit www.networklobby.org/.

And by the way, do you know someone who would be a good candidate for NETWORK's Board of Directors? If so, please fill out a nomination form as soon as possible! You will find the forms at www.networklobby.org/it-time-nominate-candidates-network%E2%80%99s-board-directors. The deadline for submitting nominations is September 24.

Thank you for all that you do for social justice!
Peace,

Stephanie Niedringhaus, NETWORK Communications Coordinator

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The Convoluted Saga of H.R. 4213

For most of this year, NETWORK has lobbied for legislation that would help people experiencing the most difficulty coping with the economic recession. Late last year, the House passed a bill – H.R. 4213, the Tax Extenders Act of 2009 – which was intended to help people who didn't have jobs and help small businesses create jobs. It needed to be passed by the Senate before it could become law.

NETWORK supported important provisions of the bill, including:

- Extension of the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund, which subsidized jobs and job training and assisted low-income families
- Extension of Unemployment Insurance benefits for an additional year
- Extended subsidies for COBRA to help unemployed people continue to buy health insurance
- \$1 billion for the National Housing Trust Fund
- Expanded Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP) to help states continue to provide Medicaid services.

The Senate debated the bill (with nearly 200 amendments) and passed a significantly different version, called "The American Workers, State, and Business Relief Act of 2010." It was sent back to the House, where it was amended again in May, and given the new name "The American Jobs and Closing Tax Loopholes Act," and sent back to the Senate. The Senate debated more amendments for two weeks in June but was unable to pass the bill. While both the House and Senate passed "emergency" spending bills for billions of dollars for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, they could not agree on emergency spending to help unemployed people in the U.S.

Finally, in July, everything except unemployment insurance was stripped from the bill, and both the House and Senate passed H.R. 4213, now called the "Unemployment Compensation Extension Act of 2010", which extended unemployment benefits until the end of November 2010.

Last Minute Help for States

In August, just before the Senate left for recess, it passed H.R. 1586, the Education, Jobs, and Medicaid Assistance Act. The House returned from their recess to pass the bill the following week. This provides \$16 billion to extend the federal Medicaid matching assistance (FMAP) to states, and also gives states \$10 billion for education jobs. Unfortunately, part of the cost of this bill was "paid for" by cutting future increases to SNAP (food stamp) benefits in 2014.

A New START

NETWORK is advocating for the ratification of a new treaty to reduce the number of U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons. The new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) was signed by President Obama and Russian President Medvedev in April, and now needs to be ratified by the Senate.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee was expected to vote on the treaty in July, but Chairman John Kerry delayed the vote when it appeared that there was little support among Republican committee members. It will take 67 Senators to ratify the treaty in the full Senate, so bipartisan support is critical. A committee vote is now expected in mid-September.

A New START (continued from previous page)

The Obama Administration wants the treaty ratified this year in order to maintain momentum for further reductions of nuclear weapons in the U.S. and Russia – the two countries with the most nuclear weapons – and to show our commitment to the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons globally.

Nuclear weapons are a threat not only to human life and dignity, but also to all of creation. All senators need to see that there is broad public support for the reduction, and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. Ratification of New START is a first critical step. You can find more information at www.networklobby.org/files/A-New-START.pdf. We recommend that everyone who is concerned about nuclear weapons contact their senators and urge ratification of New START this year.

Immigration

Border Security (again)

Sadly, the only immigration legislation recently voted on in Congress was a politically symbolic bill to approve \$600 million for “Emergency Border Security Supplemental Appropriations” that was rushed through at the last minute before the summer recess. This was a “preemptive move” to avoid a bigger bill by Senator McCain and others who wanted several billion dollars to fund the National Guard along the border. When that started to gain momentum, the Administration sought the smaller amount.

Initially introduced on July 27 as H.R. 5875, the bill passed the House on July 28 by a voice vote and passed the Senate on August 5 by unanimous consent. Due to a technicality, it had to be re-introduced on August 9 as H.R. 6080, and was passed by the House on August 10, again by voice vote, and passed by the Senate on August 12 (with only two senators in attendance), again by unanimous consent. This process allowed for no recorded votes in either chamber to indicate for the record who supported the bill. President Obama signed the bill into law on August 13. This law does very little to increase border security, and does nothing to fix our immigration system.

No Progress on Comprehensive Reform

In Late April, several Democratic senators released a proposal for immigration reform (See www.networklobby.org/content/results/legislation/10) but nothing happened after that.

NETWORK and other advocates met with staff at several Senate offices about the possibility of passing the [DREAM \(Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors\) Act](#), and tried to get commitment for hearings on comprehensive immigration reform early next year. But it appears that there is not enough support in Congress, or in the country, to get our politicians to take on this issue anytime soon. Advocates will need to do much more educating, organizing and lobbying during this election season and with the new Congress to get immigration reform on the table.

One glimmer of hope is that Senator Cornyn (R-TX) is reported to have talked to Senator Graham (R-SC) about working on immigration reform in the 112th Congress. He is reported to have said that he got a lot of negative response to his stance on “birthright citizenship,” and now sees comprehensive immigration reform as an issue Republicans must address.

Taxes

Bush-era tax cuts are set to expire soon, and Republicans are insisting that all of them be extended permanently. President Obama has stated that he would like to end the tax cuts for the top two to three percent of the nation (couples making more than \$250,000 or individuals making more than \$200,000) while permanently extending them for everyone else.

Among the tax cuts for low and middle income households are the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CT), both of which were improved in the economic recovery legislation

(ARRA). These are critically important means of assisting struggling families, and must be made permanent this year.

Some predict that Congress will refrain from seriously debating this important issue by simply extending the tax cuts for another year. Meanwhile, our national debt continues to rise, while the biggest proponents of extending the tax cuts are also the loudest voices of anxiety about the deficit.

Iraq

President Obama announced on August 31 that it was "time to turn the page" on the U.S. war in Iraq and that he was fulfilling his campaign pledge to stop a war he had opposed from the start. The war, begun by President Bush, had been initially portrayed as a relatively swift action to seize hidden weapons of mass destruction and create a democratic Iraq after deposing Saddam Hussein. Instead, it lasted for more than seven years, resulting in many thousands of casualties and much destruction, and served as recruiting tool for terrorist groups. Furthermore, it cost our nation hundreds of billions of dollars that we could ill afford.

Today, we are faced with a moral challenge to help rebuild a shattered Iraq. Although combat units have now left Iraq, 50,000 troops remain as advisers. As the rest of the U.S. military prepares to leave Iraq by the end of 2011, the State Department will assume responsibility for a number of projects, including training the Iraqi police, with the help of large numbers of contractors.

We believe that the best road to peace in this part of the world is through economic security, promoted through localized development. To learn more about NETWORK's stand on Iraqi development, go to www.networklobby.org/legislation/development-spending-iraq.

What's Ahead

In addition to other priorities, the National Housing Trust Fund (www.networklobby.org/national-housing-trust-fund) still needs to be funded, TANF (www.networklobby.org/TANF_Report) needs to be extended and expanded, the Child Nutrition bill (www.networklobby.org/child-nutrition) needs to be reauthorized, and people still need help getting jobs. NETWORK will continue to advocate for investments in people, and an economy for the common good.

NETWORK's ministry of justice, including this Legislative Update, is funded through the generosity of our members. To **donate to NETWORK or become a NETWORK member**:
www.networklobby.org/development/join/index.html

Thank you for your activism, your prayers, your financial support and your solidarity with our mission of economic and social transformation.

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