American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Funding Making a Difference

So far, hundreds of millions of dollars in Recovery Act funds have come to our district to create and preserve jobs, provide greater tax relief to workers and families, increase unemployment and food stamp benefits, and provide more money for TennCare. We are seeing hopeful signs that the ARRA’s job-creating investments are paying off by promoting new ideas for home weatherization and renewable energy, and creating “green jobs” such as those at Sharp Solar. Along with funding the “Cash for Clunkers” program, providing small businesses with low-interest loans, and creating a new first-time home buyer tax credit, it has also provided specific funding for a number of programs in the Ninth District. Here’s a sampling of how ARRA funds are making a difference in our community:

• $98.3 million for Recovery Zone Bonds to jump-start construction projects and invest in job training.
• $24.5 million for a one-time $250 check to Social Security and SSDI recipients.
• $13.5 million to modernize public housing (HOPEV).
• $12.4 million for crime prevention programs – including $6.3 million to hire 37 new Memphis Police officers.
• $120.3 million for Memphis City Schools – including $28 million for school modernization.
• $2.1 million for HIV/AIDS assistance programs.
• $1.32 million in additional unemployment benefits for Tennessee.

Federal Funding

In the last three years, more than $2 billion in federal funding has flowed into the Ninth District. In recent years, federal funding has helped to build University Place and the new $4 million UT-HSC regional bio-containment lab, which is helping Memphis become a leader in biotechnology.

For 2009, my office was able to secure over $24.6 million in federal funding for specific projects that will spur economic development, reduce crime, and invest in health care. Key 2009 funding highlights include:

• $1 million for the City of Memphis for Operation Safe Community.
• $1.6 million for a University of Memphis battlefield nursing program to support troops deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan.
• $399,000 for the dredging of Wolf River Harbor.
• $476,000 for the expansion of the emergency room at the MED.
• $475,000 for Elvis Presley Boulevard Improvements.
• $4.5 million for Memphis International Airport improvements.

Legislative Accomplishments

In the 111th Congress, I’ve authored and introduced 25 legislative measures – 10 of which have already passed the House. These include designating June as Black Music Month, honoring Memphis musical artists’ contributions to our rich musical heritage, protecting authors from foreign libel suits, and improving oversight of federal agencies. Through the appropriations process, the House has endorsed my proposals to increase funding for a number of local priorities. These successes include a proposal to honor the final wishes of fallen military service members as part of the Defense Authorization bill; increased funding in the Homeland Security bill for disaster response for trauma hospitals; increased Interior budget funding to protect national treasures; and, increased help for VA hospitals so they can recruit and retain talented doctors by forgiving a portion of their student loans as part of the VA budget bill.

Congressman
Steve Cohen
Guide To Constituent Services

Services Available Through My Memphis Office
Contact my district office to get advice or assistance regarding:
• Social Security and Medicare Benefits
• Veterans’ Benefits and Military Service Issues
• Small Business Administration Loans and Services
• FHA/VA Home Loans
• Civil Rights Complaints (EEOC)
• Federal Grants
• Workers Compensation Claims
• Civil Service Pensions and Benefits
• Railroad Retirement Benefits
• Passports
• IRS Problems

Seniors
We can ask the US Treasury to replace lost social security checks, inquire on your behalf regarding Medicare reimbursement disputes and check the status of appeals of unfavorable decisions regarding retirement, disability or survivor benefits. Please contact my office if your problem has not been resolved to your satisfaction.

Veterans
We can invest and help you with denied veterans’ benefits such as pensions and medical care.

Student Information
Internships are available in my District Office and my Washington, DC Office. An internship provides an excellent opportunity to utilize academic lessons in a hands-on work environment. Internships may be full or part-time and may qualify for college credit.

In addition, my office can provide information on federal student loan programs such as Pell Grants, Stafford Loans, PLUS Loans, Federal Work Study, Perkins Loans, and Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants.

Information is also available on the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship Program, which includes the Tennessee HOPE Scholarship, the Aspire Award, the Tennessee HOPE Access Grant, the General Assembly Merit Scholarship, and the Wilder-Nafien Technical Skills Grant programs.

Service Academy Nominations
Each year, I recommend high school graduates for admission to the United States service academies (Army, Navy, Air Force and Merchant Marines). Applicants must live in Tennessee’s Ninth Congressional District and be between the ages of 17 and 23. The nominations are made on a non-political, competitive basis. We suggest you begin the application process in your junior year.

Non-Profit Organizations & Municipalities
Please visit my office or my web site (cohen.house.gov) for information about opportunities to receive federal grants and federal loans.

Contact Me
Clifford Davis/Odel Horton Federal Building 167 North Main Street, Suite 369 Memphis, TN 38103 Telephone: (901) 544-4131 Fax: (901) 544-4329
WEBSITE: COHEN.HOUSE.GOV

To view all the legislation that has been sponsored or co-sponsored on your behalf, visit COHEN.HOUSE.GOV
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Health Care Reform

One of the most serious challenges facing our nation is health care reform. 47 million Americans including 107,000 in the Ninth District don’t have access to quality, affordable and comprehensive health care. For them, the only option is overcrowded emergency rooms. In 2008, health care providers in the district extended $188 million worth of uncompensated care to individuals who lacked insurance coverage and were unable to pay their bills. That amounts to hundreds of dollars in hidden taxes to each of us and results in higher premiums for all who have insurance.

The growing cost of health care is one of the biggest drags on our economy and one of the leading factors in consumer debt and personal bankruptcy. As Chairman of the House Judiciary Subcommittee that deals with bankruptcy, I am troubled by the alarming increase in medical bankruptcies across the country. So, I scheduled a hearing on the issue. The bottom line is that too many families are just one major medical crisis away from losing their homes and being plunged into a debt so great they simply can’t recover from it. Last year alone there were 4,300 health care-related bankruptcies in the Ninth District.

We can lower costs, offer more choices, and end the days of staying in the same job just to keep health care insurance; and improve the quality of health care throughout the system. This reform is an absolutely crucial part of our long-term plan to rebuild our economy in a responsible way and lower health care costs for American families and businesses.

The foundation of any reform effort needs to be the right to retain coverage that you currently have, including keeping your doctors. For those who don’t currently have coverage, reform needs to provide affordable quality health care. Equally important, reform must:

- ensure patients with pre-existing conditions are eligible for coverage;
- eliminate the donut hole for seniors and lower prescription drug prices;
- encourage new doctors to practice in inner cities by forgiving student loan debt;
- expand access to community health centers;
- ensure timely and appropriate reimbursements for doctors; and,
- limit outrageous insurance premium increases.

It is also important that health care reform focus on wellness and prevention. Of particular concern to me is the alarming fact that Memphis has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the country — and equal to or greater than many Third World nations. This is one of the reasons it is imperative that we have a national effort dedicated to outreach and resources to ensure that children have the chance to start out life healthy. The NEWBORN Act, which I authored, would begin this effort and should be part of the final health care reform bill.

Equal Employment for All Act

The unemployment rate in Memphis hovers around 10.3 percent. That’s higher than the national average. At a time when people are struggling to find jobs, credit checks should not be used as a basis to deny employment to otherwise qualified candidates.

It is unfair to penalize job seekers who want to work hard but have had personal financial difficulties by denying employment solely on the basis of their credit report. That’s why I’ve authored HR 3149, the Equal Employment For All Act, which would prohibit employers’ use of consumer credit checks as part of the hiring or firing process, unless the job involves national security, FDIC clearance, or significant financial responsibility (such as bank managers, loan officers, or financial managers). More than 34 members of Congress have expressed their support of this bill.