



*Congressman*  
**BENNIE THOMPSON**  
 REPRESENTING THE SECOND DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI



The Thompson Report

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**Workers Deserve Overtime Pay**

Worker's rights are once again under attack. Once again the Bush Administration has formed an alliance with certain U.S. employers to make war on worker's rights to receive overtime pay. The rights of those individuals who make up the most productive and competitive workforce in the world are in jeopardy of being taken away.

Millions of hard working Americans are at risk of losing overtime pay benefits. The Labor Department, at the command of the Bush Administration, is working hard to make permanent overtime pay reform that changes the criteria for workers to receive overtime, thus stripping hardworking American of overtime pay.

Right now, federal law demands employers to pay eligible employees 1.5 times their hourly

pay rate for every hour they work over the standard 40 hour work week. The laws protecting a worker's right to overtime pay is a part of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. Although this law will not change, President

Bush is making every effort to change the eligibility guidelines for overtime pay.

It has been estimated that these changes will result in the loss of overtime pay rights for 8 million U.S. workers.

The Bush Administration has also gone out of its way to communicate to employers how they

*"...these changes will result in the loss of overtime pay rights for 8 million U.S. workers."*

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**The Winners and Losers of Bush's Immigration Policy**

On January 12, 2004, the Bush Administration made clear the winners and losers of the new debate on immigration reform. The Administration has just recently put forward a proposal that will make wide-spread

changes to US immigration policy. This immigration reform plan proposes to link willing employers with willing employees. Although the details of this proposal are far from fully formed, the plan will allow

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**Mississippi Left Behind**

It has been two years since President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act into law. This law represents the federal government's comprehensive commitment to public education. Of greater significance is

the shift in philosophy that expands the role of the federal government in the design, development and delivery of public education to unprecedented levels. NCLB provisions hold states, school districts and

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## Why Medicare Matters

President George W. Bush signed the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act into law in December of 2003. Touted as the most sweeping change to Medicare since its passage in 1965, provisions in the legislation include a new prescription drug benefit for seniors effective in 2006, a drug discount card that seniors can buy in the interim, substantial subsidies and other incentives to private insurers.

It is imperative to better understand how this law affects African Americans. Due to a number of factors, rooted in social, political, and economic inequities, African Americans are less likely than whites to have access to



At the first of four district-wide prescription drug events, Congressman Thompson signs up Hinds County resi-

quality, consistent, and affordable health care and education over a lifetime. As a result, they are more likely to experience high rates of disability and mortality related to chronic conditions such as Type II diabetes, heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, and high blood pressure. Indeed, this reality is re-

African American Medicare beneficiaries have incomes below the national poverty level. Given their poorer health and economic status, it is perhaps not surprising that a recent study found that African American seniors are more than twice as likely as whites to report being unable to afford filling at least one prescription. A

flected in statistics that show 43 percent of African American Medicare beneficiaries describing their health as poor or fair, compared to only 26 percent of whites.

More than 33 percent of the

significant part of this gap in access could be attributed to the lack of affordable supplemental health coverage that would help offset the costs of prescription drugs.

While Medicare has been an important source of health coverage for African American seniors for almost forty years, it is evident that the need for a prescription drug benefit has been long overdue. An analysis of the recently passed law, however, raises serious questions about the adequacy of the prescription drug benefit passed and the impact of other enacted reforms.

For additional information, please contact Karis Gutter in my Washington, D.C., office.

Visit Congressman Thompson on the Web at [www.house.gov/thompson](http://www.house.gov/thompson).

## Bush Plan Allows Immigrants to Work Without Citizenship

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foreign-born workers to apply for temporary workers status. This new status will allow them to work in the United States for a period of three years. After that three year period, they will be allowed the opportunity to extend their temporary worker status. If these special temporary worker visas are not granted, they must return home. In order for the program to work, U.S. business and corporations



must be willing to sponsor these

workers. One of the problems associated with this legislation reform is the fact that this temporary status does not put workers on the path for naturalization. So after three to six years the foreign-born workers would be required leave the lives that they have built in the United States and return to their home country.

If President Bush's proposal were enacted as law, U.S. businesses will have an enlarged pool of foreign workers, many willing to engage in the dirtiest and most dangerous task for low pay without worker protections. U.S. employers from across the spectrum are ravenous for low-wage, low-skill workers and have shown immediate support for the proposal. The President's proposals have made no

mention of workers rights and protections afforded to these temporary workers.

It is important that we not create a new generation of indentured servants using catch phrases like, "immigration reform". It is important that hard-working individuals have a fair chance at citizenship. President Bush's immigration reform proposal is far from a fair chance.

For more information, please contact Curtis Austin in my Washington, D.C., office.

*"...we want to move our focus on building new transportation infrastructure that will foster the aforementioned growth."*

## Overtime Pay is Incentive

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can avoid paying overtime wages to workers who would be eligible under the administration's new reform proposal. This new reform proposal creates "overtime pay loopholes" that will greatly benefit corporations and employers while stripping low-wage workers of their right to overtime pay.

People who work on an hourly basis will be moved to a salary basis and lose their right to overtime and be required to work longer hours at no additional pay. The rules also revise the definitions of "duties" that employers can use to exempt workers who earn salaries between \$22,100 and \$65,000 from overtime benefits.

In a time of gigantic federal budget deficits and huge job losses, the idea that the Bush administration would try and erode the rights of our nation's labor market is shocking, troubling and unnecessary.

For more information, please contact Curtis Austin in my Washington, D.C., office.

## Photo Gallery



During a February grants workshop, local leaders learned about a variety of funding sources from HUD, the U.S. Dep't. of Health and Human Services and Commerce. Below, Congressman Thompson is greeted by St. Francis School (Greenwood) students.



Congressman Thompson with grant presenters in Indiana



## Federal Government Must Live up to Education Commitment

*(Continued from page 1)*

schools more accountable for student achievement and establishes new qualification requirements for teachers directly involved with instruction—far beyond existing state requirements. The legislation creates an expectation that the federal government will make dramatic strides in advancing the education of all of the nation's 50 million public school children. Making the necessary changes in public education and meeting the immediate and long term expectations of NCLB will involve an exercise of willpower and intelligent decision-making. It will also require an investment of funds—including federal resources.

In terms of costs, support for testing students is only the tip of the iceberg.

For example, if all schools, especially weak schools in poorer communities, are going to attract and retain the best teachers possible, additional resources will be needed for teacher compensation—which is the biggest expense in school districts. The teacher shortage projected for the next ten years underscores and aggravates this issue. This particular problem will become more acute since NCLB requires all teachers involved in teaching any of the nine core academic subjects to be "highly qualified" within the next two school years. Providing a high-quality education for all students, with a special focus on traditionally lower achieving groups of students will require a variety of increased resources. That is why I am supporting efforts to lower class size,

develop and acquire curriculum materials, build new schools and provide special services and programs to meet individual student needs. Additional investments will also be needed for early education and school readiness programs so that all students have a realistic chance to meet academic standards when they enter third grade.

With state budget short falls estimated at \$80 billion nationally, states are not in a position to fund the raised expectations and inherent costs associated with NCLB—especially if the federal government continues to renege on its commitment. Furthermore, if this law is going to be taken seriously, as distinguished from being perceived as a political device, the federal level will need to lead by example by appropriat-

ing the level of funds which it authorized.

It is my belief that if we take a more positive outlook at handling this very serious problem, we can make progress. We must not give up on what we have fought for so long obtaining. We must invest in our children and any resources needed to educate them. We must not show under-appreciation to the most under-rated, under-paid group of people who teach in the most under-funded schools in America. I have and will continue to play a leadership role in the ongoing national dialogue over how to improve our education system and strengthen relations.

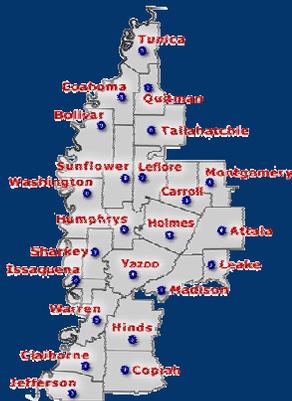
For more information, please contact Karis Gutter in my Washington, D.C., office.

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*Due to the recent ricin attack on the Washington, D.C., Capitol Complex, I am encouraging constituents to contact me via electronic mail, facsimile or telephone. Some postal mail has been destroyed and all other postal mail is severely delayed, as it is being examined at an off-site facility for the presence of biological and chemical agents such as anthrax and ricin.*

*Please visit me on the Web at:  
[www.house.gov/thompson](http://www.house.gov/thompson) for more information on the Second District and to learn more about how I am working for you!*



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