

From: Independence Hall Foundation  
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To: Haley, Nikki  
Cc:  
Subject: Grading 114th Congress at 50 Day Mark/Happenings

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February 20, 2015, 11 AM

Dear **Members** and **Friends**,

It has been a while since our last newsletter and we have much to report.

Of primary concern to the Foundation is the developing record of the **114th Congress**--and the votes of the **Tri-State Congressional Delegation**.

In its first **50 days**, the new Congress has touched on a number of key issues for which the Foundation has a keen interest.

On the **Federal level**, these issues include: reforming the tax code;

balancing the budget, reducing burdensome regulations; achieving energy independence; repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act; enforcing legal immigration laws; defending innocent human life; upholding Western values and traditions; promoting peace through strength; advancing liberty and constitutional democracy.

The 114th Congress has already addressed four of these issues in a major way.

## **1. ENERGY INDEPENDENCE**

In its opening salvo, both the **House and Senate** have passed legislation permitting the **Keystone Pipeline Project** to move forward. The bill, which will soon arrive on **President Obama's desk**, passed with bi-partisan support.

The president, as you know, is widely expected to **veto the measure**.

The long delayed Pipeline Project, blocked by the Obama Administration for several years, has forced the **Canadian Government** to seek alternative routes and international partners.

Wouldn't it be a travesty for our government to finally green-light the project only to discover that the Canadians are no longer interested?

Still, we give the **Republican-led House and Senate** kudos for getting the bill to the President's desk.

All local tri-state **Republican Congressmen voted in favor** of the bill: **(NJ)** Lance, Lobiondo, MacArthur, Smith; **(PA)** Barletta, Costello, Dent, Fitzpatrick, Meehan, Perry, Pitts. They were joined, surprisingly, by **Democrat Congressman Bob Brady**.

**In the Senate**, Pat Toomey (R-PA), Bob Casey (D-PA), and Tom Carper (D-DE) voted to pass the measure.

**Area Democrat Representatives voting against the bill:** **(DE)** Carney; **(NJ)** Watson; **(PA)** Boyle, Fattah, Cartwright.

**In the Senate**, Chris Coons (D-DE), Cory Booker (D-NJ), and Bob Menendez (D-NJ) also voted to defeat the bill.

**Overall House and Senate Grade: A**

**Regional GOP Congressional Delegation Grade: A**

**Regional Democrat Congressional Delegation Grade: C+**

If you haven't done so, please call the **White House Switchboard @ 202.456.1111** and let the President know your opinion regarding the Keystone

Pipeline bill.

## **2. EXECUTIVE ORDER ON ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION**

**The US House**, mostly along party lines, **voted 236-191** to fund the Department of Homeland Security with the exception of President Obama's Executive Order on Illegal Immigration.

All tri-state area Republicans, to their credit, voted in favor of the bill while all Democrats opposed it.

However, an **Amendment** offered by **Marsha Blackburn** (R-TN), to nix the **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program** (DACA)--a program that has allowed at least **600,000 undocumented immigrants**, including those who illegally flooded the southern border last summer, to remain in the country--**was opposed by 26 Republicans, including 6 from our region.**

**Republican Representatives Costello, Dent, MacArthur, Meehan, Lobiondo, and Smith** joined Democrat Representatives Boyle, Brady, Carney, Cartwright, Fattah, and Watson to vote against the Amendment.

**Congressmen Barletta, Fitzpatrick, Lance, Perry, and Pitts** voted for the Amendment, which passed by a narrow margin **(218-209)**. Naturally, we were disappointed by this development.

If you haven't done so already, please call the **Capitol Switchboard @ 202.224.3121** and ask to be connected to your Congressman's office. Let your Congressman know what you think about his/her vote.

**Overall House Grade: B+**

**Regional GOP Delegation Grade: B-**

**Regional Democrat Delegation Grade:**

The **Homeland Security funding bill** hasn't budged in the Senate. A few Republican Senators appeared to be wavering on the House bill due to the intransigence of Senate Democrats--even lobbying **House Speaker John Boehner** to revise it. To his credit, Boehner has held firm.

The Senate must now pass a bill and rectify differences with the House or the **Department of Homeland Security** will be forced to shut down.

Democrats in the Senate are clearly stonewalling.

**Overall Senate Grade: B-**

**Regional Senate Delegation Grade: C**

Please call the **Capitol Switchboard @ 202.224.3121** and **ask to be connected to your Senators**. Let them know just how you feel about President Obama's Executive Order on Illegal Immigration.

**Update:** Texas **U.S. District Judge Andrew Hanen** has placed **President Obama's Executive Immigration Order on hold** pending a ruling by the court on the case brought by 26 states (including **Texas**) seeking to the Order.

It is possible that the **5th Circuit Court of Appeals** could either reverse the stay or decide to hear the case itself. So while this is good news in the short run, it is not **a remedy for the congressional showdown over DHS funding**.

**Conservatives in the House and Senate** should not cave on DHS legislation denying funds for the implementation of the President's Executive Order.

Some Senators are urging a **clean bill on DHS funding** due to Judge Hanen's order and the fact that Republicans get blamed for government shut downs. However, Hanen's order could be overturned in the near future.

If the House and Senate cannot agree on a **DHS funding bill by February 27**, then the entire **Department of Homeland Security** will shut down due to a lack of funds. While this is a tenuous position for Republicans, it is the one they hung their hat on last December--and they should stand by their word. So far, **Senator Majority Leader Mitch McConnell** has held firm.

### **3. AFFORDABLE CARE ACT**

The House voted for the **60th time** to repeal the **Affordable Care Act**. This bill, which passed mostly along party lines (239-186), included instructions that the **House Legislative Committee** devise a replacement plan.

**All regional Republican Congressmen voted to Repeal and Replace ACA** while all **regional Democrats voted to keep it**.

Next month, the **US Supreme Court** will consider arguments in a case that could end subsidies for those who registered for healthcare using the **Federal Exchange**. ACA language clearly restricts **IRS subsidies** for those who register via **State Exchanges**. Since only **12 states and DC** have set up such exchanges--most of those signing-up did so on the Federal Exchange. Oops.

If **SCOTUS** rules against **ACA**, the law will be sent back to Congress for further consideration--a sure nail in the coffin for ACA.