

This week, the House Appropriations Committee, of which I am now a member, continued its debate on the [12 spending bills that fund all of the work of the federal government](#). The bills considered this week continue to demonstrate a commitment by the Democratic majority to meeting critical domestic needs that were neglected by President Bush and the prior Republican controlled Congresses. Below I have included highlights of each of the bills the committee considered this week, along with links to more detailed descriptions of each bill.

### **[Financial Services and General Government](#)**

The fiscal year 2008 Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Bill seeks to bring government closer to the people, to better fit its services to their needs. The American people expect and deserve the best services their government can offer. Highlights of the bill include:

- **IRS:** This bill addresses the need for the Internal Revenue Service to be fair and even-handed in whom it audits, and ensures that the IRS works to provide real assistance to the taxpayer who cannot afford the services of an expensive accountant by increasing funding for the Taxpayer Advocate's office.
- **Elections:** It allows the Election Assistance Commission to help promote the use of voting machines in student and school elections as an educational tool because these are our future voters and provides \$300 million for States to help them meet the requirements of the [Help America Vote Act](#) of 2002.
- **Consumer Protection:** It directs the Federal Trade Commission to examine identify theft with an eye toward ending this hurtful crime to protect consumers and directs the Consumer Product Safety Commission to strengthen its consumer product monitoring capabilities.
- **Small Business Assistance:** The bill also increases funding for the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund, to a total of \$100 million, to help expand the availability of credit, capital and financial services to underserved communities throughout the nation, and increases funding for the Small Business Administration.

**[State and Foreign Operations](#)** The House State and Foreign Operations Appropriations fiscal year 2008 bill provides funding critical to our long-term security at home and our relationships abroad. The bill reflects four key priorities: oversight of foreign assistance programs; supporting our allies in the Global War on Terror; improving aid effectiveness by strengthening Development Assistance; and responding to the global HIV/AIDS pandemic and other health challenges. It includes:

- over \$4.7 billion to support State Department operations in the United States and at our

diplomatic missions abroad

- \$365 million for public diplomacy efforts at the State Department
- \$501 million for educational and cultural exchanges
- \$6.519 billion for global health programs, including HIV/AIDS