

**Innis Associates**  
**529 Bay Dale Court**  
**Arnold, Maryland 21012**  
**Phone/FAX: 301-858-7149**  
**Email: [LarryInnis@aol.com](mailto:LarryInnis@aol.com)**

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To: ABBRA Board of Directors

Fr: Larry Innis  
ABBRA Washington Representative

Re: Washington Report

Hello:

I bring you greetings from Washington, D.C.

For the past few weeks since your last Board meeting, I have been very busy working with the Obama Transition Team. It is an interesting process with the Transition Team now wanting to post all organization comments on their web site, [www.change.gov](http://www.change.gov), for public comment and debate. They are encouraging house parties where citizens gather to discuss and then blog the various comments. The Team believes this a good way to determine public policy by getting the view of the public.

However, I will present a general overview of the past year in this report.

As you may recall, the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress began with new ethics rules and concluded with economic relief legislation and an attempt to save the American auto industry. Despite partisan tensions, the last Congress passed several significant bills, including the Clean Boating Act, a massive financial bailout, and new CAFÉ or fuel economy standards. The 110th Congress will probably be most remembered for the \$700 billion bailout lawmakers passed in October in response to turmoil in financial markets. Top lawmakers quickly wrote the legislation in a series of round-the-clock negotiations with the White House over several days in late September.

In 2007, lawmakers also passed an energy bill that will raise fuel-economy standards for vehicles for the first time since 1975. In addition, the bill would set new requirements for developing renewable fuels and contains numerous provisions to promote energy efficiency, including the usage of ethanol in gasoline.

Other key legislation to boating was the Clean Boating Act, which clearly returns boating to a sensible and longstanding exemption from compliance with the NPDES requirements

of the Clean Water Act familiar to all marinas and boat yards. If left alone, boaters were faced with a considerable financial annual burden to apply for the permit to operate their boats in state and federal waters.

### **110<sup>th</sup> Congress by the Numbers**

There were 7,303 bills introduced in the House of Representatives and 3,717 bills in the Senate. Of those bills only 453 became public law and 108 of those bills were used to name a post office. The House was in session for 280 days and the Senate worked 363 days (and that's pretty good since there are 365 days in the year).

So who did all the work? The winners are Rep. Ted Poe (R-Texas) who gave 215 speeches on the House floor and Senator Harry Reid (D-Nevada) spoke 299 times. But Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D- New York) may have been the busiest Member of Congress, because she introduced the most bills at 88.

But, how did they do this work? Debate in the House took 1,449 hours and 241 hours were spent voting. The greatest debating society in the world, the U.S. Senate, again won the award for talking the most by spending 1,713 hours debating and 152 hours voting with 286 quorum calls.

Committees were also busy, but even though we are in a two-front war, the House Oversight Committee on Government Reform held the most number of hearings at 81 and passed out 231 bills with the Small Business Committee coming in second at 76 hearings but passed out only 16 bills.

### **Where do we Go Now?**

Congress historically has come back to work at the time of the presidential inauguration, but in 2009 Congress will be back on January 4<sup>th</sup> and the House expects to pass a second economic recovery package rumored to be worth around \$850 billion and growing on January 6 with no committee review or action. The time table is set to have a non challenged bill on the president's desk the day of the inauguration on January 20. Obviously, there is a lot of work going on now between Congress and the Obama Transition Team.

Expect Congress to be busy in 2009 working on health care reform, tax reform, environmental issues, and appropriations. The Transition Team is busy reviewing very budget line item and every department. It is very hard to see how this activity will impact the recreational boating industry, but we will be closely following all the activity.

With best regards,

Larry