



## The National Organization of Portuguese Americans

### Legislative Alert ©

May 21, 2010

As a part of NOPA's mission to empower Portuguese-Americans, this Legislative Alert is sent out every two weeks as pertinent developments occur in order to keep the community informed of legislative action at the national level. This objective, non-partisan report aims to educate those interested about action on Capitol Hill that may affect the Portuguese-American community at large.

If you have any questions about this or other legislation, please contact NOPA's Government Affairs Team at [info@nopa-us.org](mailto:info@nopa-us.org) or 703-389-3512.

### State Legislation of Interest to Immigrant Communities

#### **Governor signs bill targeting ethnic studies**

Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer has signed a bill targeting an ethnic studies program in a Tucson school district.

State schools chief Tom Horne, a Republican running for Attorney General, says the district's ethnic studies program promotes "ethnic chauvinism" and racial resentment toward whites.

The measure prohibits classes that advocate ethnic solidarity, that are designed primarily for students of a particular race or that promote resentment toward a certain ethnic group. The Tucson Unified School District denies its program promotes resentment.

Six **United Nations** human rights experts said Tuesday they were concerned about the measure because everyone has the right to learn about his own cultural and linguistic heritage.

From AP - May 11th

### Congressional Legislation of Interest Recently Introduced

#### **April 29<sup>th</sup>**

By Mrs. MALONEY (for herself and Ms. WATSON):

H.R. 5193. A bill to establish an employment-based immigrant visa for alien



entrepreneurs who have received significant capital from investors to establish a business in the United States; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

### **May 13<sup>th</sup>**

By Mr. PENCE (for himself, Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS, Mr. LEWIS of California, Mr. HENSARLING, and Ms. GRANGER):

H.R. 5299. A bill to temporarily prohibit United States loans to the International Monetary Fund to be used to provide financing for any member state of the European Union; to the Committee on Financial Services.

### **May 18<sup>th</sup>**

By Mr. DeMINT:

S. 3383. A bill to temporarily prohibit the United States loans to the International Monetary Fund to be used to provide financing for any member state of the European Union, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

## **Legislation of Interest to the Small Business Community**

### **Senate Passes Amendment on Credit Card Swipe Fees**

Late last week, the United States Senate overwhelmingly passed an amendment to the in-progress bank reform bill which could change the rules of the road for credit card swipe fees. The amendment would give the Federal Reserve the ability to monitor and regulate the fees that credit card companies charge merchants and the power to ensure that the rates are "reasonable and proportional to the actual cost incurred."

The amendment is part of the bank reform legislation yet to be passed by the Senate. If the larger bill does pass, it must then be reconciled with bank reform legislation from the House of Representatives. For many small businesses the need is clear, as the total amount in interchange fees paid by merchants has skyrocketed over the last several years, up to a reported \$42 billion in 2008.

The amendment to the bank reform bill would also give merchants the right to set minimum and maximum payment amounts for any form of payment accepted, and the right to offer discount to customers paying with cards from other networks. Currently, merchant agreements prohibit merchants from requiring minimum amounts or passing on swipe fees. Many consumers see allowing minimums and maximums as a positive step, but others are opposed, as this will likely lead more merchants to post higher minimum purchase amounts, requiring consumers to carry more cash.



## Tax Extenders/Jobs Bill Released: Votes Expected Next Week

Congressional Leaders released the legislative text of their *tax-extenders/jobs/social safety-net* yesterday and votes are expected in the House and Senate next week before Congress leaves for the Memorial Day recess. The entire package has estimated cost of about \$200 billion, with a little over a quarter of it being offset (paid for).

The package renews dozens of business and individual tax breaks though the end of the year (they had expired at end of 2009), extends long-term unemployment benefits and federal COBRA health care subsidies through December (which expire at the end of next week), prevent scheduled cuts to Medicare physician reimbursement rates for four years, as well as several provisions that leadership states will 'close tax loopholes' and create jobs.

Links to the legislative text, bill summaries and Joint Committee on Taxation's estimates are below:

**Bill Text:**[http://waysandmeans.house.gov/media/pdf/111/HWC\\_711\\_xml.pdf](http://waysandmeans.house.gov/media/pdf/111/HWC_711_xml.pdf)

**Bill**

**Summary:**[http://waysandmeans.house.gov/media/pdf/111/America\\_Jobs\\_Summary.pdf](http://waysandmeans.house.gov/media/pdf/111/America_Jobs_Summary.pdf)

**JCT's revenue Estimates:**[http://waysandmeans.house.gov/media/pdf/111/JCT\\_10-1058R8.pdf](http://waysandmeans.house.gov/media/pdf/111/JCT_10-1058R8.pdf)

## Mentions of Portugal on the House and Senate Floor

There were many mentions of Portugal on the House and Senate floor over the past couple weeks. Unfortunately, the comments were not very flattering and mainly pointed to the financial crisis facing Portugal and other countries in Europe. Since some of the statements on the Senate floor were quite long, we only included the paragraph with the actual references to Portugal. The House statements are typically limited to 1 minute, so we included the entire text of their floor statements.

### **RESTORING AMERICAN FINANCIAL STABILITY ACT OF 2010-- (Senate - May 06, 2010) [Page: S3303]**

Mr. KAUFMAN

I will not hold this out, but if you want to see what can happen under the worst case, look at Europe today. Look at the mess unfolding in Europe. Greece falters and that affects confidence in other countries such as **Portugal**, Spain, and Ireland. Europe and other banks have massive exposures to these countries. German and French banks carry a combined \$119 billion in exposure to Greek borrowers and more than \$900 billion to Greece and other vulnerable Euro countries, including Ireland, **Portugal**, and Spain.



**A NEW INTERNATIONAL FISCAL CONSERVATISM -- (House of Representatives - May 06, 2010) [Page: H3249]**

Mr. KIRK. Madam Speaker, today's volatility in the stock market teaches us two lessons: first, the United States, our Treasury Secretary, and our President must advance a new International Economic Stabilization plan based on tremendous cuts in European government spending. Over 60 percent of Greece's GDP is in the public sector. With debts rising to 100 percent of national income, their ability to repay their debts was inevitably going to collapse.

Spain, **Portugal**, and Italy may be next. Their debts total trillions, not hundreds of millions. Our U.S. financial system and our stock market depends on what I would call a new international fiscal conservatism that cuts government spending and deficit financing.

Today also teaches us another lesson. The very debts that crippled Europe and shook our stock market are coming to America, fueled by the irresponsible spending of this Congress. We need to cut Federal spending now to reassure markets and assure that America's children will never have to ask this question: "Who will bail out America?"

**RESTORING AMERICAN FINANCIAL STABILITY ACT OF 2010 -- (Senate - May 10, 2010) [Page: S3457]**

Mr. DODD. I do not want to dwell on either of those points at this juncture except to make this point. Here we have an event totally unrelated to mismanagement of investment banks or financial institutions in the case of a market decline as precipitous as we saw Thursday and events that are beyond the borders of our own nation that will have an impact at home. We are told this is not going to have any kind of severe impact--at least we don't believe it will at this juncture. But we do live in a highly sophisticated, computerized world with this flash trading, as it is called--"high frequency trading," as it is referred to--where literally within microseconds buyers and sellers are matched up. What the system doesn't accommodate for is panic, unfortunately, and apparently the circuit breakers necessary in market-wide exchanges to minimize these kinds of events when they occur and also events that occur in a small country in the Mediterranean--such as Greece or **Portugal** or Spain or other countries--where their debt situations pose risks globally.

**RESTORING AMERICAN FINANCIAL STABILITY ACT OF 2010 -- (Senate - May 11, 2010) [Page: S3488]**

Mr. VITTER. With Greece, **Portugal**, and Spain, all possibly on the cusp of financial crisis, with this significant decision of the Fed, we must go beyond the Sanders amendment. We must look forward and not just one time back to ensure the American people that we all know what our Federal Reserve is doing and exactly why it is doing it.



**U.S. TO BAIL OUT GREECE -- (House of Representatives - May 11, 2010)  
[Page: H3281]**

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the International Monetary Fund, the IMF, is guaranteeing up to \$321 billion in loans to bail out European Union countries, like Greece, **Portugal** and Spain. That means American taxpayers will be on the hook for billions of dollars for these unsecured loans. We're the IMF's largest contributor.

Also, the European Union was formed to compete economically with the United States. Now it's crashing down like a socialist stack of cards. So U.S. taxpayers are going to pay to support our international competitor--the EU.

Why should American taxpayers bail out Europe's big pensions--and their government-run health care? Greece is in the EU and it's the EU's responsibility, not ours.

I don't see the IMF coming to the rescue of California and New Jersey. Their economies are bigger than Greece's and they are in financial chaos as well.

Mr. Speaker, the American taxpayer is tapped out. We have 10 percent unemployment. We don't have the money to bail out Greece. It's time Uncle Sam quit being the ATM for the rest of the world, stop spending money we don't have, and stop the bailout nonsense.

And that's just the way it is.

**RESTORING AMERICAN FINANCIAL STABILITY ACT OF 2010-- (Senate - May 18, 2010) [Page: S3864]**

Mr. KAUFMAN. Within days of the Senate's consideration of Brown-Kaufman, we saw the EU and IMF scramble to put together an almost \$1 trillion emergency package to forestall a full-blown series of sovereign debt crises throughout the continent. While ostensibly reported in the press as a rescue package for overleveraged and embattled sovereign nations such as Greece and Spain, it was actually a bailout of Europe's megabanks, not to mention our own. That is what it was about. It was about bailing out Europe's megabanks. German and French banks alone have more than \$900 billion in exposure to Greece and other vulnerable Euro countries, including Ireland, **Portugal**, and Spain.

Meanwhile, our top five banks have an estimated \$2.5 trillion in exposure to Europe. That is \$2.5 trillion in exposure to Europe.

**Reports of Interest - Social Needs**



## From CHN Human Needs Report

### Framework for Immigration Bill Released

On April 29 Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), and Senators Richard Durbin (D-IL), Diane Feinstein (D-CA), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), and Charles Schumer (D-NY) held a press conference during which they released a conceptual outline for a comprehensive immigration bill.

[More>](#)

## Report of Interest - Piece from 'The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget: The Bottom Line'

### Week of May 10, 2010

#### Lessons from Portugal: A Way Forward from our Fiscal Impasse for U.S. Political Leaders

May 13, 2010

Inspiration can come from the most surprising places. Take Portugal, for instance. (Granted, there are major differences between the U.S. and Portuguese economic and fiscal situations.)

Yet, the crisis fiscal package announced today by Portugal's Prime Minister may suggest a way forward to U.S. political leaders, so far unwilling to make the tough choices needed for our fiscal future and under pressure from citizens who do not appear to appreciate the gravity of our situation.

In announcing Portugal's new fiscal package of tax increases and spending cuts, Prime Minister Socrates said, according to the [Financial Times](#): "The world has changed - and how - over the past two weeks," Mr Socrates said, explaining why he had decided to break recent pledges not to increase taxes.

For the U.S., too, the world has changed - and how. Still emerging from our economic crisis, with unemployment so painfully high and our financial system continuing to move between boom and bust, we cannot "return to normal" - nor should we. Yet what the heck do we do now? We face increasing fiscal pressures as far as the eye can see. Without enough domestic savings, we need foreign creditors to fill the gap. We are living well beyond our means - and have been for awhile. Baby Boomer retirement is about to accelerate, which will put even greater pressure on our precious fiscal resources. Plus, there are basic fairness issues that still need to be addressed. Despite the impressive (and so important) increase in wealth here, many people are looking at a drop in their standard of living. (That may be at least some of what Tea Party supporters are telling us.) And, as the Baby Boom generation warily eyes its prospects for retirement and the



youth of America looks at limited job prospects, it is indeed not the world we had expected.

But there is a way forward. We need to come up with a new fiscal path that will allow us to have sustainable growth. In the absence of a solid fiscal (and, by the way, financial) framework underlying growth, we will most likely go from one crisis to another over the next generation. But, politicians will need to put everything on the table to achieve a fiscal recovery package that will be credible - credible to markets but also credible to the American taxpayer. A fiscal recovery package should not be put in place until the economy is on firmer footing (we made that mistake in the 1930s), but its adoption and announcement in the very near future would put us back on course. Because of the magnitude of our problems, it must involve shared sacrifice - but also shared hope. In the end, it is about higher living standards for all Americans.

So, Portugal provides an important lesson here for both the President (who is so far sticking to his campaign tax pledge) and those who have taken the "no new tax" pledge: *that an understandable and compelling case should and can be made to the American public that new tax measures must be included in a broader bipartisan fiscal consolidation package.*

Our politicians should also take note that the main political parties in Portugal were able to negotiate and agree on the contents of the package. (It does however appear that some parts of the political spectrum were left out, which could make implementation of the package more difficult. For a package to be politically credible, it is always better to include as much of the political arena as politically achievable.)

Inspiration can come from the most surprising places.

## Events of Interest

-- Upcoming --

### **The American Institute for Contemporary German Studies and German Marshall Fund of the United States - Discussion**

09:00 am - 05/24/2010

The American Institute for Contemporary German Studies and German Marshall Fund of the United States hold a discussion on "German and European Foreign Policy After the Lisbon Treaty," which will analyze the impact of the Lisbon Treaty on German and European foreign policy; the implications of such issues as relations between the EU and NATO; European and transatlantic energy policy; and EU enlargement.

Location: Cosmos Club, 2121 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Crentz Room, Washington, D.C.



Contact: 202-332-9312, [jriester@aicgs.org](mailto:jriester@aicgs.org); <http://www.aicgs.org/index.aspx>

-- Past --

**The Cato Institute's Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity - Forum**

05/11/2010

The Cato Institute's Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity holds a policy forum on "Europe's Economic Crisis and the Future of the Euro."

Participants: Bulgarian Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Simeon Djankov; Cato Institute senior fellow Steve Hanke; and Ian Vasquez, director of the Cato Institute's Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity

Location: Cato Institute, 1000 Massachusetts Avenue NW, F.A. Hayek Auditorium, Washington, D.C.

Information: 202-789-5200 or <http://www.cato.org>

**The Heritage Foundation - Discussion**

05/13/2010

The Heritage Foundation holds a discussion on "What Does the Euro-Zone Crisis Mean for the U.S.?"

Participants: Desmond Lachman, resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute; J.D. Foster, Norman B. Ture senior fellow of economics of fiscal policy at the Heritage Foundation; and Theodore Bromund, Margaret Thatcher senior research fellow at the Heritage Foundation

Location: Heritage Foundation, 214 Massachusetts Avenue NE, Lehrman Auditorium, Washington, D.C.

Information: 202-675-1752 or [lectures.seminars@heritage.org](mailto:lectures.seminars@heritage.org)

**The Center for American Progress (CAP) - Discussion**

05/14/2010

The Center for American Progress (CAP) holds a discussion on "When Federal Government Failure Leads to Local Upheaval: Arizona and Beyond."

Participants: Phoenix, Ariz. Mayor Phil Gordon; New Haven, Conn. Mayor John DeStefano; Arlington County Board Member Walter Tejada; and Angela Kelley, vice



president of immigration policy and advocacy at CAP

Location: CAP, 1333 H Street NW, 10th Floor, Washington, D.C.

Information: 202-741-6246 or <http://www.americanprogress.org>

*The source for all Congressional legislation information on this report was the THOMAS system from The Library of Congress (<http://thomas.loc.gov/>). Links for each of the bills listed above direct readers to the THOMAS web page specific to the bill.*

*You can find a PDF file of this and other alerts at NOPA's [website](#). If you have any questions about this or other legislation, please contact NOPA's Government Affairs Team at [info@nopa-us.org](mailto:info@nopa-us.org) or 703-389-3512.*

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**NOPA, Inc.  
PO Box 2652  
Falls Church, VA 22042**

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