



## The National Organization of Portuguese Americans

### Legislative Alert ©

July 8, 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.

### Legislative Update

Congress left last week for its July Fourth recess having failed to complete action on a number of priorities, primarily because of continuing concerns about federal deficits.

**Growing concerns this election year about the deficit and government spending have made it increasingly difficult to move budget-related legislation.** Democratic leaders this year have continued their pursuit of efforts to further bolster the economy and help create or preserve jobs, arguing that higher deficits were acceptable in the short term to ensure that the nascent economic recovery firmly takes hold and that efforts to tackle long-term deficits should wait until the economy has sufficiently recovered. But public anxiety about deficits has only risen as Republicans and Democrats continue their arguments over the merits of last year's \$787 billion economic stimulus law as well as the impact of this year's health care overhaul law. CBO last week issued its latest long-term budget outlook which said that "Growth in spending on health care programs remains the central fiscal challenge facing the nation" and that the enacted health care law at best just modestly improved the long-term outlook. [CBO Long-Term Budget Materials](#)

**Because of deficit concerns, House Democrats were unable to assemble a formal budget resolution this year - and were barely able to adopt a beefed-up "deeming" resolution for fiscal 2011.** Fiscally conservative Blue Dogs and many other Democrats in the House wanted greater cuts to future year deficits than were shown in either President Obama's 10-year budget plan or a five-year budget resolution ([S Con Res 60](#)) approved by the Senate Budget Committee, and were unwilling to vote for a multi-year budget that showed deep future deficits. House liberal Democrats, meanwhile, were unwilling to vote for a full budget that reflected the cuts to domestic spending that Blue Dogs were demanding. After months of negotiations between House Democrats, the chamber last week was finally able to adopt a one-year budget plan ([H Res 1493](#)) that primarily acted to set a top-line discretionary spending level for fiscal 2011 (allowing \$4 billion less for the year than the Senate budget would). However, it was adopted through a procedure involving unrelated legislation under which no separate debate or vote was held on the so-called Budget Enforcement Resolution. This year marks the first time ever since the modern budget process was created in the 1970s that the House has failed to adopt a budget resolution, as well as the first year that neither chamber will have adopted a budget resolution.



**The atmosphere in Congress has changed dramatically since earlier this year, when members of both parties were more willing to take actions that might add to the deficit.** While House Republicans have consistently opposed bills that would increase the deficit, Senate Republicans were more divided a few months ago. At the beginning of March, for instance, Senate Republicans largely abandoned their colleague, Jim Bunning of Kentucky, when he held up a short-term extension of unemployment benefits and other policies because the bill wasn't paid for. And later that month nine Senate Republicans voted with Democrats to break a GOP filibuster of a yearlong tax and social safety net extenders package that would cost upwards of \$140 billion and add \$97 billion to the deficit, with six Republicans also voting to pass the bill ([HR 4213](#)). But as public anxiety about spending and deficits continued to grow and news about the debt troubles of Greece and other European nations made headlines, Senate Republicans quickly became more unified in voting against bills that would add to deficits, with some Democrats also following suit.

**Consequently, the broad "extenders" package remains stalled, and the situation is unlikely to get much better when lawmakers return from the recess.** The House, before returning an amended version of the extenders bill back to the Senate, had to scale it back because of deficit concerns, and Senate Democrats have since offered several different versions of the measure - each with a lower cost and smaller deficit impact - but still have been unable to reach the 60 votes needed to invoke cloture and end a GOP filibuster. Democrats have since embarked on a strategy of splitting off individual pieces of that package, and late last month enacted several separate bills: including those to reverse substantial cuts made at the beginning of June to Medicare payment rates for doctors ([HR 3962](#)); to extend the federal flood insurance program ([HR 5569](#)); and to extend the date by which home purchasers must have closed on a property to be eligible for the homebuyer tax credit ([HR 5623](#)). The House late last week passed and sent to the Senate a separate bill ([HR 5618](#)) to restore and extend long-term unemployment benefits, after a separate Senate bill failed. Meanwhile, funds for a summer youth jobs program and to settle two lawsuits against the federal government have been added by the House to its fiscal 2010 supplemental ([HR 4899](#)), while efforts to provide states with additional aid for their Medicaid programs appears to have been abandoned for the time being.

**War funding for the Pentagon has also been sidetracked by the issue, with Democrats trying to use the war funding bill to carry increases in domestic funding for a number of programs they say are important to creating or preserving jobs.** The House last week amended the Senate-passed version of the fiscal 2010 supplemental ([HR 4899](#)), adding about \$21 billion in domestic spending - although Democrats completely offset that additional spending. But even those offsets are causing controversy, with the White House threatening a veto of the measure if it includes certain cuts to education spending (see below). It's uncertain what will happen to the bill in the Senate, where a significant number of Democrats object to the education offset and a substantial number of Republicans have already demonstrated they will vote against the measure if it includes non-war spending. When the Senate passed the bill on May 27, some 26 Republicans voted against the measure, which at the time carried much less non-war spending, primarily emergency items requested by the president. Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates last month called for enactment of war funding by the July Fourth recess, saying the Pentagon would "have to do stupid things" with Pentagon accounts if funding wasn't enacted by then. The likely "real" deadline, however, is the end of July; Gates said that furloughs of civilian defense employees could occur in August if the war funds aren't provided by then.



**SOCIAL SECURITY: A TOUCHABLE 'THIRD RAIL':** Social Security's politically fatal voltage is dropping to a safer level as deficit worries spur open talk of reduced benefits, higher payroll taxes and delayed retirements.

**House Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer last month suggested a solution to the long-term deficit that until now has been anathema to any American politician with constituents approaching age 65: making changes to Social Security.** And last week, House Republican Leader John A. Boehner of Ohio caused Democrats and Republicans to exchange barbs when he suggested raising the retirement age to 70. The fact that both Hoyer, D-Md., and Boehner would dare mention the once politically fatal subject in an election year highlights how rapidly the political dynamics of Social Security are changing. Americans are increasingly fearful that the \$13 trillion federal debt cannot be sustained. International pressure to restore balance to the nation's fiscal position is growing. And the fact that Social Security is suddenly incapable of covering its costs with the taxes that are paid in has brought the consequences of deferring action into sharp focus. With Democrats - including the president - willing to take the lead, those who advocate relatively minor changes to Social Security say now may be the time to place the program and the government on better financial footing.

**Sources:** CQ Budget Tracker, Congressional Quarterly, Library of Congress (THOMAS), and U.S. Government Printing Office.

## Congressional Legislation of Interest \* Recently Introduced \*

### **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS -- (Senate - June 24, 2010)**

By Ms. **SNOWE** (for herself, Mr. **LAUTENBERG**, Mr. **WHITEHOUSE**, Ms. **COLLINS**, Mrs. **SHAHEEN**, Mrs. **BOXER**, Mr. **KERRY**, Ms. **CANTWELL**, Mr. **REED**, Mr. **BARRASSO**, and Mr. **BEGICH**):

**S. 3528.** A bill to promote coastal jobs creation, promote sustainable fisheries and fishing communities, revitalize waterfronts, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

### **PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS -- (House of Representatives - June 24, 2010)**

By Mr. **ELLISON**:

**H.R. 5595.** A bill to amend section 214(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act to create, for an alien seeking to enter the United States as a nonimmigrant to care for a relative with a serious health condition, an exemption from the presumption that the alien is an immigrant; to the Committee on the Judiciary.



## **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS -- (Senate - June 29, 2010)**

By Ms. **MIKULSKI**:

**S. 3544.** A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to modify the requirements of the visa waiver program and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

## **PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS -- (House of Representatives - June 29, 2010)**

By Mrs. **DAHLKEMPER** (for herself, Mr. **KRATOVIL**, Mr. **CHILDERS**, Mr. **LEVIN**, Mr. **LEWIS** of Georgia, Ms. **BERKLEY**, Ms. **TITUS**, and Mr. **COURTNEY**):

**H.R. 5623.** A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the homebuyer tax credit for the purchase of a principal residence before October 1, 2010, in the case of a written binding contract entered into with respect to such principal residence before May 1, 2010, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committees on the Budget, Homeland Security, and Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned. Considered and passed.

**FLOOR ACTION** - the above bill was passed in the House on 29<sup>th</sup> and the Senate on 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Homebuyer Assistance and Improvement Act of 2010:** [H.R. 5623](#), amended, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the homebuyer tax credit for the purchase of a principal residence before October 1, 2010, in the case of a written binding contract entered into with respect to such principal residence before May 1, 2010, by a 2/3 yea-and-nay vote of 409 yeas to 5 nays, Roll No. 401; and **Pages** [H4936-39](#), [H4944](#)

### **Measures Passed:**

**Homebuyer Assistance and Improvement Act:** Senate passed [H.R. 5623](#), to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the homebuyer tax credit for the purchase of a principal residence before October 1, 2010, in the case of a written binding contract entered into with respect to such principal residence before May 1, 2010, clearing the measure for the President. **Page** [S5679](#)

## **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS -- (Senate - June 30, 2010)**



By Mr. **MERKLEY** (for himself, Mr. **BOND**, and Mr. **BAYH**):

**S. 3563.** A bill to amend the Small Business Act to temporarily designate as a HUBZone counties that are most affected by a recession; to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

### **PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS -- (House of Representatives - July 01, 2010)**

By Mr. **SHADEGG** (for himself and Mr. **DJOU**):

**H.R. 5658.** A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to increase competitiveness in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. **CUELLAR**:

**H.R. 5687.** A bill to extend changes to requirements for admission of nonimmigrant nurses in health professional shortage areas made by the Nursing Relief for Disadvantaged Areas Act of 1999; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. **GIFFORDS** (for herself and Mr. **POLIS**):

**H.R. 5689.** A bill to amend the Truth in Lending Act to provide an interest rate cap and other requirements for creditors making covered loans, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. **HOEKSTRA**:

**H.R. 5691.** A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide a credit for investment in new or expanding small businesses; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

## **Article of Interest**

### **Nightmare vision for Europe as EU chief warns 'democracy could disappear' in Greece, Spain and Portugal**

By: Jason Groves: Daily Mail 15th June 2010

Democracy could 'collapse' in Greece, Spain and Portugal unless urgent action is taken to tackle the debt crisis, the head of the European Commission has warned. In an extraordinary briefing to trade union chiefs last week, Commission President Jose



Manuel Barroso set out an 'apocalyptic' vision in which crisis-hit countries in southern Europe could fall victim to military coups or popular uprisings as interest rates soar and public services collapse because their governments run out of money.

The stark warning came as it emerged that EU chiefs have begun work on an emergency bailout package for Spain which is likely to run into hundreds of billions of pounds.

A £650 billion bailout for Greece has already been agreed.

John Monks, former head of the TUC, said he had been 'shocked' by the severity of the warning from Mr Barroso, who is a former prime minister of Portugal.

Mr Monks, now head of the European TUC, said: 'I had a discussion with Barroso last Friday about what can be done for Greece, Spain, Portugal and the rest and his message was blunt: "Look, if they do not carry out these austerity packages, these countries could virtually disappear in the way that we know them as democracies. They've got no choice, this is it."

'He's very, very worried. He shocked us with an apocalyptic vision of democracies in Europe collapsing because of the state of indebtedness.'

Greece, Spain and Portugal, which only became democracies in the 1970s, are all facing dire problems with their public finances. All three countries have a history of military coups.

Greece has been rocked by a series of national strikes and riots this year following the announcement of swingeing cuts to public spending designed to curb Britain's deficit. Spain and Portugal have also announced austerity measures in recent weeks amid growing signs that the international markets are increasingly worried they could default on their debts.

Dictatorships: An end to democracy in Europe could see a return of figures ruling dictatorships. General Franco was dictator of Spain until 1975; Georgios Papadopoulos led a military junta until 1973; and Antonio de Oliveira Salazar ruled as Portuguese president until 1968

Other EU countries seeing public protests over austerity plans include Hungary, Italy and Romania, where public sector pay is to be slashed by 25 per cent.

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, who visited Madrid last week, said the situation in Spain should serve as a warning to Britain of the perils of failing to tackle the deficit quickly.

He said the collapse of confidence in Spain had seen interest rates soar, adding: 'As the nation with the highest deficit in Europe in 2010, we simply cannot afford to let that happen to us too.'

Mr Barroso's warning lays bare the concern at the highest level in Brussels that the economic crisis could lead to the collapse of not only the beleaguered euro, but the EU itself, along with a string of fragile democracies.

But it risks infuriating governments in southern Europe which are already struggling to contain public anger as they drive through tax rises and spending cuts in a bid to avoid disaster.



Mr Monks yesterday warned that the new austerity measures themselves could take the continent 'back to the 1930s'.

In an interview with the Brussels-based magazine EU Observer he said: 'This is extremely dangerous.'

'This is 1931, we're heading back to the 1930s, with the Great Depression and we ended up with militarist dictatorship.

'I'm not saying we're there yet, but it's potentially very serious, not just economically, but politically as well.'

Mr Monks said union barons across Europe were planning a co-ordinated 'day of action' against the cuts on 29 September, involving national strikes and protests.

David Cameron will travel to Brussels on Thursday for his first summit of EU leaders since the election.

Leaders are expected to thrash out a rescue package for Spain's teetering economy. Spain is expected to ask for an initial guarantee of at least £100 billion, although this figure could rise sharply if the crisis deepens.

News of the behind-the-scenes scramble in Brussels spells bad news for the British economy as many of our major banks have loaned Spain vast sums of money in recent years.

Germany's authoritative Frankfurter Allgemeine Newspaper reported that Spain is poised to ask for multi-billion pound credits.

Mr Barroso and Jean-Claude Trichet of the European Central Bank are united on the need for a rescue plan.

The looming bankruptcy of Spain, one of the foremost economies in Europe, poses far more of a threat to European unity and the euro project than Greece. Greece contributes 2.5 percent of GDP to Europe, Spain nearly 12 percent.

Yesterday's report quoted German government sources saying: 'We will lead discussions this week in Brussels concerning the crisis. It has intensified to the point that the states do not want to wait until the EU summit on Thursday in Brussels.'

At the end of last month the credit rating agency Fitch downgraded Spain, triggering sharp falls on stock markets.

On Friday the administration in Madrid continued to insist no rescue package was necessary. But Greece said the same thing before it came close to disaster.

Yesterday the European Commission and the statistics authority Eurostat met to consider Spain's plight as many EU countries consider the austerity package proposed by the Madrid administration insufficient to deal with the country's problems



## Events of Interest

**\*\*\* Upcoming \*\*\***

### **Immigration**

#### **The Brookings Institution - Discussion**

07/08/2010 at 12:00 pm

The Brookings Institution holds a discussion on "Reimagining U.S. Immigration Policy."

Participants: Darrell West, vice president and director of governance studies at the Brookings Institution; Celinda Lake, president of Lake Research; Manny Diaz, former mayor of Miami; and Deputy Assistant Attorney General Juan Osuna

Location: Brookings Institution, 1775 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Falk Auditorium, Washington, D.C.

Contact: 202-797-6105, [events@brookings.edu](mailto:events@brookings.edu)

#### **Senate Foreign Relations Committee - Hearing**

07/13/2010 at 02:30 pm

Full committee hearing on the nominations of Christopher Murray to be ambassador to the Republic of the Congo; Mark Charles Storella to be ambassador to the Republic of Zambia; James Frederick Entwistle to be ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Eric Benjaminson to be ambassador to Gabon & to serve concurrently as ambassador to Sao Tome & Principe; Phillip Carter III to be ambassador to Cote-d'Ivoire; and J. Thomas Dougherty to be ambassador to Burkina Faso.

Witness(es): The nominees testify

Location: 419 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Contact: 202-224-4651 <http://foreign.senate.gov>

**\*\*\* Past \*\*\***

### **Social Issues**

#### **The National Archives - Workshop**

07/07/2010



The National Archives held a workshop on "Introduction to Genealogy," a lecture on basic genealogical research in federal records.

Contact: 202-357-5300; <http://www.archives.gov/>

### **Immigration**

#### **The Brookings Institution - Webchat**

07/07/2010

The Brookings Institution held a webchat to discuss "Rethinking Immigration Policy in the United States."

Participants: Darrell West, vice president and director of governance studies at the Brookings Institution, and Seung Min Kim, assistant editor at Politico

Contact: 202-797-6105, [events@brookings.edu](mailto:events@brookings.edu)

### **Foreign Affairs**

#### **The Woodrow Wilson Center (WWC) - Discussion**

06/24/2010

The Woodrow Wilson Center (WWC) held a discussion on "From Lisbon to Lisbon: Afghanistan and Russia as Test Cases for the New European Union Foreign Policy."

Participants: Anne-Marie Le Gloannec, senior research fellow at CERI-Sciences Po in Paris; and Christian Ostermann, director European studies at WWC

Contact: 202-691-4000; <http://www.wilsoncenter.org>

#### **The Brookings Institution - Discussion**

06/23/2010

The Brookings Institution holds a discussion on "International Volunteering and Service."

Highlights:

-- Kemal Dervis, vice president and director of global economy and



development at the Brookings Institution, delivers welcoming remarks

-- Elizabeth Frawley Bagley (**Former U.S. Ambassador to Portugal**), special representative of global partnerships at the State Department, delivers keynote remarks

-- Former Sen. Harris Wofford, D-Penn.; and David Caprara, nonresident fellow of global economy and development at the Brookings Institution, deliver closing remarks

Contact: 202-797-6105, [events@brookings.edu](mailto:events@brookings.edu)

## About Us

*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.*

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