



Congressman Bud Cramer

June 2006
E-Newsletter

PAGE ONE OF TWO

After the VA announced that an employee's computer containing financial and other personal information of almost 30 million veterans and active duty personnel was stolen, people across the country have sought to learn more about identity theft. Thankfully, federal authorities recovered the stolen computer and no evidence was found that the sensitive information was accessed. However the threat of identity theft still remains and each year, thousands of individuals are victims of fraud. The Federal Trade Commission has provided an excellent resource on what to do if you believe you are a victim of identity theft. You can find this information on my website, <http://cramer.house.gov>, under a new section called, "Hot Issues." This section is where I will include information on issues like this and others currently facing North Alabama and our country. I hope you find this new resource helpful.

Bud Cramer

Washington Update

In June, Representative Cramer participated in a House Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee hearing that questioned Veterans Affairs Secretary Jim Nicholson on the VA's efforts to protect veterans from identify theft and to ask data protection industry leaders about how the VA can better protect critical information. Cramer is also a cosponsor of the Veterans Identity Protection Act of 2006 and the Veterans Identity Protection (VIP) Act. The purpose of these bills is to protect vets that may be victims of identity theft,

This month, Representative Cramer, House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Bill Thomas, and Missouri Representative Kenny Hulshof introduced and passed the Permanent Estate Tax Relief Act of 2006. This legislation, which passed by a bipartisan vote of 269-156, would provide permanent estate and gift tax relief by increasing the exemption amount to \$5 million for an individual and \$10 million for a couple, indexed for inflation. This legislation will enable small business owners and family farmers to pass along their life's work to the next generation. Cramer said, "I strongly believe that this tax hinders families from pass along their family-owned farms and small businesses to their children, and today's bill is an effective compromise that will provide much needed relief."

Pictured on the right, Representative Cramer received an award for "Leadership in Ending the Unnecessary Criminalization of Mental Illness" from the National Association on Mental Illnesses (NAMI). Cramer accepted this honor during a luncheon with NAMI representatives from the State of Alabama who were in Washington for the 2006 NAMI Leadership Conference. Upon receiving the award Cramer said, "The mental health issues are issues that we take into the healthcare debate as often as we can. Our Alabama team is very much engaged and are working to reform the laws that affect mentally ill patients and their families.





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PAGE TWO OF TWO

District Update

Representative Cramer gave opening remarks and moderated a panel discussion on “Advancing American’s Economic Competitiveness through Innovation, Discovery, and Connectivity at the 2006 Tennessee Valley Economic Corridor Summit. Other panelists were, Representative Zach Wamp (Tenn-03), NASA Associate Administrator Rex Geveden, Oak Ridge National Laboratory Director Dr. Jeff Wadsworth, Technology 2020 Founder Tom Rodgers, and Federal Communications Commissioner Deborah Tate. Cramer said, “The Tennessee Valley has been on the forefront of scientific discovery and technological innovation for decades. To maintain our national leadership, we must continue to look past state lines, coordinate our region’s economic message, and work together to benefit all areas of the Valley.”

Representative Cramer held a roundtable discussion with pharmacists from across North Alabama to discuss the challenges facing local pharmacies in today’s market. Cramer announced his support for the Fair and Speedy Treatment (FAST) Act, which, if passed, would help local independent pharmacies adjust to the new Medicare program. Since the new Medicare program went into effect in January, area pharmacists have been challenged with processing some claims and with the slow reimbursement of claims. “The families who own and operate our independent pharmacies have been providing health care answers to the people of our community for decades,” said Cramer. “It is important that we look out for these pharmacies so they can continue to help the people of North Alabama.”

APPROPRIATIONS UPDATE:

Approved by the House of Representatives:

Transportation – Cramer secured \$600,000 for the continued development of the Huntsville Downtown Multimodal Parking system, \$400,000 to help construct an entrance road, highway median crossover, and acceleration and deceleration lanes at the Mallard Fox West Industrial Complex in Lawrence County, and \$300,000 for the extension of Peach Tree Street into the Muscle Shoals Airport Industrial Park.

Cramer also announced \$1 million for the West Extension of Interstate 565 into Decatur, \$150,000 for renovations to the Huntsville Museum of Art, and \$150,000 for the preservation of Ivy Green, the Birthplace of Helen Keller.

Science, State, Justice, and Commerce – Cramer, a member of this subcommittee included \$950,000 for the establishment of the Hudson-Alpha Institute for Biotechnology and \$200,000 for workforce development programs at Calhoun Community College.

Cramer also announced \$16.7 billion for NASA and its programs, which is a funding increase of \$462 million above the current year’s funding. The amount includes \$837 million for the Crew Launch Vehicle program, which more than doubles last year’s amount.

Defense – Cramer included \$12.5 million for defense projects in North Alabama.

Homeland Security – Cramer announced that this legislation provides \$19.6 billion for border protection and immigration enforcement. This amount includes \$4.1 billion for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), \$2.33 billion for border security, \$273 million for transportation and removal of illegal immigrants, \$115 million for border security technology and tactical infrastructure, and \$33.5 million for enhancements to aerial surveillance along borders and coastlines.

To learn more on these and all of the FY 2007 Appropriations Bills, please go to Representative Cramer’s website, <http://cramer.house.gov>.