



Register Now for 52nd Annual Washington Fly-In and Congressional Dinner

Make plans now to attend the 52nd Annual Washington Fly-In and Congressional Dinner.

Plan to attend the reception and dinner on Thursday, March 10, 2011, in addition to individual district events. Information for each can be found on the registration form at this link: [Register Now](#)

Briefings by the U.S. Chamber and N.A.M. are planned beginning at 8 a.m. Thursday morning at the hotel, leaving the afternoon free for individual or group appointments with your delegate or other agency personnel.

Reservations at the hotel must be received no later than February 16, 2011, to receive the special nightly rate of \$229. Call 703-920-3230 to make room reservations and mention that you are with the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce to get the special rate.

Please make any room reservation changes by calling Deb Mathis at 501-210-4212 or emailing her at dmathis@arkansasstatechamber.com instead of contacting the hotel.

We look forward to a large group traveling from Arkansas for this event. It is a great opportunity to meet with our delegates and their staffs and to share your business concerns with them face-to-face.

U.S. Senate Announces Committee Assignments

For the 112th Congress, Senator John Boozman will serve on Agriculture; Nutrition and Forestry; Commerce, Science and Transportation; Environment and Public Works; and Veterans Affairs. Senator Mark Pryor will serve on Appropriations; Commerce, Science and Transportation; Homeland Security; Rules and Administration; and Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

In the U.S. House of Representatives, Second District Congressman Tim Griffin (R) has been named to a third committee, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. As we reported last month, Griffin is already serving on the Judiciary Committee and Armed Services Committee. He is also an Assistant Whip for the Republican majority.

In Business Outreach, Obama Urges Companies to "Invest In America"

President Obama Monday [addressed](#) executives in what has been billed by the White House as major outreach from Washington to business. State Chamber/AIA President & CEO Randy Zook was interviewed on CNBC's Squawk Box on Monday in regard to President Obama's Overtures to the Business Community and his speech before the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. To see the video, click [here](#), scroll down and click on the image of Randy.

[ABC World News'](#) Diane Sawyer reported that the President "delivered an urgent message to the companies to get in the game, start spending money and hiring workers -- throwing down a gauntlet but also trying to build a bridge." ABC's Jake Tapper added that "Obama is desperate to get the economy going," and showed him saying, "So if I've got one message, my message is now is the time to invest in America. Now is the time to invest in America. And if there is a reason that you don't share my confidence, if there is a reason that you don't believe that this is the time to get off the sidelines, to hire and to invest, I want to know about it. I want to fix it."

The [CBS Evening News'](#) Katie Couric said "Obama continued his campaign to improve relations with business," urging "corporate America to invest the nearly \$2 trillion it has saved up and start hiring again. For his part, he President promised to address their complaints about the corporate tax code and burdensome government regulations."

The [Washington Post](#) reported, "Since his party's crushing defeat in the November congressional elections, Obama has tried to build bridges with the business community," including naming former J.P. Morgan Chase executive William M. Daley "as his new chief of staff." Moreover, "Obama recently named General Electric chief executive Jeffrey Immelt to lead a new economic advisory panel focused on job creation, another signal that he intends to work with the corporate world on issues." [The Hill](#) noted that "Daley attended the speech along with senior adviser Valerie Jarrett, Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk."

[Bloomberg News](#) reported that in his remarks, "Obama said he is doing his part to improve the business climate after a free- trade agreement with South Korea, a deal to extend Bush-era tax cuts, and a State of the Union address that proposed more government support for infrastructure and 'innovation.'" The President "touched on some of the same themes he struck in his State of the Union address: the need to rebuild and modernize the nation's transportation and telecommunications systems and take steps that will promote research and innovation in areas such as biotechnology, information technology and clean energy."

Senate Makes One Change to Healthcare Law, Rejects Repeal along Party Lines

The [AP](#) reported, "A Republican drive to repeal the year-old health care law ended in party-line defeat in the Senate [last week], leaving the Supreme Court to render a final, unpredictable verdict on an issue steeped in political and constitutional controversy. The vote was 47-51. Moments earlier, the Senate agreed to make one relatively minor change in the law, voting to strip out a paperwork requirement for businesses," which President Obama "has said he would accept the change. It does not directly affect health care." [McClatchy](#) said that "the change...is expected to win approval from the House of

Representatives." [Portfolio](#) added, "Business groups hope 1099 repeal is enacted quickly because businesses would need time to change their accounting systems if the requirement does go into effect next year. ... "

[Politico](#) reported that "the amendment to repeal the 1099 reporting requirement passed 81-17 with broad bipartisan support. ... The amendment was proposed by Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.)," though "Democrats blocked a similar amendment from Sen. Mike Johanns (R-Neb.) last year. He had offered the amendment this week, but Stabenow's got the vote."

Meanwhile, the [AP](#) reported, "Most insurers, hospital executives and state officials expect they'll keep carrying out the" requirements of the healthcare reform law despite US District Judge Roger Vinson's declaring it unconstitutional. Many in the healthcare sector "have a love-hate relationship with" the law. Despite "dissatisfaction with core provisions," the overhaul is "seen as a way to start addressing problems of cost and quality." Additionally, if the law remains on the books and states haven't prepared for it, the Department of Health and Human Services could run the new insurance markets in their areas. The AP asserts that the law "has too much momentum for one judge to stop it."

White House Proposes Moves to Bolster States' Jobless Programs

The White House Tuesday announced a plan to help states' unemployment insurance programs cope with persistently high jobless rates. While stories casts the plan as part of the Administration's continued focus on the economy, they also reflect charges that it will amount to a tax hike for businesses in 2014. Moreover, because Republicans reacted negatively to the proposal, it is being given little chance of becoming law.

[Bloomberg News](#) noted that in an interview, White House Budget Director Jack Lew said that "as part of the 2012 fiscal budget, Obama will seek a delay of state tax increases and a suspension of interest payments owed to the federal government, along with a future increase to the minimum income level subject to unemployment insurance taxes." Lew said of the proposal, "It reduces the exposure of the federal budget in the future." Lew also "said the interest moratorium and the future tax increase would help get the unemployment insurance program 'back into solid shape after the recession.'"

The [AP](#) reported that under the proposal, "employers could face higher taxes in 2014," as the plan "would give states the choice of increasing tax payments from businesses, altering their benefits or a combination of both. ... Businesses would be the most likely to be affected by the increase, but some economists say workers could also feel the change if businesses pass on the costs of the tax to their employees through wage freezes or smaller pay raises."

[Fox News' Special Report](#) stated that the President is "going to propose helping the 30 states from California to Wisconsin to New York, which have borrowed more than \$42 billion from Washington to cover their tapped unemployment funds. The taxes would take effect in 2014, and sources say they could generate up to \$100 billion over a decade by collecting more payroll taxes from companies. The White House...says this will buy time for the states, but is not another Washington bail-out." Fox noted that Speaker Boehner "called the idea a 'job destroying tax hike on US employers.'"

Issa to Hold Hearing on Regulations Opposed by Businesses

The [AP](#) reported when President Obama "asked businesses for advice on creating jobs, he might have anticipated that more than 200 responses would quickly be headed his way courtesy of Rep. Darrell Issa, a Republican who once called him corrupt." A month before Obama "reached out to businesses," Issa "sent 171 letters to various businesses and their trade associations," asking them "for help in 'identifying existing and proposed regulations that have negatively impacted job growth.'" This week, Issa is "giving business representatives an opportunity at a hearing by his committee to vent their frustration with government requirements issued by unelected bureaucrats."

[Politico](#) reported EPA rules "dominated the responses." Issa "issued a statement saying the responses from industry and the overall Republican oversight efforts on regulations 'should complement what President Obama has already called on his Administration to do and in concert, lead to a robust and expansive discussion about what the best way forward is to stimulate our economy.'"

Senators Take Aim at EPA Greenhouse Gas Regulations

A trio of bills that would curb the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) authority to regulate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions made waves in the Senate last week. Sen. Barrasso (R-WY) introduced his bill, the Defending America's Affordable Energy and Jobs Act (S. 228), on January 31. The bill would curtail the EPA's ongoing efforts to regulate GHG emissions from stationary sources under the Clean Air Act and other environmental statutes. Sen. Rockefeller (D-WV) also introduced a bill (S. 321) that would delay for two years the EPA's regulation of stationary source GHG emissions. On February 2, Sen. Inhofe (R-OK), chair of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, and Rep. Upton (R-MI), chair of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, unveiled a proposal that would block the EPA's authority to regulate GHG emissions from stationary sources only under the Clean Air Act. The draft legislation would keep the GHG rules for light-duty vehicles and medium- and heavy-duty engines and vehicles intact.

Gutierrez Urges Congress, White House to Approve Colombia Trade Deal

Former Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez and former Deputy U.S. Trade Representative John Veroneau, in an op-ed for the [Washington Times](#) wrote, "It has been four years since the United States and Colombia signed a reciprocal trade agreement," but, "unfortunately, the agreement has yet to be implemented. ... The new Republican Majority in the House must ensure a vote on this agreement, as it will create U.S. jobs and make good on a promise to an important ally. ... A reciprocal trade agreement with Colombia offers the best way to demonstrate the president's promise of 'engagement based on mutual respect and common interests and shared values.'"

The [Forbes](#) "Business in the Beltway" blog reported Gabriel Silva, the former Columbian ambassador to the U.S., "is pushing for passage of a permanent free trade agreement

between the U.S. and Colombia." Silva hopes to leverage continuing unemployment issues in the US to convince policymakers that "delaying the free trade agreement with Colombia is destroying jobs in America." The article noted, "The business community favors swift passage of the three pending trade deals, and the Obama administration is paying close attention to what business groups are saying these days." So is Congress. "[Two weeks ago], the House Ways & Means Committee held a hearing to discuss the Korea, Colombia and Panama trade deals," and Republicans "invited witnesses from" several groups and businesses. "All of favored passage of the three pending agreements."