

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

## A Congressional Scorecard Worth A Read!

Many organizations release Congressional scorecards based on a single issue, but the Drum Major Institute for Public Policy is distinctive in its focus on an overall agenda of expanding opportunity for the nation's current and aspiring middle class. We believe better policy can be created when ordinary citizens—not just political insiders—know how their representatives voted on the issues that matter most to them and when representatives know their constituents are watching. TheMiddleClass.org 2008 Congressional Scorecard is a powerful tool for holding Congress accountable and informing all those concerned about the American middle class about key pieces of legislation. After examining 13 bills in detail, the 2008 Congressional Scorecard assigns a grade to each Member of Congress based on his or her support for the middle class.

WHO MADE THE GRADE?	RECEIVED AN "A" or "A+"	RECEIVED A "B"	RECEIVED A "C"	RECEIVED A "D"	FAILED
House	41%	15%	15%	10%	19%
House Democrats	73%	24%	2%	0%	0%
House Republicans	3%	4%	31%	21%	41%
Senate	22%	13%	27%	10%	24%
Senate Democrats	43%	27%	24%	0%	0%
Senate Republicans	0%	0%	29%	20%	49%

We examine the good and the bad decisions Congress made in 2008—from the February stimulus bill to the Senate filibusters that killed legislation to address the home mortgage crisis and to assist the struggling auto industry. We look at how the middle class gained from the New GI Bill, the Higher Education Act, and better regulation of toy safety, and how ordinary Americans lost with the no-strings-attached bailout of the same financial institutions that fueled the economic crisis.

Overall, Congress managed to get a passing grade in 2008, but legislators could have done much better. 71% of Representatives and 62% of Senators earned a C or greater. While this is a significant improvement from the 109th Congress, Americans striving to attain and hold onto a middle-class standard of living during a period of increasing hardship deserve a great deal more from their elected representatives. In the face of the economic calamity of 2008, Congress struggled to muster a response that truly addressed the scope of the problem.

### MAIN FINDINGS:

- The House Beats the Senate.** Of the ten House votes considered in this scorecard, the middle-class position won eight times. The anti-middle-class bank bailout and the failure to override the President's veto of health coverage for low-income children were the exceptions. In the Senate, however, the power of a minority to filibuster positive legislation took a steep toll. The middle-class position prevailed only four times out of ten: as the stimulus bill, consumer product safety, higher education funding, and a measure combining extended unemployment benefits with support for veterans were signed into law.
- Republicans Improve, Democrats Slip.** While Democrats generally voted for the middle-class position more often than Republicans, the partisan split was less pronounced than in past years. House and Senate Democrats received a lower proportion of A or A+ grades than in 2007. Meanwhile, Republicans in both chambers received fewer failing grades and more Cs. The trend was especially pronounced among House Republicans—while 72% failed in 2007 and just 18% earned a C or better, the failure rate dropped to 41% in 2008 with 38% earning a C or better.
- Robust Democratic Support for the Middle Class Falls Short on Bailout, Bankruptcy, and Corporate Immunity.** A majority of Democrats in both chambers of Congress voted to support the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, authorizing \$700 billion for the Treasury Secretary to bailout the collapsing financial sector. While action to stabilize the financial system was imperative to ensure the flow of credit necessary for middle-class prosperity, this legislation went about it the wrong way, providing a blank check to banks rather than addressing the home mortgage crisis at the root of the financial collapse. Senate Democrats also faltered when it came to enabling middle-class homeowners at risk of foreclosure to renegotiate their mortgages in bankruptcy court. Finally, Senators stumbled by approving legal immunity for telecommunications companies that illegally spied on Americans as part of President Bush's anti-terrorism program, setting a disturbing precedent for businesses' relationships with their middle-class customers. Republicans also voted against the middle class on these bills.
- Republicans Back Consumer Products, Higher Education, and Stimulus.** Republicans in both the House and Senate provided strong support for legislation to improve toy safety, a bill that toy manufacturers also supported. Many Republicans also voted for higher education legislation which will enable more Americans to enter the middle class by increasing access to college. Finally, a substantial majority of Republicans in both chambers of Congress backed the stimulus bill. Democrats also voted with the middle class on these pieces of legislation.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** CONTINUED...

<b>SENATE</b>	Amendment to Strike Title II From FISA Amendments Act [S.AMDT. 5064 TO H.R. 6304]	Amendment to the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act [H.R. 2642]	Auto Industry Financing and Restructuring Act [H.R. 7005]	Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act [H.R. 4040]	Emergency Economic Stabilization Act [H.R. 1424]	Helping Families Save Their Homes in Bankruptcy Amendment [S.AMDT. 4388 TO H.R. 3221]	Higher Education Opportunity Act [H.R. 4137]	Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act [S.AMDT. 4825 TO S. 3036]	Recovery Rebates and Economic Stimulus for the American People Act [H.R. 5140]	Renewable Energy and Job Creation Act [H.R. 6049]
Senate voting with the middle class	33% <b>F</b>	77% <b>C</b>	60% <b>C</b>	97% <b>A</b>	25% <b>F</b>	38% <b>F</b>	91% <b>A</b>	57% <b>C</b>	84% <b>B</b>	54% <b>C</b>
Senate Democrats voting with the middle class	65% <b>C</b>	100% <b>A+</b>	91% <b>A</b>	100% <b>A+</b>	19% <b>F</b>	78% <b>C</b>	100% <b>A+</b>	91% <b>A</b>	100% <b>A+</b>	98% <b>A</b>
Senate Republicans voting with the middle class	0% <b>F</b>	53% <b>C</b>	24% <b>F</b>	93% <b>A</b>	31% <b>F</b>	0% <b>F</b>	82% <b>B</b>	18% <b>F</b>	67% <b>C</b>	10% <b>F</b>

Grade and score calculations exclude missed votes and so differ from the pie charts accompanying each bill description.

<b>HOUSE</b>	Amendment to the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act [H.R. 2642]	Auto Industry Financing and Restructuring Act [H.AMDT. 1194 TO H.R. 7321]	Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act [H.R. 3963]	Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act [H.R. 4040]	Credit Cardholders Bill of Rights Act [H.R. 5244]	Emergency Economic Stabilization Act [H.R. 1424]	Higher Education Opportunity Act [H.R. 4137]	Neighborhood Stabilization Act [H.R. 5818]	Recovery Rebates and Economic Stimulus for the American People Act [H.R. 5140]	Renewable Energy and Job Creation Act [H.R. 6049]
House voting with the middle class	60% <b>C</b>	58% <b>C</b>	63% <b>C</b>	100% <b>A+</b>	74% <b>C</b>	39% <b>F</b>	89% <b>B</b>	56% <b>C</b>	92% <b>A</b>	62% <b>C</b>
House Democrats voting with the middle class	97% <b>A</b>	98% <b>A</b>	100% <b>A+</b>	100% <b>A+</b>	100% <b>A+</b>	27% <b>F</b>	100% <b>A+</b>	100% <b>A+</b>	97% <b>A</b>	100% <b>A+</b>
House Republicans voting with the middle class	17% <b>F</b>	18% <b>F</b>	22% <b>F</b>	99% <b>A</b>	43% <b>D</b>	54% <b>C</b>	75% <b>C</b>	6% <b>F</b>	85% <b>B</b>	18% <b>F</b>

Grade and score calculations exclude missed votes and so differ from the pie charts accompanying each bill description.

**WHAT'S IN STORE IN 2009:**

With the economy continuing its downward spiral, the nation's current and aspiring middle class look to Congress for public investments that will create jobs and jumpstart the economy. But that's only the beginning: the more fundamental challenge is helping America's middle class rebuild itself through improved access to health care, stronger workplace rights, a better retirement system, immigration reform, and financial regulations that will prevent irresponsible lending in the future. In addition to these economic concerns, Congress must act to prevent global warming, which has a devastating potential to harm Americans' standard of living in the future. Will the new 111th Congress measure up to these monumental challenges? Visit the Drum Major Institute's dynamic website [www.TheMiddleClass.org](http://www.TheMiddleClass.org) for frequent updates as new votes take place.

**IN CONCLUSION:**

Legislation passed and signed into law in 2008 offered small but meaningful gains: Unemployed workers got the extension of benefits they urgently needed, the New GI Bill offered fresh opportunity to veterans, and the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act raised Pell Grants for low-income students aspiring to the middle class. Yet these incremental advances are insufficient: Congress' inability to address the home mortgage crisis effectively, extend a lifeline to the auto industry, or pass a much-needed second stimulus bill before the end of 2008 failed many current and aspiring middle-class Americans who will lose their jobs and their homes as a result. Congress can and must do better if the nation is to restore middle-class security and give more Americans the opportunity to earn a middle-class standard of living. But Congress will only generate better legislative outcomes when citizens have better information to hold their elected representatives accountable.