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Nation's Only Middle-Class Congressional Scorecard Released

Obama, Clinton Receive A's, While McCain Is Missing In Action For Middle Class

Congress Shows Improvement, But Progress Meeting Middle-Class Needs Remains Uneven

Washington, D.C. – March 12, 2008: With a U.S. Senator set to assume the presidency for the first time since 1960, and with an eye on the 470 other federal elections scheduled for November 4th, the Drum Major Institute for Public Policy (DMI) released “TheMiddleClass.org 2007 Congressional Scorecard” today. DMI’s congressional scorecard, which is the only one in the nation based solely upon the interests of the middle class, reveals a great and troubling divide in the Congress. On the positive side, the scorecard reflects an overall improvement in Congress’ support for the middle class, with 34 Senators and 199 Representatives receiving “A” grades. On the negative side, one-third of all Representatives and nearly 40% of all Senators earned “F” grades.

“The middle-class squeeze is a recurring theme among members of Congress, all of whom assert their interest in alleviating some of the burdens faced by the middle class and those struggling to earn their way into it. If that commitment was universally genuine, 99% of Congress would have received an ‘A’ this year. Clearly, that did not happen and it was the current and aspiring middle class who suffered for it,” commented DMI Executive Director Andrea Batista Schlesinger.

DMI’s scorecard grades members of Congress based on their votes on ten pieces of legislation in the House and ten in the Senate that would have the most significant impact on the squeezed middle class and the aspirations of low-income Americans who want to join the middle class. Of the ten House votes considered, the middle-class position prevailed nine times: the harmful Peru trade bill was the only exception. In the Senate, however, the ability of a minority of Senators to filibuster pro-middle-class legislation took its toll. The middle-class position prevailed just four out of ten times, although some of the Senate’s damage was undone through subsequent or amended legislation.

As for the three top presidential contenders, Senators Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton each received an “A+” grade. Stunningly, Senator McCain was the only member of the Senate to receive an “incomplete” because he missed a majority of the graded votes. Even Senator Tim Johnson, who suffered a life threatening brain hemorrhage in December 2006 and did not return to the Senate until September 2007, managed to vote on 50% more pieces of critical middle-class legislation than did Senator McCain. “When it came to doing something about the middle class, Senator McCain simply wasn’t there for them,” said Ms. Schlesinger.

While noting that Congress took important steps to strengthen and expand the American middle class in 2007, DMI deemed the progress “disappointingly uneven.” Although important advances on the minimum wage and college affordability were made and partial victories on taxes and the energy bill were secured, progress on such vital issues as children’s health coverage and workplace rights was stymied and an exceptionally harmful Peruvian trade bill sailed through Congress.

Asked what the most important function of the DMI middle-class scorecard is, Ms. Schlesinger responded, “Accountability. Members of Congress cannot tell the public they support the middle class but then cast votes against them. Thanks to TheMiddleClass.org, every American has access to their Senators’ and Representative’s voting records on the most important middle-class legislation. Those who kept their word deserve the accolades they are receiving today.”

THEMIDDLECLASS.ORG 2007 CONGRESSIONAL SCORECARD CAN BE REVIEWED IN FULL AT
WWW.THEMIDDLECLASS.ORG

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