

**Policy Paper No. 164****BillTally Report 110-1****November 2, 2007**

## **Shaking the Money Tree: The 110<sup>th</sup> Congress Through the Fall Recess**

By the time Congress returns from its August recess, signs of autumn normally begin to appear in Washington, such as leaves turning in color. One species of tree in our nation's capital, however, seems to never change: the evergreen "money tree" from which taxpayer dollars are showered on federal programs. So it is with the current Congress. Despite the accusations of gridlock that has, in part, driven Congressional approval ratings to historic lows, the parties and individual Members of Congress have been busy at one thing – introducing legislation to stake out their policy preferences. In comparison to previous years, the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress kicked off with more calls for budget savings, but Members also proposed a record number of spending bills. The difference in the fiscal attitudes between the two parties grew large through 2007: The average Democrat, perhaps empowered by majority status, called for more spending than ever, and Republicans, evidently chastened by minority status, proposed less new spending than they have in years. In both cases, however, the branches of the money tree still are rustling.

This report summarizes data from the National Taxpayers Union Foundation's (NTUF) BillTally accounting software, which studies the cost or savings of all legislation introduced in the first seven months of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress that affects spending by at least \$1 million. Agenda totals for individual lawmakers were developed by cross-indexing their sponsorship and co-sponsorship records with cost estimates for 834 House bills and 576 Senate bills under BillTally accounting rules that prevent the double counting of overlapping proposals. All sponsorship and cost data in this report were reviewed confidentially by each Congressional office prior to publication. Appendix A lists all Members alphabetically, Appendix B lists Members by state delegation, and Appendix C gives a thorough explanation of the BillTally methodology.<sup>1</sup>

### **I. Key Findings**

- For the first time in several years, Members introduced more savings bills than they did in the previous Congress. Compared to the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, the number of bills to reduce spending climbed from 29 to 40 in the House and from 11 to 17 in the Senate.
- The ratio of increase bills to decrease bills declined from previous highs, although the decreases were still heavily outnumbered nearly 20 to 1 in the House, and 33 to 1 in the Senate. The ratios remain relatively high because of the record number of spending-hike bills: 794 in the House and 559 in the Senate.
- If the House passed all of the bills introduced during the first seven months of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, spending would increase by \$1.5 trillion (excluding overlaps), or \$42,840.50 per

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household.<sup>2</sup> In the Senate, the sum of all the bills would add up to \$958 billion, or \$26,239.54 per household.

- On average, House Democrats called for \$731 million in budget savings. This amount would offset 0.2 percent of the spending bills they supported, resulting in a net agenda of \$470.5 billion – the highest level among any of the past nine Congresses.
- The typical House Republican sponsored savings of \$6.5 billion, offsetting 70.6 percent of their increases for a net spending agenda of \$2.7 billion. This is the lowest since the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress, when the average Republican’s agenda would have *decreased* spending by \$8 billion.
- The average Democratic Senator opted to cut spending by \$453 million, offsetting 0.9 percent of \$48.8 billion in spending hikes for a net budget increase of \$48.4 billion. Republican Senators on average sponsored legislation to cut spending by \$6.5 billion, which would offset 90 percent of their proposed spending (\$7.2 billion), for a net agenda of \$696 million.
- Through the first seven months of 2007 the number of net cutters – Members whose agendas actually would decrease federal outlays – rose to 65 in the House and nine in the Senate. As recently as the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress, only one Senator and no Representatives were net budget cutters.
- Members of the Republican Study Committee and the Democratic Blue Dog Coalition, two of the self-identified fiscal conservative caucuses in the House, compiled lower net spending agendas than other Members of their respective parties. The Members of a related third caucus, the Republican Main Street Partnership, compiled an average net agenda that was over four times greater than that of the average Republican. Meanwhile, they typical member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus would increase spending by over \$1 trillion.

## II. Analysis of Findings

### A. A Busy Start

The 1,410 bills introduced and scored in the opening months of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress were the most ever in the 17 years BillTally has tracked the cost of legislation. The 109<sup>th</sup> Congress had the fewest savings bills for a total of 40 between the House and Senate (see Table 1, below). Representatives this year sponsored 40 savings bills – up 38 percent from the last Congress – and Senators proposed 17 savings bills, a 55 percent boost.

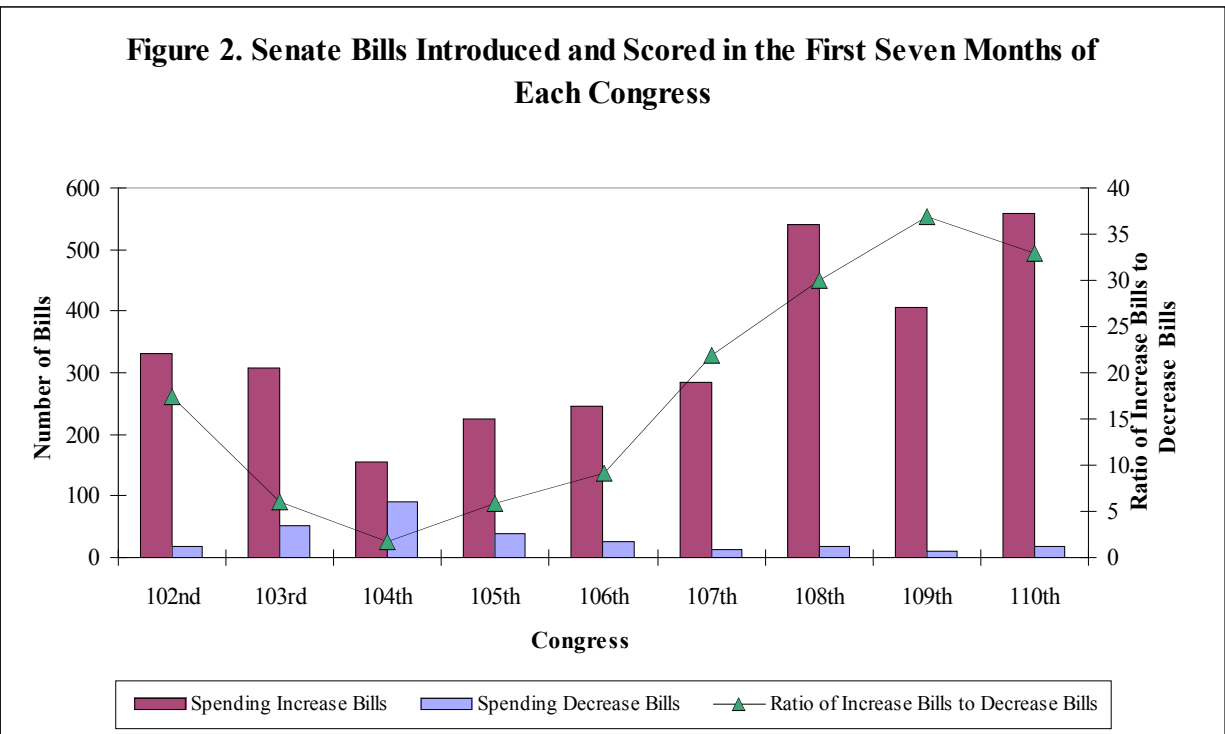
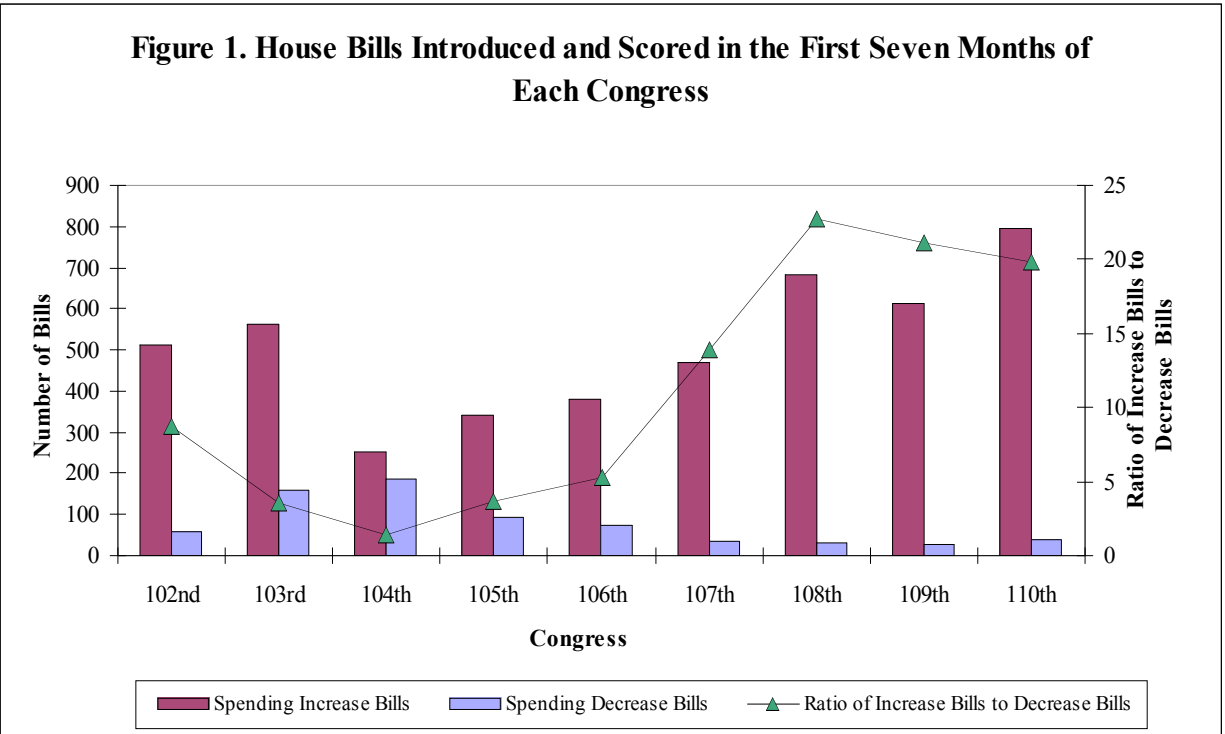
This interest in savings initiatives led to a decline in the ratio of spending increase to decrease bills, a retreat from peak levels reached by both Chambers in years past. For each bill in the House to reduce spending, there were over 19 that would increase it.

<b>Table 1. Bill Introduction Rates in the First Seven Months of Past Nine Congresses</b>			
<b>Congress</b>	<b>Spending Increase Bills</b>	<b>Spending Decrease Bills</b>	<b>Ratio of Increase Bills to Decrease Bills</b>
<b>House</b>			
102 <sup>nd</sup>	513	59	8.69
103 <sup>rd</sup>	562	160	3.51
104 <sup>th</sup>	251	185	1.36
105 <sup>th</sup>	340	93	3.66
106 <sup>th</sup>	381	72	5.29
107 <sup>th</sup>	471	34	13.85
108 <sup>th</sup>	682	30	22.73
109 <sup>th</sup>	613	29	21.14
110 <sup>th</sup>	794	40	19.85
<b>Senate</b>			
102 <sup>nd</sup>	332	19	17.47
103 <sup>rd</sup>	309	51	6.06
104 <sup>th</sup>	154	90	1.71
105 <sup>th</sup>	224	38	5.89
106 <sup>th</sup>	246	27	9.11
107 <sup>th</sup>	284	13	21.85
108 <sup>th</sup>	541	18	30.06
109 <sup>th</sup>	406	11	36.91
110 <sup>th</sup>	559	17	32.88

This continues the slow decline in the ratio since the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, when there were nearly 23 increase bills for each bill to cut spending. Senate savings bills were outmatched by spending bills nearly 33 to 1, a drop from nearly 37 to 1 in the last Congress.

The ratio decline has been slow because Representatives and Senators continue to overwhelm the savings bills with legislation to increase spending. It is difficult to remember, let alone replicate, the conditions that established a ratio of fewer than two increases for every cut during the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. The opening of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress in 1995, also the first year of the Republican majority, saw nearly five times as many savings bills and three times fewer spending bills than this first year of the new Democrat majority.

Excluding overlapping legislation, if each spending bill in the House became law, outlays would increase by \$1.582 trillion, 2.8 percent of which would be offset by \$44.9 billion of cuts in savings bills, for a net budget increase of \$1.537 trillion. If each bill in the Senate were passed into law, spending would increase by \$958 billion, totaled from the bills calling for over \$1 trillion of increases less nearly \$61 billion in savings.



*B. In the House*

The table below displays the amount of increases and savings sponsored by the average House Democrat and Republican since the 102<sup>nd</sup> Congress. The data for the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress show that the average Member of either party has called for more savings than they have in several years: The average Democrat proposed to reduce spending by \$731 million, nearly matching the level proposed in the first year of the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress, and the average Republican proposed to reduce spending by \$6.5 billion, the most since the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress.

<b>Table 2. House Sponsorship of Legislation in the First Seven Months of Past Congresses, by Party (in Millions)</b>			
<b>Congress</b>	<b>Proposed Spending Increases</b>	<b>Proposed Spending Cuts</b>	<b>Net Agendas</b>
<b>Democrats</b>			
102 <sup>nd</sup>	\$96,641	(\$620)	\$96,021
103 <sup>rd</sup>	\$209,552	(\$4,687)	\$204,865
104 <sup>th</sup>	\$171,976	(\$1,784)	\$170,192
105 <sup>th</sup>	\$104,797	(\$2,528)	\$102,269
106 <sup>th</sup>	\$15,987	(\$951)	\$15,036
107 <sup>th</sup>	\$244,936	(\$736)	\$244,200
108 <sup>th</sup>	\$337,800	(\$153)	\$337,647
109 <sup>th</sup>	\$444,826	(\$152)	\$444,674
110 <sup>th</sup>	\$471,278	(\$731)	\$470,548
<b>Republicans</b>			
102 <sup>nd</sup>	\$12,070	(\$2,116)	\$9,954
103 <sup>rd</sup>	\$10,607	(\$25,251)	(\$14,644)
104 <sup>th</sup>	\$4,964	(\$23,197)	(\$18,233)
105 <sup>th</sup>	\$8,102	(\$8,405)	(\$303)
106 <sup>th</sup>	\$7,002	(\$14,966)	(\$7,963)
107 <sup>th</sup>	\$25,947	(\$264)	\$25,683
108 <sup>th</sup>	\$26,658	(\$2,298)	\$24,359
109 <sup>th</sup>	\$13,536	(\$2,495)	\$11,041
110 <sup>th</sup>	\$9,229	(\$6,511)	\$2,718
Notes: Totals may not add due to rounding.			

Despite heightened interest shared by Democrats and Republicans to find more ways to cut spending, party differences in devising ways to increase spending were evident in 2007. During the opening of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, the average Democrat sponsored 55 spending bills that would increase the federal budget by \$471.3 billion – the highest level of new spending proposed at the

start of a new Session over the past nine Congresses. The \$731 billion in budget outlay reductions that the typical Democrat sponsored would offset 0.2 percent of the outlay hikes for a net spending agenda of \$470.5 billion.

Meanwhile, the typical House Republican sponsored 20 increase bills that would cost \$9.2 billion. The savings bills would offset 70.6 percent of the increases for a net spending agenda of \$2.7 billion – the lowest amount since the beginning of the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress in 1999. In the period from the 103<sup>rd</sup> to the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress, the typical Republican sponsored a mix of legislation that would have led to net spending reductions if they all had been passed. Incidentally, Fiscal Year 1995 (104<sup>th</sup> Congress) marked the first time since Ronald Reagan’s presidency that non-defense discretionary spending declined from the previous year (in constant dollars).<sup>3</sup>

<b>Table 3. Total Number of House Members with Net Agendas to Reduce Spending and Number of Members with Spending Agendas Greater than \$100 Billion</b>		
<b>Congress</b>	<b>Members with Net Agendas to Reduce Spending</b>	<b>Members with Net Spending Agendas Greater than \$100 Billion</b>
107 <sup>th</sup>	0	66
108 <sup>th</sup>	10	117
109 <sup>th</sup>	34	71
110 <sup>th</sup>	65	84

The number of Representatives mid-way through a First Session of a Congress with net agendas that would reduce outlays has increased steadily since the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress, when there were none. All 65 Members who called for budget cuts were Republicans, and all 84 Members who called for net spending increases of \$100 billion or more were Democrats.

The net agenda costs of Democrats ranged from \$922 million (John Tanner (TN)) to \$1.415 trillion (Steve Cohen (TN)), with a median of \$46.9 billion. The Republicans’ net agenda ranged from a low of \$39.2 billion in budget reductions (Jeb Hensarling (TX)) up to increases of \$38.4 billion (James Walsh (NY)), with a median agenda cost of \$3.9 billion.

One Democrat and 27 Republicans did not sponsor any of the 40 possible bills that would reduce spending, and 13 Members, all Democrats, sponsored more than 100 increase bills.

### *C. In the Senate*

The trends in the Senate were similar to those in the House. The average Senator proposed more budget reductions than in previous Congresses. The typical Democrat proposed \$453 million

in savings, the most since \$659 million in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress. But dollar to dollar, Democrat proposals for new increases outpaced savings \$108 to \$1. The amount of savings would offset just less than 1 percent of the \$48.9 billion in proposed spending increases, for a net spending agenda of \$48.4 billion.

<b>Table 4. Senate Sponsorship of Legislation in the First Seven Months of Past Congresses, by Party (in Millions)</b>			
<b>Congress</b>	<b>Proposed Spending Increases</b>	<b>Proposed Spending Cuts</b>	<b>Net Agendas</b>
<b>Democrats</b>			
102 <sup>nd</sup>	\$28,743	(\$258)	\$28,485
103 <sup>rd</sup>	\$55,616	(\$2,409)	\$53,207
104 <sup>th</sup>	\$2,774	(\$2,973)	(\$199)
105 <sup>th</sup>	\$16,243	(\$1,343)	\$14,900
106 <sup>th</sup>	\$7,617	(\$659)	\$6,958
107 <sup>th</sup>	\$79,637	(\$158)	\$79,479
108 <sup>th</sup>	\$103,659	(\$238)	\$103,421
109 <sup>th</sup>	\$34,393	(\$67)	\$34,326
110 <sup>th</sup>	\$48,828	(\$453)	\$48,374
<b>Republicans</b>			
102 <sup>nd</sup>	\$6,065	(\$5,709)	\$356
103 <sup>rd</sup>	\$17,189	(\$9,892)	\$7,296
104 <sup>th</sup>	\$4,939	(\$18,060)	(\$13,121)
105 <sup>th</sup>	\$9,954	(\$5,108)	\$4,846
106 <sup>th</sup>	\$8,444	(\$13,194)	(\$4,750)
107 <sup>th</sup>	\$14,347	(\$22)	\$14,325
108 <sup>th</sup>	\$25,970	(\$2,475)	\$23,495
109 <sup>th</sup>	\$7,177	(\$2,066)	\$5,111
110 <sup>th</sup>	\$7,165	(\$6,469)	\$696
Notes: Totals may not add due to rounding. Non-affiliated Senators are excluded.			

The average Republican supported nearly \$6.5 billion in savings – also the most since the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress. This, coupled with a slight decline in the total amount of sponsored spending increases since the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, drove the net spending agenda of the typical Republican down to \$696 million.

<b>Table 5. Total Number of Senators with Net Agendas to Reduce Spending and Number of Members with Spending Agendas Greater than \$100 Billion</b>		
<b>Congress</b>	<b>Members with Net Agendas to Reduce Spending</b>	<b>Members with Net Spending Agendas Greater than \$100 Billion</b>
107 <sup>th</sup>	1	4
108 <sup>th</sup>	5	22
109 <sup>th</sup>	5	4
110 <sup>th</sup>	9	3

Compared to the House, the number of Senators whose legislation would decrease outlays has risen more slowly, up from one in the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress to nine in the opening of the 110<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, far fewer Senators would increase spending by \$100 billion or more. Of those three, two were Democrats and one was an Independent. The nine net cutters were all Republican.

The cost of the Democrats' agendas ranged from \$1.8 billion (Senator Russ Feingold (WI)) to \$665.4 billion (Senator Edward Kennedy (MA)), with a median cost of \$28.4 billion. Across the aisle, the cost of the Republican caucus's agenda ranged from a net reduction of \$49.7 billion (Senator John Sununu (NH)) to \$34 billion (Senator Olympia Snowe (ME)), and the median cost was \$2.3 billion. Thirty Senators, including eight Democrats and 22 Republicans, did not sponsor any bills that would reduce outlays.

#### *D. Member Caucuses*

Once elected to Congress, a Representative has the option to join any of several Member caucuses that organize around a particular issue area and/or political philosophy. In these caucuses, Members can share ideas and coordinate strategies to promote or oppose particular legislation. Two such caucuses, the Republican Study Committee (RSC) and the Democratic Blue Dog Coalition (BDC), both espouse fiscal discipline for their respective parties. The RSC states that it is dedicated to "a limited and Constitutional role for the federal government."<sup>4</sup> On its website, the BDC states that one of its top priorities in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress "... will be to refocus Congress on balancing the budget and ridding taxpayers of the burden the debt places on them."<sup>5</sup> A related third caucus, the Republican Main Street Partnership (RMSP)<sup>6</sup> highlights a quote from George Washington on its website proclaiming that "... the most important institutional value is fiscal discipline."<sup>7</sup>

A group that makes no claim to "fiscal discipline" but instead favors "economic justice" is the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC). The CPC calls for "... a fairer, more humane, and more responsible federal budget plan for FY08 and ensuing years that truly addresses the needs and hopes of all the American people."<sup>8</sup>

Table 6 below shows the number of bills and net spending agenda sponsored by the average Member of these four caucuses. Republicans in the RSC, on average, would reduce federal spending

while those in the RMSP called for increases of \$10.9 billion – nearly four times as much spending as the average Republican (\$2.7 billion).

**Table 6. Average Spending Agendas by Caucuses and Member Organizations in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress (in Millions)**

Caucus	Number of Increase Bills	Proposed Increases	Number of Saving Bills	Proposed Cuts	Net Agenda
Republican Study Committee	16	\$6,812	3	(\$10,331)	(\$3,519)
Republican Main Street Partnership	28	\$12,605	2	(\$1,696)	\$10,909
Average Republican	20	\$9,229	2	(\$6,511)	\$2,718
Blue Dog Democrats	40	\$27,331	4	(\$836)	\$26,496
All Other Democrats	59	\$585,232	6	(\$704)	\$584,529
Average Democrat	55	\$471,278	5	(\$731)	\$470,548
Congressional Progressive Caucus	72	\$1,105,105	7	(\$767)	\$1,104,337
All Other Democrats	48	\$196,878	5	(\$715)	\$196,163

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding. Brian Bilbray, Dave Camp, and Michael Turner were the only Republicans listed openly in both the RSC and the RMSP. RMSP data only includes its Members in the House. Members of the BDC and CPC are all Democrats.

The typical Democrat *not* in the Blue Dog Coalition backed spending hikes of \$584.5 billion – 22 times as much as the \$26.5 billion agenda of those in the Coalition. Meanwhile, the Representatives in the Progressive Caucus advocated the highest spending increases among the Democrats. If the bills supported by the CPC became law, spending would increase by over \$1.1 trillion.

### III. Conclusion

Democrats took over Congress vowing to steer the country in a “new direction” and to impose “fiscal discipline.” The Republicans lost power after years of what many described as a drift away from the small government principles that helped forge their Congressional majority in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. The new Democratic majority is trying to prove it can lead and promote its agenda, while Republicans are trying to redefine their party after being relegated to the minority. In the new Congress, these dynamics have led both parties to increasingly embrace proposals to reduce spending, but these savings won’t fully offset the cost of most Members’ legislative agendas. It is often said that money does not grow on trees, but based on Congress’s overall fiscal work product, many taxpayers would be led to believe that this adage never reached Capitol Hill.

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## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> This report excludes the following Members: Representatives Paul Broun, Jo Ann Davis, Paul Gillmor, Charlie Norwood, Juanita Millender-McDonald, Nancy Pelosi, and Laura Richardson, and Senators John Barrasso and Craig Thomas.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2007 (126<sup>th</sup> edition)*, Washington, DC. No. 62, "Family Groups with Children Under 18 Years Old by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1990 to 2005."

<sup>3</sup> "Table 8.2-Outlays by Budget Enforcement Act Category in Constant (FY 2000) Dollars: 1962-2012," *Historical Tables, Budget of the U.S. Government: Fiscal Year 2008* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2007) pg 134.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.house.gov/hensarling/rsc/rsc\\_bio.shtml](http://www.house.gov/hensarling/rsc/rsc_bio.shtml).

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.house.gov/ross/BlueDogs/10%20Years%20of%20Leadership.html>.

<sup>6</sup> The Republican Main Street Partnership includes Members from both Chambers, as well as at the state level. These figures only reflect on RMSP Members serving in the House.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.republicanmainstreet.org/mission\\_temp.htm](http://www.republicanmainstreet.org/mission_temp.htm).

<sup>8</sup>

<http://cpc.lee.house.gov/index.cfm?ContentID=206&ParentID=0&SectionID=93&SectionTree=93&lnk=b&ItemID=204>.