

# CONGRESSMAN GEORGE RADANOVICH

REPRESENTING CALIFORNIA'S 19TH DISTRICT

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**President Bush and Congressman Radanovich meet with Valley firefighters to discuss forest fire prevention.**

**Congressman  
George Radanovich  
on the Web**

<http://www.radanovich.house.gov/>

## More Funding for Valley Hospital Care

The Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act of 2003, H.R. 1, passed the House of Representatives on Friday, June 27. Beyond the new prescription drug program for seniors, the bill increases funding for hospitals in the San Joaquin Valley. Valley hospitals were given the critical funding they need to survive and care for our citizens.

### Safety Net Hospitals

The Valley faces unique healthcare challenges. We have a high number of "safety net" hospitals that care for patients without insurance. Because they treat so many patients without insurance to pay for care, they risk closing down and limiting access to healthcare for Valley residents.

H.R. 1 included a 20 percent increase in federal payments for these safety net hospitals. Funding for these hospitals has been in sharp decline and other proposals delay the introduction of the increase. However, the House-passed bill begins payments to these hospitals in 2004.

### Increased Funding for Rural Hospitals

Increased funding for rural hospitals is also included in H.R. 1.

Our rural hospitals in the Valley are now on more equal footing with larger urban hospitals and will receive larger payments from Medicare. Under the current system, urban hospitals receive much larger reimbursements for caring for Medicare patients. This has threatened the survival of the rural hospitals that are an essential part of our healthcare system in the Valley.



## With Homeland Security, Changes Come to INS

With the creation of the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS), several federal agencies were integrated into the new department. Among those was the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), which became a part of DHS in March 2003. INS was dissolved and became two new, separate agencies within DHS. The Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) is responsible for pro-

viding INS benefits, while the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (BICE) is responsible for the enforcement functions of INS, the U.S. Customs Service and the Federal Protective Services.

The transition continues as is expected to be as seamless and as smooth as possible.

Local immigration offices continue to be open and operating, accepting forms and

conducting interviews. The official forms and documents issued by INS are still valid and will continue to be accepted by BCIS and other agencies.

The BCIS Web site is an invaluable tool. It contains information on filing applications, a "How Do I...?" section and all of the application forms someone might need. The Web site also has an added feature that allows individuals to

check the status of an application online that they filed at one of the five Service Centers.

As of May 29 constituents are now able to e-file the two most popular forms, the Form I-765 request for Employment Authorization and the I-90 to renew or replace a Permanent Resident Card. For the first time in history, immigrants are offered the opportunity to file for certain benefits online 24 hours a day.

### On the Web

**Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services: <http://www.bcis.gov/>**

### Next Steps: Dealing With the Phase-Out of Methyl Bromide

Congressman Radanovich participated in an oversight hearing on June 3 in the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality regarding

the phase-out of methyl bromide. The phase-out is required under the Montreal Protocol treaty, which the U.S. ratified in 1988.

Numerous crops within the San Joaquin Valley are dependent on methyl bromide to fumigate soil before planting and for post-harvest commodity treat-



**Farmland in the Central Valley**

ments. The United States Department of

(see "Methyl Bromide," p. 3)

## Methyl Bromide, cont.

Agriculture (USDA) has spent over \$146 million researching substitutes for methyl bromide, however, there are still no viable alternatives on the horizon.

Farmers have been told that they could rely upon the Critical Use Exemption process after methyl bromide is abolished. This process will allow approved commodities to use methyl bromide even after the phase-out. Unfortunately, this process is proving to be unreliable since less than 10 percent of the U.S. Critical Use Exemption requests were recently recommended for approval by the parties to the Montreal Protocol. At this rate, only a handful of commodities will receive exemptions.

During the hearing, Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Joe Barton (R-TX) expressed an interest in finding a



legislative solution to the problem. Congressman Radanovich was among other members of Congress, whose constituents depend on methyl bromide for their livelihood, to submit draft legislation to the committee on June 16 to resolve the issue.

Methyl bromide is a gas used to fumigate certain agricultural commodities.

Methyl bromide typically is injected into soil prior to planting to eliminate living organisms in soil, and to treat crops during post-harvest storage.



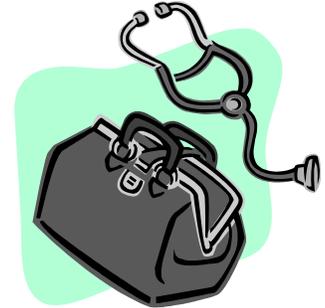
## Expanded Insurance Access for Small Businesses

Congressman Radanovich was an original cosponsor of the Small Business Health Fairness Act, H.R. 660, which passed the House on June 19. The bill will improve access and reduce costs of quality health care for employees of small businesses.

**The Small Business Health Fairness Act will:**

**Provide quality health care to millions.** 41 million Americans are without health insurance; nearly 60 percent are either employed by small businesses or dependent on someone who is employed by a small business.

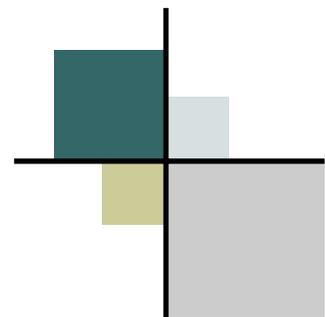
**Lower the cost of health insurance for employers.** Small businesses will be able to create association health plans and purchase health insurance collectively for their workers at a lower cost. Savings to employers and employees could



range from nine to as much as 25 percent in reduced premiums.

**Expand and improve health coverage.** Requires association health plans to cover specific diseases, maternal and newborn hospitalization, and mental health illnesses.

**Reduce the number of uninsured Americans.** Recent studies show that up to 8.5 million uninsured workers and dependents could gain coverage immediately under the congressional plan.



## A Fatal Blow to the Death Tax

Recently, the House of Representatives approved H.R. 8, the Death Tax Repeal Permanency Act of 2003. The bill now awaits approval by the Senate.

Killing the death tax once and for all will be a big boost to the small businesses that are the backbone of our economy. Employers can't plan effectively for the continuation of their business if they can't rely on this tax relief to be there in the future.

The bill removes the "sunset" provision from the death tax repeal that was included in the tax relief package signed into law by President Bush in June



2001. Under the current law, the repeal would "sunset" in 2010 and come back to life in 2011, with a maximum rate of 55 percent.

The death tax impairs the economy by restricting the growth of small businesses that help provide more jobs. In the San Joaquin Valley, we all know how much small businesses and farms contribute to our communities, and we must protect them for the future.

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## Combat Merchant Marines Bill Introduced

Congressman Radanovich introduced the Combat Merchant Marines Just Compensation Act, H.R. 2593, on June 24 to provide benefits to former, current and future U.S. merchant marines who serve during wartime.

Merchant marines

have played a vital role in our combat victories, and this bill ensures that these brave individuals are given the just compensation they are due.

Merchant marines were armed for combat during World War II and



their contributions to the war effort were crucial to the victory of the allied forces. During World War II, U.S. mer-

chant marines suffered one of the highest casualty rates compared to other military branches. H.R. 2593 will provide veterans' benefits to merchant marines who serve during wartime.