

Capitol Hill Reversal

Burton Outlines Business Prospects

By Rebecca Patrick

About now, Republicans in Congress might feel a bit like Dorothy did after the storm in “The Wizard of Oz.” Definitely “not in Kansas anymore” and not entirely controlling their own fate.

Just prior to the House and Senate officially shifting to Democratic leadership, *BizVoice*® interviewed Indiana’s senior representative, Dan Burton of the fifth district. Having first taken office in 1983, he knows what the view is like on both the majority and minority sides of the fence. Burton, who most recently has served on the government reform, international relations and veterans’ affairs committees, offered his predictions of what will and won’t be up for debate in the 110th Congress – and what that means for the business community.

***BizVoice*®:** What should Hoosier businesses be on the look out for from this Congress?

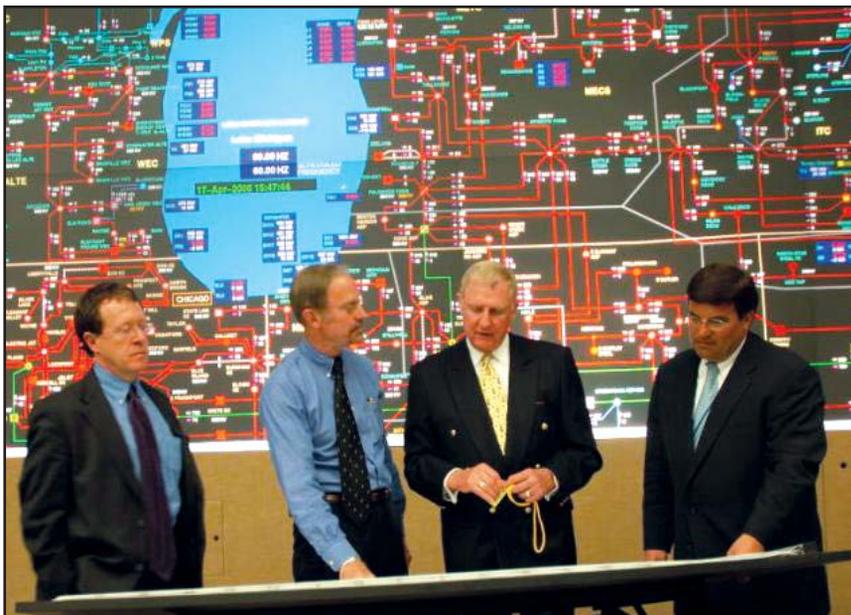
Rep. Burton: “One thing to definitely keep an eye on is what Charlie Rangel (D-New York) will do as the head of the Ways and Means Committee. He may try to do away with some of the tax cuts made in 2001 and 2002. He has said that he wants to increase the top tax rate on businesspeople and individuals who make more money. That would have an adverse economic impact if that were to happen. I do not believe that will occur in the next two years because President Bush would veto it; he won’t let that happen.

“Also, as far as moving further toward tort reform and deregulating our governmental agencies, the Democrats won’t allow that to happen. There won’t be much accomplished in that area. In general, it will be the status quo. Democrats are thinking about keeping their current majority and electing a Democratic president in 2008. Their rhetoric is designed to accomplish that, and Republicans will be trying to stop it.”

BV: Tort reform came close to passage last year. Do you expect a measure on it to be heard in 2007?

Burton: “Probably not. The chairman of the Judiciary Committee (John Conyers, Jr., D-Michigan) is close to the tort reform lobbyist with the trial lawyers, so I don’t see him doing that.”

Congressman Dan Burton (third from left) reviews the energy routing operations at the Midwest Independent Transmission System Operator in Carmel.



BV: What are your top three agenda items for this Congress?

Burton: “Make sure we do what’s necessary to stop the terrorists and win the war against terrorism. That’s not going to go away unless we convince them that they cannot win. So, we’ve got to be resolute. That’s one of my main goals as a senior member on that committee (international relations).

“Another top priority is to make sure that we don’t let the more liberal Democrats pass legislation that will hurt economic growth and small business in this country. That will be a never-ending struggle for the next two years.

“The Democrats are very interested in education and so is President Bush. One thing I would like to see and what I think would really help with kids going to college



is to give tax incentives for grandparents to put into their grandkids' college fund. Right now, we give parents that incentive to put into their child's college fund, but a lot of the parents don't have money. However, a lot of the grandparents do. I think if we gave grandparents an incentive, they would do it. For instance, if we gave them a tax credit of up to \$10,000, I think that would help a lot of kids who want to go to college."

BV: A permanent repeal of the death tax doesn't seem in the cards short term, but are you hopeful of a new bipartisan approach to this issue?

Burton: "I don't expect it will be revisited this year. While that means we will still have the tax, I also think the tax cuts put in place – which were significant strides – will be left alone. It will stay as it is for now."

BV: What energy-related bills might be brought forth that you would consider progress – particularly for Indiana?

Burton: "One thing that both sides have an interest in is the alternative fuels, the biofuels from corn, soybeans, etc. There's a chance for a positive measure there. As for oil exploration in the Outer Continental Shelf or something to do with ANWR (Arctic National Wildlife Refuge), the Democrats are too close to the environmental lobbyists for those to move."

BV: What are your constituents saying about immigration?

Burton: "Simply put, they say what most all of the polls say – that tighter border control is needed."

BV: What path do you see immigration reform taking under Democratic leadership?

Burton: "The Democrats are much more for open borders. In truth, many – including some on the Appropriations Committee –

Burton gives the keynote address at the opening ceremony for the Veterans Healing Field at the Oaklawn Memorial Garden and Funeral Center in Fishers. Burton is joined by his brother, Indiana State Rep. Woody Burton (R-Greenwood) and Johnson County Council candidate Anita Knowles at a Lincoln Day dinner.

110th Congress at a Glance

Senate

- 10 new members
- 49 Democrats; 49 Republicans; two Independents (voting as Democrats)

House

- 53 new members (three from Indiana)
- 232 Democrats; 202 Republicans

Indiana Delegation Changes

Joe Donnelly (D-Granger), District 2 — new to Congress; career as a lawyer, small-business owner; age 51

Brad Ellsworth (D-Evansville), District 8 — new to Congress; career as a police officer (elected sheriff of Vanderburgh County in 1998); age 48

Baron Hill (D-Seymour), District 9 — Three-term congressman from 1998-2004; career as insurance agent, financial analyst; age 53

don't want to close the border at all. Of course, the Democrats won't come right out and say it, but that's the case. The 750-mile fence (along the Mexican border approved under Republican congressional leadership) has not received all of its funding, and now there might be a reluctance to do so.

"In terms of business impact regarding immigration, I don't see anything being passed that will be burdensome. In that sense, it should stay the same."

INFORMATION LINK

Resource: Rep. Dan Burton at www.house.gov/burton

