



**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
OFFICE OF THE MAJORITY WHIP  
THE HONORABLE JAMES E. CLYBURN (SC-06)**

# **THE WHIP PACK**

**WEEK OF OCTOBER 1, 2007**

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## **Bill Text and Background for the Week of October 1, 2007**

- H.R. 3246 – Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007
- H.R. 2740 – MEJA Expansion and Enforcement Act of 2007
- H.R. 928 – Improving Government Accountability Act
- H.R. 3648 – To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude discharges of indebtedness on principal residences from gross income

## **H.R. 3246 – REGIONAL ECONOMIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2007**

*(Rep. Oberstar – Transportation and Infrastructure) (Subject to a Rule)*

**Bill Text:** [HTML Version](#), [PDF Version](#)  
[Bill Summary and Status](#)

**Rules Committee Meeting:** TBA

**Committee:** [Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure](#)

**Committee Staff Contact:** 5-4472

### **LEGISLATION AT A GLANCE:**

**Authorizes Five Regional Economic Development Commissions.** H.R. 3246 provides a comprehensive regional approach to economic and infrastructure development in the most severely economically distressed regions in the nation. H.R. 3246 authorizes five regional economic development commissions under a common framework of administration and management, and provides a structure for economic development decision-making and planning. These commissions are designed to address problems of systemic poverty and underdevelopment in their respective regions. The Delta Regional Commission and the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission are existing entities that are reauthorized in this legislation, while the others have been proposed in legislation introduced in this and previous Congresses.

**Geographic Coverage by Each Commission.** The Delta region would consist of certain counties in Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee. The Northern Great Plains Regional Commission would consist of all counties in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota and, as amended, 26 counties in Missouri. The Southeast Crescent Regional Commission would consist of all counties in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida not already served by another commission. The Southwest Border Regional Commission would consist of certain counties Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas. The Northern Border Regional Commission would consist of certain counties in Maine, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont.

**Management and Administration.** This bill models the administrative and management procedures for these five commissions after the highly successful Appalachian Regional Commission. The bill establishes commission membership, voting structure, and staffing; outlines conditions for financial assistance; authorizes grants to local development districts; establishes an Inspector General for the commissions; and other provisions designed to produce a standard administrative framework. By providing a uniform set of procedures, this bill provides a consistent method for distributing economic development funds throughout the regions most in need of such assistance and ensures a comprehensive regional approach to economic and infrastructure development in the most severely distressed regions in the country.

**Funding for Commissions.** H.R. 3246 authorizes the appropriation of \$1.25 billion over the 2008-2012 period to establish five regional economic development commissions under a common framework of administration and management, and provides a structure for economic development decision-making and planning. H.R. 3246 directs the five regional commissions to award grants to state and local governments, Indian tribes, and nonprofit organizations to promote economic and infrastructure development. At least 40 percent of the authorized funds would be used for grants to develop transportation, telecommunications, and other basic public infrastructure. Remaining funds would be used for other economic development activities, such as providing job training, improving public services, and promoting conservation, tourism, and development of renewable and alternative energy projects.

**House Report 110-321:**  
[HTML Version](#), [PDF Version](#)

**Full Committee Mark-up:**  
[Full Committee Markup](#), August 2, 2007  
[Summary of Subject Matter](#)

**Summary of Committee Votes:**

- [Rep. Norton Delta Additions Amendment](#) — Added Williamson County, Ill., and deleted Woodruff County, Ill., from the Delta Regional Commission. **Adopted by Voice Vote.**
- [Rep. Boustany Louisiana Additions Amendment](#) — Would have added 12 additional Louisiana parishes to the Delta Regional Commission. **Withdrawn.**
- [Rep. Graves Northern Great Plains Additions Amendment](#) — Added 26 counties in Missouri to the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission. **Adopted by Voice Vote.**
- **Vote to Report:** Favorably Reported to the Full House, as Amended, by **Voice Vote.**

**Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management Mark-up:**  
[Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management - Markup](#), August 1, 2007  
[Summary of Subject Matter](#)

**Summary of Committee Vote:**

- **Vote to Report:** Favorably Reported to the Full Committee, by **Voice Vote.**

**CRS Reports:**  
(TBA)

**GAO Reports:**  
(TBA)

**CBO Report:**  
[Cost Estimate](#): Ordered Reported by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

**Organization Statements:**  
(TBA)

**Administration Position:**  
(TBA)

**Fact Sheets & Talking Points:**  
(TBA)

**Press Releases, News Articles & Related Information:**  
[Today's Floor Statement by Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton on the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007](#), Press Release, September 17, 2007  
[Chairman Oberstar Astounded by Failed House Vote On Economic Development Agencies](#), Press Release, September 17, 2007

**Other Resources:**

[Cosponsors of H.R. 3246](#)

**Legislative History:**

Failed to pass on Suspension by a vote of 225-152 on September 17, 2007.

**H.R. 2740 - MEJA EXPANSION AND ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2007** (Rep. Price (NC) – Judiciary) (Subject to a Rule)

**Bill Text:** [HTML Version](#), [PDF Version](#)  
[Bill Summary and Status](#)

**Rules Committee Meeting:** Tuesday, October 2, 2007 at 3:00 p.m. in H-313, the Capitol, [Special Announcement](#), [Amendment Process Announcement](#)

**Committee:** [Committee on Judiciary](#)

**Committee Staff Contact:** 5-3951

**LEGISLATION AT A GLANCE:**

H.R. 2740, the MEJA Expansion and Enforcement Act, addresses two major concerns regarding the operation of contractors in war zones:

(1) The bill amends the *Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act* (MEJA) to ensure that all contractors are accountable under U.S. criminal law; and

(2) The bill mandates that the Department of Justice, through the FBI, enforce MEJA by investigating and prosecuting offenses under the law.

**MEJA Expansion.** There are an estimated 180,000 or more contractors working in Iraq under contracts awarded by the Department of Defense, the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and other federal agencies. MEJA only extends U.S. federal criminal jurisdiction to felony crimes committed overseas by contractors working for the Defense Department. For example, in the widely reported incident of September 17, 2007, in which 11 Iraqi civilians were killed, there is no clear authority for holding the State Department-contracted employees involved legally accountable. H.R. 2740 would amend MEJA to ensure that all contractors working in war zones – regardless of contracting agency – would be held accountable under U.S. law.

**MEJA Enforcement.** A law by itself is not enough; the law must be proactively enforced. Given the unstable environment in Iraq, the enforcement of MEJA requires adequate law enforcement assets within the theater of conflict to enable the immediate investigation of allegations of criminal activity. H.R. 2740 would establish FBI in-theater units to investigate every incident for which there is reasonable suspicion of criminal felony misconduct. The bill would also require the Department of Justice Inspector General to examine the number and nature of alleged incidents of misconduct thus far, along with the number of investigations, indictments, and/or prosecutions involving such cases.

**House Report 110-352:**  
[HTML Version](#), [PDF Version](#)

**Full Committee Mark-up:**  
[Markup of: H.R. 400, H.R. 2102, H.R. 3013, H.R. 2740, H.R. 1119, and H.R. 1071, August 1-2, 2007](#)

**Summary of Committee Votes:**

- [Rep. Scott Areas Near U.S. Military Operations Amendment](#) — Clarifies that the bill would apply to contractors working in areas or close to areas in which the United States has a military operation. **Adopted by Voice Vote.**
- **Vote to Report:** Favorably Reported to the Full House, as Amended, by **Voice Vote.**

**Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security Mark-up:**

[Markup of: H.R. 1943, H.R. 1199, H.R. 400, H.R. 2740, H.R. 2102, and H.R. 3013](#), July 24, 2007

[National Journal Report](#)

**Summary of Committee Vote:**

- **Vote to Report:** Favorably Reported to the Full Committee by **Voice Vote**.

**CRS Reports:**

[RL32419](#): Private Security Contractors in Iraq: Background, Legal Status, and Other Issues

**GAO Reports:**

(TBA)

**CBO Report:**

[Cost Estimate](#): Ordered Reported by the Committee on the Judiciary

**Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security Hearing:**

[Hearing on: War Profiteering and Other Contractor Crimes Committed Overseas](#), June 19, 2007

**Witness Testimony:**

- [The Honorable Stuart W. Bowen Jr.](#), Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction
- [Thomas F. Gimble](#), Principal Deputy Inspector General United States Department of Defense
- [Alan Grayson](#), Grayson & Kubli, P.C.
- [Scott Horton](#), Adjunct Professor of Law Columbia University School of Law
- [Erika Razook](#), Legal Advisor to the Business and Human Rights Program Amnesty International
- [Barry M. Sabin](#), Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Department of Justice

**Organization Statements:**

(TBA)

**Administration Position:**

(TBA)

**Fact Sheets & Talking Points:**

[H.R. 2740, the MEJA Expansion and Enforcement Act, Committee Summary](#)

**Press Releases, News Articles & Related Information:**

(TBA)

**Other Resources:**

[Cosponsors of H.R. 2740](#)

**H.R. 928 – IMPROVING GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY ACT** (Rep. Cooper – Oversight and Government Reform) (Subject to a Rule)

**Bill Text:** [HTML Version](#), [PDF Version](#)  
[Bill Summary and Status](#)

**Rules Committee Meeting:** Tuesday, October 2, 2007 at 3:00 p.m. in H-313, the Capitol, [Special Announcement](#), [Amendment Process Announcement](#)

**Committee:** [Committee on Oversight and Government Reform](#)

**Committee Staff Contact:** 5-5051

**LEGISLATION AT A GLANCE:**

H.R. 928 updates the Inspector General Act of 1978 to promote independence and accountability for Inspectors General in executive branch departments and agencies.

The bill includes provisions for (1) a defined term of office for the Inspectors General and conditions for removal, (2) Inspectors General to submit their budgets directly to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Congress, (3) the statutory establishment of a combined President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency and Executive Council on Integrity and Efficiency, (4) pay reform for Inspectors General, (5) changes in Inspector General investigative and law enforcement authorities, (6) the application of semiannual reporting requirements with respect to inspection reports and evaluation reports, and (7) enhanced authority for the Government Accountability Office (GAO).

**House Report 110-354:**  
[HTML Version](#), [PDF Version](#)

**Full Committee Mark-up:**  
[Full Committee Business Meeting](#), August 2, 2007  
[National Journal Report](#)

**Summary of Committee Votes:**

- [Rep. Davis Inspector General Removal Amendment to the Cooper Amendment](#) — Requires the head of a federal agency to report the intention to remove or transfer an inspector general from office to both chambers of Congress at least 30 prior to such removal or transfer. **Adopted by Voice Vote.**

- Rep. Cooper Substitute Amendment — Changed the bill as introduced to (1) specify that the term limits for Inspectors General apply prospectively, (2) require that reports of investigation from the Integrity Committee be submitted to Congress within 30 days of their submission to the Executive Chairperson of the Inspectors General Council, (3) prohibit Inspectors General from receiving cash awards or cash bonuses, and (4) reclassify Inspectors General at Executive Schedule Level IV to Executive Schedule Level III and require that Inspectors General of designated federal entities be classified for pay purposes at a level comparable to other senior staff members of the agency. The Cooper amendment incorporated H.R. 2527, the Enhanced Protection of the Internal Revenue Service and Its Employees Act of 2007, a bill introduced by Rep. Maloney to streamline authorities of the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration. The Cooper amendment also expanded the authority of the Comptroller General to take sworn testimony, and required the Comptroller General to assess the cooperation of federal agencies with Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigations and promptly report to Congress if agencies refuse to provide information to GAO. **Adopted, as Amended, by Voice Vote.**
- **Vote to Report:** Favorably Reported to the Full House, as Amended, by **Voice Vote.**

**CRS Reports:**

[RL34176](#): Statutory Inspectors General: Legislative Developments and Legal Issues

**GAO Reports:**

[GAO-07-1021T](#): Inspectors General: Proposals to Strengthen Independence and Accountability, June 20, 2007

**CBO Report:**

[Cost Estimate](#): Ordered Reported by the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

**Subcommittee on Government Management, Organization, and Procurement Hearing:**

[Inspectors General: Independence and Accountability](#), June 20, 2007

**Witness Testimony:**

- [Clay Johnson](#), Deputy Director for Management, Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President and Chair, President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency and Executive Council on Integrity and Efficiency;
- [Phyllis K. Fong](#), Inspector General, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Chair, Legislation Committee, President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency;
- [Christine C. Boesz](#), Inspector General, National Science Foundation and Vice-Chair, Executive Council on Integrity and Efficiency;
- [Eleanor J. Hill](#), former Inspector General, U.S. Department of Defense;
- [Kenneth M. Mead](#), former Inspector General, U.S. Department of Transportation;
- [Nikki L. Tinsley](#), former Inspector General, Environmental Protection Agency;
- [Jeffrey C. Steinhoff](#), Managing Director, Financial Management and Assurance, Government Accountability Office; Vanessa Burrows, Legislative Attorney, Congressional Research Service; and

- [Fred M. Kaiser](#), Specialist in American National Government, Congressional Research Service.

**Organization Statements:**

(TBA)

**Administration Position:**

(TBA)

**Fact Sheets & Talking Points:**

[Inspectors General Fact Sheet](#)

**Press Releases, News Articles & Related Information:**

[Committee Approves Inspector General Bill](#), August 2, 2007

[H.R. 928, the Improving Government Accountability Act](#), August 2, 2007

**Other Resources:**

[Cosponsors of H.R. 928](#)

**H.R. 3648 - TO AMEND THE INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1986 TO EXCLUDE DISCHARGES OF INDEBTEDNESS ON PRINCIPAL RESIDENCES FROM GROSS INCOME**  
(Rep. Rangel – Ways and Means) (Subject to a Rule)

**Bill Text:** [HTML Version](#), [PDF Version](#)  
[Bill Summary and Status](#)  
**Rules Committee Meeting:** TBA  
**Committee:** [Committee on Ways and Means](#)  
**Committee Staff Contact:** 5-3625

**LEGISLATION AT A GLANCE:**

**Permanent exclusion from gross income of discharged home mortgage indebtedness.** The bill would amend current law, which requires taxpayers to include discharges of mortgage indebtedness as income and to pay tax on this income. The bill would provide a permanent exclusion for any discharge of indebtedness (on or after January 1, 2007) which is secured by a principal residence and which is incurred in the acquisition, construction, or substantial improvement of the principal residence. Instead of including this amount as income, the basis of the individual's principal residence would be reduced by the amount excluded from income under this bill. *This proposal is estimated to cost \$1.379 billion over 10 years.*

**Long-term extension of the deduction for private mortgage insurance.** The bill extends the deduction for private mortgage insurance for seven years (through the end of 2014). Current law limits the deduction for private mortgage insurance to payments made prior to the end of 2007. The bill would provide that payments will qualify for this deduction whenever they are paid so long as the contract is entered into after 2006 and before 2015. *This proposal is estimated to cost \$570 million over the next 10 years.*

**Modification of the qualification tests for cooperative housing corporations.** The bill would modify the requirements for qualifying for the special rules available to cooperative housing corporations. Under current law, a cooperative housing corporation must meet several requirements, including a requirement that 80 percent or more of the cooperative housing corporation is earned from the corporation's tenant-stockholders. The bill would provide two alternatives to this 80 percent rule (i.e., one based on square footage and another based on cooperative expenditures). These two alternatives will make it easier to qualify as a cooperative housing corporation. *This proposal is estimated to cost \$22 million over 10 years.*

**Modification of exclusion of gain on sale of a principal residence.** The bill amends the current law exclusion of up to \$250,000 (\$500,000 if married filing a joint return) of gain realized on the sale or exchange of a principal residence. Under current law, the sale of a home will qualify for this exclusion if the home is a taxpayer's principal residence for at least two of the five years ending on the sale or exchange. This exclusion applies even if the home was initially purchased as a second home. Under the bill, if a taxpayer moves their principal residence to a second home, the taxpayer will only be able to utilize this exclusion to the extent that it relates to the period of time when the home was first used as a principal residence. The bill grandfathers use before 2008. *This proposal is estimated to raise \$2.005 billion over 10 years.*

**House Report:**  
[HTML Version](#), [PDF Version](#)

**Full Committee Mark-up:**

[Markup of 1. H.R. 3648 "To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude discharges of indebtedness on principal residences from gross income, and for other purposes."](#) 2. H.R. 1424, the "Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act of 2007", September 26, 2007

[National Journal Report](#)

[Joint Tax Description of H.R. 3648 as introduced](#)

[Joint Tax Estimated Revenue Effects of H.R. 3648 as introduced](#)

[H.R. 3648, "To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude discharges of indebtedness on principal residences from gross income, and for other purposes." as introduced](#)

**Summary of Committee Votes:**

- [Chairman Rangel Substitute Amendment](#) — Added a short title to the bill: the "Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Act of 2007." **Adopted by Voice Vote.**
- **Vote to Report:** Favorably Reported to the Full House, as Amended, by **Voice Vote.**

**CRS Reports:**

(TBA)

**GAO Reports:**

(TBA)

**CBO Report:**

(TBA)

**Organization Statements:**

[Letters of Support](#), Ways and Means

[Mortgage Bankers Association \(MBA\)](#)

[National Association of Home Builders \(NAHB\)](#)

[National Association of Realtors \(NAR\)](#)

**Administration Position:**

(TBA)

**Fact Sheets & Talking Points:**

[Summary of H.R. 3648](#), Ways and Means

**Press Releases, News Articles & Related Information:**

[Ways and Means Approves Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Bill Legislation would prevent families from "double whammy" of tax liability on foreclosures](#), September 26, 2007

**Other Resources:**

[Cosponsors of H.R. 3648](#)

**BILL UNDER SUSPENSION:**

**[H.R. 3087 - TO REQUIRE THE PRESIDENT, IN COORDINATION WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE, THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, AND OTHER SENIOR MILITARY LEADERS, TO DEVELOP AND TRANSMIT TO CONGRESS A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY FOR THE REDEPLOYMENT OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES IN IRAQ](#)** (*Rep. Tanner and Rep. Abercrombie. – Armed Services*)

**LEGISLATION AT A GLANCE:**

H.R. 3087 has overwhelming bipartisan support and was favorably reported by the Committee to the U.S. House of Representatives on a vote of 55 to 2. The legislation would require the President and senior Administration officials to develop and submit a comprehensive redeployment strategy to Congress within 60 days, and every 90 days thereafter. Additionally, the bill:

- Recognizes that the U.S. Armed Forces and U.S. civilians have worked valiantly, and that it is time for Iraq to manage its future;
- Notes that when Congress authorized military force in 2002, it was concerned about an Iraqi government that has since been removed from power;
- States that the new, freely-elected Iraqi government poses no threat to the United States;
- Plans for our continued military mission in Iraq;
- Expresses the view that such a plan should include a refocus of our military to combating al-Qaeda and other terrorists.

**House Report 110-283:**  
[HTML Version](#), [PDF Version](#)

**CRS Reports:**  
[RL31339](#): Iraq: Post-Saddam Governance and Security

**CBO Report:**  
[Cost Estimate](#): Ordered Reported by the Committee on Armed Services

**Press Releases, News Articles & Related Information:**

H.R. 3087 Summary

[HASC Approves Bipartisan Bill on Planning and Oversight of Iraq Redeployment](#), July 27, 2007

**Full Committee Hearings:**

Hearing on H.R. 3159 and H.R. 3087, July 27, 2007

- [Chairman Skelton's Opening Statement on H.R. 3087](#)
- [Text of the Abercrombie Amendment](#)

Iraq: Trends and Recent Security Developments, July 18, 2007

- [Chairman Skelton's Opening Statement](#)

Implications of Iraq Policy on Total Force Readiness, January 23, 2007

- [Chairman Skelton's opening statement](#)

Alternative Perspectives on the President's Strategy for Iraq, January 17, 2007

- [Chairman Skelton's opening statement](#)

The Way Forward in Iraq, January 11, 2007

- [Chairman Skelton's opening statement](#)

**Other Resources:**

[Cosponsors of H.R. 3087](#)