



News from Westminster

1st November 2007 Phil Hope MP

Looking back at the 2006/7 Parliament



As this parliamentary session ends, looking back I am proud to have represented Corby and East Northamptonshire here in Westminster, voting for important bills that will improve life for families and employees in Corby and East Northamptonshire and throughout the country.

And this week our Labour Government has got through four remaining Bills in its legislative programme as the Parliamentary year came to an end this week.

I voted for the Serious Crime Act, the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, the Legal Services Act and the UK Borders Act before both Houses were "prorogued" (which is a formal word meaning that the parliamentary session has ended).

Among the new legislation I voted for this week there are reforms that will make a real difference. New powers for police and local authorities to protect the public from violent offenders and anti-social behaviour, together with new law enforcement

agencies to combat serious and organised crime. And more say for the public about health services in their area.

So a lot can happen in a week - but even more has happened over the last year.

The Pensions Act will provide for long-term reform of state pensions, by restoring the link with earnings in the next Parliament and also reducing the time it takes to build a full basic pension to 30 years for everyone from the previous ages of 44 for men and 39 for women.

Everyone in Corby and East Northamptonshire will welcome the Act to guarantee concessionary bus free off peak local bus travel for people aged 60 in England, together with a power to allow for mutual recognition of concessionary bus passes in future across the UK.

The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act will result in greater incentives to improve health and safety and provide better protection at work, and it will be easier to bring prosecutions for gross negligence leading to death.

And, of course, we are especially proud of the achievements in Northern Ireland following the passing of the St Andrews Agreement Acts which restored the devolved institutions finally on 8 May 2007.

Next week sees the Queen's Speech - where the government sets out what will happen in the next session. I'll let you know what is announced.

So it's been another busy Parliamentary session at the House of Commons. With a lot happening I wanted to take a look back at some of the Bills I've voted for this session and give you an idea of what legislation I've been working on down here.

FREE BUS TRAVEL FOR THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED

The Concessionary Bus Travel Act will guarantee off-peak local bus travel for people aged 60 and over and eligible disabled people anywhere in England from 1 April 2008.

MORE RIGHTS FOR CONSUMERS

The Consumers, Estate Agents and Redress Act will take on people who rip off vulnerable people in our communities by cracking down on rogue estate agents and dodgy doorstep sellers.

JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF NEGLIGENCE

The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act makes it easier to prosecute organisations when their gross negligence leads to death. The new offence aims to rectify a key defect in the present law that means that organisations can only be convicted of manslaughter if a single individual at the very top of the company is also personally liable. This fails to reflect the reality of decision-making in large organisations.

SKILLS FOR ALL

The Further Education and Training Act equips the further education sector to play its part in delivering the skills Britain and Corby and East Northants needs for the twenty-first century.

BRITAIN - LIVING UP TO ITS GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The International Tribunals (Sierra Leone) Act allows the UK to sign a Sentence Enforcement Agreement (SEA) with the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), to enable the UK to honour its commitment to allow former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, to serve his sentence in the UK, if convicted by the SCSL at his upcoming trial.

GREATER SAY ON HEALTH CARE IN YOUR AREA

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act a stronger voice for local communities in the commissioning and provision of health and social care services, enabling people to influence the services they use.

PROTECTING THE PUBLIC

The Mental Health Act will help ensure that people with serious mental disorders can be required, where necessary, to receive the treatment they need to protect them and the public from harm.

The Serious Crime Act introduces a package of new powers that will strengthen and improve the ability of law enforcement agencies to tackle and prevent serious crime.

The Offender Management Act will reduce re-offending and better protect the public by providing new arrangements for the provision of probation services, and other measures to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of how offenders are managed in custody and the community.

PEACE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement 1) Act 2006 and Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement 2) Act 2007 were vital pieces of legislation on Northern Ireland that paved the way for power sharing.

ACTION ON PENSIONS

The Pensions Act had measures in it to make the basic State Pension more generous by restoring the link with earnings during the next Parliament.

It will also:

Reduce the number of years it takes to build a full basic State Pension from 44 years for men (39 for women) to 30 years for everyone;

Simplify the State Second Pension to replace the earnings relation with a weekly flat rate amount, irrespective of how much an individual earns;

Streamline the regulation of private pensions, making it easier for people to plan and save for retirement.

POLICING OUR BORDERS

The UK Borders Act gives the new immigration agency tougher powers to police the border, tackle immigration crime and protect the public, making it easier to deport those who abuse our hospitality and break the law.