

As we debate our budget priorities this week, I continue to look for ways to eliminate government waste and reduce the deficit. This week, I proposed cutting two programs that would save nearly \$3.4 billion in taxpayer dollars. I urged the House to eliminate \$1.5 billion slated for the Iraqi Security Forces by using Iraq's oil revenues to train, equip, and pay Iraq's own police force. Do taxpayers want their dollars paying for Iraqi police on the streets of Baghdad when we are cutting funding for police in New Jersey and across our nation? Unfortunately, my amendment did not pass.

We did succeed in voting to save at least \$1.9 billion by ending the F-35 alternative engine program, which neither Secretary of Defense Robert Gates nor President Obama support. This is a [smart cut](#), and throughout the year I will continue to urge Congress to adopt other sensible proposals to reduce the deficit.

What we shouldn't do is recklessly cut successful programs, as the House majority has proposed, that create jobs, support innovation, and strengthen our global competitiveness. In order to out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the rest of the world, I will fight to preserve investments in basic energy research and math and science teacher training.

Anthrax Attacks: Still Questions to Be Answered, Vulnerabilities To Be Addressed

I have never forgotten about the people who died from the 2001 anthrax attacks, which evidently originated from a postal box in Central New Jersey.

Earlier this week, the National Academy of Science (NAS) released its much-anticipated report on the FBI's use of scientific and technical evidence during its investigation of the 2001 anthrax attacks. The NAS presented two central conclusions. First, the scientific evidence – such as the origin of the anthrax used in the letters- did not support the sweeping and seemingly certain conclusions that the FBI drew. Secondly, there needs to be further investigation of the attacks and the federal government's response to and investigation of the attacks.

The NAS [report](#) makes clear there are still questions to be answered and still lessons to be learned about the FBI's investigation into the attacks. We still badly need a 9/11-style commission to determine how the attacks happened and whether we learned the lessons to prepare for another attack. I have reintroduced legislation to establish an independent, high level [commission](#) to examine the attacks, assess the federal government's response to and investigation of the attacks, and make recommendations to the President and

Congress on how the country can best prevent or respond to a future bioterror attack.

How We Exchange Ideas

The exchange of ideas has been at the center of the founding of our republic to our development as a world superpower. In the 21st century, even as we advance technologically and possess faster electronic tools – text messages, Twitter, Facebook – a Harvard Economist highlights how face-to-face communication remains the most effective way for humans to exchange ideas.

In his [book](#), “Triumph of the City,” professor Edward Glaeser writes that in the age of instant information, cities have become more important due to the close grouping of people allowing for the free exchange of ideas. As New York Times columnist David Brooks noted, the value of face-to-face communications can be seen in a study in which researchers asked individuals to cooperate – some, working face-to-face and others electronically. Those communicating face-to-face fared far better than those who relied on electronics.

The ease and speed at which ideas are exchanged not only occurs in cities but any place where there is a sense of community, such as in town centers. Towns such as Hopewell Borough, Pennington, and Cranbury have natural town centers that have been around since the founding of the town, which are important to the culture of the town and the interconnectedness of the people. Other towns, like Plainsboro, have worked to create town centers. As Glaeser highlights, building a sense of community can strengthen our economic future.