has pointed out with his presentation on peak oil this is a serious matter that demands our collective attention and we have got to deal with it in a responsible way.

So I thank the gentleman from Maryland (Dr. BARTLETT) for his support, for his interactions in dealing with a very important issue for all Americans, energy.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. The gentleman mentioned a collision course with catastrophe. I just wanted to make a quick quote from the article in the paper that the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA) was mentioning:

"The least-bad scenario is a hard landing, global recession worse than the 1930s," says Kenneth Deffeyes, a Princeton University professor emeritus of geosciences.

He goes on to say that he made that prediction because "the worst case borrows from the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse is better than war, famine, pestilence, and death.

It is interesting that the gentleman's "collision course with catastrophe" is mirrored by what he said.

I want to yield the remainder of my time to a colleague who has a fascinating Energy 101. We will only get partway through it today and we will give him a chance for a full explanation of this.

Mr. EHLERS. I thank the gentleman for yielding and I thank him for organizing this session.

I want to go very quickly through one item, and as we said we will continue later. I am a physicist. As a physicist, energy is tangible to me. But most people energy is intangible. You cannot touch it, see it, smell it or taste it. In other words, with our senses we cannot detect it. The only tangible aspect of energy for most people is the price at the gas pump and the utility bill at the end of the month.

But I have a wish and I wish it were true but my wish would be that energy would be purple. If energy would be purple it would be tangible. We could see it. And if you drive up to your house in the middle of the winter and saw the purple oozing through the walls and coming out in rivulets around the doors and windows where they are not sealed properly, you would say, oh, that is horrible. I am wasting all that energy. It is costing me money. So we would make sure that we would get the house sealed up.

Or if we were driving down the road and a Toyota Prius such as is owned by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) for his support, and also the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), I am glad to be joined by them once again because, as we have said before, we are going to come to the floor night after night to try to put a cog in the American agenda forward as best we can.

As my colleagues know, being in the minority here in the House of Representatives does not bring about the kind of support we need to respond to the needs of Americans. But I can say that being in the minority and pointing out these issues of how we could do the job better than the majority side has done, I think is not only educational for the Members of this House but also should bring about some kind of change so that we can have better representation here in Washington, DC, especially representation in terms of legislation that passes from this floor and out of this Congress and to the White House.

We have been out for a week on the Columbus Day break, and I know the gentleman and his constituents have been getting lots of rain in New Jersey, so my prayers go out to your constituents. And many others in Florida, as you know we receive our fair share of good and bad weather. Mainly good, and so we want folks to come to Florida; but we know the Garden State has been hammered, along with other states around it, quite a few days now. So I hope all is well with those counties that are trying to survive some of the flood waters.

I think it is important to begin where we left off almost a week ago, Mr. Speaker, and to address the issue of having an independent commission for the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita and making sure that not only are those Americans not forgotten but that we not forget the mismanagement that took place in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina so that they never happen again. Never again in the United States.

I think it is important for us to also realize, Mr. Speaker, that it was not just a storm. It was the aftermath of the storm and the lack of governance on the front end, making sure that our levee systems were where they should have been and the issues as relates to those buffer islands in the gulf coastal states around it. Quite a few days now. Whose issues should have been addressed by the Federal Government in making sure that we have the kind of buffer to protect one of our greatest U.S. cities.

As my colleagues may know, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) on our side of the aisle have introduced an independent commission bill that we have been working to get to the floor for some time now. I think that not only the American people need to realize that the power of this House, if we were in the majority, and this is not a partisan issue, but if we were in
the majority, because there is a bill that is there that almost every Member, if not every Member from the Democratic Caucus, has signed on to this bill calling for a 9/11-like commissión to deal with the issues that are facing us. I am still not sure that they are not dragged through the mud, becoming victims once again.

Mr. Speaker, as we open our discussions here tonight, I also wanted to make sure that we deal with the issue of corruption and cynicism. When we left here over a week ago, we were dealing with that issue; and I wanted to make sure that we talk about that. I want my colleagues to be aware of, and that we share with them the importance of governance and oversight. So there are a number of issues that we are going to talk about, and I just want to talk tonight about those issues, but I will be happy to yield to my colleagues at any time.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome our newest 30-something to the Ryan family. My brother had a baby last Friday night on his birthday. Nicholas John Ryan. So I want to welcome him into the world officially, and say hello to his first two friends, Zack and Molly Leonard, who were all over to the house, and I fed the baby for the first time yesterday. So here I had the bottle, and I fed it. It was great.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, a congratulations and, B, because we are feeding the baby for the first time yesterday, I hope that you knew what to do when you were feeding the baby. Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Well, see, I took a week and I watched. I was very timid. I did not want to make any mistakes, so I watched for a while. I watched my brother. I was being a little hesitant with the bottle, and my brother is like, jam it in there, you are not going to hurt the kid. So you pick up and gain a little confidence, and then I burped the kid. It was great. Bingo.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. There you go. Great uncle.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And the godfather. I am also going to be the godfather.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Two-fer.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Yes. So this is a lot of pressure. You think being a Member of Congress is a lot of pressure, try being the godfather to the first new baby in the family. So that for me has kind of changed my perspective, and it makes all of the stuff we talk about here that much more important because you begin to see the timetable, the effect our decisions have over the long term.

I know a couple weeks ago when we left, we were talking about this administration, and I know that many are that they are not happy with the way they have been handled. Right after the hurricane, the President of the United States had a host of cronies appointed to key positions. There have been people put in key positions, like FEMA, that have absolutely no experience whatsoever. All we are saying in this Chamber from the Democratic side is give us a chance to run this place. Give us an opportunity to be able to handle the levers of government and allow us to lead.

That is the opportunity that we are asking the American people for. My good friends and colleagues who have had the levers of government over the past, since 1994 in the House and since 2000 in the White House and in the Senate, have not been able to govern. They just have not been able to do it. You do not have to look very far. Ask yourself sitting at home, what is going on here? I mean, we have higher energy costs, we have more people in poverty, we have tuition costs that have doubled, we have an administration that has been devastated financially. We have put cronies in key government positions. We are leaking information about CIA agents. I mean, what good is going on right now? Somebody please help me.

We are bogged down in a war that is costing us 1.5 billion a week. I repeat, 1.5 billion a week. We are getting our clock cleaned by China. Delphi, the largest auto supplier in the country, filed for bankruptcy. Some people are asking their workers to take 60 percent pay cuts. I have over 5,000 workers in my district, in Warren, Ohio. What positive thing is happening today due to the Republican leadership in the House, Republican leadership in the Senate, and the Republican leadership in the White House? I cannot seem to find anything.

I think this country deserves a lot better, and I think we need to start talking about that, my good friends. After this one, let me take a break and ask the American people to go shopping. That is the best leadership you can come up with in the United States of America? We deserve a little better than that, I think.

He did not start an alternative energy policy, not to fix the health care system that is a mess, not to take care of the millions and millions of young kids that live in poverty, not fund No Child Left Behind. What are we doing? The biggest leadership move is to ask the country to go shopping? What is that? That is terrible. That is terrible leadership.

We have given this President the opportunity time and time and time again to lead, and he has not done it. He has not done it. And now the whole thing is in Ohio. Yes this is a little bit too intimate with because of the workers in my district. And General Motors. I have a General Motors plant in my district. Believe me, I understand why the corporations are doing what they are doing. The rise in costs for health care are crippling the American businessperson. Crippling the corporation and the small businessperson.

So now they are trying to squeeze blood out of a turnip in the form of asking middle-class citizens in the United States of America to get less health care or to pay for more health care, whether they are in a union or not in a union, instead of addressing the key issue, which is that the insurance companies are doing this with a lobbyist and the pharmaceutical lobby which has a stranglehold around the United States Congress.

Let us be honest. How about a little straight talk from the House floor tonight? Check it out. When you are passing the Medicare prescription drug bill, there are four lobbyists for every one Member of Congress; and I know I did not have a lobbyist, I did not have one, let alone four, so somebody had eight. Now, imagine that. When we get this health care issue under control, that will release a lot of potential that can get freed up, investments that could be made back in the United States of America.

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For example, and I am sorry because we have been dealing with this for the last week, with the Delphi situation, this money that this corporation saves, and we all want to save Delphi. We want it to be a solvent company and we want them to maintain the work that they have in Ohio. As I said, it is a way the system is set up is any savings that they get, they are going to invest that money into China. That is what they are going to do. So the whole system is screwed up to where you are forcing corporations to invest into these other countries.

Here we have an opportunity with this independent commission to oversee a problem with the government that has been going on for years. FEMA, they had a stranglehold around the United States of America to get less health care. They just have not been able to handle the levers of government and give us an opportunity to be able to lead, and he has not done it. Let us be honest. How about a little straight talk from the House floor tonight? Check it out. We are passing the Medicare prescription drug bill, there are four lobbyists for every one Member of Congress; and I know I did not have a lobbyist, I did not have one, let alone four, so somebody had eight. Now, imagine that. When we get this health care issue under control, that will release a lot of potential that can get freed up, investments that could be made back in the United States of America.
Mr. Speaker, next we will hear from the newest member of the 30-Somethings, and we charge him two sets of dues because he is almost 30-Something twice.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I do not know how many times I am going to have to endure these comments about my age.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I never say anything about the gentleman’s age.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, that is because the gentleman is almost his age. Tell the American people how old you are.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I am 39.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. See, he graduates out of the 30-somethings next year. I am going to be a one-man show.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, since the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is at the younger end, he wants to talk more about the older people that are not interested and the wiser people.

And I would say to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE), we will not prolong it any more.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I want you to know that one way to deal with the age problem is to hang out with the younger people.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. You are welcome here every time we are here, my friend.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, let me follow up on what the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) said because he certainly was right. We had a lot when we were back in our districts doing things locally. I was thinking when I was listening to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) about three events that I attended in the last 48 hours in my district or nearby which point to this whole idea of what is good and what is the Republican leadership and what is President Bush doing because all I hear are complaints about his policies.

For example, on Sunday, I went to a senior complex for a group of seniors that were meeting in Lakewood, New Jersey, which is a community just outside my district. It used to be in my district until redistricting a few years ago. What I heard was how expensive it is for seniors to buy their prescription drugs, and how they did not feel that the President’s new program, which is the kind of thing we would do if we were in charge and we could do the things we want, would correct the situation that we see.

In addition, all the seniors were saying as of October 1, all these different private drug plans are being promoted on television and they have no idea what they are all about. I said he very, very carefully. Do not sign up for these things until you really look at the details because they may not be helpful to you.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to highlight that fact. This totally puts into perspective what happens down here under their leadership. We have a prescription drug bill that we spent $700-some billion over the last 10 years on, but we were told it was just like we do now with Medicare B, and the Republicans rejected that to start a prescription drug Medicare program, and we are not doing anything to control the costs, whether it is reimportation from Canada or to allow the Secretary of Health and Human Services to buy in bulk.

There would be every Medicare beneficiary behind that proposal. And you can say Merck, you want to negotiate this, we want 30 to 40 percent chopped off, and they would do it because they want the contract. We would not have to create a new bureaucracy. If people think the old Democrat Party wants to create a new bureaucracy, they are wrong. This is a progressive idea of giving the Administrator already in place the power that he has that makes sense, but you can only do it if you are not tied to the pharmaceutical lobby like our friends on the other side of the aisle.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I have ceased even referring to this program as Medicare because as far as I am concerned there is nothing Medicare about it. You said we need to show to the American people how we would do things differently because we want a change to be in the majority and to run the country.

Here we had a clear contrast. The fact of the matter is every Democrat, or maybe one or two that did not vote for a substitute, that basically would have been just like we do now with Medicare Part B, how seniors pay for their doctor bills, and that would have been under Medicare as a regular government program. They would have paid a $25 premium per month, and had their choice of whatever prescription drug plan they want. They would not have to go out privately and shop around. They would have had a $100 deductible and 80 percent of the cost paid for by the Federal Government. 20 percent copay. We already have it for Part B, and the Republicans rejected that to a person. There is clear contrast. This is the kind of thing we would do if we were in the majority and in charge.

The gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) talked about the rain and the storms in New Jersey. There was a senior complex in my district that was near a brook where a number of homes were completely destroyed to the point that they moved out. I went there this morning with the Army Corps of Engineers because the Corps has a project that would correct the situation that we would like to do. It would cost about $8 million to do it. What I am hearing from the Corps, we would like to do it but we have to see if we have the money.

What happened with those levees in New Orleans is no different from what is happening around the country. We are spending our dollars on structure needs, whether flood control or whatever it happens to be. The reason, and I am going to go back to another forum, right after I met with the Corps this morning and talked about this, this flood control project has been delayed for a number of years now, I met with students at Rutgers, a State university in my district, and we talked about the Iraq war.

I started out talking about an exit strategy and what needs to be done. A lot of the students were talking about the cost of the war, not only cost in terms of the lives and the wounded, but also the cost of the actual dollars we were spending and the fact that because we were spending so much money on the Iraq war, we were not able to pay for a lot of domestic needs, whether it be student financial aid. They were stressing that, of course. But I was thinking about my flood control project which would avoid all of the damage and all of the people who had to move out if it had been in place.

The bottom line is we are spending all of this money on the Iraq war. The President does not have an exit strategy. He keeps talking about how everything is going to get better, and the cost is not only lives and the wounded, but also in terms of the dollars we are not spending here domestically, and we are not investing in the future to remain competitive with China and the other countries that are competing with us.

People get this. I am not making this up. This is within the last 48 hours at three different forums or opportunities I had to meet with my constituents, and this is what they are saying. They are not happy. They realize there are alternatives. The bottom line is some of those alternatives are easy, some are hard. Democrats are saying we have alternatives, whether it is prescription drugs or any of the other topics.

Many of us voted against all these tax breaks that the President gave because we knew it would put us into debt and we would not have money to...
pay for a lot of the domestic programs, and most of the money went to the wealthy rather than the average person.

One more thing, and that is when we were here last time, the week before we were back in our districts, I think it was the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. Wasserman Schultz) talking about the energy bill because the next day we voted on the Republican energy bill. She pointed out there was no benefit for our country, would not do anything—there was no plan—nothing to reduce gas prices or reduce our dependence on foreign oil. All of the things that people would like us to do, the Republicans were not doing.

What she did do was bring something, two things she mentioned, one was to allow for offshore drilling off the coast of Florida and New Jersey, all these sensitive areas. The second thing the gentlewoman mentioned was it was going to weaken the Clean Air Act. Lo and behold, the interesting thing was the next day the Republicans took those provisions out of their energy bill because there was such a hue and cry. When they finally passed the energy bill, they barely were able to pass it. We had to wait an hour for them to get the votes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Ninty minutes. Mr. PALLONE. The bottom line is that this Republican majority is starting to fall apart because their policies are not good for the American people. Even some of the Republicans are starting to realize it and are not willing to vote for some of the junk bills that come to the floor with the Republican leadership.

I just mention that because I think there is hope here. I left last Friday thinking maybe now because of yourselves getting on the floor, maybe because Republicans are speaking out and talking about why these Republican initiatives are not helpful, maybe people are starting to realize it. Maybe some Republicans are starting to realize it. That is why I admire what you are doing because I think it is making a difference.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) has been relentless in pushing us to get up to the floor once or twice a week. I just saw a poll last week that had 60 percent of the independent voters in the country are sick and tired of what has been going on in Washington, D.C. Mr. Wagner from General Motors said D.C. needs to do something about health care. We are not doing anything. What we are doing seems like we are doing something, but the energy bill is not really doing anything.

The gentleman mentioned the $1.5 billion a week that we are spending in Iraq. I want to share one thing. This is a great article today in the Washington Post. The front line says it feels like it. The 1990s minus the good parts, all of the scandals that were going on, but the economy, energy costs and every-thing is bad.

There was a proposal made, and talking about dealing with the Chinese, we need to offer, and that is what we are doing as Democrats, we just need to convince the American people that we are offering alternatives and do have ideas, whether it is prescription drugs or alternative energy.

I want to share a proposal from the National Academies and it is a combination of a variety of different things to get our math scores up. Our math scores in 8th grade, we ranked 15th internationally and in the 9th grade we ranked 24th internationally. We are not going to make the economy if we do not have engineers and math and science majors, and the 30-Something Group is calling for a million new engineers and scientists over the next 10 years because we believe that is going to be the greatest stimulus.

But let me share the proposal from the National Academies to spend money on math prizes for high schoolers, pay raises for math teachers and to boost Federal research funding to 10 percent of the GDP. That would cost $10 billion a year. That is it. We are spending $1.5 billion a week in Iraq. The American people judge, $10 billion a year on increased Federal funding for research and development and targeted investments to increase math and science scores in the United States of America among K-12 school kids. That is what the Democrats want to do, versus $1.5 billion a week in Iraq, versus hundreds of thousands and millions and trillions of dollars over the next 10 years and people who make more than $600,000 a year.

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Pick what they want. Democrats, increased funding for Pell grants to lower tuition costs. Republicans, cut taxes for the top 1 percent. Trillions.

Democrats, fully fund No Child Left Behind, make sure every kid who is eligible for more funding, for afterschool tutoring or a school; the Kids in the United States of America among K-12 school kids. That is what the Republicans want to do, versus $1.5 billion a week in Iraq, versus hundreds of thousands and millions and trillions of dollars over the next 10 years and people who make more than $600,000 a year.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) brought up some interesting points; and I can tell him, having been a parent myself, this issue of No Child Left Behind, we would talk to our Republican leadership colleagues and they would say, well, that was a bipartisan bill and over on the opposite side, in the Senate, folks were having press conferences and bill-signing ceremonies and everything.

But we believed that we were going to see full funding of No Child Left Behind and that this Congress would go down in history as the education Congress, and we were close to fulfilling our obligations. As a matter of fact, we have about eight States that are suing the Federal Government over No Child Left Behind unfunded mandates. These are States. These are not other countries. These are States here in the United States that taxpayers pay money.

We have a number of school districts that do not have enough funding for this. If we cannot pass it, we want to opt out. We do not want to opt in. That is not a federalized education program to help local communities and chambers and all the other do-gooders in small communities and big communities to make sure they have an educated workforce. It is not that same theory.

We have one other issue that is here. The gentleman mentioned the issue of the energy bill. I am glad that resurfaced because I am going to tell the Members the reason why that is important. The energy bill came to this floor, and for 90 minutes we sat and stood here on this floor waiting for the board to close. What we call the board here in Congress is a voting board. For several minutes, almost 1 hour. The bill was defeated. And, Mr. Speaker, I think this is where if I had a yellow flag and I was a referee or an official on the 40 yard line that I would actually throw a flag. I would have thrown the flag because the votes were violated because when the board opens up and there are 15 minutes to vote, there are 15 minutes to vote, give or take 1 or 2 or 3. But when they say the board is open for 15 minutes and we close it when we lose it when that is a violation of the spirit of the rules of this House. And it feeds into the whole issue of the corruption and cronyism.

I have two young children; and if there were a homework assignment that was due, and my wife and I have to sign their reading stuff and say that it is done, but it would not be fair if my children were to do their homework and there were two other children in the same classroom or in the same school that say, well, I do not have to do my homework. I will just do it two nights from now because my father or my mother is a chairperson of the PTA and we have power like that. We can do it. That would not be fair to the children who actually did their homework.

I use that analogy because I want to make sure that the Members and the American people understand what we are talking about. Yes, it is a bad thing dealing with children, but it is a horrible thing when we have a national policy for the greatest country on the face of the Earth, the shining example of democracy. Now, we salute one flag. And my colleagues heard me speak a couple of weeks ago about those Americans; and, yes, we think about those 2,000-plus individuals who have fallen in this war, but for those Americans who are still here who are voting for representation and fair pay, they are individuals that are without limits now.

We have all gone to Walter Reed. We have all gone to these hospitals in our own communities, these VA hospitals, watching these men and women come...
back, half of their head blown off, legs and arms missing. And we are here and we walk through this door and we put our voting cards in these machines to represent them and the Americans that they fought for. And then we come to the floor because the majority did not get what they wanted when they wanted it, to say that they will hold this vote open as long as they have to make sure that they twist enough arms on the Republican side because every Democrat voted against the bad policy, this bill.

I do not even want to address it as an energy bill because basically it was just a giveaway to the industry. That is all it was. Everything. The week prior, that could not go straight-faced into the energy bill at that time they got in that last time right before we took a break of the bill that just passed recently. And the reason why they went to Al's Hurricane Katrina came through. Hurricane Rita was on its way. The bill was already being marked up before Rita came, but it was on its way to help deal with the issue of possibly and making sure that we are able to provide energy for our country and hopefully bring down the price of gas, and it did not do that. What it did was it raped our environmental laws. It raped the process of fair practice in this institution.

There are certain things, as Members of Congress, we cannot allow to happen on behalf of the institution. When the record books are opened, the annals of history of the 109th Congress, yes, there was everything. 7 months, 6 months, 4 months, it did not mention; but also it will be that day that we were on the floor and the spirit of the rules of the House were violated in the worst way, time after time again. Time after time again.

Then the Republican side, Mr. Speaker, came to the floor with a parliamentary inquiry. The clock was at triple zero. Obviously, the measure did not pass, Mr. Speaker. Can we ask for the Speaker's colleagues and making sure that we are able to provide energy for our country and hopefully bring down the price of gas? I do not want to make any commentary, and the Speaker said what he had to say at that particular time to keep it going.

The gentleman from California (Ms. Pelosi), Democratic leader, came to the floor, gavel down for asking the question and then pointing out the fact this is what is wrong with Washington now, the culture of corruption and cronyism, not in the dark corners of Congress, but in the light of national, not national, but international television that we are willing to rape the spirit of the rules of this House and the spirit of fair play in America. Not something that we watch with little sympathy on foreign land somewhere in a Third World country. Not there. But right here for the world to see. I would not say the hypocrisy of the democracy of everyday Americans, but because of the leadership allowed it to happen here in this House.

Mr. Speaker, last point, I just want to make sure that we understand, as Members of Congress, that we have a responsibility in the majority and minority. I take full responsibility for what took place, Mr. Speaker, here on this floor, yes. Did I do everything I could? Of course I did. Did I walk over to the other aisle and talk to some of my friends over there that are level-minded individuals, who will go unnamed because we do not want them to receive any repercussions for speaking out, who said, I think that the majority has to be called? Well, you need to go tell your leadership that the vote needs to be called.

I mean, we want to do it in a gentlemanly way. We call ourselves, Mr. Speaker, gentlemen and gentlewomen, respect for the institution, and still the vote was not called. I mean, individuals' arms were twisted. You vote, hurry up, and trying to call the vote while they went. And it almost happened in the morning. Somebody kicked in of some Members and they changed their vote and it went back to a losing vote again, and they said we had to hold the board open another 20 minutes because we did not get our way.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman can yield, he will yield, he is absolutely right. This is strictly an abuse of power. That is what is going on here. This is the majority, the Republican majority, abusing their power. And I think that last Friday was the perfect example of it. And it was not the first time. I have to say one thing that was interesting that he pointed out was that it happened in broad daylight, because if the gentleman remembers, most of the time when we had to deal with these major policy initiatives, which was not, they waited until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, so nobody was watching. And, of course, the best example of that was the Medicare prescription drug bill, which, as the gentleman knows, was voted on at 3 o'clock in the morning. We had to wait how long? We spent the whole night twisting arms all night for that too and even lied about the fact of how much it was going to cost; otherwise they would have never passed it. Remember when they said it was only going to cost, I guess, 400 billion and then it ended up being 600 or 700 billion?

We see this abuse of power constantly. I see it in my committee because what happens is when bills come to committee, they go to a sub-committee. They do not have a hearing. When the Democrats were in the majority, every time we had a bill that we wanted to move, we had a hearing, sometimes several hearings, in the sub-committee, where we would have a 7-man markup in the sub-committee. Then it would go to the full committee. Then it would go to the Committee on Rules. And at every point there was an opportunity not only for the majority but also for the minority to have some input into what went on.

But that does not go on around here. A lot of bills just go to the floor with-
Page, I just want to take this and make sure everyone understands this is about saluting one flag. This is not about what side of the aisle we are on. But the reason why we point out the fact, Mr. Speaker, that the majority leadership has not taken leadership to lead us where we should be led in fair play when we are saluting one flag on issues that are facing national security, I am on the Committee on Homeland Security and I am on the Committee on Armed Services with the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL); and I can tell the Members right now that energy, as far as I am concerned, is a national security issue.

So when folks come to the floor not on behalf of the American people and national security but on behalf of special interests, I personally have a problem with it.

I take the Federal Page from the Washington Post. This is actually from October 5. This story here talks about: Storms show system out of balance. GOP Congress has reduced agency oversight.

I think it is important that we pay very close attention to not only this article. It names only three Republicans, one on the other side of the body in the Senate and two here in this body. As a matter of fact, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. HARRIS), two of my colleagues, called for hearings, Mr. Speaker, on FEMA, the money that was spent last year in Florida on counties that were not truly affected by the four storms that came through, the money that was just given out without any oversight, just simply, for the committees wrote a letter, which one I sent on, to have oversight hearings on FEMA. I agreed with that, yes, we should have oversight hearings. If something went wrong, that is the thing that the Congressperson does, call for oversight hearings.

These are Members that are in the majority. These are not Democratic Members that have said we need to have oversight hearings. These are the Members in the majority side that said we need oversight hearings. Guess what, they did not happen, and this was last year. This was the story that they asked for the hearings last year. It still did not happen.

The point I am making on this article, it goes on to say that it took an analysis of the first 6 months of Congress between 1983 and 1997, to make a comparison. This researcher found that both Chambers of Congress both reduced their numbers of hearings. Actually, in the House, there were 782 hearings in 1983 of oversight, and it went down in 1997 to 287. In the Senate, they had 439 hearings on oversight, and in 1997 it went down to 173.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, I want to say, because I have been here longer than the gentleman, and he has already told me that many times, the fact of the matter is I remember when the Democrats were in the majority. I was here from 1988 to 1994 when we were in the majority. The core of our being in the majority was oversight. That is what we did. That was our life blood. We spent lead time on oversight than anything else.

I remember specifically in my committee, the Committee on Energy and Commerce, every one of the subcommittees had oversight on health care issues, energy issues, national security, and now name it. That was our MO. For all practical purposes, the Republicans have eliminated any real oversight. So you are absolutely right.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We have said it 1 million times. Article I, Section 1 of the U.S. Constitution creates the House of Representatives. The people of the country govern. Anything that is created from there we have oversight of, and that is the essence of this democracy represented in the republic that we have. This is our job, overseeing FEMA.

Mr. MEEEK of Florida. Overseeing the Federal Government, but see, the issue that is so difficult here is the fact that this is our main job, and we are not doing it.

It takes a while to get a culture. If it is corruption, it comes and it goes. When you have a culture of corruption and cronyism, that means two things. Someone has not been overseeing the rules. Someone has not been listening, no, I am sorry. We have the Department of Transportation. This is what you are supposed to be doing because we are the oversight committee of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and we have oversight over you and we are elected by the American people to make sure that your tax dollar is being spent in the appropriate way.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We write the checks out of this body. The checks come if you are going to write the checks but not oversight.

Mr. MEEEK of Florida. This is what we have done, and in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, in the aftermath of Hurricane Rita. We are living with the highest deficit in the history of the republic. We are standing and we are doing this, and what goes back to this article that I was addressing a little while ago was the fact that there is no checks and balances.

I just want to remind the Members, since some might have maybe not fully focused on what is happening, the Senate is Republican-controlled. The House is definitely Republican-controlled. The White House, we know for sure that it is under Republican control, and when we see the amount of money that is now having to be spent, I am just going to take Katrina. I do want to talk about health care, and I know the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) has the next hour, and I just want to talk a little bit about health care again.

But I can tell you this, I am going to take Katrina for an instance, $200 billion plus. A big part of that is the fact that Louisiana or New Orleans were flooded, under water. Hundreds of thousands of Americans were displaced.

Two things happened there. Americans were dead but two things happened there. There was a lack of governance, and I can tell you that if we had the right kind of oversight, if maybe that Army Corps of Engineers captain or commander would have told us that he was going to do exactly what the National Hurricane Center called for or to do exactly what Members of Congress from that area asked for, or to say that since we are doing all of these strategic review of vulnerabilities, I am on Homeland Security so I know the language, since we are doing all of that and we did all these things when we knew when we were vulnerable, then we are supposed to respond to that, and we did not. That is where the lack of governance comes.

So this whole issue of oversight is a big issue, and if folks feel that it is not going to be in a community by you, it is already there. Katrina knocked the scab off of the Department of Homeland Security and others that have said that we are ready for anything that happens. It is a perfect example that we are not and we were not. Communities should not have to go through it to learn it, and we are the Congress, and we are supposed to respond to that, and we know better, and we know better, and we are not doing better because we are not willing to lead.

On this side of the aisle, we are here at some couple of minutes before 10:00 saying that we are ready and willing to lead or share in the leadership. What is important here is that we allow a bipartisan nature in dealing with some of the issues that we pointed out here tonight, and that is not happening. That is the other part that is so important.

So I am glad historically that the gentleman was able to share with us what happened when Democrats were in control, how many opportunities that the minority had an opportunity to be a part of legislation and inclusion.

Mr. PALLONE. If I could just say, that is the other part that is so important is, again going back when the Democrats were in the majority, most if not all committees were bipartisan, bipartisan basis. In other words, you would find in my committee, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), on the Committee on Energy and Commerce, who of course was the chairman, and legislation, if it was an energy bill, if it was a water bill, he would start by going to the ranking member, the Republican man, the minority, and saying what input do you want into this bill and let us sit down and there would be meetings, and they would try to build a consensus on legislation.

That does not happen anymore around here. I mean, it is very rare to
just read it, said this. It says, There is no way to whitewash a hurricane. A government dominated by one party should be disqualified from investigating itself. Just as President Bush repeatedly fought the creation of the 9/11 Commission until public pressure forced him to do so, should the public now demand the administration and Congress get real about Katrina.

That is what we are getting with this Republican-dominated committee. It is just going to be another whitewash, and we can call it so. I appreciate the opportunity.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I think what is important here are several points that the gentleman has already made.

You have this chart here dealing with the whole gas price issue on the middle class, and I just want to take a couple of minutes of this hour just to talk a little bit more about what is called an energy bill.

We had an alternative, and the reason why I call it an alternative to the gas or to the bill is the fact that we were in the majority and it was called an energy bill dealing with price gouging and also making future investments and bringing out alternative fuels to be done by a certain date. Also, our alternative said if you price gouge, we are not talking about someone at the pump, we are talking about the oil industry that has soaring, through-the-roof profits in a time that we have individuals who cannot even make it to house if they cannot afford to buy a tank of gas. They did not get an increase. Their employer did not say, listen, we are going to give you an increase so you can pay for gas. They did not say, listen, we are going to give you about three hundred more dollars a month so you can pay for gas. They did not say that.

So we dealt with those individuals in our alternative by saying that if you price gouge the American people, not only will it allow State Attorneys General to enforce the law, but you will pay serious fines, up to $3 million a day. Every day you price gouge, you pay. You do not get your profits and run off and the stockholders are happy.

No, you are punished, and it not only dealt with gas. It dealt with oil and LP Gas and heating gas.

I think it is important for folks to understand that we were for real about it, and the majority side was really defending the industry. I know we are going to have more time.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Let me do this, we want to give the e-mail address, 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP: REFORMING GOVERNMENT

The Speaker pro tempore (Ms. FOXX). Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be back and continue our discussion here. I hope for the next hour, my good friend, we can talk about something that I think is very important for the Democratic Party and what the future of the Democratic Party is all about, and that is reforming government. There are the party of reform. We have offered alternatives, as we have talked about in the past hour and over the past several weeks, that have been ignored; but we are not going to let that stop us. We are going to continue to talk throughout the rest of this year and into next year about the different reform measures that we are going to propose, and we are going to be critical of what we think is a broken system in general and broken systems in general, all of these different systems in our government.

I was thinking about this and talking about this last night, about how our government runs today; and our government really runs today totally different than it did in the 20th century. It is almost like an assembly line. We have our health care over here and our education is over here and our foreign policy is over here and our research is over here, and none of the component parts are allowed to come together. That is an old assembly line kind of system. You deal with this part and you put that part on and then that part, and everything is separated.

Government in the 21st century needs to be integrated and unified. A health care system that does not teach healthy eating habits and has a diverse physical education requirement in our schools or gives our kids good food in our schools, that is not a comprehensive health care system. Because at some point we are going to pay the bill for obesity or diabetes, or whatever may come from the long-term effects of not having a healthy diet. And one day, somebody is going to be on Medicaid and we are going to have to pay the price.

I want to just talk for a couple of minutes about what is going on with Delphi and their bankruptcy and how I think the system right now is a bit broken. Basically, over the last 30 years or so, this company and their workers have generated a lot of wealth over the past 30 years. A lot of people in Ohio and in Mississippi and all over the country have made money. Work- ers were paid well, pensions and benefits and health care coverage and everything else. The wealth that these workers created was taken and invested in China, first in Mexico, then in China. And now, because of all of that has happened, we increased the global supply of labor, that is driving down the wages here in the United States of America, which leads to Delphi filing bankruptcy because they cannot compete with their competitors who are doing a lot of business in China or China.