the increases, again, the 67 percent increases that we have seen over the last year.

As a result of all the spending, as the gentleman knows, the Nation’s deficit now stands at a record $1.35 trillion, something that all of us, I know, are very concerned would like very much to see reduced if not erased.

Mr. HOYER. Would the gentleman yield just for one minute?

Mr. CANTOR. I yield.

Mr. HOYER. I don’t want to get into what we’ve been getting into, but simply to observe that as the gentleman knows when he uses the 60 some odd percent, much of that, a significant part of that spending, was specifically not included in the baseline, so that it will not be incorporated in the freeze. It will be a lower number than that because, although some of it was in the baseline, a significant portion of it, as the gentleman knows, was not in the baseline.

□ 1430

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, again in trying to maintain my brevity today, we do know that in the omnibus spending bill there was a 12 percent increase in the spending of the omnibus bill, something that all of us should try and eliminate and erase, given working families and small businesses are having to do much more and actually cut their expenditures right now.

With that, I thank the gentleman, Mr. Speaker.

□ 2025

ADJOURNMENT TO FRIDAY, JANUARY 29, 2010

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at noon on Friday, January 29, and further, that when the House adjourns on that day, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 2, for morning-hour debate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GARBANZO). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

□ 1430

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER TO BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR JOHN C. STENNIS CENTER FOR PUBLIC SERVICE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 114(b) of the John C. Stennis Center for Public Service Training and Development Act (2 U.S.C. 1109), and the order of the House of January 6, 2009, the Chair announces the Speaker’s appointment of the following Member on the part of the House to the Board of Trustees for the John C. Stennis Center for Public Service Training and Development for a term of 6 years:

Mr. Travis Childers, Booneville, Mississippi

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. After consultation among the Speaker and the Majority and Minority leaders, and with their consent, the Chair announces that, when the two Houses meet tonight in joint session to hear an address by the President of the United States, only the doors immediately opposite the Speaker and those immediately to her left and right will be open.

No one will be allowed on the floor of the House who does not have the privilege of the floor of the House. Due to the large attendance that is anticipated, the rule regarding the privilege of the floor must be strictly enforced. Children of Members will not be permitted on the floor. The cooperation of all Members is requested.

The practice of reserving seats prior to the joint session by placard will not be allowed. Members may reserve their seats only by physical presence following the security sweep of the Chamber.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 8:35 p.m. for the purpose of receiving in joint session the President of the United States.

Accordingly (at 2 o’clock and 34 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until approximately 8:35 p.m.

□ 2025

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order at 8 o’clock and 37 minutes p.m.

JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS PERSUASIONS TO HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 229 TO RECEIVE A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Speaker of the House presided. The Majority Floor Services Chief, Mr. Barry Sullivan, announced the Vice President and Members of the U.S. Senate, who entered the Hall of the House, the House of Representatives, the Vice President taking the chair at the right of the Speaker, and the Members of the Senate the seats reserved for them.

The SPEAKER. The Chair appoints as members of the committee on the part of the House to escort the President of the United States into the Chamber:

The gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER);

The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN);

The gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON);

The gentleman from California (Mr. BECERRA);

The gentleman from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN);

The gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER);

The gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURA);

The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL);

The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER);

The gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CANTOR);

The gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE);

The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MCCOTTER);

The gentlewoman from Washington (Mrs. McMorris Rodgers);

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. CARTER);

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. Sessions);

The gentleman from California (Mr. McCARTHY);

The VICE PRESIDENT. The President of the Senate, at the direction of that body, appoints the following Senators as members of the committee on the part of the Senate to escort the President of the United States into the House Chamber:

The Senator from Nevada (Mr. REID);

The Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN);

The Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER);

The Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURkowski);

The Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ);

The Senator from North Dakota (Mr. DORGAN);

The Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW);

The Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MORGUILLI);

The Senator from Arizona (Mr. KYL);

The Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER);

The Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI);

The Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE); and

The Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN).

The Majority Floor Services Chief announced the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, His Excellency Roble Olhaye, Ambassador from the Republic of Djibouti.

The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seat reserved for him.

The Majority Floor Services Chief announced the Chief Justice of the United States and the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court.

The Chief Justice of the United States and the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seats reserved for them in front of the Speaker’s rostrum.

The Majority Floor Services Chief announced the Cabinet of the President of the United States.

The members of the Cabinet of the President of the United States entered
the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seats reserved for them in front of the Speaker's rostrum.

At 9 o’clock and 7 minutes p.m., the Majority Floor Services Chief and the Sergeant at Arms, the Honorable Wil- son Livingood, announced the President of the United States, escorted by the committee of Senators and Representatives, entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and stood at the Clerk's desk.

(Applause, the Members rising.)

The SPEAKER. Members of the Congress, I have the high privilege and the distinct honor of presenting to you the President of the United States.

(Applause, the Members rising.)

The PRESIDENT. Madam Speaker, Vice President BIDEN, Members of Congress, distinguished guests, and fellow Americans:

Our Constitution declares that, from time to time, the President shall give to Congress information about the state of our union. For 220 years, our leaders have fulfilled this duty. They have done so during periods of prosperity and tranquility. And they have done so in the midst of war and depression, at moments of great strife and great struggle.

It’s tempting to look back on these moments and assume that our progress was inevitable—that America was always destined to succeed. But when the Union was turned back at Bull Run and the Allies first landed at Omaha Beach, victory was very much in doubt. When the market crashed on Black Tuesday and civil rights marchers were beaten on Bloody Sunday, the future was anything but certain. These were the times that tested the courage of our convictions, and the strength of our union. And despite all our divisions and disagreements, our hesitations and our fears, America prevailed because we chose to look forward as one nation—as one people.

Again, we are tested. And again, we must answer history’s call.

One year ago, I took office amid two wars, an economy rocked by severe recession, a financial system on the verge of collapse and a government deeply in debt. Experts from across the political spectrum warned that, if we did not act, we might face a second Depression. So we acted—immediately and boldly. And 1 year later, the worst of the storm has passed.

But the devastation remains. One in 10 Americans still cannot find work. Many businesses have shuttered. Home values have declined. Small towns and rural communities have been hit especially hard for those who had already known poverty, life has become much harder.

This recession has also compounded the burdens that America’s families have been dealing with for years: the burden of working harder and longer for less, of being unable to save enough to retire or help kids with college.

So I know the anxieties that are out there right now. They’re not new. These struggles are the reason I ran for President. These struggles are what I’ve witnessed for years in places like Elkhart, Indiana, and Galesburg, Illi- nois. I hear about them in the letters that I read to each night. The stories that I read are those written by children—asking why they have to move from their home, asking when their mom or dad will be able to go back to work.

For these Americans and so many others, the challenges they face come fast enough. Some are frustrated; some are angry. They don’t understand why it seems like bad behavior on Wall Street is rewarded but hard work on Main Street isn’t; or why Washington has been unable or unwilling to solve any of our problems. They are tired of the partisanship and the shouting and the pettiness. They know we can’t afford it. Not now.

So we face big and difficult challenges. And what the American people hope—what they deserve—is for all of us, Democrats and Republicans, to work through our differences, to overcome the numbing weight of our politics. For, while the people who sent us here have very different backgrounds, different stories, different beliefs, the anxieties they face are the same. The aspirations they hold are shared. A job that pays the bills. A chance to get ahead. Most of all, the ability to give their children a better life.

And you know what else they share? They share a stubborn resilience in the face of adversity. After one of the most difficult years in our history, they remain busy building cars and teaching kids, starting businesses and going back to school. They’re coaching Little League and helping their neighbors. One woman wrote to me and said, “We are strained but hopeful, struggling but encouraged.”

It’s because of this spirit—this great decency and great strength—that I have never been more hopeful about America’s future than I am tonight. Despite our hardships, our union is strong. We do not give up. We do not quit. We do not allow fear or division to break our spirit. In this new decade, it’s time the American people get a government that matches their dec-ency, that embodies their strength.

And tonight, I’d like to talk about how, together, we can deliver on that promise.

It begins with our economy.

Our most urgent task upon taking of- fice was to shore up the same banks that helped cause this crisis. It was not easy to do. And if there is one thing that has unified Democrats and Republic- ans and everybody in between is that we all hated the bank bailout. I hated it. You hated it. It was about as pop-ular as a root canal.

But when I ran for President, I prom- ised I wouldn’t just do what was pop-ular— I would do what was necessary. And if we had allowed the meltdown of the financial system, unemployment might be double what it is today. More businesses would certainly have closed. More homes would have surely been lost.

So I supported the last administration’s efforts to create the financial rescue program. And when we took office, asked that it be more transparent and more accountable. And as a result, the markets are now sta- bilized, and we recovered most of the money we spent on the banks—most but not all.

Now, I know one way to recover the rest, I have proposed a fee on the biggest banks. Now, I know Wall Street isn’t keen on this idea, but if these firms can afford to hand out big bonuses again, they can afford a modest fee to pay back the taxpayers who rescued them in their time of need.

As we stabilized the financial system, we also took steps to get our economy growing again, save as many jobs as possible, and help Americans who had become unemployed.

That’s why we extended or increased unemployment benefits for more than 18 million Americans, made health insur- ance 65 percent cheaper for families who get their coverage through COBRA, and passed 25 different tax cuts.

Now, let me repeat: We cut taxes. We cut taxes for 95 percent of working families. We cut taxes for small busi- nesses. We cut taxes for first-time home buyers. We cut taxes for parents trying to care for their children. We cut taxes for 8 million Americans paying for college.

As a result, millions of Americans had more to spend on gas and food and other necessities, all of which helped businesses keep more workers. And we haven’t raised income taxes by a single dime on a single person. Not a single dime.

Because of the steps we took, there are about 2 million Americans working right now who would otherwise be unemploy- ed. 200,000 work in construction and clean energy. 300,000 are teachers and other education workers. Tens of thousands are cops, firefighters, correc- tional officers, first responders. And we are on track to add another 1.5 million jobs to this total by the end of the year.

The plan that has made all of this possible, from the tax cuts to the jobs, to the Recovery Act, is called the Recovery Act, also known as the stim- ulus bill. Economists on the left and the right say this bill has helped saved jobs and avert disaster. But you don’t have to take their word for it.

Talk to the small business in Phoenix that will try to hire 50 workers because of the Recovery Act.

Talk to the window manufacturer in Philadelphia who said he was skeptical about the Recovery Act until he got a call to add two more work shifts just because of the business it created.

Talk to the single teacher raising two kids who was told by the principal in the last week of school that, because of
the Recovery Act, she wouldn’t be laid off at all.

There are stories like this all across America. And after 2 years of recession, the economy is growing again. Retirement funds have started to gain back some of the value. Businesses are beginning to invest again, and slowly, some are starting to hire again.

But I realize that, for every success story, there are other stories—of men and women who wake up with the anguish of not knowing where their next paycheck will come from, who send out resumes week after week and hear nothing in response. That is why jobs must be our number one focus in 2010, and that is why I am calling for a new jobs bill tonight.

Now, the true engine of job creation in this country will always be America’s businesses. But government can create the conditions necessary for businesses to expand and hire more workers.

We should start where most new jobs do—in small businesses, companies that begin when an entrepreneur takes a chance on a dream or a worker decides it’s time she became her own boss.

Through sheer grit and determination, these companies have weathered the recession, and they are ready to go. But when you talk to small business owners in places like Allentown, Pennsylvania or Elyria, Ohio, you find out that, even though banks on Wall Street are lending again, they are mostly lending to bigger companies. Financing remains difficult for small business owners across the country. Even those who are making a profit.

So, tonight, I am proposing that we take $30 billion of the money that Wall Street banks have repaid and use it to help community banks give small businesses the credit they need to stay afloat. I am also proposing a new small business loan—the one that will go to over 1 million small businesses who hire new workers or raise wages.

While we’re at it, let’s also eliminate all capital gains taxes on small business investment; and provide a tax incentive for all large businesses and all small businesses to invest in new plants and equipment.

Next, we can put Americans to work today building the infrastructure of tomorrow. From the first railroads to the Internet System, our nation has always been built to compete. There is no reason Europe or China should have the fastest trains or the new factories that manufacture clean energy products.

Tomorrow, I’ll visit Tampa, Florida where workers will soon break ground on a new high-speed railroad funded by the Recovery Act. There are projects like that all across this country that will create jobs and help move our Nation’s goods, services and information. We should be working Americans to work building clean energy facilities, and give rebates to Americans who make their homes more energy efficient, which supports clean energy jobs. And to encourage these and other businesses to stay within our borders, it is time to finally slash the tax breaks for companies that ship our jobs overseas and give those tax breaks to companies that create jobs—here in the United States of America.

Now, the House has passed a jobs bill that includes some of these steps. As the first order of business this year, I urge the Senate to do the same, and I know that they will. People are out of work. They are hurting. They need our help. And I want a jobs bill on my desk without delay.

But the truth is, these steps won’t make up for the 7 million jobs that we’ve lost over the last 2 years. The only way to move to full employment is to lay a new foundation for long-term economic growth and finally address the problems that America’s families have confronted for years.

We can’t afford another so-called economic expansion like the one from the last decade—what some call the “lost decade”—where jobs grew more slowly than during any prior expansion, where the incomes of American families declined while the cost of health care and tuition reached record highs, where prosperity was built on a housing bubble and financial speculations.

From the day I took office, I have been told that addressing our larger challenges is too ambitious—that such an effort would be too contentious. I’ve been told that our political system is too gridlocked. They say we should just put things on hold for a while.

For those who make these claims, I have one simple question: How long should we wait? How long should America put its future on hold? Your Washington has been telling us to wait for decades even as the problems have grown worse. Meanwhile, China’s not waiting to revamp its economy. Germany’s not waiting. India’s not waiting. America’s household declined while the cost of health care and tuition reached record highs, where prosperity was built on a housing bubble and financial speculations.

But here is the thing, even if you doubt that America can afford such changes in a tough economy, you can’t afford not to make them. These nations aren’t playing for second place. They’re putting more emphasis on math and science. They’re rebuilding their infrastructure. They’re making serious investments in clean energy because they want those jobs.

Well, I do not accept second place for the United States of America. As hard as it may be, as uncomfortable and contentious as the debates may be, or as long as it takes, it is time to get serious about fixing the problems that are hampering our growth.

Now, one place to start is with serious financial reform. Look, I am not interested in punishing banks. I’m interested in protecting our economy. A strong, healthy financial market makes it possible for businesses to access credit and create new jobs. It channels the savings of families into investments that raise incomes. But that means a financial system that will guard against the same recklessness that nearly brought down our entire economy.

We need to make sure consumers and middle class families have the information they need to make financial decisions. We can’t allow financial institutions, including those that take your deposits, to take risks that threaten the entire economy.

The House has already passed financial reform with many of these changes. And the lobbyists are trying to kill it. Well, we cannot let them win this fight. And if this fails up on my desk does not meet the test of real reform, I will send it back until we get it right. We’ve got to get it right.

Next, we need to encourage American innovation. Last year, we made the largest investment in basic research funding in history—an investment that could lead to the world’s cheapest solar cells or treatment that kills cancer cells but leaves healthy ones untouched. And no area is more ripe for American innovation than energy.

You see, Washington has been telling us—just as our competitors are. If we don’t move fast, we’ll lose more jobs. If we don’t act, we’ll fall behind. If we don’t invest in advanced biofuels and clean coal technologies, China’s not waiting to revamp its economy. Germany’s not waiting. India’s not waiting. America’s not waiting to revamp its economy.

But here is the thing, even if we doubt that America can afford such changes in a tough economy, you can’t afford not to make them. These nations don’t wait. These nations are not sitting still. These nations aren’t waiting. These nations, they’re not standing still. These nations aren’t playing for second place. They’re putting more emphasis on math and science. They’re rebuilding their infrastructure. They’re making serious investments in clean energy because they want those jobs.

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January 27, 2010

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—HOUSE

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America sits on the sidelines while other nations sign trade deals, we will lose the chance to create jobs on our shores. But realizing those benefits also means enforcing those agreements so our trading partners play by the rules. And that’s why we will continue to shape a trade agreement that opens global markets, and why we will strengthen our trade relations in Asia and with key partners like South Korea and Panama and Colombia.

Fourth, we need to invest in the skills and education of our people.

Now, this year, we’ve broken through the stalemate between left and right by launching a national competition to improve our schools. And the idea here is simple: instead of rewarding failure, we only reward success. Instead of funding the status quo, we only invest in reform—reform that raises student achievement, inspires students to excel in math and science and turns around failing schools that steal the future of too many young Americans, from rural communities to the inner cities. In the 21st century, the best anti-poverty program around is a world-class education. And in this country, the success of our children cannot depend more on where they live than on their potential.

When we renew the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, we will work with Congress to expand these reforms to all our schools. In this economy, a high school diploma no longer guarantees a good job. That’s why I urge the Senate to follow the House and pass a bill that will revitalize our community colleges, which is a career pathway to the children of so many working families...To make college more affordable, this bill will finally end the unwarranted taxpayer subsidies that go to banks for student loans. Instead, let’s take that money and give families a $10,000 tax credit for 4 years of college, and increase Pell Grants. And let’s tell another 1 million students that, when they graduate, they will be required to pay only 10 percent of their income on student loans, and all of their debt will be forgiven after 20 years—and forgiven after 10 years if they choose a career in public service. Because in the United States of America, no one should go broke because they chose to go to college. And by the way, it’s time for colleges and universities to get serious about cutting their own costs—because they, too, have a responsibility to help solve this problem.

Now, the price of college tuition is rising faster than the pay for many Americans. So, I went to see Vice President Biden to chair a task force on middle class families. That’s why we’re nearly doubling the child care tax credit and making it easier to save for retirement by giving access to every worker a retirement account and expanding the credit for those who start a nest egg. That’s why we’re working to lift the value of a family’s single largest investment—their home.

The steps we took last year to shore up the housing market have allowed millions of Americans to take out new loans and save an average of $1,500 on mortgage payments. This year, we will step up refinancing so that homeowners can afford their mortgages. And it is precisely to relieve the burden on middle class families that we still need health insurance reform.

Now let’s clear a few things up. I didn’t choose to tackle this issue to get some legislative victory under my belt. And by now, it should be fairly obvious that I didn’t take on health care because it was good politics. I took on health care because of the stories I’ve heard from Americans with preexisting conditions whose lives depend on getting coverage, patients who have been denied coverage, families—even those with insurance—who are just one illness away from financial ruin.

After nearly a century of trying—Democratic administrations, Republican administrations—we are closer than ever to bringing more security to the lives of Americans. The approach we’ve taken would protect every American from the worst practices of the insurance industry. It would give small businesses and uninsured Americans a chance to choose an affordable health care plan in a competitive market. It would require every insurance plan to cover preventative care. And by the way, I want to acknowledge my First Lady, Michelle Obama, who, this year, is creating a national movement to tackle the epidemic of childhood obesity and make kids healthier.

Our approach would preserve the right of Americans who have insurance to keep their doctor and their plan. It would reduce costs and premiums for millions of families and businesses. And according to the Congressional Budget Office—the independent organization that both parties have cited as the official scorekeeper for Congress—our approach would bring down the deficit by as much as $1 trillion over the next 2 decades.

Still, this is a complex issue, and the longer it was debated, the more skeptical people became. I take my share of the blame for not explaining it more clearly to the American people. And I know that, with all the lobbying and horse-trading, the process left most Americans wondering, what’s in it for me.

But I also know this problem is not going away. By the time I’m finished speaking tonight, more Americans will have lost their health insurance. Millions will lose their jobs. Our deficit will grow. Premiums will go up. Patients will be denied the care they need. Small business owners will continue to drop coverage all together. I will not walk away from these Americans, and neither should the people in this Chamber.

So, as temperatures cool, I want everyone to take another look at the plan we’ve proposed. There is a reason why many doctors, nurses, and health care experts, who know our system best, consider this approach a vast improvement over the status quo. But if anyone from either party has a better approach that will bring down pre-existing conditions, cover the uninsured, strengthen Medicare for seniors, and stop insurance company abuses, let me know. I’m eager to see it. Here’s what I ask Congress, though: Don’t walk away from reform. Not now. When we come together, let’s find a way to come together and finish the job for the American people. Let’s get it done.

Now, even as health care reform would reduce our deficit, it’s not enough to dig us out of a massive fiscal hole in which we find ourselves. It’s a challenge that makes all others that much harder to solve and one that’s been subject to a lot of political posturing.

So let me start the discussion of government spending by setting the record straight. At the beginning of the last decade, the year 2000, America had a budget surplus of over $230 billion. By the time I took office, we had a 1-year deficit of over $1 trillion and projected deficits of $8 trillion over the next decade. Most of this was the result of not paying for two wars, two tax cuts, and an expensive prescription drug program. On top of that, the effects of the recession put a $3 trillion hole in our budget. All this was before I walked in the door. I’m just stating the facts.

Now, if we had taken office in ordinary times, I would have liked nothing more than to start bringing down the deficit. But we took office amid a crisis, and our efforts to prevent a second Depression have added another $1 trillion to our national debt. That, too, is a fact.

I’m absolutely convinced that was the right thing to do. But families across the country are tightening their belts and making tough decisions. The Federal Government should do the same. So, tonight, I’m proposing specific steps to pay for the $1 trillion that it took to rescue the economy last year.

Starting in 2011, we are prepared to freeze government spending for 3 years. Spending related to our national security, Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security will not be affected. But all other discretionary government programs will. Like any cash-strapped family, we will work within a budget to invest in what we need and sacrifice what we don’t. And if I have to enforce this discipline by veto, I will. But at a time of record deficits, we will not continue tax cuts for oil companies, for investment fund managers, and for those...
making over $250,000 a year. We just can’t afford it.

Now, even after paying for what we spent on my watch, we’ll still face the massive deficit we had when I took office. More importantly, the cost of Medicare, Social Security, and military retrenchment will continue to skyrocket. That’s why I’ve called for a bipartisan fiscal commission, modeled on a proposal by Republican Judd Gregg and Democrat Kent Conrad. That’s why—for the first time in decades, it’s time to try something new. We face a deficit of trust—leaving them a mountain of debt. Let’s pass a bill that helps correct some of these problems.

I’m also calling on Congress to continue down the path of earmark reform—Democrats and Republicans. You’ve trimmed some of this spending. You’ve made some meaningful change. But restoring the public trust demands more. For example, some Members of Congress post some earmark requests online. Tonight, I am calling on Congress to publish all earmark requests online. This is not too little, too late. Before there is a vote so that the American people can see how their money is being spent.

Of course, none of these reforms will even happen if we don’t also reform how we write the rules. Now, I am not naive. I never thought this would be easy. But people is a Washington where every single bill just because they can. Rather than fight the same tired battle day is an election day. We can’t wage a campaign where the only goal is to see who can get the most embarrassing headlines about the other side—a belief that, if you lose, I win. Neither party should delay or obstruct every single bill just because they can. We can and should do better.

That’s the work we began last year. That’s the work we’ll do together. This week, I’ll be addressing a meeting of the House Republicans. I’d like to begin monthly meetings with both the Democratic and Republican leadership. I know you can’t wait.

Throughout our history, no issue has united this country more than our security. Sadly, some of the unity we felt after 9/11 has dissipated. We can argue all we want about who is to blame for this, but I’m not interested in rellitigating the past. I know that all of us love this country. All of us are committed to its defense, but let’s put aside the schoolyard taunts about who is tough. Let’s reject the false choice between protecting our people and upholding our values. Let’s leave behind the fear and division, and do what it takes to defend the American people.

That’s the work we began last year. Since the day I took office, we’ve renewed our focus on the terrorists who threaten our Nation. We’ve made substantial investments in our homeland security and disrupted plots that threatened to take American lives. We are filling unacceptable gaps revealed by the failed Christmas attack, with better airline security and swifter action on our intelligence. We’ve prevented torture and strengthened partnerships from the Pacific to South Asia to the Arabian Peninsula. And in the last year, hundreds of al Qaeda’s fighters and affiliates, including many senior leaders, have been captured or killed—far more than in 2008.

And in Afghanistan, we are increasing our troops and training Afghan Security Forces so they can begin to defend themselves. And if the price of our success is hard work. The confirmation of well-qualified public servants shouldn’t be held hostage to the pet projects or grudges of a few individual Senators. Washington may think that saying anything about the other side—no matter how false, no matter how malicious—is just part of the game. But it’s precisely such politics that has stopped either party from working together. Our troops and training Afghans. And the other day, it’s clear that campaign fever has come even earlier than usual. But we still need to govern. To Democrats, I would remind you that we still have the largest majority in decades, and the people expect us to solve problems, not play political games. To Republicans, the bipartisan leadership is going to insist that 60 votes in the Senate are required to do any business at all in this town—a super-majority—then the responsibility to govern is now yours as well. Just say no to empty promises of a good short-term politics, but it’s not leadership. We were sent here to serve our country, not our ambitions. So let’s show the American people that we can do it together. This week, I’ll be addressing a meeting of the House Republicans. I’d like to begin monthly meetings with both the Democratic and Republican leadership. I know you can’t wait.

As we take the fight to al Qaeda, we are responsible for Iraq to its people. As a candidate, I promised that I would end this war, and that is what I am doing as President. We will have all
As we have for over 60 years, America takes these actions because our destiny is connected to those beyond our shores. But we also do it because it is right. That’s why, as we meet here tonight, over 10,000 Americans are working in each many nations to help the people of Haiti recover and rebuild. That’s why we stand with the girl who yearns for freedom. That’s why we stand with the boy who yearns for the opportunity to earn a living. That’s why we accept responsibility to the rest of the world, to our future, to our children. And we are launching a new initiative to help Ghana and other nations around the world to promote democracy and stronger sanctions—sanctions that help our country prosper. But we must also strengthen our global commitment to support the military families who have the resources they need in war, and we will continue to partner with the American people to provide regions peace and prosperity. But make no mistake—this war is ending, and all of our troops are coming home.

Tonight, all of our men and women in uniform—in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and around the world—have to know that they have our respect, our gratitude, our full support. And just as they must have the resources they need in war, we will all have a responsibility to support them when they come home. That’s why we made the largest increase in investment of our men and women in decades last year. That’s why we’re building a 21st century VA. And that’s why Michelle Obama has joined with Jill Biden to forge a national commitment to support military families.

Even as we prosecute two wars, we are also confronting, perhaps, the greatest danger to the American people—the threat of nuclear weapons. I’ve embraced the vision of John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan through a strategy that reverses the spread of these weapons and seeks a world without them. To reduce our stockpiles and launchers, while ensuring our deterrent, the United States and Russia are completing negotiations on the farthest-reaching arms control treaty in nearly 2 decades. And at April’s Nuclear Security Summit, we will bring 44 nations together, here in Washington, D.C., behind a clear goal—securing all nuclear material around the world in 4 years so that they never fall into the hands of terrorists.

Now, these diplomatic efforts have also strengthened our hand in dealing with those nations that insist on violating international agreements in pursuit of these weapons. That is why North Korea now faces increased isolation and stronger sanctions—sanctions that are now intensively enforced. That’s why the international community is more united and the Islamic Republic of Iran is more isolated. And as Iran’s leaders continue to ignore their obligations, there should be no doubt: they, too, will face growing consequences. That is a promise.

That is the leadership we are providing—engagement that advances the common security and prosperity of all people. We are working through the G-20 to help our global economy. We are working with Muslim communities around the world to promote science and education and innovation. We have gone from a bystander to a leader in the fight against climate change. We are helping developing countries to feed themselves, and continuing the fight against HIV/AIDS. And we are launching a new initiative that will give us the capacity to respond faster and more effectively to bioterrorism and infectious diseases. And we have a plan that will counter threats at home and strengthen public health abroad.

Unfortunately, too many of our citizens have lost faith that our biggest institutions—our corporations, our media and, yes, our government—still reflect these values. Each of these institutions is full of honorable men and women doing important work that helps our country prosper. But each time a CEO rewards himself for failure, or a banker puts the rest of us in risk for his own personal gain, people’s doubts grow. Each time lobbyists game the system or politicians tear each other down instead of lifting this country up, we lose faith. The more that TV pundits reduce serious debates to silly arguments, big issues into sound bites, our citizens turn away.

No wonder there’s so much cynicism out there.

But remember this—I never suggested that change would be easy or that I could do it alone. Democracy in a nation of 300 million people can be noisy and messy and complicated. And when you try to do big things and make big changes, it stirs passions and controversy. That’s just how it is.

Those of us in public office can respond to this reality by playing it safe and avoid telling hard truths and pointing fingers. We can do what’s necessary to keep our poll numbers high and get through the next election in a way that’s best for the next generation.

But I also know this: If people had made that decision 50 years ago or 100 years ago or 200 years ago, we wouldn’t be here tonight. The only reason we are here is because generations of Americans were unafraid to do what was hard, to do what was needed even when success was uncertain, to do what it took to keep the dream of this nation alive for their children and their grandchildren.

Our administration has had some political setbacks this year, and some of them were deserved. But I wake up every day knowing that they are nothing compared with the setbacks that families all across this country have faced this year. And what keeps me going—that keeps me fighting—is that, despite all these setbacks, that spirit of determination and optimism—that fundamental decency that has always been at the core of the American people—lives on.

It lives on in the struggling small business owner who wrote to me of his company, “None of us,” he said, “are willing to consider, even slightly, that we might fail.”

It lives on in the woman who said that, even though she and her neighbors have felt the pain of recession, “We are strong. We are resilient. We are American.”

It lives on in the 8-year-old boy in Louisiana, who just sent me his allowance, and asked if I would give it to the people of Haiti. And it lives on in all the Americans who’ve dropped everything to go someplace they’ve never been and pull people they’ve never known from the rubble, prompting chants of “USA! USA! USA!” when another life was saved.

The spirit that has sustained this Nation for more than two centuries lives on in you, its people.

We have finished a difficult year. We have come through a difficult decade.
But a new year has come. A new decade stretches before us. We don’t quit. I don’t quit. Let’s seize this moment—to start anew, to carry the dream forward, and to strengthen our union once more.

Thank you. God bless you. And God bless the United States of America.

(Appplause, the Members rising.)

At 10 o’clock and 26 minutes p.m., the President of the United States, accompanied by the committee of escort, retired from the Hall of the House of Representatives.

The Majority Floor Services Chief escorted the invited guests from the Chamber in the following order:

The members of the President’s Cabinet; the Chief Justice of the United States and the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court; the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps.

JOINT SESSION DISSOLVED

The SPEAKER. The Chair declares the joint session of the two Houses now dissolved.

Accordingly, at 10 o’clock and 27 minutes p.m., the joint session of the two Houses was dissolved.

The Members of the Senate retired to their Chamber.

MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE ON THE STATE OF THE UNION

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker. I move that the message of the President be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered printed.

The motion was agreed to.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. ABERCROMBIE (at the request of Mr. HOVER) for today on account of medical reasons.

Mr. ORTIZ (at the request of Mr. HOVER) for today on account of medical reasons.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker. I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 10 o’clock and 28 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until Friday, January 29, 2010, at noon.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XXIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker’s table and referred as follows:

5827. A letter from the Assistant Deputy Administrator for Acquisition Policy, General Services Administration, transmitting the Administration’s final rule—Federal Acquisition Regulation; FAR Case 2006-021, Postretirement Benefits (PRB), FAS 106 [FAC 2005-38; FAR Case 2006-021; Item V; Docket 2009-0043, Sequence 1] (RIN: 9000-AK49) received December 9, 2009, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

5828. A letter from the Assistant Deputy Administrator for Acquisition Policy, General Services Administration, transmitting the Administration’s final rule—Federal Acquisition Regulation; FAR Case 2006-021, Postretirement Benefits (PRB), FAS 106 [FAC 2005-38; FAR Case 2006-021; Item V; Docket 2009-0043, Sequence 1] (RIN: 9000-AK49) received December 9, 2009, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.