

THE NEED FOR AN ECONOMIC STIMULUS PLAN IN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Congressional Black Caucus to highlight the immediate need for an economic stimulus plan in the minority communities we represent.

Many minority communities throughout our country have been disadvantaged in various ways throughout our country's history. Historically, Latinos and Latin Americans have had higher rates of unemployment, lower rates of health care coverage, and fewer educational opportunities than do their Anglo counterparts.

Now, I know most Members know what I am talking about here. However, I would ask that my colleagues in this House and in the other body keep in mind these historical facts as we seek to craft a meaningful economic stimulus plan.

My district and those of my colleagues joining me here this evening are in desperate, desperate need of assistance. We need an economic stimulus package now. Although tax cuts have a role in our economic plan, especially ones similar to a bill that I introduced earlier this year that would grant tax rebates to low-income families who did not receive a rebate as a result of the tax cuts that the President enacted, the most important aspect of any economic stimulus plan is unemployment protection.

Latino and African American families in the Los Angeles area, in California, and throughout the country, are being forced to endure the harsh consequences of high, alarmingly high unemployment rates. We know that brings on problems. All I have to do is point out what those current rates are here in my own district and in Los Angeles County.

I would like to point out for my colleagues that in one of the cities that I represent in Los Angeles, in South El Monte, we know at the national level right now the unemployment is at 5.9 or 5.4 percent, and in the city of South El Monte, which is largely minority, it is up to 9.3 percent. In the city that I live in alone, it is 7.6 percent. In other areas that I can point out here where high numbers of minorities live, such as in the city of Baldwin Park, a largely working class blue-collar community, unemployment levels are up to 6.8 percent.

These figures are already dated, and I can tell the Members now in all honesty that these numbers are going to keep going up. These people have not seen the relief that we have talked about in this House. In the economic stimulus plan we passed a few weeks ago, I know that my residents, the people that I represent, have not seen any-

thing that is going to give them the assurance that we in fact are doing our job here in the House to take care of them.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there is much more that we can do. I am also pleased to have join me tonight the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN), the distinguished gentlewoman who is also helping me provide this important information about our minority communities. I know she has a lot to say, and I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN).

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the gentlewoman for organizing this Special Order. It is so important that we point out the disparity within the minority community; and I have an old saying, that when America has a cold, African Americans, Hispanics, have pneumonia. That is what we are here today to discuss, what is going on within those communities, and, of course, the economic stimulus package.

First, I just want to take 1 minute to talk about a subject that is very dear to my heart, and that is election reform. We have not had or passed a bill, a fair election reform bill, and that is so close and dear to my heart because of what happened in the last election in my district, the Third Congressional District of Florida, where 27,000 African Americans were disenfranchised.

Mr. Speaker, there is an article that I will include for the RECORD that was written by former President Carter and President Ford on this subject, and I would like to commend the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY) for their leadership on this issue.

The title of the article is "A Holiday Gift for the Voters," and it talks about the House and the Senate and the administration coming close to passing an election reform bill. That is so needed for the people that were so disenfranchised in the last general election in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the gentlewoman again for her leadership on this issue, because how minorities have been affected by 9-11 and the economic downturn is something that we need to point out, and we need to move forward as far as how we address these issues.

When we passed the transportation emergency bill for the airlines, we passed \$15 billion for the industry. In the hearings, when the airline executives, the CEOs, the big dogs, when they came to the committee, they indicated to us that they were going to lay off over 100,000 employees.

Mr. Speaker, I did not vote for the bill because nowhere in the bill did we address those over-100,000 people that were going to be laid off. That is the problem with this House, the people's House. That is the problem. The problem is that, and I like this saying, only the big dogs eat here. That means they have to have the big-time lobbyists, and they have to be in with certain people.

But the problem that bothers me is not just that the big dogs eat, it is the only dog that eats. In other words, we are not concerned with the gentlewoman's constituents or my constituents. We were not concerned about those 100,000 people that we laid off, that the industry laid off. I am very concerned about it.

Ms. SOLIS. I also want to point out, Mr. Speaker, this other chart that I have before me. What this indicates here is all the layoffs and different service sectors or industries that have been affected from September 12, 2001, to November 19.

What these figures portray here is, as the gentlewoman and I know, and as the gentlewoman from Florida stated earlier, large segments of our communities, service employees in the airline industry, lost many jobs. They did not receive one penny of that bail-out that was passed by this House.

I, too, did not vote for that legislation because I knew that the workers were not going to receive any type of benefit.

According to this chart, it says in transportation alone over 137,291 jobs were lost in that sector alone. In the hospitality, tourism, and entertainment industry we lost 135,783 jobs.

□ 2000

Communications and utilities, and I do not think I need to remind folks that in California we were hit pretty hard with our energy crisis. We lost 68,671. This is nationally.

In the manufacturing industry, one of the largest segments that has been affected here, 286,717 jobs lost.

In retail trade, that is our small businesses, where people are really striving to try to make a difference, we lost 20,000 jobs.

In the services, 47,000.

In finance, insurance and real estate, 31,000.

In public administration, over 12,000 jobs.

Other jobs, 82,000 jobs.

A total of 747,850 jobs lost that we know of, and this information is being provided to our offices by the AFL-CIO.

I would yield time to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN).

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, what stands out most in my mind is that the economic stimulus package that passed this House, that I did not vote for, gave more tax breaks to a certain segment. I call them the country club tax breaks. I say it is the reverse Robin Hood, and we have practiced it ever since a certain group took over this House. What I call it is reverse Robin Hood, robbing from the poor and working people to give tax breaks to the rich country club friends.

I am so happy to say that the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS), from Chicago, has joined us, and he wants to help us explain to the American people about this, the big dogs controlling this debate.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me congratulate the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN) for organizing this Special Order. They have identified one of the most immediate needs in our country, and that is the need to stimulate the economy.

I guess it must be somewhat official now in that economists are declaring that we are in a recession, and I can tell my colleagues, if the economy overall is in a recession, then in much of my district we are in a depression. For if America sneezes economically, many low income, intercity, rural and marginalized communities catch pneumonia. If the economic temperature drops, we go into a deep freeze. Therefore, we need an economic stimulus, and I mean a real stimulus, and we need it now.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, our response to the terrorist attacks, I commend the Congress, the President and the people for what we have done. What really amazes me the most is what we have not done. We have not bailed out the post office so that people can regain confidence in our mail services. We have not raised the minimum wage so that low-income wage earners may obtain a livable wage. We have not extended health care coverage so that unemployed workers who were laid off or have lost their jobs will have some protection.

Please, Mr. Speaker, I hope that nobody comes to me again with the same old worn-out, nonproductive, trickle-down theories of huge tax breaks for big corporations and the wealthy, with the idea that somehow this will reach those who are most in need. Most often, it does not. I call it the same old wine in a new bottle, or maybe we could call it the same old lemon with a new twist.

The real deal is that a rising tide will lift all boats, and so if we want to stimulate the economy, take John Smith who makes \$7.50 an hour, give him an extra \$50, and I guarantee my colleagues he will spend every penny of it, plowing it right back into the economy. He may go to the shoe store, buy little Johnny a pair of shoes, maybe Suzy a dress. Then the clerk at the shoe store can go to the grocery store, pick up a gallon of milk, maybe some eggs. Then the clerk at the grocery store can go to the beauty shop and see the cosmetologist who then goes to church, puts something in the collection plate. Maybe the preacher then goes to the car dealer, purchases a car, so that he can go and visit his parishioners in the county hospital. On the way, he purchases gasoline so that the person at the gasoline station then earns some money.

So if we want to really stimulate, I think we need to reach down to where the people are.

My mother was a great soup maker, and she could make a soup that was just out of sight. But I would always

notice that when she was making the soup she would take this big spoon and go deep down in the pot, and she would stir up the bottom, and then we could smell the aroma all through house as the ingredients mixed, and then we could be filled with nutrients as we would eat the soup. We would be healthy and happy.

This is what America has to do if we are going to stimulate the economy, that is, raise the minimum wage, extend coverage for unemployed workers, for people who are laid off, give them some health benefits so they can still be healthy, and then put the people back to work. If we are not prepared to do that, then we are not really talking about a stimulus. We are talking about a trickle-down system that does not work.

I again just commend my colleagues, both of them, for providing us with the opportunity to share with the American people.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) for being here tonight, also, and helping to clarify that the stimulus plan that was passed out of this House a few weeks ago did not address those workers that are in need of unemployment insurance. Many Latino workers, because of the fact that they may not work 40 hours and are viewed as part-timers, will not qualify for any assistance. That means their children, their families will go hungry.

We cannot ask charities to pick up that, because many of those folks are also hurting. We need to do something here in the House to extend that coverage beyond that, qualify people to make sure that their earnings can be calculated according to a sound method that would treat human beings adequately, because these are workers that support our economy.

I appreciate the statements of the kind gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS).

I yield time to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN).

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have one question. The gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) talked about his mother's soup. Now I need him to know that my grandmother used to do a sweet potato pie, and I mean her pie was the best pie, and those ingredients that she put in the pie represent the ingredients that we have here in this Congress, the economic stimulus, and the key is that everybody always wants a slice of my grandma's pie, and that is what our constituents want. They want a part of that soup and a part of the pie.

As I heard one of the colleagues on the floor say, we know that this is tilted one way. Tilted was not the word. The word was there was nothing left over. There was no pie nor soup for the majority of the American people. The economic stimulus package that passed this House was clearly for the country club set.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield time to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS).

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Let me just say one thing as I prepare to leave. The gentlewoman from Florida's (Ms. BROWN) grandmother was not only a great pie maker but she was also a very wise woman, because she taught the gentlewoman from Florida the value of getting a slice of that pie. Keep doing the work that your grandmother taught you.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) for his comments.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank both these gentlewomen for arranging the Special Order of this very important subject on the stimulus and pointing out to the American people what the ingredients of a good stimulus program would mean in order to benefit all Americans.

I like the analogy to food, because I like soup and I like dessert and I like sweet potato pie and I also like the idea of getting a slice of the pie. I do not want dessert to be gone.

American people, too, understand the very basics. They understand that this economy has had a big slowdown. In fact, recently, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities shared some important issues in the debate. There are those who would say that investing in corporate tax reduction or incentive for corporations would be the way to stimulate this economy. But, actually, when we understand that the downturn in this economy is based on a lack of demand for services and products, meaning people are not purchasing the products and services that the corporations have, that they have invested in, therefore understandable is the business theory that if there are more products and services than people are demanding, therefore, they have to reduce their employees for that.

So, as we do that, we also create a spiral, and that spiral is we have less families now with resources to buy those products and services that were already reduced. So we are increasing that spiralling that is going down.

Business is based on a market, a market that can afford to purchase the cars or the clothes, the large appliances or the services. To the extent that is not happening, the economy goes down.

Well, what would we put in that soup to make that economy respond immediately? Well, there are some things we could do. Obviously, investment is one, but that is a long-term strategy. We need a strategy that will bring that aroma of that soup, if I can play on that analogy a little bit, immediately. There was a soup when we are sick we give, mother's chicken soup, I think they used to say, and that would really get us well. We need something to really respond to the illness of the economy, and that does not mean long term. That is not a 6-month strategy. We need something immediately.

The bill that went out of the House, what it did, it proposed to transfer neatly funds to the States and to unemployment. They did not change the strategy, as the gentlewoman indicated. There are many people who are now not eligible for any unemployment. So they still will be ineligible. So what we have done is put more money that is in the State with the structure just like it is. It does not help those people in their needs.

Ms. SOLIS. Reclaiming my time, I think the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) makes an excellent point, and in that stimulus program that was passed on the floor Members voted on putting aside \$3 billion that would go out to States. Now, if the States have an astute governor, that might make sense because he could be creative and hopefully draw down that money and give it to these people who would not otherwise qualify for unemployment insurance. I am not sure that all the governors in this great country are going to be mindful of these people that we are talking about here tonight.

I hope people will heed our concerns and talk to their elected officials as well about garnishing that money and making sure that it goes to those particular families that are not going to be eligible under the categories of unemployment insurance, as well as the loss of health care, COBRA. Many people, because they work for small businesses, did not have health care coverage. We need to put money into Medicaid so that when they do go to the emergency hospital or go get a flu shot, they are going to have something there for them, not next year but this year.

I yield time back to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN).

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Ms. BROWN of Florida. On that point, if the gentlewoman will yield for a second, the gentlewoman said something that was very important when she spoke of the governors. Because I come from the great State of Florida, and one thing I can tell my colleagues about my governor from the great State of Florida, for the past 3 years we have given these ludicrous tax cuts. Well, what is the result? Florida is a tourist State. The tourists are not coming.

So we have given these large tax cuts every year, and what has happened? Florida now has a \$1.3 billion shortfall. Based on spending every dime that we have on a tax cut, now the revenue is not good so we do not have any money. So we are going in there cutting programs now. And let me just mention a few. Services for children. Blind kids. Can my colleagues imagine that? \$15.2 million cut just in one county. Duvall County school system cut out summer school programs. Florida will take from health care, and we talked about health care earlier today, \$146 million, \$109 million from public safety. Those

are programs for youth. Cutting out scholarship programs for kids in college.

So those are the results of this same kind of ludicrous policy we have going on in Florida that we are trying to transport here to Washington.

Mrs. CLAYTON. I think both of my colleagues' points are very timely, and it has to be understood in the context of our wanting to have a program that would have an impact immediately, that would not be a permanent fix, meaning that we want something that is temporary that we can remove when there is no need, but we want something that will be responsive for right now.

The bill that passed the House transferred unabated or unstructured or unmodified to the States the unemployment insurance that we have called the Reed Act. And what it would do, the States would have to match it. A case in point: if Florida is now in a deficit, they do not have a reserve to match it.

In fact, again responding to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, they made a survey of all the States, and the survey results by the National Association of State Workforce Agencies confirmed that 38 States of the 50 that responded stated that they have questioned whether they would use those funds. And most respondents say they would not expand or extend the benefit. Why? Because they are uncertain how long this will last. They know what their reserves are, but they are uncertain how long they would be expected to put up a match.

So we need to change that match. The match now does not favor the States making that kind of commitment, and the proposal should be where we have more of a Federal match expanded for those who are not covered and the Federal Government assuming more of a responsibility without adding those extra burdens to States that are already bankrupt or find themselves with real fiscal problems in that area.

Now, I want to talk about health; but I know the gentlewoman from Florida wants to respond to that, so I will stop for a moment.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Well, I first want to bring in the gentlewoman from Georgia (Ms. MCKINNEY).

Ms. MCKINNEY. Well, I thank my colleagues very much, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS), the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN), and the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON), my good friend and mentor.

The gentlewoman from Florida talked about policies from Florida coming up to D.C., and I guess what I want to talk about is policies from Texas coming up to D.C. and the impact that it is going to have on all of us. We know that minorities are hit hardest in times of trouble and lifted last in times of plenty. But I think it is correct to point out tonight some of the particular problems that are faced by minorities in this country.

Eighty percent of all Federal prisoners are minorities. Fifty percent of them are black. Blacks and Latinos are not graduating from high school. There is a 56 percent graduation rate for blacks, 54 percent graduation rate for Latinos, juxtaposed to a 78 percent graduation rate for whites. Forty-three percent of American children live in or near poverty. Thirty-three percent of black children live in poverty; 30 percent of Latino children live in poverty.

Let us talk about being able to just reach the age of 1. Black infant mortality is twice that of the rest of the American population. And as I was sitting in front of my computer terminal, as I do too much because my eyes are getting worse, a name came out at me. Jesus Blanco. Jesus Blanco was the first person in the year 2001 to freeze to death on the streets of Washington, D.C. How in the world in this country in the land of plenty can we have people freeze to death on our streets? Five people froze to death in Washington, D.C. Let us remember the name of Jesus Blanco. Twenty-three million Americans were forced to seek food assistance. But this was when times were great. This is before there was a recession. Just imagine what it is going to be now, when times are bad.

And instead of homeland security that protects our most precious assets, our values and our people, President Bush gives us three hits and two misses in Star Wars national missile defense. He gives us military tribunals that put us in the same league with Peru. Remember Lori Berenson? Burma, Egypt, all of whom we have criticized for their military tribunals, and now we are going to do the same thing and follow in their footsteps.

President Bush gave us a recession. Even though the recession did not start as 2001, as early as December 21 in 2000, Bush said, and I know it is true because it is here on the CBS News Web site, December 21 Bush said, "I have said that there are some warning signs on the horizon. I think people are going to find out that when I am sworn in as President, I will be a realist. And if there are warning signs on the horizon, we need to pay attention to them. We need to act in a positive way to make sure that our economy continues to grow so people will be able to find high-paying jobs. One of my responsibilities is to anticipate problems and be prepared to act."

But that is not all.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. If I can interrupt the gentlewoman for one quick second, I have a question. We are going to take up Fast Track tomorrow. Does my colleague think that is the solution? Is that the President's solution to the high-paying jobs?

Ms. MCKINNEY. Well, we all know that Fast Track is not the solution, because I used to represent a rural district. I know my colleague from North Carolina currently represents a rural district, and we lost our jobs.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. We lost them in Florida, too.

Ms. MCKINNEY. If I can return, because I would like to finish this, Vice President CHENEY, who before he was sworn in was talking about the recession that was on the horizon, and Bush said as early as this year that a warning light is flashing on the dashboard of our economy and we just cannot drive on and hope for the best. This was reported by the American Prospect in April of this year. Now, we have got President Bush and Vice President CHENEY saying all these things, and President Clinton told them not to talk up a recession; do not talk it up.

But we have seen plenty of stimulus. We have seen stimulus for the airline industry, even before we took care of airline security. We have seen stimulus for the insurance industry before the victims of the September 11 tragedies have even been taken care of. And what about America's working families? The gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN) even brought us today people from Florida who were crying not to cripple our public hospitals. But that is what they are going to do.

It is the economy, stupid. That was 1992. And advertise economy, stupid, which I am sure the American people will hear on 2002. A piece of the pie. A political piece of the pie as well as an economic piece of the pie.

I will yield now, but I have some devastating news about the election down in Florida that I want to talk about. Because when we talk about public policy up here, it depends on the actions of people who go to the polls and vote and think their vote is going to be counted. And then when they find out that their vote has been stolen from them, and we end up with this kind of public policy, maybe it has to do with how we even arrived at the people who are sitting making that public policy today.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I would ask the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) to join us and also ask the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) if she would like to finish up.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Yes, I wish to make a departing comment. I want to visit an analogy for the American people to understand and for those of us who are in this debate; a contrast giving a corporate investment stimulus and tax break as investing in the people in terms of uninsurance benefits.

If we understand that this economy is not due to a lack of cash, it is due to a lack of economy spending, there are not consumers, consumers with money, not corporations without money. It is not a lack of cash on the part of corporations; it is a lack of cash on the part of the average American citizen to buy products and services. So if we want to really be a realist in what it will take, we are investing in the wrong thing in order to get the economy moving.

We have to put cash in our citizens' hands, and we do that by making sure we have a structure that will allow us

to put cash in individuals' hands and in modifying the unemployment insurance and providing that insurance in such a way that States can use it. As it is now, the States will not use the Reed Act because it is too much of a burden on them. As it is now, the proposal has too much of a tax break. That means that only the investment side is there.

If we were not in a recession, that may make some sense. But we are in a recession, where there is a lack of consumers with cash to buy products and services. So we want to find a way where we modify that and have a more equitable way of stimulating interest. And I thank my colleagues again.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. I also want to thank the gentlewoman from North Carolina, our former class president, for her leadership. She is always right on target.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. I want to thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS). I know she invited me to come over and say a few words as it deals with the stimulus package, but let me say that my colleagues are exactly correct.

One of the things we have heard, and we have heard from every single economist, with perhaps one exception, we do have Senator GRAMM, who was an economist, but every single economist who is worth anything, the seven Nobel Prize winners, have indicated that we have been on the wrong track; that we have been in this recession since March; that we need to be able to come together and be able to do the right thing. And they agree that if we are going to consider any tax cuts, they have to be for the basis of creating additional jobs.

But we have been sending checks. And the economists tell us they do not need cash, what they need is consumers. And in order for us to create consumers, we have to allow those resources to go down there. So one of the first things we need to do, and one of the first responsibilities that we have, is that we have declared war. We have to make sure our homeland is secure.

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That should be first before any tax cuts.

In addition, let me add that they were quick to give the tax cuts, and I saw a check for \$1.4 billion for IBM, but at the same time they are dragging their feet when it comes to taking care of the people who have been losing their jobs. Just what happened in New York, a lot of people have lost their jobs in South Texas. On the Mexican border, it is taking 3 hours for people to cross the border. I have a 13 percent unemployment rate in Starr County, and we are having a rough time, and they are getting impacted like everyone else.

When we look at stimulating the economy, the only thing we have stimulated is the corporations. The rest of us have not received any stimulus. In the month of October, 450,000 people

have lost their jobs, the most in any month since May of 1980. We have a serious situation.

In addition, the comments that were made earlier by the gentlewoman from Georgia (Ms. MCKINNEY) regarding the impact to minorities, the African American is a little higher, about 9 percent. Unemployment for Hispanics and Latinos is 17.2 percent, while the national is 5.5 percent.

In order for us to turn this around, our first priority ought to be our national defense and taking care of our homeland. We have been told that we do not have enough people in the medical fields and in the areas to make sure that we have first responders to help our communities, our cities.

I got a report from the city of San Antonio, and I was told in the first 2 weeks after September 11, that we had over 500 calls. The majority were hoaxes, bomb threats, but it cost the community resources is the bottom line. That is occurring across the Nation and has a great impact on our local communities.

This battle, we have to protect our troops, but now it is a war, and we have to protect our families. Our families should come first. We ought to consider that and do the right thing when it comes to taking care of the pensions and making sure that workers get good benefits. As we looked at pensions and unemployment benefits, the data is startling. The fact that a great number of people, if they worked 30 hours, worked part time, they get nothing. Some States are worse than others. People are hurting.

Mr. Speaker, what little insurance they had, they are having difficulty getting access to their insurance. The minority, both African Americans and Latinos, are the least likely to have insurance coverage.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the gentleman for coming forward today and helping to provide a picture of what is happening in America, the face of the minorities, Latinos, African Americans, people who are disadvantaged, who do not have a voice at the table. The gentleman said that the unemployment rate in some of his cities is as high as 9 percent. In Los Angeles, in East L.A., we have upwards of 9 percent and more, and it is higher for the youth. We know that we are always the last hired and the first fired. We need to do something here to provide a stimulus, to get the Senate, the other House, to understand that these are some major concerns that we have, and they can help work this out.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I want to leave one last message. That is that every single war that we have declared, from the Spanish American war where we had the phone tax to the Gulf War, we have always had a war tax. This is the first time not only do we not have a war tax, we are giving tax cuts to special interests and taking care of them and stimulating them. At the same time, this is the first war

that we run it on the so-called surplus which we know is the resources that provide for Social Security and Medicare. This war is being run on the backs of our senior citizens.

Once again, I congratulate the gentlewoman.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, did the gentleman say more workers lost their job in October than any other month since May, 1980?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, that is correct. That is 450,000 Americans in the month of October alone.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, shame, shame, shame.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for joining us here.

Joining us here is the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE).

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her leadership and for engaging us in this dialogue tonight. Because we have to remind the public and the world that, as we move to enhance our national security and our public safety, we must also respond to economic security. We must be sure that we deal with this by passing a strong and fair economic stimulus bill that provides relief where it is truly needed. That is to our workers who have lost their jobs and also their health care. In losing their jobs, they lost their health care. This is really the right way to pass a plan to stimulate the economy. There is always a right way and a wrong way.

The wrong way to pass a bogus stimulus plan is to allow special interests, which we are allowing in this Congress, to use this moment to push and to solidify their corporate welfare agenda. The gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN) referred to tomorrow's vote on Fast Track. That is just another slap in the face to American workers. We have got to put a stop to this. We are here tonight trying to frame the arguments so people understand that there are many in this Congress that understand that an economic stimulus plan should target those in need. Creating jobs and economic development activities stimulate the economy. Providing for fair employment and health benefits to those who have lost their jobs, that creates economic stability, and that is the right thing to do.

I am really happy that the gentlewoman from Georgia (Ms. MCKINNEY) and all of the Members here on the floor tonight are talking about how minorities are especially affected by this recession and need an economic stimulus plan. The percentage of African Americans and Latinos who are unemployed rose more than 2 percent between October, 2001, going back to October, 2000. Minority women were affected the most. African Americans and Latinos are more likely to lose their jobs than other workers.

Additionally, many minority workers are not eligible for unemployment insurance because they work part-time or short-term jobs. That knocks them out of eligibility for unemployment in-

surance. Because minority workers, unfortunately, earn less than their white counterparts, they receive a smaller unemployment benefit.

Additionally, low-paid jobs mean that workers have less of a chance for workers being eligible for health benefits from their employers while they are working and, of course, when they are laid off. We need to pass a strong economic stimulus plan, one which extends the period of time for workers to be eligible for unemployment insurance and also extends the eligibility.

We also need a bill that provides for comprehensive health benefits for workers who have lost their jobs. We need a plan to improve our infrastructure which not only creates jobs but also renovates our crumbling schools and hospitals.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, being on the Committee on Transportation and the Infrastructure, for every billion dollars that we spend on infrastructure, it generates 49,000 jobs. If we want to stimulate the economy, then we should invest in the building up of our infrastructure and tie it to homeland security.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, so infrastructure development should be part of any economic stimulus plan that this Congress moves forward to the President's desk.

We also need to extend the \$300 per person rebate which the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) has worked very hard on, because over 50 percent of our low-income and minority families were left out of that benefit earlier this year, and that is not fair. That is wrong, and we should correct it since we have the opportunity to correct it now.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I know her district is a lot like mine, many folks that maybe just got laid off from the hotel and restaurant industry that was shattered by the September 11 attack. It hit all of us, no matter where the worker is, and on the chart here, 137,000 or more jobs were lost. What about the people already on the short stick that got pink slips before that disaster?

One of things that was an eye-opener for me, I visited one of the unions that had a lot of employees laid off. The union decided to put together a food bank to bring together resources to try to help these people out. What are we doing in this stimulus package that got passed here that is going to provide coverage for those families? I go back to that same thought that the governors can take hold of \$3 billion that is earmarked for every State. Every State can go into that pot and get money, but which astute governors are going to do that?

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentlewoman would yield, the gentlewoman is right. This is through no fault of their own. They lost their jobs through either recessionary measures or as a result of the tragedy of September 11. However they lost their job, they lost

their job, and they deserve unemployment benefits, and they deserve their health care.

Families who are laid off, they cannot keep waiting for a bill to be passed, hoping that they can extend their rent that is due or hoping that they might pay their mortgage sooner or later or hoping that their children's tuition will hang tough until they can figure out how to pay for their kids to stay in school. They cannot keep waiting for their grocery bills to be paid as we here in Congress promise that we are going to do something. I think during this holiday season we must remember those who really do need us the most.

Tax cuts will not provide relief for these families and for these workers. We need to provide a safety net immediately for families who desperately need our attention. Hopefully, we will continue to beat the drum, because this is such an important issue. It is so important for us in December now to really move this bill forward and move it in a way that benefits those that need it the most.

I thank the gentlewoman for this Special Order tonight.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, if the gentlewoman would yield, I want to mention that the bill that passed this House, the one that passed, I did not support it because it did not include almost any of those elements that we are discussing here tonight.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, it was a tax cut bill for the country club set.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, that is what most people are saying back home: Why did the Congress vote out a measure that does nothing for our families?

Mr. Speaker, I yield to Mrs. JONES.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for this opportunity to discuss the economic stimulus package. I agree with the statements that have been made by my prior colleagues, and I would like to associate myself with their comments.

If the gentlewoman would allow me, I would like to bring this issue particularly back to my own congressional district.

Mr. Speaker, currently, we have LTV Steel Company in bankruptcy. In fact, in court yesterday and today, the steel company has moved to have an opportunity to corral its assets and sell those assets. As a result thereof, we are looking at losing 3,200 workers from LTV Steel. If those 3,200 workers are laid off, another 40,000 workers across the State of Ohio will be impacted by the layoff.

Two things that I would like to have happen on the economic stimulus package is that the steel loan guarantee would be changed, that it would allow the steel loan guarantee bar to be reduced to allow a steel company in the United States to have the same application process as a steel company in a foreign country. Currently, if you are building a steel company in a foreign country, your economic layout does not have to be as strong as if you are building in the United States.

Secondly, I would like to have added a proposal that would allow for net operating losses to be used by steel companies when they have not been able to use them before because they have not been profitable and let those dollars be used as tax credits to pay retiree health care benefits, legacy costs, as well as to pay retiree health care benefits and retirement.

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I recognize that our time is coming to an end. I thank you for the opportunity to be heard. I would encourage those of you who are listening to me and my colleagues to allow these two amendments to any economic stimulus package we present so that the steel industry, that has significant numbers of minorities and women in those jobs, that they be able to stay in decent high paying jobs. I thank you for the opportunity to be heard.

Ms. SOLIS. I thank the gentlewoman for her remarks. It is very appropriate, given the discussion that we had earlier today on the floor, but also with the vote that we are going to take tomorrow on fast track. The whole irony is that we are going to be charged with building up our defense, and where do we get the steel?

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. From foreign countries.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. I want to thank the gentlewoman for organizing this special order. I think it is so very, very needed, that we point out how the minority communities around this country are suffering. You talked about California, but I want to point out I represent the third Congressional District of Florida that goes from Jacksonville to Orlando, and we have had one of the largest declines in tourists coming into the area. An area that had 30 million people coming through, it is scary when you look at the decline. It is for many reasons. People are not taking personal family trips, and we want to encourage them to do that, but they are not going to do it if they do not have jobs. They are not going to be tourists if they do not have the jobs. That is just common sense. So, job creation should be one of the things we should be doing, along with training, to stimulate the economy.

When we think about homeland security, let us look at it. We have looked at the security of the airports, but we have not discussed the ports. That is another area. For every \$1 billion we spend, it creates 49,000 jobs. We have not discussed Amtrak. That is another area that we need to deal with as far as security. In fact, we need to change our mode of operation completely on how we do things in this country, and we need to beef up security. That should be targeting part of any economic stimulus package that we bring forth to the American people.

One of my favorite scriptures that I quote all the time is to whom God has given much, much is expected, and he is expecting us during this time to

raise up and do more. When we have had special orders talking about how women and children are doing in other countries, we need to look at how women and children are doing in this country, how are women and children doing in this country.

Many of those workers that we are talking about are the head of the household, so, therefore, when they lose their jobs and there are no benefits and the benefits run out, there is no safety net, and it is our responsibility to do what we can to make a difference for the people in this country.

Once again, I want to thank the gentlewoman for her leadership in organizing this special order.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Florida and my colleagues that have come and spoken here tonight. Obviously you can tell that the women of this House, the minority women, are sending a resounding message to the public that the stimulus program that passed out of this House did not go far enough.

This is going to be a sad Christmas for many families all over the country, and particularly for those women and children that get no benefit at all. They are not that group of people that got the tax cuts. They are not the group of people that got the tax break, because they did not get enough money to earn to get a tax break.

Let us do the right thing. Let us make sure we put money and food on their tables and in their pockets so that they have a wonderful Christmas, something that I think all of us here can get behind.

Again, just to reiterate, the numbers here, the totality is still unforeseen. In our districts we have more people getting pink slips every single day, and those people are waiting for us to take action here in the House.

I want to thank my colleagues, and I hope that those that are not here tonight, that perhaps are listening to us, will understand the urgency of trying to provide immediate relief to those families, the working families that made America the great country that it has been, and to provide that security, that safety net, for all Americans, regardless of race, color and gender.

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I commend my good friends, Congresswoman CORRINE BROWN and Congresswoman HILDA SOLIS, for organizing this Special Order and for their leadership in bringing public attention to the disproportionate impact of the post-September 11th economic downturn on minority communities.

Mr. Speaker, the September 11th attacks have radically altered business prospects throughout our country. No community has been spared. While even places thousands of miles from the destruction of September 11th have been severely affected, tourist dependent communities that rely upon the airlines and the hotel industry, like my home town of Miami, have been particularly hard hit.

Mr. Speaker, the post-September 11th economic downturn has been difficult for many

Americans. It has been particularly devastating to the African-American community, both nationally and in my congressional district in Miami. We are in the midst of an economic crisis in the African-American community. My constituents desperately need relief. They need help and they need it now. It's scandalous that, almost 3 months after the despicable attacks of September 11th, we have yet to pass any meaningful relief for our workers and their families. Let's look at the facts: In October 2000, nationally, the percentage of unemployed African-Americans was 7.4%. In October 2001, the percentage is 9.7%, an increase of 2.3% which is an increase of 32% in the African-American unemployment rate in the past year. The rate went up 1.0% from 8.7% to 9.7% between September 2001 and October 2001.

From October 2000 to October 2001, the unemployment rate among African-American adult women, 20 and over, went from 5.8% to 8.9%, an increase of 3.1%, which is an increase of almost 53% in that unemployment rate in the past year.

From October 2000 to October 2001, the unemployment rate among African-American adult men, 20 and over, went from 7.0% to 8.0%, an increase of 1.0%, which is an increase of about 15% in that unemployment rate in the past year.

From October 2000 to October 2001, the unemployment rate among African-American teens, (16–19 years, went from 21.2% to 29.0%, an increase of 7.2%, which is an increase of about 32% in that unemployment rate in the past year.

In Miami-Dade County, in October 2001, the first month to reflect the impact of the September 11th attacks, the unemployment rate was 7.3%, up .9% from September 2001, and up 2.0% from October 2000, an increase of 36% in the past year. Normally, in Miami, the unemployment rate drops slightly between September and October because of tourism and agriculture. Obviously, this year, everything is different because of the catastrophic decline in tourism that resulted from September 11th.

Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Miami-Dade County jumped from 7,100 in September 2001 to 13,200 in October 2001, an increase of 85%. Initial claims for unemployment in October 2001 were up 143% from October 2000 because of major layoffs in tourism-related industries such as air transportation, water transportation, hotels, and business services.

Mr. Speaker, in this downturn, so far two-thirds of all mass layoffs and 74% of all initial claims for unemployment insurance have come from the manufacturing and service industries. From October 2000 to October 2001, nationally, over 1 million jobs were lost in the manufacturing sector as employment fell from 18.4 million to 17.3 million jobs. The Service Sector lost 70,000 jobs from October 2000 to October 2001 (1.93 million down to 1.86 million). From October 2000 to October 2001, there was a loss of 42,000 jobs in the restaurant sector alone!

Nationwide, in September 2001, the number of layoffs and initial claimants for unemployment insurance reached its highest levels since April, 1995. When the November figures are released this Friday, the figures are likely to be even higher.

Mr. Speaker, we all know about last hired, first fired. African-Americans get laid off more

frequently in an economic downturn. For decades now, for reasons ranging from lower educational levels, to the remoteness of job hubs from African-American neighborhoods, to the over-representation of blacks in low-skill part-time jobs with little security, to the impact of racial discrimination, the African-American unemployment rate has been roughly twice that of the white rate.

Mr. Speaker, the tens of thousands of workers who have lost their jobs as a result of the September 11th terrorist attacks need immediate relief. Since September 11th, more than 100,000 airline employees have lost their jobs. Many thousands more workers in industries directly and indirectly affected by the disruption of the airline industry also have been laid off. Small businesses also have been hit very hard by the September 11th attacks. Many of them lost key customers who constituted the lion's share of their business, as well as key suppliers who enabled them to do business. Unfortunately, it seems clear that we have not yet hit bottom. Unless we act promptly and decisively, many more hard working Americans, through no fault of their own, soon will lose their jobs. Mr. Speaker, all of these workers desperately need our help and they need it now.

Mr. Speaker, the human costs of this economic downturn for many of our fellow Americans are truly staggering. Airline and airport workers, transit workers, employees who work for airline suppliers such as service employees and plane manufacturers, all face common problems and challenges. Their mortgages, rents, and utilities still must be paid. Food must be placed on the table. Children must be clothed. Health care costs must be covered.

While some will get by depleting their savings, the vast majority of those who have lost their jobs have little or no savings to deplete. All of these workers need a strong, flexible and lasting safety net, the kind that only the Federal government can provide. With no income coming in and little prospect for prompt re-employment within their chosen field, these displaced workers must search for new jobs while few firms are even hiring. While some will find new positions quickly, many, if not most, will not. Some of this unemployment will be structural as some of these industries will be downsizing permanently. As a result, many workers will have to retrain in a new field or receive additional training in their chosen field simply to get reemployed.

So what is it that these workers need? Just like those workers who qualify for help under the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program, workers who lost their jobs because of the September 11th attacks need extended unemployment and job training benefits (78 weeks instead of 26 weeks). Those workers who would not otherwise qualify for unemployment benefits need at least 26 weeks of benefits. These workers especially need COBRA continuation coverage, that is, they need to have their COBRA health insurance premiums paid for in full for up to 78 weeks, or until they are re-employed with health insurance coverage, whichever is earlier. Those without COBRA coverage need coverage under Medicaid.

Mr. Speaker, this Congress acted quickly and responsibly to meet the challenges posed by the September 11th attacks. We acted as one to pass the Joint Resolution authorizing the use of United States Armed Forces against those responsible for the attacks

against the United States. We heeded the call of all Americans and said: Never, again. We stood shoulder to shoulder with President Bush, our Commander in Chief, firmly united in our resolve to identify and punish all nations, organizations and persons who planned, authorized, committed, or aided the September 11th terrorist attacks, or harbored such organizations or persons. We unanimously passed the \$40 billion Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill to finance some of the tremendous costs of fighting terrorism and of helping and rebuilding the communities devastated by these horrendous attacks. We provided cash assistance and loan guarantees to the airline industry. Now, Mr. Speaker, we must demonstrate the same resolve, the same commitment on behalf of our workers. Deeds, not just words, are required. All of these hard working, innocent displaced workers and their families desperately need our help. We must hear and answer their pleas. They need our help and need it now. We cannot rest until we have met their needs.

Mr. Speaker, even in good economic times, African-Americans suffer the nation's highest unemployment rates. In bad times, they tend to fare even worse losing jobs at a disproportionate rate and remaining out of work longer than other Americans. Mr. Speaker, this Congress said yes to the airlines and to other with extraordinary needs arising as a result of the September 11th attacks. Our workers deserve at least the same level of support. They have already waited far too long. Let's do the right thing for the minority community and all of our displaced workers by providing them with fair and immediate relief.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, we all know that today Chairman THOMAS and a number of our colleagues have begun negotiations on an Economic Stimulus Package. We also know that the administration and most of us are anxious to come to some kind of an accommodation that will help revive our faltering economy. Economic conditions are spiraling downward every day and certain sectors are experiencing dramatic setbacks. The traditional tourism and travel industries were the first to feel the impact. These industries fuel the service jobs that have been the first line of fire. The unemployment statistics are growing worse with each passing day with thousands of people set adrift with little or no compensation. Most of these jobs are at the low-paying, minimum wage end of the scale for which there is no soft landing, no cushion for these workers.

Therefore, the matter of directing economic stimulus towards lower-income workers is of vital importance towards the goal of this nation regaining economic health. If more deficits occur as a result of misdirected tax breaks for the upper 2% of the spectrum, we will not be able to achieve a positive outcome. There will not be enough stimuli for both bread and butter and the working poor will become even more devastated. Painful choices will have to be made between paying for food or for the car note, for the mortgage or for medicine.

Mr. Speaker, in my mind it would be disastrous to force such choices on our fellow citizens when they are already suffering severe loss. How could we in good conscience provide immediate refunds of corporate taxes paid since 1986, which were minimum to begin with, when we should be addressing the plight of the ranks of the unemployed and

those soon to enter that group? With businesses folding each day, our actions must work to ensure that we help the least fortunate of the working world as well as to strengthen the hand of small and medium enterprises that employ almost two-thirds of the work force.

For me and for many of my distinguished colleagues in this House, this issue strikes close to home. In our districts, across the country, large numbers of our constituents, particularly women, are employed in the service economy. They hold part-time or low-paying jobs. Many also have been the first to lose employment due to the layoffs and to the impact of the September 11th terrorist attacks. They have joined the throngs of the unemployed and have lost the minimal health and other benefits—if they had any. This situation is highly notable in minority communities across the major urban areas of America. What is being viewed as a recession in much of the country could be termed a depression in these already disadvantaged communities. In my own district, unemployment among African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans and other minority groups, many of whom work in the travel and tourism areas has reached a high proportion. As pointed out, unemployment in the Los Angeles area is well above the national level.

Mr. Speaker, we should be grateful for the attention on this critical matter being brought forward today by my distinguished colleagues, Congresswoman HILDA SOLIS and Congresswoman CORRINE BROWN. This Special Order should serve notice that we as congressional leaders want an economic stimulus package as much as the rest of the nation. We just want to prepare a plan that will aid the greatest number of our working citizens to ride out the effects of the worse economic downturn we have experienced in two decades. We want to ensure that this worsening job market is not disproportionately felt by our minority constituents who are already struggling to maintain their families at a level of dignity and well-being against difficult odds.

Black men, women and teenage citizens since 2000 have borne the brunt of falling employment at a higher rate than other Americans. Since the playing field is not yet level and hiring discrimination, unfortunately, is still a fact of life in our great country, what can we do to help these impoverished communities?

Mr. Speaker, there must be a safety net below which no working American should fall. I urge us to come up with a stimulus package that can achieve this objective in the immediate term. This is an important challenge for us and has implications for our nation's recovery, both economically and psychologically from the horrific attacks of September 11. We need urgent action. We cannot delay any further on this critical task before us.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2944,
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2002

Mr. KNOLLENBERG (during the special order of Ms. SOLIS) submitted the following conference report and statement on the bill (H.R. 2944) making appropriations for the government of the District of Columbia and other activities chargeable in whole or in part