

That was enacted into law in June. By Labor Day, economists were telling us the tax cut was working on getting our economy moving again. Unfortunately, the tragedy of the terrorist attacks on September 11 occurred and that tragedy cost thousands of Americans their lives. It was a terrible tragedy, but also it also gave a psychological blow to our economy, causing investors and consumers to step back from decisions they had made prior to September 11. Unfortunately, by stepping back from those decisions, it cost hundreds of thousands, and almost a million, Americans their jobs.

Today, over a million Americans have lost their jobs since the terrorist attacks on September 11, tens of thousands in the area that I represent in the Chicago area. To win the war against terrorism, we must get this economy moving again. We must give Americans the opportunity to go back to work.

I would note that this House, the House of Representatives, has twice, in October and in December, acted to get the economy moving again, passing a bipartisan economic stimulus plan and sending it over to the Senate. Unfortunately, partisan politics prevented our efforts from succeeding in getting to the President's desk and signature into law. I believe we must not give up on our efforts to revitalize this economy and give Americans the opportunity to go back to work.

During these times, some Democratic leaders have called for a tax increase. I am proud to say that this past week the House spoke loud and clear stating opposition overwhelmingly to a Democratic proposal to repeal the Bush tax cut. No economist says that we should raise taxes in a recession, but that we should bring spending under control.

I want to take this opportunity to urge our leadership, as they consider what to do next, to once again move legislation to stimulate our economy and to bring economic security for American workers. I want to rise to suggest one provision that I believe must be included in that package that we send to the President, a provision that is a strong stimulation for our economy. Many of us know it as accelerated depreciation, or depreciation reform, or expensing, or bonus depreciation.

The provision, which has strong bipartisan support in this House, provides for 30 percent expensing, giving faster or quicker cost recovery for a business that buys an asset. Think about it. When someone buys a pickup truck or a computer or security equipment, there is a worker somewhere in America who manufactures that product. There is a worker that is going to install it and service it. And of course there is going to be a worker who is going to operate that piece of equipment. Accelerated depreciation, the 30 percent expensing provision rewards investment in those kinds of jobs.

I would note the only way to take advantage of that tax incentive is to in-

vest and buy and create jobs. Many businesses back home that I know of, since September 11, are also upgrading their security and their safety measures in their plants. Accelerated depreciation will help them better afford to make their plants and places of work safer and more secure for their employees and visitors.

□ 1300

Over the next few days, decisions are going to be made on how we can better help by extending unemployment benefits. The gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) and President Bush have urged a tax credit to help the uninsured with health care insurance. That is a good idea, and I believe that should be part of that final package. But I also believe that we mean to combine the unemployment benefits and the health care benefits with incentives to invest in the creation of jobs. Accelerated depreciation of a 30 percent expensing component will help put Americans back to work.

Mr. Speaker, I have a letter signed by almost three dozen Members of this House, a letter circulated by myself and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. UPTON) and the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLEY), urging our leadership to include accelerated depreciation in any package that goes to the President, and I include that for the RECORD.

WASHINGTON, DC,  
February 6, 2002.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,  
Speaker of the House,  
The Capitol, Washington DC.

DEAR SPEAKER HASTERT: We are disappointed by the recent breakdown in negotiations in the Senate on a meaningful economic stimulus package. We firmly believe that Congress can help balance the desire to promote economic growth with efforts to help those workers who have lost their jobs due to the recession.

If the Senate sends the House a bill extending unemployment benefits by 13 weeks, we would encourage you to add the one major economic growth component that is bipartisan and agreed upon by almost everyone, the 30% accelerated depreciation bonus for new investments. Not only is this provision bipartisan, but it is widely supported by most businesses and business groups.

The combination of a temporary unemployment compensation and the 30% bonus depreciation proposal would provide an excellent balance between providing a helping hand to workers out of work and struggling because of the recession and the desire to foster economic growth. The most important feature of the accelerated depreciation proposal is that in order for businesses to take advantage of the bonus, a decision must be made to purchase and invest in new equipment. When businesses make these investments, employees are put back to work engineering, building, installing and operating the new products, thereby stimulating and growing the economy. This type of stimulus is exactly what the economy needs to pull out of the current recession.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to working with you on this proposal.

Sincerely,

JERRY WELLER.  
FRED UPTON.  
CAL DOOLEY.

## UNEMPLOYED AMERICAN WORKERS NEED ASSISTANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, later this week the House will adjourn for district work period in honor of Presidents Day and give us an opportunity to go home and talk to our constituents. It is a tragedy before we adjourn, we will not deal with the problems of unemployment. Those who were unemployed prior to September 11, who have been unemployed for many, many months, those who were unemployed as a result of September 11 because of the downturn in the economy because of that tragic event against this country, but both of these categories of the unemployed need our help. They are exhausting their unemployment benefits.

Close to a million people have exhausted their unemployment benefits. Many of those who were unemployed were working in occupations that were at the margins. They were not able to build up extensive savings accounts or a rainy day fund for their family. They were not able to pay their mortgage in advance or car payments in advance. When the checks stopped, they were in trouble.

I have now listened to many of these workers in California, Indiana and New Jersey who have testified that they worked for 15 years, 10 years, 8 years, women in professional jobs at banks, truck drivers, people who worked in the dot-com industry, and now they are in serious financial trouble because they are in the process of exhausting their unemployment benefits.

Last week the Senate took the necessary step to extend it for an additional 13 weeks. Last week the House of Representatives did nothing. This week the House of Representatives will do nothing. It is incredible the insensitivity of the Republican leadership to the needs of these hard-working American families. These are people who have really, really good work records. They have been trying to provide for their families for many years. A young man who worked for Sunkist Corporation in California told our meeting that he had been driving a truck for 15 years, he was able to buy a home a few months ago, and now he is scrambling to pay the mortgage. He is invading his retirement benefits and 401(k) to try to save his house. This is not an unusual story.

There is also the issue of over 2 million people who have lost health care benefits because of unemployment. Congress has failed to respond. One of the proposals was to help them provide the payment of the COBRA benefit that allows workers to continue the employer's health insurance plan until

reemployed. That is an absolute necessity for many of the unemployed because if they cannot continue that plan and they have a preexisting health condition, or their child has a preexisting health condition or spouse does, that individual's break in employment, break in health insurance means very likely that condition will not be covered when reemployed. That is why the COBRA benefit is so terribly important. Yet for those 2 million people, Congress has done nothing.

The tax credit that the President offers does not solve that problem for hundreds of thousands of families that are in that situation. Or for those people's whose spouses may have had a bout with cancer, or whose children who may have a childhood illness, that would not be covered.

Yet Congress insists it is going to take leave of this town, go home for 13 or 14 days, and we are going to fail to address the needs of these families. We must understand that these families are in dire financial straits. In dire financial straits. They are either adding up their debt because they are living off of what credit card debt they have available to them, they are borrowing from family members, or they are invading their retirement funds. Why in America should a working family that finds itself unemployed through no fault of their own, because of a terrorist activity or because of a downturn in the economy, they showed up and went to work every day, why should they lose all of their assets before we help them with health care or extend them some benefits?

Mr. Speaker, we ought to extend the 13 weeks immediately. If there is a break, and a worker has been working in the hospitality industry or low-paying jobs in this country, 2 weeks, 4 weeks without a check is a devastating event. Maybe Members of Congress cannot understand that, but when Members go home for the district work period, Members need to talk to these people. Then Members will begin to understand the desperate straits that millions of Americans find themselves in because of this Congress' failure to extend the unemployment benefits.

#### CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on campaign finance reform, legislation once again before this Chamber. I, like most of my colleagues, support some type of campaign reform. I know that reasonable and balanced reforms to our current campaign finance system is necessary. Unfortunately, the Democrat bill, the Shays-Meehan bill, does not strengthen or improve our campaign finance system as well as I think the Ney-Wynn bill does, which is a Republican alternative.

In fact, I think the Democrat bill does more to harm than help both the political process and the Constitution by hurting the ability of political parties to increase citizen involvement and participation, unconstitutionally limits free speech, and tilts the playing field towards one party or another. For this reason, I applaud the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. WYNN) in their bipartisan bill for their efforts at sensible reform for our current system.

Proponents of the Shays-Meehan bill, which is support by the minority leader, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT), claim their legislation puts an end to soft money. That is false. None of the proposals before this body ban a complete ban of soft money. Even the most cursory of glances indicates there is no soft money ban in the Shays-Meehan campaign finance legislation.

In reality, this bill bans the national parties from raising or spending soft money, but it does nothing to prevent unions, corporations, and other special interests from spending as much soft money as they want on election activity. As a result, corporations or unions are allowed to give tens of thousands of dollars to each State and local party committee. With over 3,000 counties in the United States, this means corporations and unions will still be permitted to inject millions of dollars of soft money into the political process. As such, the soft money debate amounts to nothing more than a shell game with dollars being shuffled and moved from one part of the table to another, and the American people losing out.

Furthermore, the Democrat plan does not ban soft money advocacy, it only bans it on the eve of an election. Through such rulings as *Buckley v. Valeo* in 1976 and other cases, the Supreme Court has declared that the government may not regulate political commentaries "to promote a candidate and his views." Since the 1976 *Buckley v. Valeo* decision, strong majorities have supported protections for the expenditure of money for political communications. The first amendment cannot be sacrificed by government restrictions on issue ads and free speech. No matter how they are dressed up, such restrictions still involve government regulation of political speech.

Mr. Speaker, the proposal to be offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. WYNN), supported by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT), is aimed at reforming our current system of laws, but does so in a manner that is rational, balanced, and, most importantly, constitutional. Their legislation bans the use of soft money by national parties for Federal election activities. It does not, however, impose new burdensome Federal laws and rules on State parties. It restores and enhances grassroots politics by allowing State and local parties to continue to assist State and local candidates with

funds permissible under applicable State law.

Most importantly, their proposal does not violate constitutional rights to free speech, nor destroy the ability to participate in the political process. So I support fair and balanced solutions to improving our campaign finance system. As such, I have voted accordingly and supported the Hutchinson-Allen bill, which was patterned after the Ney-Wynn bill when it was considered on the House floor in the last Congress. Unfortunately, it failed.

Mr. Speaker, had the rules governing the amendment process not been limited for this upcoming debate, I would have also supported amendments to allow tax credits for up to \$200 for individuals for Federal political contributions, thereby creating an incentive for persons of all financial means to participate in the political process.

Additionally, I support allowing permanent resident aliens serving in the Armed Forces to make campaign contributions. And if we really want to clean up the current system, I support prohibiting labor organizations from fund-raising on Federal property through the use of payroll deductions.

If advocates of misguided campaign finance reform are successful in passing this legislation, they will have done nothing to prevent future campaign abuses. Instead, they will be successful in eroding and handicapping Americans' right to free speech and the right to political expression. Therefore, I urge all of my colleagues to support the Ney-Wynn bill.

□ 1315

#### WHY COMMUNITY SERVICE IS IMPORTANT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to make some comments today on how everybody in America probably should do a little more in helping their fellow man in contributing some community service, either at the community or national level.

I was this past week deciding on the essay topic that I ask seniors to write to apply for what I have called the LeGrand Smith Scholarship. It is named after my dad. I simply take all of the pay increases that I have had since I first ran in the Michigan Senate back in 1983; I have put these pay increases into an irrevocable trust for scholarships for graduating seniors. It is designed to reward and acknowledge those individuals in high school that are not only academically capable but also are willing to contribute to others in community service or in leadership positions in high school. Part of that decision in scoring of the committee that decides who the winners are is