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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 19, 2002.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN ABNEY CULBERSON to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) for 5 minutes.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, today, we are a Nation at war, we are working to build our homeland security, and we are suffering an economic recession. I am proud to say that our commander-in-Chief, President Bush, has shown strong, resolute leadership in the war against terrorism and has been working to build our homeland security as well as giving Americans the opportunity to go back to work.

One thing we must not forget in this war against terrorism is that it is not going to begin or end in Afghanistan. The war against terrorism could last years, not just months. But also, if we are going to win the war against terrorism, we have to recognize that we must get our economy moving again.

As we look back, over 1 year ago when President Bush became President, he inherited a weakening economy, an economy that was getting weaker by the day; and the President said that we need to give Americans more spending money, we need to cut taxes, we need to take 20 cents out of every dollar of our budget surplus and give that back to the American workers to help the economy. Well, that tax cut was signed into law in June of this past year, eliminating the marriage tax penalty, eliminating the death tax, and lowering taxes for every American.

Economists were telling us by Labor Day that it was working, the economy was beginning to be on the rebound. Then, of course, the tragedy of September 11 occurred. That terrorist attack on American soil cost thousands of Americans their lives; and since September 11, the psychological blow on the economy of that terrorist attack has cost almost a million Americans their jobs. So we need to get the economy moving again. We need to give Americans the opportunity to go back to work.

Now, I am proud to say that House Republicans have fought hard and led the way to give Americans the opportunity to go back to work. Four times this House of Representatives passed an economic stimulus package and economic security legislation, helping those laid off with extended unemployment benefits and providing incentives for investment and the creation of jobs. We want American workers to be able to go back to work. That is our goal. We recognize that in the past decade it was investment in jobs that created economic growth.

I am proud to say that the fourth time was a charm. After this House fought month after month, October, November, December, January, and just a few weeks ago we passed for the fourth time legislation to give Americans help, as well as the opportunity to go back to work. Our Democratic friends relented and worked with us in a bipartisan way, and we were able to put on the President's desk legislation to help American workers, and the President signed it into law.

With the economic stimulus and security package we have helped American workers who have been laid off with extended unemployment benefits, and we have also provided incentives for investment and the creation of jobs. This legislation will provide an opportunity to give businesses who purchase assets an opportunity to write that off quicker with something we call 30 percent expensing, or some call bonus depreciation. It essentially provides a way to recover the cost of that pickup truck or that computer or that piece of telecommunications equipment much more quickly.

The benefit of that is felt when a business buys a pickup truck. There is, of course, an auto worker who makes that pickup truck, as well as the parts that go in it, and there is a worker who services and installs equipment in that pickup truck. There is also a worker who is going to operate that pickup truck for that business. That creates jobs and rewards investment. And I am proud to say that the 30 percent expensing was the centerpiece of our economic stimulus plan in rewarding investment.

The legislation will also help homeland security. Many businesses in America felt it was important after September 11 that they make their businesses, their plants, their stores, their offices, their places of business safer and more secure for their workers, their customers, and their visitors; and so their purchase of extra security equipment, safety equipment, software

and cybersecurity equipment costs money. The 30 percent expensing will help them recover the cost of investing in cybersecurity and surveillance equipment and software and other measures to ensure their workplace and business is more safe and secure for those who visit or work there.

We also recognize that many companies this year, because of the recession, are losing money. We gave an opportunity for those companies that are currently losing money to be able to come up with some investment capital to reinvest in jobs within their company, even though they are losing money this year, by allowing them to go back 5 years, to a year they may have made some money, and apply this year's loss to that profitable year. They will essentially get a tax refund and can then use those dollars to invest in job creation. That is what it is all about.

We want to get this economy moving again, and so that is why we wanted to provide investment incentives with 30 percent accelerated depreciation as well as giving those companies losing money this year the opportunity to carry back this year's loss and come up with investment capital.

I am proud to say this House has acted. We are giving American workers the opportunity go back to work, we are helping those unemployed; and I am proud to say House Republicans lead the way.

ARAFAT IS THE PROBLEM, NOT THE SOLUTION

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

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, as we speak here today, Vice President CHENEY and General Zinni are both in the Middle East trying to help in the peace efforts. I think it is very important, though, to put things in perspective as the fights and the clashing between the Palestinians and the Israelis continue.

For a number of months now, many months, there has been the question of what is Arafat doing to stop terrorism and can Arafat actually stop terrorism? Is he able to do it and does he want to do it? I would like to call the attention of my colleagues to an article last week that appeared in USA Today, and it is right here, blown up, and it says, ''Terrorist says orders come from Arafat. Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade leader says group is integral to Palestinian chief's Fatah.''

I think it has been very, very clear that not only is Yasir Arafat not the solution to stopping terrorism in the Middle East, he is the problem. He is the one that is sanctioning the terror in the Middle East. Three-quarters of the terrorist attacks directed against innocent Israeli civilians in the past several months all come from organizations to which Arafat is the leader, the Al-Aqsa Brigade, Fatah Tanzim, these are all groups under the control of Yasir Arafat.

So it is not simply a matter of can he control terrorism and will he control it, it is simply a matter of he is the terrorist. He has never changed. Some people can change and grow, but he has never changed. Terrorism is used as a negotiating tool, and it is something that countries cannot tolerate.

It does not matter what one feels about the Israeli response. It does not matter what one feels about how terror is being fought. President Bush put it best. He said, you are either with the terrorists or you are with us.

We launched a campaign in Afghanistan to root out terrorist cells not because the Government of Afghanistan, the Taliban, as abhorrent as they are, were doing the terrorist attacks, but the Taliban were aiding and abetting al Qaeda, which was carrying out the terrorist attacks.

Now, if we go to Afghanistan, and rightfully so, and I support everything President Bush has done and everything our brave men and women are doing over there, but if it is right for us to fight terrorism against innocent civilians, and as a New Yorker we all know the pain of the World Trade Center, and as someone who works in Washington, we all know the pain of what happened at the Pentagon, but if we have the right to fight terrorists on the other side of the world, surely Israel has the right to fight terrorism right in their own back yard. Repeatedly, Arafat has been asked to curb terrorism. And again not only is he not doing it, according to this article, which is very accurate, he is directing the terrorist attacks.

Now, I am glad Vice President CHENEY has not met with Arafat. He is in the Middle East now and he said he would meet with Arafat under one condition, that the Palestinians need to embrace the Tenet plan. And what does the Tenet plan say? It simply says, stop the violence as a first step to negotiations. But the Palestinians, under Arafat, do not want to stop the violence; they want to use it as a negotiating tool. This has been a constant with them.

Violence and terrorism against innocent civilians cannot be used as a negotiating tool, and it is never acceptable no matter what the grievances are. Blowing yourself up and taking 15 people with you, killing innocent kids at pizza shops and discotheques is not acceptable. And if it is not acceptable in New York or in Washington or Virginia, it is not acceptable in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem either. It is not acceptable anywhere in the world. So I think it is very, very important that we look and see what is happening in the Middle East, who is carrying out these terror attacks against innocent civilians.

Now, I hope that when Vice President CHENEY is going around to the capitals to try to line up U.S. support for whatever we wind up doing in Iraq, I think it is important that he is doing that, but I, frankly, do not think the security of innocent civilians in Israel should be sacrificed. And if the people in the Arab capitals are saying, well, you know, this Palestinian-Israeli question is a problem and we cannot get Arab support for any incursion in Iraq unless that ends, Israel should not be used as a sacrifice because we want Arab support for Iraq.

Let us say the way it is. Arafat is the terrorist, he is the problem, he is not the solution.

THE BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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, this week we are taking up the budget. We are going to increase the limit on how deep this government can go into debt. Every year we spend more tax dollars and we add more government services, and my concern is that too many Americans are becoming too dependent on government.

By the next election, this fall, a majority of Americans will be dependent on Federal Government for their health, their education, their income, or their retirement benefits. Some suggest that as many as 60 percent of households receive more than $10,000 a year from government in the form of retirement, health care, welfare or other benefits. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, the number of taxpayers paying for these benefits is rapidly shrinking.

The question is, how well can any free nation survive when a majority of its citizens heavily dependent on government services no longer have the incentive to restrain the growth of government? As we all know, over the last 50 years, American attitudes have been shifting from cherishing self-sufficiency and personal responsibility to wanting a little more security from the Federal Government to assure them of a certain number of benefits. Government benefits, once concentrated on the needy, now extend into the middle and upper-middle class households, even as more and more Americans see their income tax liabilities decrease.

Today, the majority of Americans can vote themselves more generous government benefits at little or no cost to themselves. As a result, they have really little incentive to restrain the continued growth of big government and the benefits big government dangles before them. Fifty percent of Americans now pay less than 4 percent of the total individual income taxes, while the top 5 percent pay nearly 55 percent of the individual income taxes. At the same time, the folks who are paying the least for government are receiving the most benefits. Americans who receive nearly half of the Federal Government benefits pay only, listen