

see how the Republican majority has turned this House into an undemocratic institution where the people who are elected by the people cannot even have the ability to speak their minds.

We are fighting for democracy in Iraq, but we will not allow democracy on the floor of the United States House of Representatives. For shame.

The average American is not stupid. In fact, the average American is very smart. The average American knows that when he or she has a budget they must live within their budget. They make a certain amount of money. They take home that money. They have to pay their bills with that money, and they know that they cannot week in and week out spend more than they take in. A person can do it for a while. They can charge everything on their credit card for a while. They can keep paying minimums on their credit card for a while, but sooner or later the bubble is going to burst. That is what we are doing here in the United States Congress.

My Republican friends talk a good game about balancing the budget and a balanced budget amendment, and by the way, the balanced budget amendment passed here in the House several years ago, failed by one vote in the Senate, and the Republicans, despite having the majority in both Houses, have not brought it up again.

The fact of the matter is that when Bill Clinton left office we had a surplus of \$200 billion per year, and now in two short years we have a deficit of \$400 billion per year, and these tax cuts, mainly for the wealthy, will dig us deeper and deeper and deeper in a hole.

We are leaving our children and our grandchildren with a legacy of debt. We are having an orgy now of tax cuts and saying to our future generations, you pay the bill. We are going to walk away. We are going to do things that are easy. Everyone likes a tax cut. Of course, a majority of people favor the tax cuts. Everyone wants more money in their pockets, but what are we doing to our children and our grandchildren and the fiscal responsibility of this country?

The Republican leadership, the Republican majority here wants to do this, in my estimation, deliberately. The ancillary benefits, giving their rich friends a tax cut, is only an ancillary benefit. They want to starve this government and make it impossible for there to be any kind of program, entitlement programs like Social Security or Medicare or Medicaid or education, for our children. They do not want it so a balanced budget goes out the window. Deficits and deficits.

Let us take a quote from the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), the current majority leader. This is what he said in 1995, "By the year 2002, we can have a Federal Government with a balanced budget or we can continue down the present path toward total fiscal catastrophe." That was in 1995. I ask the majority leader and the people

on the other side of the aisle, what was true in 1995 is certainly true in 2003. We cannot continue to run these deficits. We cannot continue to have this kind of fiscal irresponsibility. The borrow and spend Republicans cannot continue to lead this country down a path of fiscal irresponsibility.

It is a disgrace that we now have to take to the floor of the House after the bill has been voted on because we could not get the time to talk before.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MARKEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TAX CUTS AND THE ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. LOFGREN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, just 3 years ago when the President took office, San Jose, California's unemployment rate was only 1.7 percent. At that time, our Nation had a projected \$5.6 trillion 10-year surplus. Today, instead, we have an 8.5 percent unemployment rate in Santa Clara County, and with this tax package a \$2 trillion projected national deficit.

Since the President took office, San Jose has lost almost 16 percent of its jobs. When all is said and done, it is projected that we will, in fact, use the over \$12 trillion in debt ceiling that Republicans slipped into the budget resolution a few weeks ago. What a turnaround.

What does the President propose? For the most part, more of the same failed tax schemes. Tax cuts for a select few have done nothing to improve the economy so far and more of the same will not help. Further, the Republican tax plan does nothing to help unemployed workers and will leave millions of families out in the cold when their unemployment benefits expire on May 31.

Mr. Speaker, since the President took office, California has lost 239,000 jobs. Over 175,000 of those jobs were deleted from my home, Santa Clara County, and I hear from people at home, well-qualified, well-educated and talented people who have been laid off for over a year, people who have sent out 2,000 resumes who cannot get a job interview, people whose stock portfolios are shot, whose bank accounts are drained, whose unemployment insurance is running out and who cannot find work.

It is pathetic that the President's answer is this tax cut scheme. While there are a few temporary crumbs to small business and normal people, the vast majority of the financial impact is caused by the tax cuts for the few, which will not create economic growth. The President's words about creating

jobs and stimulating growth are right. It is just that his plan is disconnected from his rhetoric.

He must think the unemployed are also dumb, that they will not see the truth of what is happening here, but I think he is wrong on that score and is it not ironic that those few provisions in this tax bill we passed today, like the child tax credit and marriage tax reform and expensing for small businesses, the things that benefit normal people, those sunset. The real expensive part of the program that is skewed to the select, those go on forever.

The Republican plan is irresponsible, deceptive, will not create jobs or grow the economy and will saddle the country with debt to hurt our potential for long-term economic growth. We are actually borrowing money from the Social Security Trust Fund to cut taxes for the top 5 percent of households.

Economists tell us that this plan is the smallest bang for the buck in terms of creating economic stimulus of any of the plans that have been publicly discussed. It is projected to create less jobs in the next year than we have lost in the last 2 months.

Republicans both in this House and in the White House talk a lot about faith-based programs. The man who calls the shots here in the House, the majority leader, does not even believe in evolution, and I have heard that is true for the President as well. They have a right to have faith, even when it seems at odds with the facts in their religious lives, but when their faith in tax cuts for the few threaten the economic stability for our Nation, then I think it is time to draw the line on their blind faith.

Today, the Republicans in this House used their narrow majority to shorten debate and prevent consideration of the fiscally responsible growth plan. There is an aura of corruption that clings to the Republican leaders who celebrate the onset of democracy in Iraq but cannot abide real democratic processes in the Congress of our Nation that is supposed to be freedom's leader.

This is a watershed day, one that I think in later years we will recall with dread and with regret.

MORE MEDIA DEREGULATION WILL BE A DISASTER FOR DEMOCRACY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, I recently held a town meeting at St. Michael's College in Vermont to discuss an issue that for obvious reasons does not get much media coverage, and we had over 600 people, Vermonters, coming out to this meeting to discuss the issue of corporate control over the media and the impact that further media deregulation will have on the quality of our democracy.

At that meeting we had a gentleman named Michael Copps, one of the commissioners on the Federal Communications Commission, who laid out what is happening at the FCC and told us what most Americans do not know, that on June 2 the FCC is likely to hold a vote which will further deregulate media in the United States and create a situation in which a handful, a tiny handful of huge media conglomerates will largely control what the American people see, hear and read. What we have today is already a very dangerous situation. What is likely to happen after June 2 will be even worse.

What do we have today? If we turn on the television and watch NBC, how many people know who owns NBC? It is owned by General Electric, one of the largest corporations in the world, a corporation with enormous conflicts of interests in a dozen different areas. Turn on CBS. Who owns CBS? It is owned by Viacom, another huge company. Turn on ABC, owned by Disney. Turn on Fox, owned by the right wing Australian billionaire Rupert Murdoch. Turn on CNN, owned by AOL-Time Warner, another huge corporation.

What happens when we end up with a few large companies determining the flow of information in America? Two things happen. Number one, if we listen to radio, we know that on talk radio, the only differences that we hear are between right wing radio talk show hosts and extreme right wing talk show hosts. There is virtually nobody on national talk radio who is expressing the needs of working Americans, of the middle class, of low income people.

If we watch television, huge sections, huge areas of great concern to the American people are virtually never discussed. How many Americans know that we as a Nation have the most unfair distribution of wealth and income of any major country on earth? The richest 1 percent own more wealth than the bottom 95 percent, and the Bush tax proposal will only make that situation worse.

Have my colleagues heard discussion on that issue? Is it appropriate to give tax breaks to billionaires when we have the highest rate of childhood poverty in the industrialized world? When we turn on the television we can see a lot of advertising come from the large drug companies. How many Americans know that we are the only major country on earth that does not have a national health care program that guarantees health care to all people as a right of citizenship? Yet we end up spending twice as much per capita on health care as any other country.

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Mr. Speaker, turn on television, you hear a lot of discussion about a lot of things; but you may not know in the United States, our people, especially seniors, are forced to pay by far, not even close, the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs. Turn on TV, read the editorial papers of your

newspapers. You will hear how great our trade policy is doing. How many people know that NAFTA, most-favored nation status with China, was pushed upon Congress by the big-money interests who also own the media but have resulted in huge job losses for working people in this country.

If deregulation of media goes forward, this is what will happen. For the first time, we will have television stations and newspapers in a given town or city owned by the same person. You are going to turn on TV and get the same point of view as you do from the local newspaper owner. Also as a result of further media deregulation, we will see large television companies able to own more and more TV stations all over the country. The trend is very clear. Fewer and fewer large corporations own more and more of the media. This is dangerous for democracy. It must be opposed.

TAX CUT AIMED AT COFFERS OF THE RICH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HENSARLING). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. MEEKS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Mr. Speaker, the first tragedy of today is we did not have democracy at its best. Democracy at its best would have called for a debate on this great floor of the House of Representatives so that the Democrats and Republicans would have had an opportunity to roll out their respective plans so that the people of America would have known what the Republican plan was and what the Democratic plan was.

However, it must be out of fear that the majority had decided that they were going to completely silence the minority by not allowing them to debate the issues on the floor so that the American people can see what is happening here in this House of Representatives.

Therefore, I am compelled to come to make a statement in Special Orders as opposed to debating with my colleagues on something that is so fundamental and so important to our great Nation. It is important to its future, and it is important for our children and our children's children. So I have to rise today to express my concern and opposition to the huge, unfair, and illogical tax cut which the majority just propelled through the House of Representatives today.

I listened to the debate this morning, and I had to wonder how long it would take, if you would call that a debate. Because it was only an hour and we did not have an opportunity to do anything else on our side, I had to wonder how long would it take before we, as a body, realize that this tax cut is nothing more than the 2001 tax cut in 2003 clothes.

In May of 2001, we, those of us who are Democrats, made a passionate plea

to the administration to temper and equally disburse its 10-year tax cut which did not protect the Social Security trust fund, did not include funds for much-needed domestic priorities, and was almost totally based on projected revenues barring any catastrophic event. A modest tax surplus meant that Americans had earned some tax relief.

My Democratic colleagues on the Committee on Ways and Means, led by the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL), proposed a fair and responsible tax cut, job creation and economic stimulus plan. Most importantly, we tried to convince the administration that should some major national emergency require us to draw on emergency funds, there would be none if we spent it all then. The media and many called us pessimists and naysayers. But then sad for all of us, September 11 happened; and on September 12, 2001, we found ourselves poised to expend the greatest amount of personal, monetary, and political resources in our history.

The debt ceiling has now become a ballistic missile, and it is unguided at that. Most importantly, we are now faced with the largest deficit in the history of this great country. This does not sound like fiscal responsibility to me. What this \$550 billion fiscal monster does effect is another round of tax cuts tilted toward the affluent and deficits that will become a future tax on the rest of us and our children.

The Social Security trust fund surpluses will be misused every year for at least 11 years to mask the even larger deficits. Estimates are that by 2012 the resulting debt load will be about \$50,000 per American household. This is a travesty, and we should not be a part of it. Some say, what about some tax relief? I agree with providing some tax relief. I agree with not allowing marriage to be a discriminating tax category. I believe people should be given incentives to save more for their retirement, especially when they live longer, and the Republican policies that we see will make us live longer, but without Social Security.

I cannot agree with leveraging Social Security, earned income and child tax credits, food stamps, family support, student loans, public housing, drug elimination programs, section 8 housing opportunities, and the virtual zeroing out of all unemployment compensation in order to make the rich richer and the real people the holders of a budget-busting, loose-cannon tax cut promissory note.

So, as I conclude, we sought then, as we do now, to provide tax relief that is fair, responsible, and immediate.

This tax cut is aimed at the coffers of the rich. We all know that tax cuts for the rich and affluent will not help the economy. The people who will spend the money are those who need it the most! Let's keep in mind that 2.6 million private sector jobs have been lost since the end of 2000! It is 2003 and we are still paying for unintended consequences, ill-conceived tax