

the field to enforce these immigration laws, telling those officers, the victims of crimes like those witnessed in south Florida over the last year, and the 80,000 criminal aliens this government cannot find, one simple thing: we are simply not serious about this crisis. This Congress is not serious about this crisis.

Earlier this summer, along with the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD) and the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. HART) and the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DEAL), I introduced a bipartisan bill that would get serious about our Nation's growing criminal alien crisis. The bill, entitled the CLEAR Act, is a measure that would make clear that our Nation's 600,000 local and State law enforcement officers have the authority to enforce our Nation's immigration laws, and we would give them the training, access to data, and the resources that they need to get the job done. Finally, it would give some much-needed help to the 2,000 out-manned Federal agents we have enforcing immigration law today.

Mr. Speaker, today's broken and failed immigration system is simply unworkable and for this government and this Congress to stay on the sidelines and let 80,000 criminal aliens create more horror stories like those perpetuated by Mr. Rapalo is simply unacceptable behavior. I urge my colleague to get off the sidelines and support the CLEAR Act, get involved in this game, and let us get serious about America's criminal alien crisis.

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S ECONOMIC POLICIES

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

Mr. HINCHEY. Madam Speaker, last February the President's Council of Economic Advisors forecast that, as a result of the economic policies of the Bush Administration, there would be 510,000 new jobs generated this year. Here we are on the advent of October; and in order for that prediction of last February to succeed, 947,000 jobs would have to be created between now and December 31, in other words, within the next 14 weeks. I wish the President's Council of Economic Advisors luck because this administration, aided and abetted by this Congress, has lost 437,000 jobs so far this year. We have had record job losses under this administration and that includes the 93,000 jobs that were lost in August alone. We do not yet have the figures of course for September, but it is likely that we will be seeing some similar amount of job loss.

This administration and this Congress have given us the worst economic performance in more than 70 years; 2.7 seven million jobs have been lost since the neoconservative Republicans have controlled both the White House and

the Congress. They have also done other things which are huge in their consequences. They have given us the largest budget deficit in history, and they have also provided the Nation with a record national debt.

Just recently we learned from the Census Bureau that America is now poorer than it was last year, just as it was poorer last year than it was the year before. Median income of the average American family has dropped by more than \$1,000 within the last year. America and its families are poorer today than they were this time last year. Poverty is up.

These are the statistics, bare statistics. They only begin to tell the difficult story that has fallen on American families all across this country. We need a reversal in these policies, and we need it quickly.

WASHINGTON WASTE WATCHERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Madam Speaker, the Washington Waste Watchers have been hard at work locating a vast range of government waste, fraud, and abuse. Unfortunately, these examples have not been hard to find, Madam Speaker. For some, however, examples of wasted taxpayers' money does not slow down their efforts to raise taxes. We have got a spending problem here in Washington; and waste, fraud, and abuse is a huge part of why we have that problem. For example, \$366 million, \$366 million in Pell grant awards was improperly disbursed because applicants understated their income on their applications last year. That resulted in over 84,000 Pell grants lost to waste, fraud, and abuse. And the Democrats want to raise taxes to pay for more of this?

The Veterans Affairs Inspector General, Madam Speaker, estimates that roughly 14,000 incarcerated veterans have been paid about \$100 million nationwide because the Department has no method of identifying prisoners, never has, \$100 million in wasted benefits that missed going to the needy, truly needy veterans in order to line the pockets of Washington's bureaucracy. And the Democrats, Madam Speaker, want to raise taxes to pay for more of this?

Over the last 4 years, the Department of Agriculture spent a total of \$5.13 billion in food stamp overpayments. That is \$5.13 billion wasted instead of helping low-income families who are unable to put food on their table. And again Democrats insist on wanting to raise the taxes of the hard-working American people to do more of this?

We do not need to raise taxes to improve government benefit programs; but Madam Speaker, we have to be willing to reach into the pockets of the bureaucracy and stop that system from

spending the checks of our taxpayers' money.

Accounting schemes that send people to jail in the private sector do not even impact a normal promotion schedule for the bureaucracy in the Federal Government. It is not an issue here. See, it is time to hold those people responsible for wasting taxpayers' money; but we have got to be committed to fixing the broken systems, not just pouring more and more tax money from the hard-working people to keep the same programs going exactly the same and wasting the same amount of money as the Democrats would suggest.

The American taxpayers are not fooled, Madam Speaker. They know that their hard-earned tax dollars have paid for \$106 billion in Medicare improper payments since 1996. Their dollars have paid for \$233 million in improper payments within the Veterans Compensation and Benefit program. Their tax dollars have even bought a pet dog for a member of the bureaucracy with a government charge card. Billions of dollars are lost every single year to waste, fraud, and abuse. Taxpayers are sending their money here to Washington only to find that it is being wasted; and the Democrats again still want to raise their taxes, saying there is not enough money up here.

There is a clear path, Madam Speaker, to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse throughout this Federal Government. We must find savings and not tolerate, I repeat, not tolerate, any level of wasted taxpayer dollars. Democrats have chosen to oppose those efforts time and time again and fight to raise taxes in order to pay for more of this business as usual.

Every week, Madam Speaker, the Washington Waste Watchers will keep reminding every person, every person in this Chamber of the impact of government waste, fraud, and abuse, not only to the taxpayers, Madam Speaker, but also to the beneficiaries who do not receive the benefits that they do deserve. Again, we will also remind our friends on the other side of the aisle that their constant attempts to raise taxes will only result in billions of additional dollars being lost to waste, fraud, and abuse at the expense of the hard-working American taxpayer.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Texas?

There was no objection.

LACK OF A GOOD HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, as a nurse by basic profession, I have spent much of my public career working to ensure that the Nation's health care system is affordable and provides the best services possible to all Americans. While America still has a world-class health system, there are those whose lives have been threatened by a focus on profits over healing. I believe that a doctor and patient, not an HMO accountant, should make sensitive medical decisions. I also support a plan that would expand Medicare coverage for prescription medication. However, there must be some cost containment agreement with the manufacturers and a streamlining of the Federal administrative structure to reduce costs to beneficiaries.

The Current Population Survey, the CPS, is the primary source for data on Texas's uninsured population. It paints a picture for the state of health care in Texas. My home State currently has the second highest rate of uninsured in the United States behind New Mexico. CPS data shows that there were 4.5 million people without health insurance in Texas, which is about 21.4 percent of the total population.

The rates for the uninsured minority are also quite frightening. Blacks and Latinos are far more likely to be uninsured when compared to their Anglo, or white, counterparts. Nationally, 11.6 percent of the Anglo population, 20.1 percent of the African American population, and 34.8 percent of the Hispanic population are without health insurance; but in Texas, while 12 percent of whites are uninsured, 21.2 percent of the African Americans and 36.7 percent of Hispanics do not have medical coverage.

Finally, one of my most passionate fights has been an effort to expand health care for children. I am a principal supporter of the State Children's Health Insurance Program, CHIP, the program that represents the largest expansion in health care in over 30 years. CHIP covers children not eligible for Medicaid insurance. Unfortunately, the rates for children without health coverage are also reaching alarming numbers. In the United States today, one in five children is without health insurance. In fact, in my home State of Texas 1.6 million children depend solely on health insurance provided by Medicaid. Limited access to health care contributes to growing rates of disease among children.

Studies have shown that good health is a prerequisite for optimal learning, and schools can help children achieve academic success by participating in efforts that promote good health, including access to regular medical and mental health care.

Protecting the health care of children should be the number one priority of any great nation. An investment in the health care of our youth is one of the wisest investments we can make for this country. Now is the time for all Americans to have access to quality

health care and meaningful patient protection. Our citizens deserve and expect nothing less.

REBUILDING IRAQ

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

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, in 1838, John Quincy Adams, as a former President, came to this floor as a Member of the House of Representatives. In those days the conservatives in this Congress passed a rule banning the discussion of slavery on the House floor. Congressman John Quincy Adams, former President Adams, was outraged by that rule; but what he did was come to the House floor and a couple of times every week read letters from his constituents opposing slavery, demanding that slavery be abolished in the United States.

Today, 160-some years later, many of us in this Chamber feel an outrage towards what is happening with Iraq and especially that the leaders in this Chamber are unwilling to debate many of the issues around Iraq, how they propose to spend \$87 billion, asking the President for his plans, wanting the President's contributors and contractors in Iraq who are literally receiving hundreds of millions of dollars a week to account for those dollars.

□ 1945

I thought tonight, in the tradition of John Quincy Adams, I would read letters from constituents of mine around the State who are expressing their views about Iraq.

Kim writes, "Why should we spend \$87 billion when our own servicemen and women who were in Iraq only got one meal MRE, meal ready to eat, per day, went 30 days without showers, not enough heavy artillery or ammunition. They fought hard in Iraq and then come back and don't even get the GI Bill to pay for their educations and medical. Use the \$87 billion to compensate our military personnel first." That is Kim.

A veteran, Jack, writes, "Just a very short few months ago, we were asked, no told, that we had to turn over \$70 billion," that was the first \$70 billion, "for the war in Iraq. That money was dispensed," Jack, a Vietnam vet writes, "on the backs of veterans in decreased benefits; schools, health care, Social Security, Medicare, redistribution of wealth through the Bush tax cuts, even the active duty military was not excluded from cuts. Now the administration is asking for another \$87 billion. Who's going to get thrown out in the cold when the next round of cuts come if Bush is given his \$87 billion," Jack, a Vietnam vet, writes.

Michele writes, "The way this grandmother sees it: for whatever the reasons, Bush wanted the war and misled the public to start it. Bush gave a tax cut to many of the wealthiest Ameri-

cans, many of whom stated it was wrong. Bush has accumulated an unprecedented amount of campaign financing from these wealthy friends."

What these letters all home in on, Madam Speaker, is that we are today spending \$1 billion a week in Iraq. \$300 million of that \$1 billion is going to private contractors, many of them going to Halliburton, one of the largest companies in the United States, a company which still pays Vice President CHENEY who used to work there, still pays him \$13,000 a month, and people want these hundreds of millions of dollars of tax dollars going to these private contractors, people want them accounted for, as we can see in these letters.

Joseph writes, "We are between a rock and a hard place. We are over there because of lies and it looks as if we will be stuck there for many years to come. First, this administration should roll back the tax cuts for the wealthy."

If my colleagues recall, Congress passed, at the President's urging, tax cuts, literally hundreds of billions of dollars of tax cuts where 43 percent of those tax cuts went to the richest 1 percent of people in this country. That is what Joe is writing about.

"In order to increase their now questionable integrity, this administration should agree to turn over total control of Iraq and its oil supplies to the U.N. and cooperate with the U.N. and our other allies 100 percent."

Again, Joe who writes in is troubled by the fact that we are giving hundreds of millions of dollars a week to private contractors who are not accountable, many of them the President's contributors, most of them the President's friends, and one of those companies a company that is still paying Vice President CHENEY \$13,000 a month.

The last letter I would like to read is from Joseph. "It appears we have no choice but to spend the \$87 billion, but Congress should make sure that the money comes from a rollback of Mr. Bush's excessive tax cuts for the wealthy, which primarily benefits the rich in this country. I sincerely hope the Congress does not give the money to Mr. Bush without stipulations. Three million Americans have lost their jobs," actually about 3.5 million now. "Three million Americans have lost their jobs in the country since Mr. Bush moved into the White House. More Americans are suffering and dying because they are unable to pay for proper health care and health care insurance. Exactly how we can afford to spend \$87 billion is something that I don't even understand." That is a letter from Joe.

Madam Speaker, I think it is clear what people in this country think. We need answers, we need accountability, and we really need to know the truth.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MILLER of Michigan). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman