

Union Address. Why in the world is the President letting this happen?

I know what is going to be said tonight. The President is going to speak to us about Iraq. I think it bears repeating, as I said last week, America's future is about more than Baghdad. It is about the challenges that moms and dads across America worry about every single day. It is about more than Iraq. It is about the rock and the hard place which millions of Americans find themselves between when they deal with the Bush-burdened economy. How bad is this economy? How likely is it that this President will do something now at the end of 2 years to turn it around? The numbers are staggering. The numbers I give you are not cooked by Democratic strategists. These are numbers reported by President Bush's own agencies of Government.

We have had the first back-to-back years of job loss in America in 50 years; the worst job creation record of any President in 58 years, with 2.3 million private sector jobs lost since the beginning of this administration; a 43 percent increase in unemployment rates since President Bush took office—43 percent; the loss of \$4.9 trillion in the stock market. Did my colleagues notice what happened yesterday in the stock market? People who follow this, as they should, know the Dow Jones hit 8,000. It lost 141 points in 1 day. What does it mean? It means for people who have stocks that they own directly or through mutual funds for their savings or their retirement, as the people say on the late night talk shows, they have seen their 401(k)s turn into 201(k)s—and maybe 101(k)s, if we are not careful. It is hard to even smile at that suggestion because a lot of people who counted on the stock market for their future have seen it disappear over the last 2 years during the Bush administration.

We have seen the elimination of a surplus in our budget. When President Clinton left office—and these are indisputable facts—we were generating a surplus each year to pay off the debt of America. Well, we are back in debt again. We are back in deficit. The projection is that this next year, the deficit we will face in America will be the worst deficit in 20 years, worse than any deficit under President Ronald Reagan, President Bush's father, or the early years of the Clinton administration. We are back in the deficit world.

What will the President say about that tonight? Will he remind us that his response to the deficit is a \$676 billion tax break primarily for the wealthiest people in America? Think about that for a moment. At a time when we are in recession, at a time when we are most certainly to be involved in war in the Middle East—I pray that does not happen, but most certainly we are going to see that, with added expense to the taxpayers—at a time when we should be funding the security of America, our homeland security, instead of meeting those obliga-

tions, the President has said give a tax break to the wealthiest people in America—a \$90,000-a-year tax break to people who make \$1 million a year in income.

Because of our deficits and because of the President's tax cuts, he is unable to fund things which are critically important to America. President Bush's plan is no stimulus to our economy. It is, in fact, a debt burden that we are passing on to our children and grandchildren. We have classrooms that assemble with us regularly in Washington to talk about what is going on in Washington. The sad news for those young students is that this administration, with the cooperation of this Republican Congress, is running up the balance on America's mortgage for our kids to pay. That mortgage, incidentally, is money taken directly out of the Social Security trust fund to fund the tax breaks for the wealthy people in America. That is not fair.

I think the President should address the real challenges facing America, real job creation, a stimulus plan that will put people back to work, not one that is going to help the folks who sit around the country club and try to figure out what to do with their portfolios but the people on Main Street who are trying to keep their small businesses open and the folks who are struggling to keep their jobs.

One million American workers who have run out of unemployment have been left behind by this administration. There will be more to follow unless the President changes his approach.

Secondly, this President should address the costs of health care in America. Health insurance expenses have become a crippling liability on businesses and families who cannot afford to buy protection. Instead, the President is going to talk about tort reform, an important issue but one that does not bear directly on the cost of health insurance and the run-up we have seen there. He is going to talk about privatizing Medicare. So we are going to say to senior citizens, for the first time they have a choice: They can pick their doctor or they can have their prescription bills paid, but they cannot have both. Boy, is that the future of health care in America?

We also need to give a helping hand to middle-income families. Would it not be great to have the President say tonight: We are going to provide a tax deduction for college education expenses for middle-income families? Think about families worried whether their kids can afford to graduate from college because of all the debts they are going to have. Would it not be great for the President to say, "I believe in education"; instead of this being a tax break for millionaires, this will be a tax break for working families. Unfortunately, we should not hold our breath.

The President should also promise to fund his program of No Child Left Be-

hind. He has created a mandate on every State and school district in America to do certain things, but he has refused to fund it. It is an unfunded mandate when the States are deep in debt. That is not fair, and the President should rise to that challenge.

Senator BOXER of California will speak to protecting the environment, so I will not dwell on that, but this President in 2 years has a dismal record. When it comes to the polluter pays for Superfund sites, the President says, no, the taxpayers should pay, not the polluting industries. That is plain wrong.

The President should commit himself to protecting Social Security. We know the baby boom generation is coming along in big numbers and they will be needing Social Security and Medicare. This President ignores that and instead increases the deficit and the debt of America at the expense of Social Security.

Finally, as to homeland security, listen carefully to see if we hear the following words tonight in the State of the Union Address: Osama bin Laden. Let's see if the President even mentions the name of the person we believe was responsible for September 11 who has disappeared from the headlines, disappeared from the news stories, because our pursuit of him has, frankly, not ended as we wanted. Let's see if the President mentions that effort. Let's see if he mentions investing in police and firefighters and health care across America to provide real security to the people of this Nation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

AN ANXIOUS NATION

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I say to my friend from Illinois I always appreciate his remarks both on the floor and when he is out meeting with people via the media. He puts his finger on a lot of important issues. He mentioned that I was going to speak about the environment. This afternoon, I will take on that issue. I will mention it this morning, but my idea this morning, in the few hours before the State of the Union, is to basically address the President of the United States from this Chamber in a way to urge him to address the anxiety of the American people because I think the state of the Union, if it can be summed up in one word, is anxious.

I want to go through why I think that is the case. So as we get ready to take part in a wonderful ritual where the Members of the Senate will gather in this Chamber—and I know the Chair, as a new Member, will experience this amazing feeling of patriotism and excitement as we gather here to make that march across the Capitol to join our colleagues in the House—we think very seriously about the state of our Union and what we hope the President will say.

In the spirit of great respect, I want to tell the President, through this short talk of mine today, what I am hearing from my constituents about the state of our Nation.

When I say "Mr. President" in my talk, it is directed at President Bush.

Mr. President Bush, I must tell you that the state of the Union today is anxious—*anxious* about the twin threats of war and terrorism, about the health of our economy and our environment; *anxious* about our children's education and our family's health care; *anxious* about our basic civil rights, including our right to privacy and the right to make personal decisions without Government interference.

Mr. President, the people are anxious and they are worried that you are leading us prematurely down a lonely path to war while ignoring other serious threats to peace and that you have lost your focus on terrorism.

As Senator DURBIN said, the people have not heard a word about Osama bin Laden, whom you placed at the top of your terrorist list. We have not heard a word about him in months.

Many believe that you are heading down the wrong path on the economy; that you are leaving too many children behind; that you are sacrificing our environment at the altar of the special interests; and that you are failing to address the health care issue.

People worry that you are actively seeking to reverse the constitutionally protected right to privacy. Two examples of this are your attacks on the right to choose and your selection of Admiral Poindexter, who was convicted of lying to Congress, to lead the Total Information Awareness Program, collecting vast amounts of personal information and intelligence about ordinary American citizens.

I am very pleased there was an amendment which passed to essentially do away with that program, but we do not know what the House of Representatives will do in conference.

Mr. President, you have not stated at all that you are for getting rid of this agency which will know everything there is to know about any citizen they decide to follow around via their use of computers.

Here is the stark contrast to where we were a year ago, when the entire world stood with the President and with all the American people as we struggled to recover from the terrorist attacks and prevent their recurrence.

I saw Senator BIDEN on a talk show yesterday. He reminded us that a headline in a French newspaper said: We are all Americans. What a moment that was in history; the world was united behind us. Somehow we have lost that leadership. We need to get it back. Today America stands far too alone when it comes to foreign policy challenges.

Many thoughtful Californians of both political parties are saying U.N. inspectors must have more time to do their work. I hope the President will state

that tonight. Three weeks ago, Colin Powell said the inspectors were gaining momentum. We also know we have yet to give the inspectors a lot of information we have about what has been going on in Iraq. Information is power. The inspectors need that information, first, to find out what happened to the weapons; second, so we can make a case that we do not have to deal with Saddam Hussein alone. I don't want to see us deal with Saddam Hussein alone. Could we beat him militarily? Absolutely. But what happens after when we are alone? What happens to sharing the costs of human life? We need our allies with us, and more than Great Britain.

Yes, Iraq must disarm. After all, Saddam Hussein said he would; he has to. He agreed to the resolutions. We have to keep in mind more arms were destroyed by the weapons inspectors in Iraq after the first Persian Gulf war than we destroyed by our bombs. That is a very important point reiterated by Madeleine Albright and by others. We have a great deal of information to give the inspectors. Let's give it to them. As long as Iraq is the focus of worldwide attention, as long as the inspectors are there, as long as we are having the no-fly zones patrolled by our planes and our allies in the north and the south, this man is boxed in. He cannot put a big toe outside of that country. He cannot do anything to harm us.

I believe, therefore, we have time to avoid the devastation of war and, once again, to build the case and keep the international community with us. I worry with this focus on Iraq that we have a foreign policy elsewhere in the world that is one of deliberate negligence. As a matter of fact, if I had to put a word or two to the Bush doctrine, it appears to be a policy of designed neglect, except for Iraq. We ignore the problems. We wait for the crisis to hit us. This *modus operandi* is causing serious trouble in North Korea because North Korea was ignored and now it has complicated a crisis that grew out of this neglect.

Closer to home in Latin America we see unrest. I ask, why do we see unrest? We have ignored the countries in our own hemisphere. We ignored Mexico. You promised there would be a new day. Yet we see the Foreign Minister of Mexico resigning out of frustration that he cannot even get a meeting with anyone in America who has any power. To have control over what goes on, that is foreign policy.

At home, people are anxious and worried. They are worried about terrorist attacks. I am introducing a bill that will enable us to have countermeasures placed on our commercial airlines so if someone held a shoulder-fired missile aimed at one of our commercial airlines, at a takeoff or landing period, when they are most vulnerable, there would be countermeasures on that plane. The President has been studying this issue. The President is spending tens of billions on missile defense for

long-range intercontinental missiles. Perhaps it is up to \$60 billion. A fraction of that would retrofit all of our planes.

And, by the way, when we take care of homeland security in such a manner, we create jobs, good-paying jobs, as well. Yet we will be prepared for what will come.

We have to fund homeland security. I know Senator SCHUMER is going to talk about that later today.

Let me finish by discussing the economy. We have watched this economy spiral downward for 2 years. We have seen this economy in a free fall. We have seen the stock market in a free fall. We have seen people in the country say: My God, I cannot retire. I was planning to retire. I will have to work 5 or 6 years because my retirement nest egg is essentially gone or so greatly reduced people cannot imagine.

The unemployment rate, which was 4.2 percent when President Bush took office, now stands at 6 percent nationwide. In my home State, it is at a 5-year high of 6.6 percent. This is bringing anxiety and angst to the people. More than 2.4 million private sector jobs have disappeared. Mortgage foreclosures have reached record levels. The stock market has lost trillions of dollars. We have gone from surpluses in our Federal budget to deficits as far as the eye can see. We are headed to a path of the worst economy in 50 long years.

In California last month alone the State lost 25,800 jobs. That is real people. What is your answer? Give tax breaks to the people who have jobs, who have earned millions of dollars, who are earning \$1 million a year? You want to give them back \$87,000, while my middle-class people are going to get back \$87 a year. Where is that fair?

More than that, what kind of stimulus is that? Think about it. Someone who earns \$1 million a year is going to take that \$87,000-a-year tax cut. What are they going to do with it? They already have a new refrigerator in every home they own. They already have a new car or two parked at every home they own. They already have their vacations prepaid. What are they going to do? They are not going to do anything with that money that is going to stimulate the economy. The greatest secret of America is that our middle class is what makes the country great. It is our working families who will go out and spend that money in this economy, buying a new car. My friend from Michigan knows that is important. The millionaires have their cars. It is the middle-class working people, if they get a good deal on a car, who will go out, if they feel a little more economically secure, and purchase that car. More of the same of the trickle down to the rich, which never gets down to this country, will not get us out of the economic nightmare in which we find ourselves.

What the President wants to do to Medicare sends shivers up and down my

spine. My friend from Michigan will talk about health care. I hope she talks about the fact that the so-called Medicare reform is the end of having a chance to pick your own doctor. They are blackmailing Medicare patients into thinking if they stay in that plan where they can choose their own doctor, they will not get any prescription drugs. This President wants them all in the HMOs. I say to my friend, and to the President of the United States, if the HMOs did a good job, that would be one thing. If we could pass a Patients' Bill of Rights giving people rights in an HMO, giving them the treatment they need, giving them the preventive care they need, giving them the quality doctors they deserve, it would be a different story. But pushing people into HMOs before we have solved the HMO abuse problem, and then saying, well, if you do not do that you do not get your medicine, I hope people in this country will rise up against that plan.

Mr. President, you have another 9 hours. I hope you take that plan out of your speech. I hope you will take that tax cut plan out of your speech and rewrite it and give the tax cuts to the middle class and give the tax cuts to the working poor. That will stimulate this economy and make it a 1-year stimulus that doesn't drain the revenues of Government in the outyears so that we are in deficits for as far as the eye can see. Give those tax breaks to the small business people. They are going to spend it on plant equipment.

Mr. President, go back to your speech and take a look at what you are doing on education. Fully fund the No Child Left Behind Act.

Mr. President, if you continue with your "leave no millionaire behind" plan, you will have no money for your Leave No Child Behind plan. You can't have it both ways. You can't go to war, promise people education, promise them this, promise them that, promise them homeland security, and then give away all the money to the millionaires and have nothing to fulfill your promises.

People are on to this. They see it. You are doing it over and over again—with homeland security, not spending the money we need. The burden is falling on the cities and the States and the localities. I met with the mayors. Do you know what they said? Senator, when something goes wrong and, God forbid, there is a terrorist attack, someone is going to call 911. They are not going to call the White House, with all due respect. And they are not going to call me either.

I used to be in local government. I respect those people. We are hanging out local government to dry—the local police, the local fire departments, and the rest. That is wrong. It is all in the name of giving tax breaks to millionaires who don't need it and won't spend it. It is unfair and it is hurtful.

I will close, because my friend, Senator STABENOW, is here, on one of the topics I will speak more about later,

and that is the state of our environment. If you look back at the progress we have made in the last 50 years and more, you will see a wonderful story emerging on the environment. You will see Republican Presidents and Democratic Presidents who stood up and had great plans for this environment. Teddy Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, Bill Clinton—they all made the environment stronger. Everywhere you turn, Mr. President, you are rolling back that progress.

So the state of the Union is anxious. They are anxious on all of these issues. Millions of Americans are waiting to feel less anxious. I hope, Mr. President, you will think about that before delivering your speech tonight.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SESSIONS). Under the previous order the Senator from Michigan is recognized.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I first thank my friend from California for her usual eloquence. I agree totally with her sense of what our people are feeling in terms of the anxiousness about possible war, the anxiousness about education for our children, about health care, about jobs, about homeland security. I thank Senator BOXER for her comments this morning.

I will follow up talking about an area that is so important to each of our families and is a growing concern to businesses in the country and to workers in the country; that is the whole question of health care.

We know there is a growing sense of anxiousness. When I sit down with small businesses across Michigan, they tell me their fastest growing cost is their health care premiums. In some cases they are doubling. When I talk to the big three automakers and the other manufacturers in Michigan, I hear the same thing. When I hear from Chrysler that they are spending more on health care than on the raw materials for the vehicles—I am concerned. This shows me we have a serious, serious crisis, a health care crisis.

At the same time, we all have spoken about the seniors of our country who are choosing between their food and their medicine. This is real. People are asking us to act. Words are not enough. Rhetoric is not enough. We have to act in a way that provides opportunity for quality, affordable, accessible health care.

On the eve of the State of the Union Address, I rise to ask the President of the United States what he intends to do. Will he, in fact, change his record and work with us on issues of health care in a bipartisan way, to actually get something done? I worry, myself, because of the record I have seen in the last 2 years. We have a record of this administration on health care that, unfortunately, is bad medicine for the American people. We have attempted on several occasions to move forward

policies and proposals that are in the best interests of the American people. This administration continues to oppose those.

I am talking about a Medicare benefit for all seniors for prescription drugs under Medicare that is affordable, that is dependable, that is available to all of our seniors—this President has consistently opposed that approach. Whether it is also making prescription drugs affordable for all Americans and lowering the prices for our businesses—the President has opposed efforts to open the doors to Canada to drop prices immediately, and he has opposed efforts to make sure we have more competition in the system by closing the generic drug law loopholes. Generic drugs are made by those companies that do not do research but take the formulas after the patents expire and are able to develop and put on the market lower cost prescription drugs, oftentimes exactly like the brand-name drugs. We know they can drop the prices up to 70 percent by just having the generic drug laws work.

We have business coalitions formed across the country urging us to pass laws to shut down the loopholes so competition can work to bring prices down. Unfortunately, even after we passed a bill in this body, in the Senate, the administration has opposed it.

We have innovative State solutions like what has been done in Maine where the State wants to come in and use its bulk purchasing power and leverage that to negotiate lower prices on behalf of the uninsured who pay the top prices in the world right now for their prescriptions. Our State governments understand that. Our Governors want the flexibility to be able to bulk purchase and lower prices. This administration has opposed it.

We need fair prices for Medicare providers. While we have seen some willingness, and I appreciate that, to focus on the cuts that have been put into place for our physicians—that certainly needs to be done—what about the home health agencies that are closing? What about our nursing homes? What about our hospitals, our teaching facilities? We have a crisis in health care, and the last thing we need to do is to be making more cuts to Medicare or Medicaid. Yet the administration has, to date, opposed fixing the Medicare problem.

The Patients' Bill of Rights, a real Patients' Bill of Rights so that those who are in HMOs have the opportunity to have the physician of their choice and to have the rights available to them they wish to have to protect their families, a strong Patients' Bill of Rights—this administration has consistently opposed that, as well.

And what about assistance to States for Medicaid? Right now 25 percent of Michigan's State budget is Medicaid. We have a \$2 billion deficit in Michigan out of a \$9 billion budget. Our new Governor is doing a wonderful job of trying to make the numbers add up, but without Federal support and help they will