

SPECIAL ORDERS

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

AMERICANS SUPPORT ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, in April of 2003, James Oo-jamuh of Seattle pleaded guilty to charges of conspiracy to help al Qaeda. He planned to train terrorists in Oregon. According to one recruit, members of the cell brought AK-47s, pistols, and other assault rifles, enough for anybody and then some.

Mr. Speaker, assault weapons will go back on our streets in 174 days, that is, September 14. If we do not bring the bill up for a vote here on the House floor, it will expire; and we will be back where we were 10 years ago. That is good news for terrorists and other criminals, but bad news for American families and communities and our police officers.

Since I came to the floor to talk about gun violence last week, almost 400 people have died in the past week to gun violence in this country. Simply put, assault weapons were designed to kill as many people as possible as quickly as possible, and we want them back on our streets? Where in God's name do we understand that kind of an attitude? That sounds like the perfect weapon for a terrorist whose goal is to create as much death and fear as possible.

Following the fall of Kabul in November of 2001, a document was found in a safe house advising those that were training where to buy the guns: go to America and buy all the guns you can. It is also known that during the 1980s al Qaeda purchased dozens of advanced sniper rifles for use in the Afghan war against the Russians.

Since going into effect in 1994, the Assault Weapons Ban has increased public safety and prevented dangerous weapons from falling into the wrong hands.

There are those who wish to see this critical and commonplace public safety measure die a quiet death. The American people support this ban. Our law enforcements across this Nation support this ban.

During the 2000 year election, then-Governor Bush, now President Bush, promised he would sign the bill if it went on his desk. Well, that, unfortunately, is the trick. Unless we have a vote on it here, it is never going to get on his desk. It is up to the American people to use their right to have their voices heard. All they have to do is call the two bodies, call the White House and say, we want to have an assault weapons ban in place.

Let me say this: Ten years ago I was not in Congress. Ten years ago I was back home in Mineola. I was a nurse, and something happened to my family. They were shot with many others on the Long Island Rail Road. That is when I woke up to the gun violence in this country.

I promised that I would do whatever I could to reduce gun violence in this country, and the first thing I started working on was the assault weapons ban. If we do not approve this, it is going to die.

Large capacity clips, our police officers are allowed to use them, our military men are allowed to use them. Our hunters are not allowed to use them. Hunters give animals a better chance of surviving than we allow people. Clips that have 15 bullets in it. Well, we can go back to the old days, 20, 30, 40.

Why in God's name do we need these particular guns on our streets again?

Please, I am asking the American people, have your voices heard. I hear continuously they feel they have no voice in government. You can have a voice in government. You can make a difference. One person can make a difference. How many votes have we had here on the House floor where it is won or lost by one vote?

I am asking the American people to get involved in this. Please. We can make a difference.

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

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

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

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

TAX CUTS IMPROVE ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, last week I spoke about a Tennessee report showing 15,647 new corporations, LLCs and limited partnership registrations in my State. That was the best ever, the best on record. The tax cuts that President Bush and Congress passed are clearly giving those with the entrepreneurial spirit the room to take that leap and form new businesses. This is what America is all about, living out that American dream.

And today I have more good news. This time from the Nashville Tennessean Business Section that

speaks to the growth that this Republican tax relief is helping to generate.

Democrats and candidate JOHN KERRY say the Bush tax cuts are not working, that they will repeal the Bush tax cuts and raise your tax bill so that they can fund more government spending. Well, I would like to recommend that they just hold on a minute before the Democrats rally around tax increases.

They should read this article. "Businesses Using Tax Cuts to Get While Gettin's Good." This is from the Nashville Tennessean. "Businesses Using Tax Cuts to Get While the Gettin's Good." This is what we said would happen with tax cuts, businesses would grow.

Now the article is about John Aron, a business owner in Nashville. He runs The Pasta Shop, and his story is a testament to the Bush tax relief. Mr. Aron wanted to expand his business, but the cost of new equipment was nearly \$81,000. After looking at the President's tax relief package that this Congress passed last year, and it gives businesses a tax break on equipment purchases, Mr. Aron went ahead and made the investment and expensed 57 percent of his equipment costs this year, saving his company \$35,000 on his 2003 taxes.

Well, guess what he did next? He hired two employees. This is exactly what Republicans said would happen if we lowered the taxes.

Now, some across the aisle are saying, well, that is just one story and it cannot be a trend; but let me give you a few more examples. Brad Blevins spent \$100,000 for a metal stamping machine for his company. He'll save \$30,000 in taxes. Business grows.

Rivergate Partners in Nashville spending \$350,000 on their 50,000-square-foot building. They will save \$60,000. Business is growing.

Richards & Richards, able to write off \$100,000 worth of storage shelving for their offices.

Get the point? Businesses are growing because of the tax relief. Mr. Aron said, "The Bush tax cuts substantially reduced the risk of entry."

If I were calling for tax increase, I would be feeling a little bit foolish right now for calling for those tax increases.

In 2003, 25 million small business owners saved an average of \$2,853 on their tax bill. That is 25 million small business owners. The President and Republicans supported this relief because we know that it will spur investment and encourage Americans to start new businesses and reach that American dream.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct a few misplaced perceptions that have been allowed to go unchallenged far too long. The Democrats have criticized the President. They have slammed his foreign policy, his economic policy, and they often cite Europe as an example of the sort of countries that we ought out emulate.

I beg to differ.

The countries of Europe have created large, extensive welfare systems. They have outrageously high taxes. They tax and spend, all to support growing government social programs. And the result? In December 2003, Belgium had an 8.3 unemployment rate. In January 2004, France, a vocal critic of U.S. economic and foreign policy, had a whopping 9.3 percent unemployment rate. Germany, another consistent critic of the U.S., in January of this year had a 9.1 percent unemployment rate.

Mr. Speaker, in January of 2004 America had a 5.6 percent unemployment rate.

A leftist European model does not work in foreign affairs and it does not work here in economics. Unfortunately and unwisely, Democrats have adopted this kind of approach for their platform.

We have weathered a recession and September 11 with the \$1 trillion impact it had on our economy, and we remain committed to tax relief. And this month the Employer Outlook Survey reported that 28 percent of the 16,000 employers that they surveyed expected to hire more workers from April to June of this year.

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

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

"EXXON VALDEZ" IS NOT THE ONLY SHIP AGROUND

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, America will pause tomorrow to remember the 15th anniversary of the *Exxon Valdez* environmental disaster. On March 24, 1989, the captain in charge of this massive tanker was unfit to command even a row boat, yet the intoxicated captain was at the helm, and he ran the *Valdez* aground in Alaska's fragile and pristine Prince William Sound. Eleven million gallons of oil emptied into the sea and devastated everything in its path. It will take generations, if ever, for there to be a complete recovery.

Fifteen years later, at least 100 tons of toxic waste, concentrated by years of weathering, continues to kill and maim Alaska's environment. Fifteen years later, thousands of Alaskans continue to wait for the \$5 billion a jury ordered Exxon to pay. The money remains in Exxon's pocket. Exxon would rather buy time and influence than pay what amounted to 1 year of profits for an environmental catastrophe.

Sound familiar?

It should.

The President's proposed budget hemorrhages red ink about as fast as

the *Exxon Valdez* gushed oil into the Prince William Sound, and the consequences are just as devastating. This President has run the U.S. economy aground with the same disregard for protecting ordinary Americans as a drunken captain had one night for protecting Alaska's environment. It will take generations, if ever, for there to be a complete recovery.

Here is the damage report from the scene.

The President rewards our soldiers returning from Iraq by increasing fees for medical service in his budget. Welcome home, soldiers. Get out your checkbooks.

The administration orders universal health care for everyone in Iraq, but not America. Administration officials claim everyone in America already has health coverage. That will come as a surprise to 44 million Americans.

The person who knew the prescription drug bill would cost \$139 billion more than the administration said it would, he was told he would be fired if he released that data. If only Supreme Court Justice Scalia were a Member of the House, he might lead the Republicans in a great "Quack, Quack" when the drug bill passed on quack data.

Perhaps we should have heard a similar refrain when the administration decided that flipping hamburgers was a manufacturing job. Perhaps the President should have declared, "Quack, Quack" when the administration rewarded corporate buddies by throwing out the rule book for overtime pay for ordinary Americans.

The average American is a sitting duck for this administration.

Millions of Americans are drowning in a sea of unemployment, but the administration refuses to throw a lifeline by extending unemployment benefits.

Average Americans received an average cut of \$676. Millionaire Americans received an average cut of \$112,925. This must be an example of the compassion the President says motivates him every day.

Big oil gets invited to secret meetings conducted by the Vice President to map out a future energy policy for America. Somehow, I do not think they talked at all about the *Exxon Valdez* or the money Exxon owes the people of Alaska for their drunken sailor.

I could be wrong, but we may never know because the administration refuses to tell America what went on behind closed doors.

Speaking of doors, they are slamming shut on average Americans at an alarming rate. Interest rates are at a record low. Mortgage foreclosures, personal bankruptcy and credit card delinquencies are either rising or are at record highs.

I wonder if we will hear a "Quack, Quack" from the White House on that one? Probably not. Duck hunting, after all, is best done on private lands owned by oil companies with the Vice President leading a Supreme Court Justice who has elevated duck calls to a Supreme Court decision.

How much things change. How much they stay the same.

The *Exxon Valdez* ran aground when there was a President Bush in the White House. The U.S. economy ran aground when there was a President Bush in the White House. The *Exxon Valdez* caused the greatest environmental catastrophe in history when it ran aground. Our President Bush, Bush II, may trump that with the largest economic catastrophe in history when he ran America aground.

HONORING THE CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CONFERENCE

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

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the first anniversary of the Congressional Hispanic Conference. Formed just 1 year ago, the Conference promotes the interest of over 40 million Americans of Hispanic and Portuguese descent. As an associate member of this Conference, along with our founding members, we have provided a needed voice in Congress and in issues important to the Hispanic and Latino community.

Hispanics, by principle, value moderate and conservative beliefs, and the Congressional Hispanic Conference's policy objectives mirror those beliefs.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly believe "Los valores le los Hispanos son los valores de los Republicanos," meaning "Hispanic values are Republican values."

When you address the issues, it is clear that the values of the Republican Party are the values of Hispanic and Latino Americans.

In the 108th Congress, the Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2003, known by most as the "Bush tax cut," was passed and signed by George W. Bush. This legislation lowered taxes for every American taxpayer, and now several million working Americans of low income benefit from a new lower tax bracket of 10 percent, allowing them to keep more of what they earned. But also note, these hard-working Americans in the lowest tax bracket receive the largest percentage reduction in their tax burden. In fact, 3 million low-income families no longer have to pay Federal income taxes.

Another benefit of the Bush tax cut to strengthen families is that we increased the child tax credit from \$600 to \$1,000 per child this year. An estimated 34 million families benefit from this provision to help them. And I would note that we also strengthen families and, particularly, the institution of marriage by eliminating the marriage tax penalty.

The Congressional Hispanic Conference is committed to passing legislation which provides common-sense lower taxes for all Americans.

With the No Child Left Behind Act designed to help our schools passed by this Congress, signed into law by President Bush, minority parents are empowered with the freedom to remove