

Gettysburg address, Can a nation of the people and for the people long survive. At least he implied that. I think it can, but I think it is going to take some leadership, some willingness to face up to some of these challenges, less partisanship, more bipartisan cooperation in terms of trying to solve and deal with some of these problems that are facing this country.

We have got to have the kind of education, we have got to give education the kind of priority it needs. We have got to continue to invest in research to make sure that we develop the kinds of products and an efficient way to produce products that the world wants to buy to make sure that we continue to be competitive in this country.

We are the greatest country on Earth, militarily, economically; but now we are moving into a dangerous situation where we are overspending every year, going deeper into debt, where we are making promises that our kids and our grandkids are going to find very difficult to pay for. And so the challenge is not just in our Republic, with Members of Congress. The challenge is also in this election year and every election year to size up the candidates that you think are going to be willing to make the tough decisions, to solve some challenges that this country is facing.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all of my colleagues to examine the Social Security bills that have been introduced, to consider sponsoring some of that legislation or writing their own legislation to solve and keep Social Security solvent.

30-SOMETHING DEMOCRATS

THE SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CARTER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, once again it is a pleasure to come before the Members of the House and the American people to talk about issues that are facing all Americans.

As you know, week after week we come to the floor, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) and myself and other members of the 30-something Group to talk about things that are facing young Americans, which also I think have a lot to do with the bottom line of American families, as they start to work on their finances, work on their future, and I am glad to do that.

The first week we came we started talking about the issues of student loans, the fact that more Americans are graduating from college in debt, unable to purchase a home or take part in the American dream. We also talked about the issues that were facing students in America here with the price of text books, which then also has an issue that is placed on the table of their parents are trying to make sure they come up with the in some cases \$800 to \$1,500 for text books on top of

exploding tuition costs, which I must say is a student tax and a tax on the American people.

Last week, we talked about the cost of health care as it pertains to the young people having an opportunity to have adequate health care outside of going to the emergency room, for that level of health care that they so desperately need and is so very, very important that we have a health care plan here in the United States versus some sort of health care savings plan that the average American, that the administration is pushing that does not make as much sense as it should make to the average American.

We talked about voter suppression also last week, voter suppression on college campus, and we want to make sure we get the word out that it is important that students and parents of students, where your children are going to be on a college campus this fall, that they can register to vote there in that city, that town, wherever they go to school, because we had an issue and we still do to this day, individuals that are supervisors of elections that are saying, or the Secretary of State that is saying, well, you are a resident of Indiana, but you cannot register to vote at the University of Georgia. Well, you can.

The Supreme Court has already spoken to this issue, and so it is important that we get that out and we encourage many people who want to learn more about voter suppression to contact the Rock the Vote organization. On their Web site they have information pertaining to that issue.

We also want to continue to encourage people to e-mail us. We have received quite a few e-mails. I know we both will talk about it tonight. I am so excited about the fact that we are getting such a great response from the American people, young and old. And I will say some of these e-mails are really going to help us direct hopefully this House, if given the opportunity to lead in this House in the majority, to make sure that average Americans are heard. And I will talk a little bit about our Web site; I hope the gentleman would.

I also want to, as we did last week, I want to thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), who is the Democratic leader in this House, for pulling us together, helping us realize the importance of young Americans, that we have a voice in this process, in this democracy and allowing us to be on the floor once a week to not only respond to e-mails but also share with the American people about what is going on.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for taking a lead on this. He is quarterbacking tonight.

I think there are some great issues. Just so we know, we wonder sometimes when we stand on the floor how many people are out there watching. And I just got off the phone with my wife and she is changing from "Law and Order" to C-SPAN so that they can watch us

here tonight. So we know we have a little bit of an audience out there. But, again, it is the Thirtysomething Democrats@mail.house.gov. And I have a stack of e-mails here that we have received since we started doing this, and it is amazing the response we are getting.

I think as we have talked about this, and it was not too long ago that we were in college and participating in a variety of activities there, and we felt that the political leadership was not engaging us. And I think that is something that the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) has made it a point that as a Democratic Caucus we are going to go out and we are going to pay attention to what the needs of the students are. We recognize that they are the future of the country. We do not just want to pay them lip service. We want to make sure that we are there for them with the issues that they care about and on the issues they need us to be there for them.

□ 2245

If we are going to continue to thrive as a democracy and country we are going to need to invest in our young people, and we cannot just say we are only going to take care of senior citizens. I think there is a responsibility there and we have a commitment there, but at the same time, we need to make sure that we let these young people know that we are committed to the issues they care about, we are committed to them, we want to see them get educated and see them recognize their own dreams, their own aspirations. In many instances, that is through a college education, period, end of story.

It is not the only thing you need but for a good many Americans, if you want to succeed, you have to do it by going and furthering your education.

So the question that we have here tonight is, are young people better off today, are students better off today than they were 4 years ago? I think if you look at the chart that we will put up and some of the statistics that we will talk about here today, it is clear that young people are not better off today than they were just 4 years ago.

In the past 4 years, the unemployment rate for people ages 16 to 24 has gone up 3.7 percent through the Department of Labor statistics. So there are thousands of kids who are young people who are out there trying to get jobs, trying to find work, and they cannot find work.

Then this is not so much off the subject, but I found this article today that I wanted to talk about and bring up today.

This is from San Jose, California, and the title of the article is Offshoring of U.S. Jobs Accelerating. We talk about how we have to educate our young kids. In every single trade agreement that we have passed, the commitment was we are going to continue to invest in education, K through 12, No Child

Left Behind, Pell grants, consolidation of student loans, investment in our young people. We are going to move the country forward by investing in our young people, and if you get an education, the promise was, then you have work in this country.

So this study that was done roughly, and that is a quote, roughly 830,000 U.S. service sector jobs ranging from telemarketing and accountants to software engineers and chief technology officers will move abroad by the end of 2005. Eight-hundred-and-thirty-thousand jobs will move offshore, high-tech jobs, by 2005.

This same outfit did a study a couple of years ago, and they said it was only going to be 588,000. Now it is 830,000.

So the question is, do you have the opportunity that you had if you would have graduated in 1999 or 2000 and the kind of job market that a Democratic Congress and a Democratic President created through balancing the budget and being fiscally responsible and leading an enormous economic growth and creating the kind of jobs needed?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, can I say, without one Republican vote, Democrats did that on behalf of our future, balancing the budget.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Many Democrats lost their job over it because they made the sacrifice.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. And did the right thing.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. To do it right and to create long-term and probably really what we have, and I think young people sense this when I talk to them because they have grown up in the culture of where we are talking about stocks and politics, and they are a little more sophisticated than even we were just a few years ago, but a lot of those young people recognize that the decisions that are made in this body and the political decisions that are made are made for short-term political advantage, not long-term prosperity for the country.

I think you have seen it over the past few years that the decisions that are made about how can we win the next election, and I am from the school of thought that if you do right when you are in power, when you do right by leading, that the electorate will take care of itself and the people will vote for candidates who support issues that make the country better, make the country stronger, economically, politically and whatever.

But I think it is important for us to realize that the kind of atmosphere that we are creating here, the lack of investment in education, the lack of investment in K through 12, the lack of investment for our college kids is coming home to roost, and we are not creating any kind of new jobs. We are losing jobs.

But what is the next industry? If you are not investing in the young people, you are not going to be able to create the next industry.

I am going to share one statistic with you and then I am going to kick it

back over to the quarterback here tonight.

Some of the major technology hubs over the past few years, Silicon Valley, famous; Seattle, booming; Austin, Texas, everything was great. Those areas now have a higher unemployment rate than the Nation at large, and I think when we are talking here tonight about what is the future prospects of the young people who are hopefully out there tonight watching this, if not studying and going to school and trying to make themselves better, what are the future prospects, and think when you hear statistics like that where great areas of concentration of high-tech wealth and job creation have higher unemployment rates than the Nation at large, I think that there is a lot of things that need to be done, and I think the answer to that is investment into education.

So I am hoping that through raising the awareness for the young people here that we have an opportunity to hopefully engage these young people like the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) wants to do, reach out to these students and 20 somethings and 30 somethings and engage them in the process and let them know that they have a right to stand up and they have a right to be involved in this process.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, the only way we are going to see the shift that we need, and I am so glad that you are referring to studies that were not only done recently but were done 4 years ago, and also having a backdrop of reading articles that are in daily publications and the facts from the Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Labor of what the reality is, because many times people may turn on CSPAN, Members may be sitting in their offices listening to us right now, and they are saying, oh, well, that is just the 30 Something Democrats, upset because they are not in the majority right now; so they will say and do anything, and we will tell the American people anything.

I just wanted to say this is not the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) report or the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) report. This is the report of the reality of what is going on in this government that we serve in and what is happening to the American people.

The rubber meets the road when one has to go into the emergency room for health care services. I must say if we cough or our throat feels a little funny today, we walk down to the clinic. We have good health care. Fine, not a big long wait. We are not told what veterans are told; we will see you in a couple of months. If we need to see an ophthalmologist or optometrist or whatever the case may be, oh, sure, in a matter of hours, not days, not weeks.

Folks did not elect us to Congress nor any Member to Congress to say I want you to have better health care; we love you so much we want you to have better health care than what I have. No, they elected us to make sure

they have life better for them. That is our purpose, and I am pretty sure that a lot of Members come to this body thinking that that is what they would do eventually.

We have impediments of allowing us to be able to provide a better way of life, and so the question that you mentioned earlier, are you better off than you were 4 years ago, well, looking at the numbers, it does not necessarily look that way.

In the past 4 years, the unemployment rate for 16 to 24-year-olds have gone up 3.7 percent, and I think it is also important, in the past 4 years a number of unemployed college grads have doubled from 600,000 in 2000, a whopping 1.2 million in 2004 and this is the Economic Policy Institute in case someone wants to check that out.

Goodness, I do not want to talk about gas prices. Have you filled your car up lately?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I am not sure we want to talk about it because it is painful.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, I do.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I drive back and forth from Ohio to Washington, and it is just, to try to get it on the turnpike or in a big city like Washington, shameful.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Last night, I filled up, and you have to have a credit car when you fill up. No more of that, oh, I will just take 20 bucks out and make it happen. You may get a quarter of a tank in some gas stations.

So when you look at these issues it is not within our control. It is not our control. That is the reason, well, we do not necessarily set the agenda here in this House. We had a great debate today on the issue of overtime pay. Please, tell me that we are not arguing about taking away overtime from Americans. Please tell me that. Please tell me that what you are saying, I wish it was untrue about American jobs that are going overseas. Guess what, when they fire you, they do not come and ask you are you a Democrat or Republican or Independent. You are fired because your job is now overseas.

So the only way I think that we are going to change that is that the American people help people like yourself, myself, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) and some Republicans who want to do something about it, and I think it is important. So the only way that is going to happen is that we can bring it here to this floor. We do not have to talk about it in a special order after legislative business. We can actually take action towards making life better on behalf of every American.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I think when you ask and we talk about what do you do, and I think there is ample evidence for criticism of what has been happening, not only in this chamber but the leadership throughout our government, the lack of leadership, I guess I should say, throughout our government, and the variety of issues that have not been

touched upon here tonight and a lot more that we have, but what are we going to do? What should we do? What is the answer? It is one thing I think to criticize and critique, but what is the answer?

I think part of the answer is all we have to do is look back throughout the history of this country from its inception, and many people like to say, well, the government is not worth anything, the government cannot initiate anything. If you look at all of the major advancements that have been made in the country from the post office, to land grant colleges, to the railroads, to the interstate highway, Medicare, Medicaid, civil rights, Social Security, the GI Bill, the Pell grants, Federal housing, all of these initiatives have, in one way or another, moved the country forward. Who was it that moved the country forward? It was always the government who was leading the way to move the country forward.

The research on the Internet was government investment. The research for diseases now at NIH, government investment, and now I just heard Secretary Abraham, Secretary of Energy, he wants \$50 million for a new super high-tech fast supercomputer to give our country a competitive advantage. Who is the Secretary of Energy? Who does it belong to? Where does the money come from? It comes from here. It comes from the government.

The government always has had a role to play. It will continue to have a role to play, and I think the philosophy that people are trying to push down the American people's throats now of here is your 300 bucks, while tuition and fees has increased by 28 percent under this current administration; tuition and fees at 4-year public institutions increased by 35 percent; tuition and fee increases at public 2-year institutions increased by 60 percent; tuition and fees increased in 49 of the 50 States in 2003.

You and I come here at eleven o'clock at night. Our wives are watching and hopefully trying to engage some young people.

□ 2300

But why do it? Because we need to establish a program in this country that will move the country forward.

Now, after 9-11, we had opportunities for energy efficiency, or another GI bill, or you could have asked the American people to ride to work on bikes and they would have gone out and done it because they were committed to moving the country forward and committed to doing whatever it takes. And yet look at the inaction, look at the one solution for every problem. This is a one-trick pony. Tax cuts, tax cuts, tax cuts. And they are not going to the people in my district.

Fifty percent of the people in my district in Youngstown, Ohio; in Niles, Ohio; in Warren, Ohio; and in Akron, Ohio, 50 percent of the people got a tax cut, but 50 percent did not.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is also important for my colleague to identify that the majority of the tax cut is going to the individuals with the most money, the individuals that are making over \$1 million a year. A lot of my constituents are not. If I had to go out and run the election saying I am only concerned in my district with those who are making over \$1 million, I would be surprised if I received 50 votes out of the number that I need.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I have been very, very on target as it relates to sharing with the American people, with not just pointing out and describing the inequities of leadership or the inequities of our so-called health care plan, because we do not have one right now, but I just want to share this with our listeners here.

The amount of young adults 18 to 29 years old who are uninsured has gone up 8 percent since 2000, and in 2000 only 22 percent of all young adults were uninsured. Now 30 percent of the uninsured Americans are young adults, despite the fact that their age group represents just 15 percent of the population. These are uninsured numbers, I just want to add and correct myself.

I think it is important that there is a piece of legislation authored by one of the members of our caucus, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER). He has a bill, House bill 3192, that aims to help young adults without health insurance.

I want to also share with the American people that the Federal Government, we in the Congress are supposed to be in the business of not only helping the people that we represent, especially this Congress, but also assisting States. Now, we have the benefit up here, and here I have my credit card here. I do not have any money in my wallet, but I can go back in and pull a credit card out, I pulled my credit union credit card out, and we have the ability here to just swipe the card and add it to the deficit. Swipe the card and add it to the deficit to the point that we are borrowing money by knocking on the bank of China, saying, hey, can you help us pay down our debt. But we are not doing it on behalf of everyday Americans. We are doing it on behalf of making sure that we can provide tax cuts to people who are not asking for it.

For the middle-class individual, we support some of these tax cuts. We support the family tax cut as it relates to child tax credit and things of that nature. But when we start talking about tax cuts for billionaires, fundamentally, I believe, especially in this deficit time, in this time when States are running deficits because they cannot take a credit card out and swipe it and say I will put it on the card, they have to balance their budgets. So they balance their budgets on behalf of who? The people in their State. Those people are who? Americans that we represent. And what do they do at the State level? They then in turn pass it on to

the county government. Well, county, sorry, but you have to let us know how you are cutting costs. We are going to get down to the bottom of this.

What is important is that we start getting to the top of the whole situation, and the top is in the White House, the top is here in this House of Representatives, the top is over in the other body where we have the kind of leadership that we have that is allowing this legislation to pass. This is what some academics call devolution of taxation. We will cut it here, but we will raise it there.

I can tell you right now, for the Americans listening to us and Members of Congress and mayors and council members, or city commissioners, school board members, they know exactly what we are talking about. They get it. They know.

Tell me if this sounds familiar in a community near you or as to Members of this House or people that are watching us now. Has there been a referendum for a bond issue or something to help pay for schools? Of course there has been. Has there been an extra penny for transportation or something of that level, or a gas tax increase on the local level to try to make up some kind of shortfall in revenue? Of course there has been. It is going on now. To seniors, are you getting the same service that you were receiving as relates to an activity program or a good-will program in your neighborhood or in your community? Of course there have been cuts.

The reason why there have been cuts is not the fact that we have not been able to provide the level of service that we have been providing in the past. And I have great concern about being in the Congress and standing over the largest, or be taking part in the largest deficit in the history of the Republic.

One would assume, listening to some of our colleagues in the majority, if we were to believe what they are saying, it is those liberal Democrats that brought us here. Oh no, it has been a long time. And they cannot say that. I challenge the other side constantly. I wonder where the deficit hawks are, those individuals that came to this floor, just like we are here on this floor talking about how they cannot believe the deficit is where it is. I cannot believe this. How did we allow the deficit to get out of control?

Guess what? Democrats delivered a balanced budget. They got what they asked for. Then they turn around and flip the script and try to make it seem as though the Democrats did something fundamentally wrong. Now we have a deficit that people do not understand how we are going to get it down. I guarantee people are going to suffer. Student loans? Forget about it. The banking community is here, and they are trying to make the situation even worse for students that are trying to pay their loans back. They will never pay them. They will always be in debt to the banks for getting an education.

□ 2310

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) gave some great statistics that even when individuals graduate from college, where will they go? Where will the jobs be? Back when President Clinton was President, there were jobs looking for people. Now there are people looking for jobs. And the President says, well, for anyone who is willing to work. Well, I do not have a lot of constituents saying, Congressman, I am not willing to work. They want to have a job. They need that job. It is very, very important that we help them.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to share this one point with my colleague, but I have to say I love to hear my friend when he is sharing these statistics and everything. I just sit right here, and I say this is amazing, look at this guy. The way my colleague deploys the information, it is just so informative. And this is good because we are addressing folks who know what it means for someone to call your house and say are you going to pay this bill or this student loan that you have, or what have you? These are what real people go through, receiving a letter in the mail that you do not know how they are going to pay it.

For the individuals that own credit cards, because they do not have a job and they are trying to make ends meet, they are paying what the bank or the credit card is asking for, \$23 versus paying to the principal because they cannot afford to do so because they are in debt. So it is important for us to share this information.

The government spends \$900,000 a minute. Every minute, \$900,000. That is a lot of money. And it borrows \$1.1 billion a day. That is an awful lot of money, \$1.1 billion, to pay down on this deficit that is in the trillions. And people talk about our children are going to pay. My colleague, we are going to pay it, and seniors are going to pay it. Because Social Security is not going to be what it should be and how it should be.

So when my colleague started talking about are we better off today than we were 4 years ago, and I know my colleague wants to say something. He is ready to get back on the mike, and I am going to give him a chance in just a minute, but I think it is important for us to share this. We shared about a piece of legislation that one of our colleagues has sponsored now to help young Americans without health insurance. I am 37. Individuals such as myself, the 50-somethings, the 60-somethings can say, well, we have health care needs. Of course, we do. But guess what? When that young person, that grandson or that son or daughter finds him or herself in a health crisis, who is going to pay for it? Nine times out of 10 they will mortgage their homes to pay for the health care costs for their children and grandchildren.

So this is not an issue; this is interconnected. It is all together, and it is going to be the reality of America, or it is the reality of America.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I think the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) makes some great points. I believe this is a good opportunity for us to try to communicate some of these points.

To continue on a point that the gentleman was making, the gentleman was talking about the devolution of taxes and going from the Feds cut their taxes and they push it off onto the States. And the States, in many instances, cut their taxes too and have reduced revenue, and they are passing it on to the county. And we see the local school boards, we see the university raise its tuition prices, we see mental health levies, transportation levies, disability levies, and senior citizen levies for senior programs, parks; we see levies for just about everything.

We have the devolution down until it gets to the local level, and the reason why we have a Federal Government to pass money along is because a lot of those areas are poor. They do not have the money to treat people with mental health problems in their county. They do not have the money. We need the Federal Government and the States to come in and help those poor communities.

A lot of the school districts, and this is something that is going on in Ohio, some of the school districts, they do not have the local tax base to be able to fund an adequate education for their kids. So you need the State to be involved or you need the Federal Government to be involved in order to help them.

That is one stream that comes down, and it is pushing down on the poor citizens in our communities all across the country regardless of the State.

Then, as you reduce the Federal revenues and, as you said, you borrow the money, you reduce the Federal revenues; but then you have to figure out what you are going to give back because the revenues are not there to give back. It is not like we are returning surplus money to the millionaires, it is not like when Clinton left office, and we had billions of dollars to give back. There is no surplus to give back, and we keep giving back. So where do we get the money? We pull out the credit card. We borrow the money to give it to the top 1 percent.

So we are cutting services on this end. We are pushing the burden down to the local level, and then we are borrowing money to give to rich people; and then in this other area here, we are pushing the burden off on the next generation. It is a tax shift off onto your kids, to your grandkids some day, my kids and my grandkids.

So we are going to have a higher rate of taxes for your grandkids because of this indulgence, this binge that we have been on, the binge that this administration has been on; and we are pushing it down to these kids at the same time that the baby boomers are moving into our systems, our Medicare

system and our Social Security system.

What are we thinking? This makes no sense to do what we are doing. It is mind-boggling.

I was on the floor a couple of hours ago with the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) and the other gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) and we were talking about veterans. When you listen to this, if you are home just listening this, Law and Order is over, now you are turning on CSPAN, watching us, you think those are two partisans down there talking, and a few hours ago there were three, just trying to score political points, just blatant politics. But then you look at the facts and you look at what is going on with our country and the lack of investment in people, the lack of investment in all of the programs that we have believed in for years, you begin to recognize it is an issue of priorities. It is an issue of we would rather give these tax cuts because we think in the long run it will help us win an election as opposed to what is best for the country.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, we are in our districts working next week, but the week after next what we should have, we need to get a nice credit card. Just write the deficit in, expiration date unknown, put the credit card there. You know how they have the pictures now with the football teams, we need to talk about that, and I think that is something that we need to talk about over the break.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Over the break, maybe we can get away from here and open up and let the creative juices roll, and we can come up with something.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Yes, and I have a couple of credit cards. None with any substantial balance, but there was once upon a time that was the case. We know better now. I think it is important to understand that young people make youthful indiscretions, and some of those indiscretions are financial.

Another thing is, when we set the deck, when we cut Pell Grants and cut opportunities, low-interest student loans to students that need them, and these are Democrat, Republican, Independent kids that are trying to educate themselves, that is another thing. That is indiscretion based on this Congress knowingly doing this. That is a fundamental problem when we have more young people coming out.

Are you better off? I am looking at this chart that is next to the gentleman, and you can see it better than I can. The gentleman and I are both Letterman guys. He is coming on in a few moments on another station, and I always like to hear his top 10. We have more than 10 here.

When we look at those that are employed, January 2001, 132.4 million were employed. Now we have 130.9 million, and there are more people in the United States of America than there were 3 to 4 years ago.

Unemployment, January 2001, was 5.6 million. Now unemployed is 8.2 million. We are going in the wrong direction.

Not in the labor force, but want a job, 4.6 million then; 4.7 million now. You would assume these numbers would be heading higher rather than going lower.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Absolutely. I think an amazing number here, and I know viewers cannot see these at home, but these are official statistics.

Household debt in January 2001 was \$6.6 trillion. Household debt today, \$8.8 trillion; \$2.2 trillion more of household debt. And that is the issue that we keep talking about because the debt tax, the tax per household from this reckless binge that we have been on over the past 3 years is ultimately going to cost your kids and your grandkids enormous amounts of money to pay for that debt.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. There is one thing coming out at me, like 3-D, 15 gallons of regular gasoline, January 2001, was \$18.90. Now, May 2004, is \$26.33.

Let me just say this, it is one thing to talk the talk, and it is another thing to walk the walk. We have a lot of guys down on Pennsylvania Avenue at the White House. They have the bully pulpit. They are members of the administration talking about what the indicators said, and we believe that the indicator is going to indicate. But when it comes down in the final analysis, the American people more is coming out of their pockets than they are getting in their pockets, if they are getting anything.

So when we start talking about young people, once again, I go back to the parents and grandparents. I think the goal of every parent and grandparent or even aunt or uncle is to see their kids or grandkids do better than what they have done. That is their goal.

What we are seeing now, and this information can be found if Members want to find it. You can check onto the Web site, this information is there at housedemocrat.gov/areyoubetteroff. It is amazing, people come up with these Web sites.

□ 2320

Mr. MEEK of Florida. It is just amazing what we are finding and what we are seeing and what is actually happening out there.

One other thing I wanted to mention. I want to talk about a broken promise. President Bush said 4 years ago that he promised to increase Pell grants to \$5,100. For the past 4 years the President and congressional Republicans have frozen or cut the maximum Pell grant award. The Pell grant stands at \$4,050 today. That is \$1,000 off the mark. But meanwhile we are here on this floor to make permanent tax cuts for the most affluent individuals in this country. The only way that this is going to change, not if we do the 30-Something hour every week. We can only inform the American people. They are going to have to act.

They are going to have to make sure that we have the kind of leadership

that is willing to stand up to special interests and say, no, it is not going to happen. We have a constitutional right to make sure that we watch out for the future of this country and to stand here on this floor today not because of our doing, and we voted against a lot of the stuff that has put us in this situation now, laws or legislation passed. I always say this is the biggest cake and ice cream administration I have ever seen. It is almost like sitting one's kid down at the table and say, hey, do not worry about the veggies, do not worry about eating your baked chicken. Turn those plates around and eat that cake and ice cream, go ahead, all you want. But what happens eventually? Either obesity, diabetes, or something. And that is what we are finding ourselves in.

Well, we are down in the polls; so let us see what kind of tax we can come up with today. We will give maybe 30 percent to average Americans and the other we will give to friends and individuals that have money. So I think it is important that we look at that.

I wanted to just hit one more Web site because I think it is important we pay attention to this. It is rockthevote.com on voter suppression, to make sure that young people can vote. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the gentleman from Ohio that I am telling school districts in Florida to tell the kids in school to send notes home to their parents to remind them to vote in the general election. Now, those kids have Republican moms and dads, Democrat moms and dads, Independent moms and dads. But anyone who is paying attention to what is going on with their child in school, they are going to have an issue of what is happening here. So if those parents were to go out and vote, it would be a different conversation. We would be on the floor talking about, what, under the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) as Speaker, we passed on behalf of the American people, not just Democratic kids, not just Democratic 30-somethings, not just senior Democrats, but on behalf of all Americans, and it will be fair. It will be fair to the business community. It will be fair to the other everyday Americans.

I am going to let the gentleman go ahead because, like I said, he has a way of being able to supply that information; but once again we as Democrats are looking to make sure that we have opportunities to provide opportunities for young Americans. During the Clinton administration, more than 10 million people were able to take advantage of the New Hope Scholarship tax credit and other scholarships. Students saved \$8 billion through the direct college loan program. JOHN KERRY is talking about the same. He is talking about \$4,000, not once in the college experience but per semester, per year, credit to be able to allow young people to attend college even though student loans have gone up. That will allow them to be able to receive a college education.

Let me share this, Mr. Speaker, before I yield. During the Bush administration, college tuition has increased by 28 percent. That is that devolution of taxation we talked about earlier, when we cut it up here and we hand it down to State governments. They have to find it somewhere. So where do they go for it? The weak prey, seniors and students and young children, cutting back and saying that public schools need to suck it up and do better. 400,000 qualified high school graduates will not attend a 4-year college this year because of financial barriers; 200,000 will not attend college at all. This is not because they do not want to. It is because they cannot afford to. So I think it is important that if we are going to have a workforce that will be able to take those jobs under a new administration, hopefully under a new leadership here in this House of Representatives, that they will be able to get through school to be able to provide the kind of skilled worker that we need versus what we are experiencing now, more and more jobs going offshore than right here in our own communities, State, and country.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I think the gentleman from Florida is absolutely right, and he is as articulate as anyone is around here.

A couple of issues that I want to talk about. And we are going to wrap up here in a few minutes. The hour is getting late, but I think it is important to just say that what we want this Congress to do, what we want this President to do is to take a strong leadership role in creating a new economy for the young people of this country. And I come from an old steel town, very strong during the industrial age; and what I hear from the retirees, I hear from people who have been working in a lot of these mills over the years and are coming close to retirement, is, What are our kids going to do? And when we look back at how we succeeded during the industrial age, the GI bill, the investments in infrastructure, the investments in the interstate highway systems, and I think needs to be duplicated, not in the same, but look at the space program, the national priority to educate people. It was not just about going to the Moon, which was a great national priority; it was about getting people, young people and the country engaged in math and science and engineering and physics because that administration understood that that would spin off into the economy, and those engineers who were getting educated were not just working in the space program. They were working in a lot of other industries. So I think it is important for us to do that. That is one.

And, two, I have heard the President say the economy is turning around. I cannot help, as we are wrapping it up here in the final couple of minutes, but to just acknowledge the fact that just a few miles outside of my district in Canton, Ohio, Timken, which was a

staple in Canton and Massillon, some of the greatest high school football in the country, the Timken Company is going to close up shop, 1,300 jobs in this community. Howard Fineman just wrote a great article about Timken and its potential effect on the election, but 1,300 jobs in Ohio were bleeding. And the President and others want to say that the economy is turning around, and I cannot help but say, where? Where? Maybe if they have a little bit of stock, and the stock market is not even doing all that well. And gas prices are going up. I mean, where is it getting better? It is not. It is getting progressively worse. We have the financial albatross around our neck with the current war, and we are having a number of problems. So these are some things where we have to make education a national priority for us.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Are you better off now than you were 4 years ago? Mr. Speaker, I just want to, if we can, share just a few of our e-mails that we received, and I am going to start off. From Melanie B. of Maryland, and I will just leave it at that. She is a political and science and social worker major at the University of Maryland, Baltimore campus, will be 30 years old this year. And she goes on to say that "I have noticed over the past 2 years how tuition costs have gone up and continue to go up. Just over the past year, I have gotten really interested in the workings of the Congress. I tune into C-SPAN quite often now, and I was so happy to listen to the 30-Something Group talk Tuesday night. It almost brought me to tears."

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It almost brought me to tears.

"I started my education late at 25. I am working full-time for an attorney to put myself through school. My parents were unable to help me. I live on my own, which leaves me no choice but to work full-time, or I wouldn't be able to support myself. It is going to take me 6 years to complete both degrees. I started at the community college and transferred.

"I received a scholarship from the National Honor Society, but lost the scholarship after the first semester. In order to keep the scholarship you are required to go to school full-time, 12 credit hours, and keep a GPA of 3.5. I was not able to do so, and just by dropping down to 9 credit hours I lost the little bit of money I had for access to school.

"I make too much money to qualify for a Pell Grant, which means that by the time I finish school, I will be in a mountain of debt. I hope to go to grad school, but right now I am not sure that that will be an option. I can't imagine the cost of grad school adding to my already outstanding debt."

That is a reality of what is going on out there. Community college, had a scholarship, have to work full-time, lost scholarship because she has to work to support herself, had to go to 9 hours, she lost it. She wants to continue her education, but cannot; not because it is not offered, but because she cannot afford it, and also because she will be in so much debt.

If you will read one.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I will read a couple here and start wrapping things up here. Alan T, a senior at Oklahoma State University, sent us an e-mail.

"I am spending over \$300 a semester for textbooks that have been used four or five times already by previous students. My best friend was unable to be the first in his family to graduate from a major university due to the fact that he was unable to pay for textbooks, parking permits and other student fees that are burdening students more and more," also probably a few parking tickets, if I remember college well. Those are also a cost that students must endure.

"I can either pay my bursar, or I can pay my rent. Next year, I won't buy my textbooks, so I can pay both."

The fact that we have people making this decision, it sounds eerily similar to the decision that a lot of our senior citizens have to make between food and prescription drugs.

Joseph Oliver from North Dakota, a 20-year-old chemical engineering student:

"Full disclosure, I do want to tell you that I am historically, even though I am only 20, a conservative voting citizen. The investigation into textbooks," for those of you at home, we have a bill that is going to investigate the high cost of textbooks, also provide a \$1,000 tax credit for you to be able to deduct that, or credit that, for your textbooks, up to \$1,000 a year, or your parents up to \$1,000 a year.

"The investigation into textbooks is long past due. I spent nearly \$600 for three classes of books, then was unable to sell any of them back because the new editions were released."

If anything gets you more upset in college, than you would drop hundreds of dollars for a textbook, and then you would go back at the end of the semester to get hopefully 10 or 20 bucks back, and they say, "We are not buying these back any more." I mean, that was ridiculous.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I still have some of my textbooks from college at home, because I was so upset, I was appalled by the fact they would not even give me even one-tenth of what I spent for them, and I did not even give them the privilege of giving me \$5 for the textbook. I kept the textbook, even though maybe Bush 41 was

the last President of the United States in it.

Go ahead. That is just a personal issue.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. He goes on to say, "That was the biggest unseen cost of college." He also goes on to talk about the variable interest rate for student loans. "I have a fixed rate of nearly 3.4 percent right now. If that were to change, the light at the end of the tunnel would get a little less bright. I work 18 hour days in the summer to afford the opportunity of continuing school. I get upset every year, because I get penalized for working hard, among other factors, when it comes to receiving financial aid."

I am going to wrap up here and just, again it is an honor to be here with the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) to talk about these issues. I think it is important, if you are there, please send us your e-mail to us, find the rockthetvote about voter suppression. But continue to send us these, because it is important for us to know exactly what your issues are.

I do want to take this opportunity, since we are not going to be here next week and this is my first term in Congress, to wish my mother a happy birthday. She is 60-years-old, so I wanted to wish her a happy birthday. Also my cousin, Phil Guerra who is also turning 60 this year.

I wanted to take this as an opportunity to wish them a happy birthday before we take off for our Memorial Day break. And just to say again, we got to keep plugging away. We got a long road here. But you establish what you stand for, you take it to these young students, these young kids, and I think you have an opportunity to change the way the country is run, and I think that is a great opportunity that we have here.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Congratulations to the young people in your family. They are still young, and they still have a lot to do. 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov, 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov.

I want to thank the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), for this evening. I look forward to coming back in another 2 weeks to talk about other issues that are facing young Americans.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CARTER). Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 36 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.