

being American corporations. In fact, I think it was Ralph Nader sent a request to all of the huge corporations in America asking them to begin their board meetings with the Pledge of Allegiance. Few even responded but those that did were irate that he would suggest such a thing, suggesting that there is no allegiance to a nation state, that their allegiance is to a corporate bottom line. And if that bottom line can be enhanced by ignoring the needs of the country in which they are housed, that is okay, they are going to do it because that is exactly what they are constructed for.

So it is true that this issue is a jobs issue. It is certainly true that this issue is a national security issue. As I said, there are people who are coming into this country hidden among those who are coming here for relatively benign purposes but there are people coming in to do us great, great harm, undeniably true. We have found some here already. We have arrested them. Some of them we have been able to actually take out of circulation not necessarily because we can immediately bring them to trial on the basis of espionage or some sort of allegation that deals directly with their support of terrorism but because they have violated immigration laws. That is the first thing we go to. They are here illegally. It is nice we have something to use and it is nice that we would actually use it, but the fact is that even these things are not as important in totality as the issue I discussed earlier, and that is the very difficult problem we are going through in America with identifying who we are.

There is a great book that has just come out. It is in fact called "Who Are We?" It is by Samuel Huntington. I consider him to be an enormously talented observer of the American political and social scene. He has written other books, one called "The Clash of Civilizations" that I have read several times over. I am about halfway through "Who Are We?" I find it to be a fascinating read. I believe that that is the ultimate question with which we are dealing, who are we? Where are we going? What is it we are going to try and accomplish as Americans? What does it mean to be an American?

Our students in our classrooms throughout the country are being fed a steady diet of anti-Americanism, sometimes subtle, sometimes overt. This diet includes a revision of history that creates a picture I think totally and completely incorrect and certainly skewed that would show American history and Western civilization itself as being inherently evil, something out of which nothing good could come. A textbook I remember picking up in a junior high I was in in my district, this was a couple of years ago now, started out, the chapter on American history, as Columbus came here and destroyed paradise.

□ 2310

That was not in italics. It was not just a quote they were going to then analyze. That was the way the textbook portrayed Columbus's trip and his landing here on our shores, on the shores of North America. That kind of thing where we have made it very confusing for Americans to even understand or identify who, in fact, or what we are, combined with massive immigration where that same message is given to people who are not necessarily coming here, by the way, to become Americans but to simply achieve a greater economic level of existence and prosperity, which certainly is an admirable and laudable and understandable goal. But it behooves us, I think, to change the way in which we teach our children, the way in which we discuss this issue of multiculturalism, which has gotten to the point where it becomes almost a cult and that anything that is said to suggest that American culture, that American history, and that Western Civilization is, in fact, worthy of analysis, worthy of allegiance, anything that suggests that is determined to be sort of against the grain; and it is certainly not going to be accepted by academia as a legitimate subject matter.

I recently had the opportunity of going to a high school in my district where 250 students were asked to assemble. And we talked for a while, and one of them asked me a question. They sent these questions up. And it was written out, and it said what do I think is the most serious problem facing America today? And I said, Before I answer that question, let me ask you something: How many in this room, 250, approximately, students, how many in this auditorium would agree with the statement that you live in the greatest country in the world? And about maybe two dozen raised their hands, and they did so sheepishly, the ones that did. It was none of that immediately hands go up, sure, of course, naturally, we live in the greatest country in the world. That did not happen.

And they looked along the walls where their teachers were lined up in this auditorium, and I could see in their faces that they were concerned. I am not saying that the ones that did not answer were suggesting that they did not like America, hated America. I am just saying that they did not have the slightest idea, they had absolutely no intellectual ammunition to defend themselves if they were to postulate that, in fact, America is the greatest country in the world. They were not taught anything that would lead them to that. In fact, they were taught things that would make them feel very sheepish and sensitive about making that kind of statement.

That is what I consider to be the real issue with which we are involved and which we should be debating: changing the way in which we look at ourselves, changing the way in which we teach our children about who we are, and cer-

tainly changing the way in which we try to bring immigrants into American mainstream, which today does not exist. Today we tell them they should stay separate, keep a separate language, even keep political affiliations with countries other than the United States. This is all done to our great and long-lasting disadvantage. It is a very serious issue, one that, as I say, requires more time and attention and analysis than can be given during a 30-second or even 1-minute ad during a political campaign. But it is the reason why I do come to the floor as often as I do to try to raise the issue.

I could be, of course, 180 percent off course here. I could be totally wrong. But I believe with all my heart that at least this deserves the debate, that this body should afford it, and that this arena would be the perfect place for that to occur.

30-SOMETHING DEMOCRATS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for the remainder of the time until midnight.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, once again, as I always start, it is an honor and a privilege to stand here and speak not only to Members of the House but also to the American people. And as the Members know, for several weeks now, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) has appointed a 30-Something working group to address the issues that are facing middle-class Americans throughout America and some of the issues that we need to work on to make sure that their voice is heard in this democracy and this U.S. House of Representatives.

Lately, we have been having quite a bit of discussion on some of the issues that are facing democracy here in the United States, and we have been working with Rock the Vote in making sure that young voices are heard throughout this country to make sure that they have access to voting, to make sure that they know the things that they need to know to fight to register on their campus.

There have been several reports that have been quite disturbing throughout the country. We encourage young people to go to rockthevote.com to find out more about voter suppression that is happening throughout this country. We also inform young people in the public and their parents that are also concerned about making sure that they are able to receive good information to go on the rockthevote.com site or the 30-something Dems site to make sure that they get information so that they can share it with supervisors of elections that are misinformed.

Based out of that discussion, we received several e-mails, Mr. Speaker, of times that young people had to actually go get an attorney to register to vote. And I think that that is very unfortunate due to the fact that many of

us in this country are concerned about voter apathy, concerned about the 18- to 32-year-olds or 18- to 24-year-olds, the reason why they do not vote or the reason is not great enough for them to vote. We have to make sure that their voices are heard.

And in this light, I want to share again with the American people that are watching us right now that in 1979, the U.S. Supreme Court spoke to this issue. It said if a person is enrolled in school and needs to be out of state or in state, they have the right to register where they are attending school. That is so very important.

The reason why I mention that is the fact that, as we start looking at issues that are hindering young Americans from being able to educate themselves, that once they leave that higher education opportunity that they are given in their State or another State, they should not leave that educational experience in debt. When they leave that experience in great debt because of student loans, because the President said that he was going to raise the Pell grant opportunities for young people that would like to educate themselves, middle-age people that would like to educate themselves, to \$5,100 versus what we are experiencing now, a little bit over \$4,000 and some change, that is more a reality now for young Americans than fiction. So I want to make sure that they have the opportunity to vote.

As we cut the Federal commitment here in Washington, D.C., States do not have what we have, the opportunity to put it on a credit card and continue the deficit clock is running. Right now the deficit is well out of control, and we are experiencing the highest deficit in the history of the Republic. The States do not have that opportunity. They have to balance their budget. When they balance their budget, they then pass that cost on to local government and in this case to State university systems that then ask students to pay more money for tuition and for services that ordinarily they would receive at a lower cost or for free.

The educational experience is quite financial these days, and I think it is important that these individuals or the young people or middle-age individuals, even in the community college experience, that they understand that they have an opportunity to have their voice heard in November; and it is very important that they are able to not only have their voices heard in November but also during the primary season to let it be known that they are voters too. They are our future, and it is important that we stand with them and for them.

□ 2320

On another point, and I am just going back to some of the e-mails we received, I think it is important for us to talk a little bit about what we are experiencing here today, Mr. Speaker, even though we have seen a 6 cents or

5 cents in some areas, 3 cents in others, drop in gas prices.

I will share with you even from my great State of Florida that this is really putting a crunch on the middle-class. They did not receive an additional dollar from an employer or a small business person did not receive more dollars from a bank to be able to deal with the gas price crunch that we have right now.

I have a chart here, Mr. Speaker, if I can just share it here with the American people what has happened over the last 2 years in America. In 2002, the gas prices were \$1.44. This is just for regular grade gas, the retail prices. Then in 2003 it was raised to \$1.60 here. Then in 2004 it skyrocketed, and it was projected to be \$1.87. Now, May 31, in recent numbers of this year, it is now up to \$2.05.

I know some Americans are looking and saying, "I want to know where I can find \$2.05 gas." Before I came here to the floor, I was going to fill up my tank, and then I hesitated and I said hopefully tomorrow will be a better day. We cannot judge our spending based on the fact, middle-class spending, based on the fact maybe the gas prices will be cheaper tomorrow, and in many instances throughout America it is going to be quite a lot higher.

OPEC has done some things that are very interesting. They have put more crude on the market now to try to deal with the issue of gas prices. But I will tell you that this administration has to have a better response than to try to encourage OPEC to do something that is short-term.

This is a real issue. We have Americans that are trying to work, trying to get to work, trying to use mass transit, and at the same time we are trying to find some of the solutions to be able to alleviate the financial burden of American families at the same time we are stalling legislation here in this House.

There is a Federal highway bill. The President has also said he would veto it due to a bipartisan effort here in this House to make sure we are able to give States the necessary dollars for the roads, bridges and modes of transportation to be able to help the middle-class and help working Americans.

I am here today as a witness from a State that we have individuals that wake up and go to work every day, young Americans that are trying to do the things they have to do to be able to meet the obligations of their family. And so many of those individuals that are watching us now with one eye open, they have to wake up. Their reality is at 6 a.m. in the morning to get their kids ready for school and make sure they have what they need. If they are fortunate to have transportation or can afford to fill that tank up, take them to school, go to work. These are individuals that know what it means for a 15-minute break in the morning, a strict half an hour lunch break, punch in and out, and 15 minutes in the afternoon.

These same working individuals, I must add, and I am not talking about individuals that are not contributing to our economy in the way they should and trying to support their families, these are the same individuals that are a part of the 43 million Americans that are working every day that do not have health care.

I think it is so very, very important for us to take up this point, the fact there is not a bill that is being considered in this Congress that will see the light of day at any time in the very near future that will be a national health care plan so individuals will have an opportunity to provide for themselves, to provide adequate health care.

If you want to talk about a health savings plan that the President has proposed, under these gas prices, under the strain American families already have, there is not a lot of room about talking about okay, we are going to save in case I get sick. They need preventive care. They have to have it, their children need to have it, and it is important to prioritize that.

If we are going to make tax cuts permanent for the millionaires in this country, knowing of the unmet needs of being able to find alternative fuel sources here in the United States, to be able to pull back on our dependency on crude oil, that I believe has a lot to do with our American troops as I speak on guard in Iraq and in the Middle East, and if we are going to be able to set forth an America that is set for young people and families that are trying to do the best they can to provide for their families, something has to give, Mr. Speaker.

The 30-something group is working toward solutions, not just identifying these problems, but solutions, and continuing to put pressure on this administration to make sure that the President knows that it is very important that we do some of the things that American people need.

One, we need to make sure that on this gas issue that Americans do not have to find themselves going to a gas station and saying "give me \$5 worth." Now, that is something that I used to do when I was in college. There was a time in college when you are financially challenged, you probably do not have the opportunity, I know I did not, to fill my tank up every time I showed up at the pumps, but it was something I knew was temporary in nature.

But individuals that have jobs that work every day trying to provide for their families, they should not pull up with a child seat in the back and say, "Give me \$5, because that is all I can afford, and hopefully it will last me for a day or two if I do not turn on my air conditioner."

This is reality in America right now. We are at war now. A lot of folks feel throughout the world we are at war because of oil and our dependency on oil. Is there a real move from this administration to take us off that dependency of Middle Eastern oil?

I think it is important for us if we are going to hold Saudi Arabia's feet to the fire that this administration should stand up to Saudi Arabia and stop making excuses for them. I think it is also important for us to realize we have to find alternative ways of finding fuel and encouraging more cleaner burning vehicles.

I think it is also important for us to realize that we have to do some work here in America in trying to find new oil resources within our own control, but also be very sensitive not to go into natural environmental areas in this country that we have great respect for, that we would turn into an example that we chastise other countries for doing. I think that this could definitely be able to assist us in our efforts in keeping gas prices down.

My talk here tonight is about making sure that individuals that have children, or do not have children that are trying to make this time in their lives from college on to 40, 45, and on, and even grandparents that are now stepping in, or the parents of these children that I am mentioning in this age range, that are trying to provide not only information, but provide financial assistance to their children because they are not able to make ends meet, it is in that vein.

I think that it is important for us to remember that declining real wages are putting a squeeze on middle-class Americans, and that gas prices have a lot to do with it.

I also want to share with you that in the last 3 months, average wages in the United States increased at an annual rate of 2.2 percent, but what is sad is the fact that during this same time, the most recent stage of so-called Americans that actually have worked, took a pay cut as relates to the costs they had to spend for their health care.

So in this circle of not doing anything at all, in this circle of not passing a transportation bill that is going to help not only States be able to stimulate more jobs or be able to help us to find alternative ways of finding fuel outside of the Middle East, we are at a standstill now, and we are at a standstill that Americans are actually suffering. We are at a standstill of their voices being heard.

I think it is important that Americans understand that this Federal Government has chosen, this administration has chosen to make sure that millionaires receive a permanent tax cut over health care for working Americans, over making sure that we are able to keep gas prices down so that Americans can be able to continue doing the things that they are trying to do and providing for their families, over a prescription drug benefit for seniors.

So when we start talking about the middle-class and we start talking about the 30-somethings and the 20-somethings and even those individuals who are looking forward to getting to that particular age, we look at all of

these impediments. So our government is supposed to be here to assist, not to hinder. I do not think that anyone sets out at the beginning of the day saying, "Well, let's see what I can do to throw a log in front of young people in America."

□ 2330

But I think it is important for us to bring into question this upcoming election season whose side are you on when it comes down to the policies that are either being made or not being made in the process.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to just share a few other issues as it relates to what is happening to so many young people, and as we look at the squeeze of what is happening with the gas prices, as we look at the squeeze of what is not happening as it relates to health care, and what I mentioned at the top of the hour, voter suppression; and I know that this Congress has tried to deal with that. I have to mention, when we talked about a couple of weeks ago, the issue of Iraq, and I am going to come back to the middle-class squeeze.

In some of these families we have troops that are serving and we have parents that are raising children on their own. Now, they receive correspondence, they also receive support from the spouse or the significant other that is fighting on behalf of this country of what they have been told to do in Iraq and Afghanistan and other areas. We even have troops in Haiti as I speak right now trying to provide some way of life for that country, and security. No one is giving anyone a gas voucher to that spouse or significant other to make room for this squeeze. They have to suck it up. So this is very, very important business that I am talking about here this evening.

My good friend and colleague, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), we have been working together for some time; we had a very late night tonight, we had a hearing in the Committee on Armed Services, a markup, which is disappointing at best; but this may be a time that we can talk about that. The gentleman represents Ohio, and they have been hit hard on this middle-class squeeze. A lot of people that are around the gentleman's age range and even above have experienced economic hard times on top of not having a job, on top of not having health care, even though small businesses in the gentleman's State that are trying to provide and trying to continue to keep the workers working, they are taking a squeeze, they are taking a hit on the gas prices. So I think that not only the gentleman being a Member of the Congress and being a very insightful person, that the gentleman's purpose here is even greater to give those individuals voice, and I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, and I think he is absolutely right. In places like Ohio, things are very difficult. The \$300, \$400,

\$500 increase over the course of a year in the gas effects people's lives. I know the gentleman from Florida is also concerned. But, Mr. Speaker, I have been very disappointed tonight, because several of the Special Orders tried to, I guess, address issues and make persuasive arguments I think that really do not exist, and one just wonders to oneself what the communities are like where these people are living. I know in Youngstown, Ohio, and in Niles, Ohio and in Warren, Ohio, and in Akron, Ohio, that people are feeling the squeeze; and people are losing jobs that pay \$20, \$25 an hour, health care benefits, pensions, 401(k)s, defined benefit plans, and they are losing those jobs, and the jobs that are being created are jobs that are paying \$7, \$8, \$9, \$10 an hour and no health care, in addition to the gas prices, in addition to these people trying to send their kids to school or to college. In Ohio, as I am sure it is going on around the country, that increase in tuition is 10 percent, 15 percent every single year.

So the reason we are here, the reason we want to talk about these issues is because we think something needs to be done. I do not believe that we should just sit here and criticize, although I do believe that is part of our constitutional responsibility, to make sure that we identify our platform where we want to take the country and we compare that to where the country is or where the opposite political party would like to take the country; and we try to make a comparison. I just want to share a couple of ideas that are the Democratic proposals for some of the education squeeze issues that people are feeling.

Senator KERRY, Presidential candidate Kerry, has several plans that we also agree with here in the Congress. A couple of them I would like to share with the American people here tonight. One of them is a tax credit for \$4,000 for anyone who sends their kid to school or they are paying for their own school; \$4,000 a year tax credit. Phenomenal. Not terrible; phenomenal. I think that is the kind of direction that we want to go in, when we can say to a young student, we are going to be here, the government is going to be here to support you.

Now, some people may say, what is the responsibility of the Federal Government on the issue of education, at least on the issue of college education? Well, some of it is Pell grants where we can give actual grants. When the Pell grant program was started in the middle of the 1970s, it accounted for almost 80 percent of a person's college tuition. Today, the Pell grant accounts for nearly 40 percent of a person's college tuition. So the buying power of the Pell grant program has decreased, almost cut in half. President Bush, when he campaigned in 2000, said that he was going to increase the amount invested into the Pell grant program so that young students would have the opportunity to go to college, but that just

was not the case. So one of our proposals is to also increase the amount of funding for the Pell grant program.

Another specific proposal that I think is something that we really need to look into and hopefully act on the first of next year, although many people believe that we cannot wait, is the issue of the States not having the money, the resources to invest. Many of the colleges in the States are publicly funded through the State tax coffers, so the State aid to universities in Ohio, for example, has decreased. And because the State aid has decreased, the local universities and colleges have been forced to raise tuition to compensate for the lack of State funding. One of the issues that we are proposing here is to have \$25 billion given across the country to the States with one provision: this money is to go to reduce the increases in tuition; this money is to go directly for State aid to our colleges. This will have a direct impact. It will lower the cost of tuition for many of these universities; it will allow access.

Since 2001, I believe the statistic is, and I will have to get it, but I think it was 2001, 250,000 potential students, college-eligible, qualified to attend, proper test scores, proper GPAs, would be able to access the college system. I say to the gentleman, 250,000 have not been able to go to school because they cannot afford it. In the United States of America, that is unacceptable.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, that was the U.S. Department of Education report.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Yes. This was not the Kendrick Meek Report, this was not the Tim Ryan Report, this was not the Democratic Caucus report. This was the U.S. agency's report. I just think it is important for people who are listening here tonight to say is that we can do better in the United States of America. Why would we want 250,000 people who want to go to college be somehow prohibited from going to college because of their financial situation? We know that if we invest in these people; and we did a study, I say to the gentleman, when I was in the State Senate in Ohio, the University of Akron did a study. For every dollar that the State would invest into higher education, they would get almost \$2, there were two or three studies, but they would get almost \$2 back from tax revenues.

□ 2340

Because you get someone who graduates from high school, goes out and is working somewhere for seven, eight bucks an hour and paying taxes on seven, eight bucks an hour as opposed to someone who is college educated making 40 or \$50,000 a year paying taxes on 40 or \$50,000 a year. It makes sense for us to invest. We have to get return on our investments. That is not the reason we are doing it but we know the societal benefits. Less racism, more tolerance for people from dif-

ferent cultures, different walks of life, different religions, and not to mention the added benefit to our economy, the entrepreneurship and everything else. So the point is this is an investment we should make.

The University of Akron study is applied to this particular proposal of \$25 billion. It would mean an increase in revenues to the States by \$50 billion. Each State would get \$1 billion.

Now, you go to a State like Ohio or Florida and say Governor Bush, Governor Taft, what would you do with an extra billion dollars? You would pump it right back into education. You would pump it back into health care. You would make sure your kids are healthy. You would be able to fund the No Child Left Behind that is underfunded.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Let me share with you, we received a rebate in the State of Florida of a billion dollars. And the State Governor Jeb Bush said, let us hold it off to next annual year versus trying to resolve some of the issues that are facing Floridians right now.

I am going to tell you nine times out of ten if it is the wrong governor or the wrong way of thinking of continuing to way say, well, I am here to make sure that we do the right thing with the people's money, well, let me just say this, nine times out of ten when things are held off it is in the kitty to justify another tax cut for individuals and for big corporations that are not necessarily on their knees and need it right now. They are carrying out the tax cuts because they cannot because they need to.

When the gentleman talked about that report, basically colleges and community colleges are not able to provide the courses for the individuals that would like to educate themselves. Right now, I just want to read something almost from the same report that was given to us. The fact that we talk about the 30 percent, we talk about the 250,000 college qualified students that have been shut out of last fall, 2003, in many cases because of cutbacks, because colleges will have to pull their belts tighter and cut courses. They just did not have the room to be able to adequately serve these students. Also as we start looking at the debt issue, Mr. RYAN, I mentioned earlier that many people are leaving the college experience in debt and right now.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Big time debt.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. We have individuals now that are undergraduate level and just to do a comparison between what happened in 1997 to 2000, and if you move beyond that you really start getting in trouble. But here between 1997 and 2000 the typical undergraduate debt rose 66 percent to \$18,900. And more than a quarter of today's 14 million undergraduate students will incur more than \$25,000 in debt to earn their degree.

Now, that is a good story because I know of stories that individuals leave

the higher education experience 75,000, \$100,000 in debt.

Now, you mention that yes, we are here to point those issues out but at the same time we are here to talk about solutions, and there is legislation on this side of the aisle from the Democrats with our fearless leader, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) that has served this Congress so well as the Democratic leader, and wants the opportunity to be Speaker of this House, so to summon these issues that are facing real Americans can rise to the top, need it be carrying out if the American people would have it, Senator KERRY's plan which hopefully will be President Kerry, or Members of this body that want to be see this legislation top shelf in this House. But now we have Republicans that are blocking legislation to lock low interest rates in, to allow students to be able to continue to receive low interest rates versus a variable in the long run. They will pay more if this is not taken care of.

I will tell you that if we go to a variable as some of the big banks want us to do, I will tell you right now they are not talking to me because they know they will be wasting their time because I am all about being on the side of the individual who tried to educate themselves, and unfortunately had to go beyond the call to pay for that education. It will cost those individuals \$5,500 over time. That is real money. That is while you are trying to buy a house. That is while you are trying to provide for your family.

I will tell the gentleman right now this is a real issue. We talk about the dollars and cents. This is a Democratic proposal. Lock it. Make sure the individuals have what they can be able to have, more money in their pocket versus more money out of their pocket.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. The official Democratic proposal says that the Democrats would double the maximum petroleum grant to \$11,600. Now, for many people that will cover pretty much most of your college television.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. That is correct. Right now we are experiencing the highest deficit in the history of the republic. And you would assume that if we have the highest deficit and it was Democrats that balanced the budget. I just want to remind the American people of that in this Congress, it was not the Republicans, it was not the Republican President. It was the Democrats in this House that balanced the budget. Just 3½ years ago, the discussion was on the floor on what are we going to do with the surplus. Now the discussion is, can I take my credit card out? This is a big number.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. It is a big number.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. A big number. And I will tell you right now if we had a little ticker here these zeros would be moving to a higher number as we speak. So the experience now that the American people have to witness and

this is the U.S. Treasury credit card here, and we have Republican Congress there. What we are experiencing now is that every 3 weeks we are knocking on the bank of China saying, can you loan us money to be able to pay down on the debt? So as we look at that, more money in the American people's pocket versus out of their pocket.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We are talking Democrat and Republican. And there are several Republicans I think who have taken a very courageous stand on this particular issue. If you had an opportunity today to read the New York Times, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. PETRI) I believe had a marvelous, marvelous letter to the editor, or op-ed today. It was phenomenal and I cannot say enough about it.

It basically said that the Federal Government should be directly loaning money to students. We do not need the banks involved in this. I do not think the banks are inherently bad people, but why would I give money to you for you to give it to somebody else and then you charge me more and I give you a little bit more so you can make a profit and then you give somebody else the money? We insure your loan. We guarantee you. So the Federal Government gives the money to the banks or we guarantee it to the banks so the banks takes no risk at all. Why not eliminate the banks, directly lend to the students, and give them the money and tell them to go to school and tell them that we are going to give him or her and many students like him or her around the country \$25 billion. And when it is all said and done, we are going to make \$50 billion on the deal.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Is the gentleman actually suggesting that we do something that will actually help the students? Are you suggesting that?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I am working on it. I do not want to be so bold but we need to start peeking in that direction.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I have a Bachelor of Science Degree, and I am not an economist, but one would argue, well, if we take the banks out of it, what kind of effect will it have on the economy? And I think very little. If any of us that have gone to banks knowing the kinds of praying at the altar, at the end of the day to be able to get money, for them to trust us enough to pay them back, it reminds me of the pharmaceutical companies in the prescription drugs.

I think the pharmaceutical companies are doing good things in America, in research, things of that nature, but when you look beyond the blankets of all of that we are paying, it is subsidized research. With the banks we are guaranteeing their loans.

□ 2350

So the real issues for that individual that is trying to educate him- or herself, this feeds also to the parents that we are talking 30-something, but individuals that are 50- or 60-something, high 40s, they are picking up the slack,

and they are paying the interest 9 times out of 10 for young people because they cannot afford it.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Because the Federal Government guarantees the loans, now the banks have no real incentive to go capture somebody who defaulted on their loan. Why would they? They are going to get reimbursed anyway from us. So, actually, the Federal Government, if we eliminated the banks or removed the banks from this process, we would lend the money directly, and there would be more incentive for us to go and capture people who defaulted on the loans that we gave them. We would want there to be incentive because we would get the money back. The banks are going to get their money one way or the other. They are either going to get it from the student or the Federal Government. So there is no real incentive.

Again, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. PETRI) was phenomenal today in his op-ed, and I cannot say enough about his courage to say if you are a conservative, if you do believe in the private, free markets, this kind of government intervention with the banks and playing all these games is no way to do it. It was very articulate, and I commend him for doing that and having the courage to do that.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is all depending on the kind of leadership that we will have come November, and I, for one, believe that the gentleman from California (Ms. PELOSI), who believes in some of the things that we are talking about here tonight, making sure that children or young people receive the opportunity that they need to be able to move in the direction, that they would like to move in to make this country strong, also making a decision like you just mentioned, what will be best for the American young person or the American family.

I mentioned early in our time here tonight the crunch, the squeeze on the middle class, the gas issue, and you have the gas chart there. We talked about voter suppression, also. We did a little cutback on that, but I think it is important when we talk about the middle class squeeze that folks say, well, you know, I received a \$35 check in the mail and I am so glad or \$100 back in my middle class tax cut, but I will tell my colleague, this gas thing is very real.

This is not the Tim Ryan report or the Kendrick Meek report. We actually do a little homework before we get to the floor. We spend the week making sure we get this information so that we are factual and we are sharing it with the American people, the good, bad and ugly, but according to the Forbes Magazine, it says the gas price increase since the beginning of this year cost Americans \$35 billion. That is a big number, much more than the 15 to 20 billion middle class consumers got from the Bush tax cuts this April.

I think it is important for us to continue to bring these facts to the table

because it is money in one pocket and it is more money out of the other pocket. I will tell you right now that is playing with the economy of families and will continue to do so, and it is important that we share this information with them.

We are asking on this side of the aisle the opportunity to lead, an opportunity to cut the deficit, an opportunity to be able to make sure that young people have greater opportunities in the future to make America strong and investing in U.S. jobs here versus overseas.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, with regards to what you were just talking about in the middle class squeeze, and I do not know if you had an opportunity to talk about this or not, but I think it is so fundamental to everything that we are talking about tonight.

CEO wages average \$8.1 million, 300 times that of the average worker in the United States of America, 300 times. Now, we are not begrudging those people. God bless them. You are in America. Make as much money as you possibly can. Unfortunately, taxes on wages earned average almost 24 percent. So if you are out working 40, 50, 60 hours a week, make a wage, 24 percent. Taxes on income from investments like stocks and bonds average less than 10 percent.

There is a shift in our tax code, our tax system, where we are moving the burden to wage earners. We are reducing the burden for those people who make money on stocks and bonds that has begun to divide the country, and there is this gap that is being created for the people who have a lot and the people who do not have too much.

I think it is dangerous, and I want to share with my colleague a conversation I was having last week with an old school Republican, moderate, conservative, fiscally balanced budgets. I will not mention his name, but he was saying how this kind of system that we are running right now, where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer and the middle class gets squeezed and tax burden goes on to those people who earn wages and the taxes are reduced for those people who make money on stocks and bonds and everything else, when we have a trading system that removes the good jobs to other places like China and India and they are not replaced by good paying jobs, where there is no health care, where people cannot find good employment, we begin to jeopardize the whole system. We begin to put the whole system at risk because we lose the stability that we need to have, and poor countries have revolutions because the poor get so poor that they just take up arms.

Now, I am not suggesting we are at that point, but we are beginning to move in a direction where the very rich donate money to this place. They get the laws they want, the free trade agreements that they want, the tax

structure that they want, the cuts in government that they want, the investments in government that they want, defense spending and something where the big companies can make a lot of money. There is no stabilizing force, and that is what the government is here for. We are here to stabilize this democracy and stabilize this country, and we have always been that country where people can look and say here is the middle class, the average people have an opportunity, average people are going to get educated, average people are going to have health care; everyone is going to have health care; everyone is going to have an education.

I think we take a step back and we look how the government and what we are talking about, the investments that we are talking about, have a stabilizing force on our society as a whole and allow us to be that kind of example that we want to be for the rest of the world.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I just want to say I do not think anyone on this floor could have shared in a way that the gentleman just summed it up and what he just shared with the American people. It is choices that one has to make.

I believe that people are going to make the right choice this upcoming election season. I have said it before. President, commander-in-chief, I do not envision him as what you might say a textbook Republican. I think he is something else. I think he is trying to take the country to another level, to where a number of Members of this House are not, and I think some of them are on the other side, and I think that they have gone to see the wizard to get courage and heart to be able to speak out against the present administration. So while we are trying to tell the rest of the world how a democracy works, it is going to be up to the American people ultimately to be able to stand in judgment of this Congress, Democrat and Republican, and also this President of making sure that we move in the next 4 years towards a safer, sounder, more job generating America, an America that is healthy, that has health care, so that we do not have literally millions of Americans experiencing emergency room health care.

With that, I would say that we should try to run to catch the back end of David Letterman's monologue tonight and come back next week with solutions to problems but also pointing out the good, bad and ugly so that we can come clean with the American people so they can be able to make a sound judgment in a letter or e-mail that they may send to their Member of Congress or the President of the United States.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That would be great. I will be here. Would you like for me to share the Web site?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Do that Web site real quick. Then we are going to take this back to the Speaker.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Send us an e-mail if you would like, to 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov. We would love to hear any personal stories or opinions on the topics we discussed, and I would like to thank the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) for all his leadership.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. FROST (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.

Ms. KILPATRICK (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.

Mr. LAMPSON (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.

Mr. REYES (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.

Ms. WOOLSEY (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of illness.

Mr. MILLER of Florida (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of district responsibilities.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. EMANUEL, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFazio, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. OSBORNE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. WELLER, for 5 minutes, June 16.

Mr. WELDON of Florida, for 5 minutes, June 15.

Mr. MURPHY, for 5 minutes, June 16.

Mr. OSBORNE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, June 15 and 16.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, June 15, 16, 17 and 18.

Mr. HENSARLING, for 5 minutes, June 15.

SENATE BILLS REFERRED

Bills of the Senate of the following titles were taken from the Speaker's

table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 2214. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 3150 Great Northern Avenue in Missoula, Montana, as the "Mike Mansfield Post Office"; to the Committee on Government Reform.

S. 2415. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 4141 Postmark Drive, Anchorage, Alaska, as the "Robert J. Opinsky Post Office Building"; to the Committee on Government Reform.

S.J. Res. 38. Joint resolution providing for the appointment of Eli Broad as a citizen regent of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution; to the Committee on House Administration.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at midnight), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, June 15, 2004, at 8:30 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

8471. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Drawbridge Operation Regulation; Chincoteague Channel, Chincoteague, VA [CGD05-03-168] (RIN: 1625-AA09) received May 26, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

8472. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Drawbridge Operation Regulations: Cheesecake Creek, NJ. [CGD01-04-036] received May 26, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

8473. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Drawbridge Operation Regulations: Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, Galveston, TX [CGD08-04-021] received May 26, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

8474. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Security Zone; Cleveland Harbor, Cleveland, Ohio [CGD09-04-009] (RIN: 2115-AA00) received May 26, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

8475. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Security Zones: Port Valdez and Valdez Narrows, Valdez, AK [COTP Prince William Sound 04-001] (RIN: 1625-AA00) received May 26, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

8476. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Safety Zones: Fireworks displays in the Captain of the Port