

EXTENSION OF UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

(Mr. McDERMOTT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, a constituent in my district named Virginia received something very special this Christmas. The gift, if we could call it that, came directly from the Bush White House and the Republican leadership. Pretty impressive. It arrived on December 23 and stayed through the holidays. It was a notice saying her extended unemployment benefits would end soon. Merry Christmas, Virginia. Eighty-two thousand other Washington residents face the same fate in the first 6 months of this year.

It does not matter whether there is money in the account or there is a jobless recovery underway, we realize last month we got 20 jobs in the State of Washington, 1,000 in the whole country. Virginia and thousands of other average Americans will remember this Christmas for a long time as the Christmas when she was forgotten by the Republican leadership and the White House.

Tonight, the President will be upbeat. I just gave my colleagues the State of the Union in one household in my district. Virginia is anything but upbeat. She is frightened, she is angry. She calls it unconscionable. We ought to call it disgraceful.

I call upon the President and the Republican leadership to recognize the ordinary Americans and support them by immediately passing an extension of unemployment benefits. Eighty-two thousand people in my State will remember.

THE PRESIDENT'S POLICIES

(Mrs. MILLER of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, tonight President Bush will offer his optimistic vision for our great Nation.

President Bush has been a remarkably strong leader in trying times. He inherited an economy headed into recession and took very bold action. He cut taxes for every American and softened the blow of tough economic times. He extended prescription drug benefits and coverage to our Nation's seniors who depend on Medicare. He was faced with unprecedented terrorist attacks that threatened our freedom. He did not sit back. He did not appease, as some have advocated. Instead, he took the fight to the terrorists, and America now has the initiative in the war on terror.

The President's policies are getting America back to work. His policies will further grow our economy and create jobs. His policies will expand edu-

cational opportunities for our children. His policies will work to ensure that quality health care is available to every American.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of our great President and look forward to hearing his positive views for our Nation this evening.

EXTENDING UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

(Mr. LEVIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I could care less about the moon. I want a job. That was said to me by an electrician during our recess. He is one of 1,200 members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in the metropolitan Detroit area out of work. He is one of 8.9 million Americans, and there are another 4 million Americans not classified as unemployed but who are out of work.

The long-term unemployed in this country reached a 20-year high in November, but this House and the President have refused to extend Federal benefits. They expired December 20.

Ninety thousand people run out of State benefits every week. In this country, America, Americans deserve more than continued silence from the President of the United States. Let us hope he speaks to this issue tonight.

KASHMIR

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I recently returned from a trip to Pakistan and India.

I would like to commend Prime Minister Vajpayee of India and President Musharraf of Pakistan for the ceasefire in Kashmir and for their courageous leadership and peaceful dialogue in addressing an issue of deep importance to both nations.

During my visit, I had the privilege of visiting a camp for internally displaced people in Azad Kashmir. The suffering that the people on both sides of the Line of Control have endured is horrific: land mines, bombings, deliberate rape of women and other human rights violations, all this in the midst of a land of great beauty.

It is time for the tragic suffering to end. All sides in the conflict need to immediately cease using rape as a weapon of war. All sides need to allow children to receive an education. Until the issue of Kashmir is resolved peacefully, the stability, security and economic viability of South Asia and the international community are at risk.

I urge the U.S. government to fully support the current positive steps between Pakistan and India to bring a peaceful end to this long-running conflict.

THE PRESIDENT'S BIG IDEA

(Mr. WYNN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WYNN. Mr. Speaker, good afternoon. Happy New Year. Welcome back.

Last year, the President's advisers decided that in 2004 the President was going to talk about big ideas. Good, that is what Presidents are supposed to do, but then the President decided what we ought to do is go to the moon and Mars and cost the taxpayers \$1 trillion. We have explored the moon in 1969 and 1970. It is a rock. We have seen pictures of Mars. It is also a rock.

It seems to me the big idea is to help the working families in America. This economy has lost 3 million jobs under President George Bush. Two million workers have been unemployed for more than 6 months; 1.4 million workers have exhausted their unemployment benefits but still have not found work.

A big idea would be to put people to work like Franklin Roosevelt did. Another big idea would be to provide health insurance for all 41 million Americans who do not have health insurance. Health insurance costs for those who have it are rising, and pretty soon more people will not have it. That would be a big idea. Health insurance. Funding medical research to fight cancer and AIDS and ending poverty and hunger would be big ideas that we ought to be pursuing in the 21st century.

Instead, when the President's big idea is to go to Mars, it seems to me he has lost contact with the American people. Democrats have big ideas, making America a better place in which to live.

THE PRIORITIES OF AMERICA

(Mr. BELL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because I am deeply concerned with the state of our Union. I share the concern of many that we are heading in the wrong direction in this country.

We need to focus on creating jobs, but tonight we will hear about extending tax cuts for the rich in a mythical economic recovery that has created no new jobs. We need to focus on protecting Social Security and Medicare for a new generation, but tonight we will only hear about a thinly disguised plan to dismantle those vital programs and place our sacred covenant with America into the hands of corporations and pharmaceutical companies seeking profit at the expense of working men and women.

Tonight, we will hear more empty promises on education and literacy when we should focus on the President's own No Child Left Behind program which he and the Republican Congress continue to refuse to fully

fund. As a result, we are leaving millions of children behind every day.

It is all about priorities, Mr. Speaker. Creating more jobs, access to affordable health care and better education for our children, those are the priorities of America, and they should be our priorities here in Congress.

HONORING U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD SPECIALIST MICHAEL G. MIHALAKIS

(Ms. LOFGREN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, as I rise today, over 500 Americans have lost their lives in the war in Iraq. Each loss is a wrenching tragedy to a family somewhere in America, and this tragic loss has now come to the Mihalakis family in San Jose, California.

U.S. Army National Guard Specialist Michael G. Mihalakis of San Jose, California, was killed the day after Christmas when his Humvee overturned near the Baghdad International Airport. He was assigned to the 270th Military Police Company and was one of the youngest casualties of the Iraq conflict. Michael was proud to be a soldier, with a strong commitment to service, an unflinching bravery, a dedication to family, and a deep love of country.

America remains strong and free because, for generations, Americans like Michael have been willing to put the well-being of their community and country ahead of their personal comfort and safety. From towns and cities all over America, ordinary citizens have become transformed into heroes through their service.

There is aching loss and pain when such heroism means the hero is not coming home. This wrenching loss can never really be healed for the mothers and fathers who have given what is most precious to them for their country. We want to thank the Mihalakis family and let them know they are in our hearts and prayers and that his grateful country will always remember their son.

On behalf of the House of Representatives, I want to thank Michael for his service to the United States and offer heartfelt condolences to his parents and entire family.

REAL IMMIGRATION REFORM

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the State of the Union will be an opportunity for the President to push his issues and to explain to the American people how we can work together.

I think there is no doubt that there are those of us who understand that this Nation was first built on the opportunities for immigrants to come and to seek, if you will, a better life.

We do need real immigration reform in this Nation, but I am disappointed and saddened by the offering of the President of which I have said this is not an amnesty plan, and so I defend him from the perspective that this is a first step of recognizing the needs for immigration reform, but we really need to focus on earned access to legalization for those millions of immigrants who are here paying taxes, working every day and wanting to provide for their family and to get in line to be able to earn their right to be a citizen of the United States of America.

What happens to a guest worker program? It literally disappears into the night because when the program ends after 3 years, there is some suggestion that these individuals will go home. They will not.

Mr. President, work with this Congress, work with the Democrats in a bipartisan way to lift up the values of this Nation, that we are a land of immigrants, to allow the immigrants that are here to get into the system of earned access to legalization.

THE DRUG COVERAGE BILL

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, President Bush, in his State of the Union a year ago, said, "Medicare is the binding commitment of a caring society." He then promised a prescription drug/Medicare reform bill.

The gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS), the Republican chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means, one of the authors of the bill with the Bush administration, said, "to those who say this bill would end Medicare as we know it, our answer is we certainly hope so."

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I wish President Bush tonight would explain what happened to the Medicare bill that he signed in December. I wish he would explain that this legislation will mean \$139 billion, that is with a "B," \$139 billion additional profits for the drug industry. I wish he would explain tonight to the American people why this Medicare privatization bill means \$14 billion in extra payouts to the HMOs and to the insurance companies. And I wish he would explain to the American people why he let in to write this bill the drug industry and the insurance industry, which sat down with the administration, with Republican leadership and actually wrote the Medicare prescription drug privatization bill. We need answers tonight, Mr. Speaker.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA VOTING RIGHTS RESTORATION ACT

(Mr. ROHRABACHER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend

his remarks and include therein extraneous material.)

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, I have just introduced the District of Columbia Voting Rights Restoration Act, a bill to restore full and equal congressional voting rights, including representation in the United States Senate, for the residents of the District of Columbia.

My bill would restore the Federal rights of Maryland citizenship that were taken away from the District of Columbia residents over 200 years ago by an Act of Congress, the Organic Act of 1801. Enactment of my bill would mean that D.C. residents would once again have the full Federal voting rights they enjoyed as Maryland citizens prior to Congress' assumption of exclusive legislative authority over the District of Columbia. Those rights included the right to vote for and to be elected as and to serve as U.S. senators, U.S. representatives and presidential electors from Maryland.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle not to let small national political considerations stop us from restoring these rights, and I would also insert the questions and answers about my bill that I am putting on the desk today as part of the RECORD.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for all Members of Congress, whether Republican or Democrat, conservative or liberal, to heed the legitimate complaints of "taxation without representation." We must correct this 200-year-old injustice to the U.S. citizens who live in our nation's capital. The debate must no longer be about whether D.C. residents should have full voting rights in Congress, but how to accomplish a goal that we all share.

Question. Since the VRRRA includes D.C. as part of the Maryland delegation in the U.S. House, what is to keep the Maryland legislature from splitting D.C. and joining it with two or more Maryland congressional districts?

Answer. The VRRRA would require that whenever D.C. has fewer people than the average Maryland congressional district, D.C. be kept intact in a single congressional district, with contiguous territory from adjacent Maryland counties added as necessary to produce a district equal in population to the other Maryland districts. The VRRRA also provides that whenever D.C.'s population is equal to or larger than the average Maryland district, then there must be at least one district that is 100% D.C.

The controlling Supreme Court opinion in *Oregon v. Mitchell* (the 18-year-old vote case) made clear that Congress has the power to regulate congressional redistricting by state legislatures. Congress has exercised this power in prohibiting at-large districts in states with more than one House member. In this case, Congress would protect D.C. from unfair treatment because D.C. residents would have no voice in the Maryland legislature.

Question. Does the Constitution allow D.C. residents who do not actually live in Maryland to choose the representatives of that state? If it were constitutional to treat D.C. residents as if they were residents of the state of Maryland for the purposes of voting, would D.C. residents be constitutionally precluded from representing the new Maryland district, given the language of Article I specifically requiring that representatives be