

People are thirsting for respectful discourse about these issues because they are so profoundly important, and I want to thank the gentleman for the kudos. I know that each of us has benefited from appearing here on a weekly basis, having this conversation; and I think what has also amazed us is the level of interest, the response that we have received so that there is no doubt that there is a deep need out there for, again, the kind of dialogue that goes on here, at least once a week, and that the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) mentioned earlier even should be expanded so that there can be a variety of perspectives expressed, because it is important.

My colleague mentioned Ahmed Chalabi earlier. How many people in this Chamber, in this country, know of Ahmed Chalabi; and yet many, many in the world, in the intelligence community, believe that he is as responsible as any single individual for the faulty intelligence that led us into this war, a man, by the way, who is a convicted felon, who was an individual who was convicted of embezzlement in Jordan and reports now indicate is being investigated for the dissemination of sensitive information to a potential adversary in Iran.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts for his comments. I see that our time has expired and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) has arrived.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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, it is an honor to come before the House of Representatives tonight and the American people and this great house of democracy that we serve in day in and day out. It is an honor to serve, and every day that we have an opportunity to serve it is important that we share important information with the American people and also with Members of the House.

Once again, our 30-something Working Group that consists of 14 Members on the Democratic side of the House, we come together to share with Americans things that are going good. We call it the good, bad and ugly; but at the same time, we work towards constructive change, and as my colleagues know, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) and I have been coming to the floor, along with other Members of this House, to address issues such as education, issues that are facing young Americans from the ages of 18 to 30-something. That covers a supermajority of individuals that are not exercising their right to vote at this particular time, but I believe now, because we are reaching out to those individuals, they will find a reason to go out

and register to vote or to use that voter registration card to work towards good for their family and also for their future.

There is a lot happening to young Americans now versus poor young Americans, and this is the 30-something hour that the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), the minority leader, has organized. Those of us in the House that are living the 30-something right now or that recently went through 20-something come and give voice to those individuals on the floor, and I think this reaches out to even a larger demographic, a demographic of parents that are paying for their loved ones to go to college, a demographic of individuals who were not able to go to college immediately after high school or completion of a vocational training program. Some are in community colleges that are trying to make a way. Either they did not have an opportunity to go to college immediately after high school, one, they could not afford it; two, they had to help their family. Many Americans have to make that choice, and it is okay to make that choice.

It is about family. It is about values. It is about religion. It is about definitely individuals that have strong morals and outright patriots in our country that would like to see their children and grandchildren have a better opportunity than what they have.

I think it also addresses grandparents. I am not one, obviously. I have two children and a wife; and I would tell my colleague that I look forward, if God is willing, to allow me to become a grandparent one day. I am pretty sure my goal would be to make sure my children are able to provide for their children and that their children have a better opportunity than the generations that were before them.

So we come to the floor to be able to share with the American people and give response to some of their e-mails. We welcome e-mails to the 30-something group, and we will be giving that e-mail address out; and I will tell my colleagues week after week, we have received a number every week. We are receiving more and more e-mails. It is very encouraging.

Some Americans have questions that they need answered. We try to provide those answers to the best of our ability. Some Americans are saying, hey, it is great, I am a Republican, I am glad you are giving voice to the issue of student loans, and the fact that more people are graduating from college that are in debt now than it was in the previous generation and the opportunity for Pell grants that were promised, and even those who went through college in the early 1970s, I mean we have less of an opportunity for financially challenged individuals that work every day, individuals who did what we told them to do, go to high school, get that vocational training, that we will be there to be able to assist you. There was a commitment made by the Presi-

dent to raise the Pell grant commitment a little bit up to \$5,000, but he has not yet been able to do so. Not because the resources have not been there. It is because the priority has not been there, which then takes us back to being able to have individuals ready for the workforce, that small businesses and businesses need in this country; and it is so very, very important we pay very close attention to that because that is serious business, the business of making sure that we have a workforce ready to step up and meet the challenge to be able to make America strong.

If we are going to have these individuals graduating from college in debt before they can invest in the American dream of being able to buy a home, being able to invest in this economy, it is very important that we do not put them in debt prior to that opportunity.

Some believe in this Congress that we should have variable student loans. Well, one may argue, well, it is the lower interest payment now; but guess what, they will be forever paying those student loans. Being someone that was once on a college campus, offered a credit card, I will tell my colleagues I am a victim. I put my hands out. I was on my campus.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, pull it out.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, well, I do not want to pull my credit card out. I have a couple of credit cards here, but that is later on in the program. We have our whole David Letterman, Top 10 thing that we have to do, and we have to read some e-mails that we received in the previous weeks. We had last week off.

I can tell the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), I missed him.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I missed my colleague.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. We come together. We have this thing here on the floor. We have special guests sometimes from the 30-something Working Group. I like the new haircut that the gentleman has going on there.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. My wife made me get it.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, let me tell my colleague, if it was not for our wives, I do not know where we would be, to be honest with him; and I thank God. Coming up October 12, it will be 13 years for me; and, amen, I got married young.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. August 22 it will be 1 year for me.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Is that not something? What a country.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. God bless.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. What a country. Let me just, if the gentleman would start, I started out with some opening comments, just to kind of share with the American people and the Members of the House our purpose for being here.

Once again, we pay all respect and opportunity to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), the Democratic leader, that has made a commitment that young people in America

will have a time on this floor. This is just an hour. They are going to have time they have not had in the past so we can raise those issues to the level of the national debate, have people here in this Congress pay respect and treat 30-somethings on down to 18 or 16 or 15, those that are looking to participate in this democracy that we serve under, have them use their power that they have as it relates to voter registration cards, have them use their power in talking with their Member of Congress, to let it be known that throughout they have issues, they have concerns.

I also made the correlation between the parents and grandparents. I mean, obviously, parents want their children to do well. Grandparents especially want their grandkids to do well and make sure they are able to have a better and safer America for the future.

So I just wanted to tell my colleague once again I look forward to this. We were talking earlier today when we were going through some of the subjects we are going to talk about here today because we try to be as factual as possible, also come out with solutions; but guess what, there was a great announcement today. Maybe the gentleman wants to talk about that.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I think all of us were very excited about the announcement of Senator EDWARDS to join Senator KERRY on the ticket, and I think it illustrates the kind of excitement that is going to be around in the fall. I mean, I think it is going to be an exciting election, and we have to celebrate not only what party we stand for but I think process in general, the fact that there is going to be a great election; and Americans are going to get to decide whether or not the President who has been in charge for the last 4 years is going to get re-elected, or if he is going to get "Donald Trumped," and we are going to ask somebody else to come in and take over and set us in another direction.

I think what we have been trying to do here is try to articulate for a lot of the people, not only those people who are 30 or 20 or in college or in high school or affected by the No Child Left Behind, but also to say to other Americans who are concerned about the future of this country that we are going to have real debate.

□ 2215

And I think, from the e-mails we have received, and from the comments that we have heard and the calls we get at our office, people have appreciated the fact that my colleague and I are not personalizing this. This is not personal, this is business. This is my colleague and I discussing issues that we believe in and the direction we think the country should go in, as opposed to the direction that I think the Republican Congress, the House and the Senate and the Republican White House right now, wishes the country to go in. I think there will never be a clearer choice in any election as to where we

want to go and where the Republicans want to go.

This is our e-mail here: 30somethingdems@mail.House.gov. That is the number 30, the word something, the word dems, D-E-M-S, at mail dot House dot gov. We have been getting some great e-mails, from both of the parties.

I listened to my colleague's opening statement and the one issue I think we need to touch on, there was an article today in The New York Times. Paul Krugman did an opinion editorial and he talked a little about the Bush boom and how the tax cuts that President Bush initiated and passed and pushed through this chamber and also through the Senate has peaked. And I thought it was very interesting.

We had moments in November, December, January, February, some early parts of this year where we actually thought we had some job growth. Things were starting to come along and we thought the economy was starting to turn around. Now we have recognized that the job growth has slowed. It is still growing, but it has slowed from previous months. And not only has it slowed down, but the unemployment rate is still at 5.6 percent. So it has not changed. There are still thousands of people who are no longer actively seeking to find work because they know the job market is so slow.

So here is the point I want to make. We had two choices in this country after 9/11 with all the tax cuts. We had two choices: Are we going to try to get some short-term political gain with this trickle-down theory of economics that was proven that did not work in the 1980s, or were we going to continue with the Clinton-era balanced budget, invest in education, invest in health care, invest in the American people and allow them to go out and grow the economy? We chose the former, which meant tax cuts, tax cuts, tax cuts, and primarily to the top 1 and 2 percent of the people in the country.

The theory was that they would begin to take those tax cuts and put it back into the economy. But when we look at the statistics, corporate profits after tax are at the highest level compared to the GDP of the economy than they were since 1929, since they started keeping track of this stuff. So if you are a major player in a corporation, you are doing great, sending jobs to China, move the headquarters to Bermuda, where they do not pay any taxes there, they pay no wages in China, and they take the money and put it in their pocket.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned Bermuda, and I cannot help but think of the largest Homeland Security contract that was given to an offshore company. Now, this was once a U.S. company.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And what do they pay in taxes?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Nothing. Zero.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. So the company that gets the most money from the homeland security budget.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. The largest agency in the history of the world, Federal Government agency created by this Congress, the largest contract they have given out thus far has gone to an offshore company. No taxes, no benefit to the American people, no benefit of helping to pay for education, no benefit to be able to provide for alternative fuel sources or towards a health care program.

Hopefully, my colleague, we can share with the American people, and we always say this is not the Tim Ryan/Kendrick Meek Report, this is facts. We spend at least 7 days prior to what we are going to talk about in the upcoming week getting the facts. So anyone that wants to line up on the other side of the aisle and start refuting or just saying, well, that is not true, this is not true, well, we have the facts. And folks who want to e-mail, we will send them the facts.

A lot of this is hard to digest and a lot of it is hard to believe. And, to be brutally honest with you, we are all wrapped up in patriotism and we understand that we have to protect the homeland, but yet we give the largest contract from the Department of Homeland Security to an offshore company. Now, I am from the South. I am from Florida. We have people in South Carolina, in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Alabama, and Mississippi who are sitting around not because they want to sit at home watching cable television. They want a job. They need a job. But they do not have a job because we are sending the jobs overseas.

And who am I to talk, because my colleague is from Ohio.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Yes, and it is the same exact situation. We have given these companies free rein. We do not object to people wanting to make money. If you can go out in the economy and do well for yourself, God bless you. That is what America is all about. However, you are not here to manipulate the system, and that is what is happening right now.

We have these corporations, as we said, they move the headquarters to Bermuda, they do not pay any taxes, they move the production manufacturing site to China, they do not pay anything in wages or in environmental. OSHA. There is no OSHA in China. There is no safety and occupational hazard prevention in China. That does not exist. So you take advantage of the workers there, you take advantage of the tax system here, and you reap the benefits of the profits. Then you take the profits and you put them into this place, into the Congress, and you keep getting the same kind of deals over and over and over. And who is losing? The average people who used to be able to make a middle class wage in the country. They used to be able to afford health care.

I want to mention to my colleague a study that the Toledo Blade paper in Ohio, in Toledo, Ohio, has been doing.

They noted for the average American family, with a median household income of \$42,409, average median income \$42,409, that they have seen increases in their premium payments, this is a family of four, go from \$6,348 to \$9,086, which is a \$2,738 increase from the year 2000.

Now, I know a lot of companies back in my district that are now renegotiating their contracts and their proposals are zero percent increase in wages in the first year, zero percent wages increase in the second year, zero percent wage increase in the third year, and then maybe in the fourth and fifth year there will be some increase. But imagine if you are in a family of four that is making \$42,000 a year, very little disposable income, and you may be trying to send your kids to college and over the last 3 or 4 years you have an extra \$3,000 a year after taxes that you have to pay in health care increases.

This Congress has done nothing to address health care. And if there is an issue that needs to be talked about this fall for this election, it is health care. We have done nothing to control the prices of prescription drugs. Two things we tried to do during the Medicare bill, and I realize this will not affect everybody, but the Democrat proposal was we wanted to negotiate health care prices with these big major drug companies. We wanted the Secretary of Health and Human Services to go to Pfizer and all the big drug companies and say to them, if you want the Medicare contract and the \$500 billion that we are going to spend, you better sit down and talk price with us. We want a discount for the taxpayer, for God sake. Right? We wanted that.

And then we wanted reimportation. Let us free trade pharmaceuticals. We free trade cars, textile, steel, everything in the world we want free trade, but when we tried to impose at 3 o'clock in the morning the free trade pharmaceuticals, no one wanted to talk about it. So we are not controlling prices, we are asking the taxpayers to spend an extra \$500 billion, and we have done nothing in the market to somehow try to fix a \$2,700 increase for a family of four making \$42,000 a year. Nothing.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, that is something to be outright mad about, but I can tell you one thing I find comfort in. I have the opportunity, I am Baptist, and I have the opportunity to do something we call pray, and we pray for days when things will get better for real people, people who understand what it means to take a 15-minute break in the morning and a 15-minute break in the afternoon, and a solid 30 minutes for lunch. These are people who know what it means to punch in and punch out. They know that if you punch in five minutes late that you have to punch out five minutes late. Those individuals.

These are the individuals who come home, and I am not just talking about

hardworking men that have the steel toes sitting next to their chair watching their favorite sitcom when they get home, if they can stay awake through it. I am talking about every day working men and women in this country. And also young people that are having to pull a little extra wait because the money is not coming in like it used to.

So if a family tries to get health care, someone has to sacrifice. The person that has the lowest premiums has to pay that out of their paychecks. This is hard, particularly in a single-family household. And I will tell my colleague that I came up in a single-parent household, and there is nothing wrong with that. I want my colleagues to know that right now. I commend those single parents out there doing what they have to do on behalf of their children. Whatever your faith may be, whatever your religion, it is the same thing. The responsibility of taking care of one's child is priority number one. It is close to what we call in the Baptist and Christian faith, when you think about God, agape, love. It is important we do that and we practice that.

Now, what I see, because I am not a pessimist, I am a person that feels that tomorrow will bring about a different day, a brighter day for Americans. And that means Democrats, Republicans, Independents, Green Party or what have you. When it comes down to health care, and you talk about emergency room health care, no one asks for a party affiliation. No one says, well, Republicans over here, Democrats over here, Independents over there. We are going to take the majority party first. They do not do that. They treat you equally. That means 3 to 4 hours in the emergency room.

Why does it have to come to that? Why do we not have 41 million Americans working? I am not talking about individuals looking at want ads, not even trying to get a job and saying the job situation looks sad. I am talking about individuals who go in and punch out or sign in and out every day. Those individuals who cannot walk away from their job, or say, hey, guess what boss, I am leaving.

Or what about a small businessperson? These businesses that have 100, 200 good hard-working Americans, be they citizens or noncitizens, working in their companies, they are not offshoring it. They are right here in America paying their fair share. They are the American Dream.

I want to make sure Americans understand and the Members of the House understand that we are talking about super-duper corporations. I mean the folks who publicly traded on the stock market. I am talking about individuals who do not even say hello to the individuals that we are talking about here. And the reason why we are here, at 10-plus o'clock at night, taking away from our families, is to be able to say there can be a brighter day.

And I am glad that even though we did not have the vision or foresight or

power to put us on the floor for an hour every week, I thank God for the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), the Democratic leader. She has been here for some time, along with the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), and they have seen this happen.

So I can say that we have been about the solution on this side of the aisle as it relates to Democrats. And guess what, there have been some good Republicans that wanted to do it, but could not. They could not do it because they felt there would be repercussions for them manning up and womaning up and leadering it up to be able to say you are wrong. But, guess what? Some have said it. And the record speaks for itself.

Once again, this is not the Tim Ryan report or the Kendrick Meek report. This is fact. We talked about prescription drug plan. The bottom line is, Americans get drugs cheaper under the Democratic proposal. Bottom line. I am sorry. No one can debate that or dispute that.

Now we have the AARP coming out and saying we need the Democratic proposal. I prayed that the leadership here in Washington, at the time that the issue was here on the floor at 3 a.m. in the morning, would have said without that that they would not support it. But that is the past, and we are talking about the future.

□ 2230

At the same time, when we talk about folks taking money home, and what I would like to see and for us to continue to let the American people know just because we are Democrats, and there are a number of Americans that are out there, and they are not all Democrats, they are Independents, Republicans, they voted for leadership, to make sure they get their voices heard in this democracy in this House; and they are going to get it. The bottom line is if given the opportunity, if we are able to have as the Speaker the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) in the 109th Congress, that this will happen. If we are able to have new leadership in the White House, this administration has had their chance. The Democrats did not impede them from doing what they wanted to do. The Democrats are not in the majority. We did not appoint the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Commerce. We did not appoint these individuals, the national security person, the Attorney General. The Bush administration did.

They cannot say well, the liberal Democrats ran the deficit up to the highest level in the history of the Republic. They cannot blame that on the Democrats. That game is over.

Or the reason we do not have health care is because of the Democrats. I am sorry, the last I checked at 1600 Pennsylvania, there was a Republican President there.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And we have to listen to some Members from the other

side of the aisle, they are talking about how the Democrats, they want to keep spending. The Democrats are tax and spenders, and we sit here and scratch our heads because if Members have been paying attention, Republicans took control of this Chamber in 1994 with Newt Gingrich. They have had the Senate and have had the White House for 3½ years. They are spending like drunken sailors, and all they can say is look at the Democrats spend; all they do is tax and spend. It is not us.

Mr. Speaker, we were the ones trying to pass the pay-go provisions which mean if we increase spending, we have to raise taxes on millionaires or we have to find another program you want to cut. Pay as you go. We were trying to get that in here. It was the Clinton budget in 1993 that balanced the budget, that invested in the proper programs.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, that budget was balanced without one Republican vote in this House. I want to make sure that we are clear on that because 3½ years ago, we were talking about how we were going to spend the surplus.

Are we going to save Social Security? And I want to say this to our older Americans and future Americans that will be eligible for Social Security, the little thing on their paycheck, Social Security deduction, think about that. We were going to be able to put money into the trust fund.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. President Clinton said "save Social Security first" from that very podium. Play it smart, do not spend money you do not have. I think that is one of the issues that we have talked about early on, and more so last year than this year, but all of these tax cuts that we have been given which are great, and I know a lot of people who have benefited from the tax cuts, and God bless them. But when we look at the government's financial position, we have borrowed that money. We did not have that money. There was not a surplus here that we said we have billions of dollars, let us give it back and let the American people have it. We went out and borrowed that money. So we borrowed it and gave it to primarily the top 1 or 2 percent. Then we have to pay interest on it. So really we borrowed it, we are paying interest on it and gave it to rich people who are not investing it back into the economy for the most part. Because we borrowed it, we have to pay the interest on it so there is not really a tax cut, there is a tax shift. So the next generation of Americans, they are going to have to pay this bill that we have left here.

We have almost a \$600 billion annual deficit for the past year. That is getting rolled into our \$7 trillion debt that we have. So almost 20 percent of our annual budget that we pay down here is interest on the debt that we have. So if you keep accruing this big debt, you have to keep taking tax money to pay it off. Who is lending us the money? Japan and China are lending us the

money. So it is not bad enough that we are borrowing it to give it to the top 1 percent, it is not bad enough that we are borrowing it and paying interest on it, we are borrowing it from the Chinese and the Japanese who are taking the interest money, and they invest it in their factories because a lot of their factories are state owned.

So the state takes the money that we borrow from them, and they invest it back into their company and steal our manufacturing jobs. Their economy is booming, and they are doing it with our tax dollars. It makes no sense. Until we get it right down here, we are going to continue to erode the middle class of the United States of America, our cities, like Youngstown, Ohio; Warren, Ohio; Akron, Ohio; Cleveland, Ohio; Toledo, Ohio, these areas which have seen their manufacturing base erode. They have to keep passing police and fire levies. They do not have the tax base. Mental health levies keep going down. We have people that need mental health treatment but they cannot get it because we cannot pass a tax.

All I am trying to say here is let us be responsible, let us take a step back, look at the big picture, not self-interest but what is in the best interest of our society. I believe if we would have taken the Bush tax cut, made sure, like Senator KERRY wants to do, take billions of that and give it to the States where they have to use it at the universities to lower tuition prices, double Pell grants, this is long-term economic planning for us. We do not have it right now. It is frustrating.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, let me say quickly, we talked a couple of weeks ago, and I want to segue into what is happening in the workforce, and before we leave here we have to read some of the e-mails that we have received so our viewers will be able to know we hear them and are responding to them. We get a number of hits on the 30-something Web site, and a lot of people are very interested in this. They are not just young people, they are older people, they are Republicans and Democrats.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I have one here from 40-something.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. God willing, I will be there one day.

We talk about a devolution of taxation, and that is when the Federal Government cuts the Federal commitment to the States, and the States do not have the privilege that we have. See, here in Congress we have the opportunity to put it on the U.S. Treasury. Oh, we can take that credit card out any day of the week and we do on the minute. Then every 3 weeks we knock on the bank of China or Japan and ask for more money to pay down our own interest on debt. The States do not have that luxury. The States have to balance their budget. How do they balance it, well, they do not balance it out of thin air. They raise tuition prices, raise fees on hunting and fish-

ing licenses, they raise the driver's license fee, and simple services to local government. Then they cut their commitment to local governments and school districts. When they do that, the school districts do not have the credit card. They have to balance their budget. When they balance their budget, the senior feeding program that everyone counts on to be able to provide a warm meal for seniors, the after-school program for kids, and I am not just talking about poor minority kids, I am talking about kids in rural America, where families have to work two, three jobs to make ends meet, these sorts of things take place. The quality of life of our communities is just not a priority here.

So when we say well, we are sending you a \$150 check, in the final analysis it is going to end up being a lot more. And gas prices are on their way back up again. I do not want to get started on that.

Let me mention quickly what 30 somethings will be handed if we do not make drastic changes here in Washington. We talk about the good, bad and ugly, and we will give credit where credit is due, but we will also point out where there is trickery in what they are sharing with us.

On July 2, the Labor Department announced that in the month of June, 11,000 manufacturing jobs were lost and only 12,000 jobs were created in June for the total population of America, less than half of what was widely expected. So what the Labor Department is doing, they will make these projections, these grandiose projections and then they will fall short.

The President had to explain himself by saying we are not necessarily gaining jobs, but we are steady and the economy is solid. It is all in the words. Thank God for institutions such as the Children's Defense Fund which also announced that almost 60 percent of teenagers lost their job last month, and that is the highest June jobless rate since the data was first collected in 1949. The gentleman from Ohio and I were not even on earth in 1949, but this should not happen in America in 2004 as it relates to young people. I do not even want to get started on the minority numbers. It is 77 percent, even more. So when we look at it and we look at individuals that need jobs and summer jobs, even in Florida where you have Walt Disney World and Busch Gardens and Universal Studios and all of these fine amusement parks, there was a big thing in Florida, there was an uptick in jobs, but many jobs are summer jobs. Some 5,000 are summer jobs, and they provide very little health care benefits, if any at all. When you start looking at a healthy America, it is not necessarily the case.

It is almost like some of these infocommercials, buy this and it will help you lose weight. You wait on the UPS guy to show up, and the bottle is not as big as it looked on television. I will tell you right now, Americans, we

have to understand that we have an opportunity, we cannot change it, we can do all we can in this great House and we give respect to this House, no matter what control it may be under at a particular time, but guess what, we are all Americans and we have to uphold the American dream.

Part of that dream is a better tomorrow, and that is just the bottom line. If given the opportunity, and I am talking about Democrats, if given the opportunity, to be able to set the agenda, to say health care is a priority in this House, real health care; making sure that your child is educated, that is a priority.

Senator KERRY says he wants to give a \$4,000 education tax credit every year to make sure there is money in your pocket to pay for tuition. When we see tuition prices going up, that is a tax, in my opinion. That is a tax on young Americans and working Americans. I cannot tell you how many parents that are my age, I am 38 years old, that actually are having to do the prepay college deal. Oh, I have to put this money away because there is no guarantee that my children will be able to educate themselves. At the same time, they are trying to provide health care. We do not want any handouts, but we want to make sure that they have a fair shake at what previous generations have had.

Mr. Speaker, 3 months ago at birth, a child born already owes the Federal Government over \$23,000. So now we are a part of this Congress that oversees the highest deficit in the history of the Republic. I want to say that again. Since we have been the United States of America, today, this year of 2004, this Congress is overseeing the highest deficit in the history of the country.

□ 2245

Now, I am going to tell you I do not take any great pride in that nor privilege. The fact that we have men and women that are over in Iraq right now, sand in their teeth trying to do the best that they can and will fight on behalf of this country as long as this country asks them to fight, but the individuals that are here in shirts and ties are making bad decisions. So we need to make sure that we have the kind of leadership that is going to make the right decisions, make sure that we are fiscally responsible. I want to say that again, to make sure that we are fiscally responsible, making sure that we are spending the taxpayer dollar in the right way, not just saying that I have a couple of friends, happen to know the CEO of super mega company X, and they are happy. That is their constituent, their base.

Our base is individuals who punch in and punch out every day; and I encourage every American, because I am only one vote, maybe I can influence a few others, but I am only one vote and you are one vote. Okay. But they have to do their part, that they have to re-evaluate the leadership, that they have

to be tough on their Congressman and Congresswoman and they have to be tough on their local elected officials. They have to be heard, because if they are not heard, ladies and gentlemen, you think the last 4 years was a super-roller coaster ride, what will happen in the future when there is really no accountability from this administration to do the right thing on behalf of everyday working people?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And this is a clear difference of opinion, and I think the administration has clearly articulated where they want the country to go. And I want to share a statistic that I think I have shared here before.

When I was in the State Senate in Ohio, the University of Akron did a study; and the study was amazing what the impact of State support for higher education was. And the study came back, and it said for every dollar, because in Ohio we were going through the same kind of budget cuts as everyone else, and the legislature at that time and the Governor at that time, still do, are going after the big pot of money that is going to the universities.

So the study came back. The University of Akron did a study. It said for every dollar that the State of Ohio invested in the higher education, they would get almost \$2 back in tax money, basically because a high school diploma, a worker with a high school diploma would make about \$20,000 a year average. Someone with a college diploma, with a BA or a BS, would make on average 35 or \$40,000 a year. So this person who had the college diploma would pay double in taxes and then go on probably to get a master's or something else, and then you would pay even more in taxes, income tax, sales tax, property tax, the whole nine yards.

So from the State's position, every dollar you invest, you get almost \$2 back in tax money. That is a good deal. That is a good deal, because you are investing in the long-term growth of your economy. It is that person with the bachelor's degree. For the most part, there is always exceptions, and I am not saying you have to go to college to be successful, because you do not, or have a college degree to be successful, because you do not; but on average those people will be out in the economy creating jobs, being entrepreneurs, developing the new technology, the new economy that needs to grow, which we do not even know what it is yet.

And so the best thing that we can do now is just educate a lot of people and let them go out into the economy, support them with business incubators, worker retraining, small business loans; let them go out into the economy and create and manage new, alternative energies and on and on and on and on. That is a whole other story, but my point is that what do you want? If you are sitting at home right now in Ohio or somewhere across the country,

what do you want? What would you rather have, a government that is saying we are going to invest in you and in your children, in their college education so that they will eventually become taxpayers? Or do you want a check for \$300 from the Bush tax cut, while your property tax goes up, while they have to pass a police and fire levy in your city, while your tuition increases go up. I know in Ohio they have gone up 9, 10 percent, 3, \$4,000 over the last couple of years.

And then when you look at the health care, up \$3,000. There are certain things that we can do together as a country, as a people, as a Congress, that we cannot do on our own. You cannot build a hospital on your own. You cannot build a road on your own. You cannot build a school on your own. There are certain things that we need to do as a country, and one of the things that we need to do is to make sure that everybody has an opportunity to go to college, because it will benefit everybody, and in the long term we are all going to benefit.

What I want the American people to know from my perspective is that the difference is the short-term, \$300, here is your check, government is, you know, giving you something back, which is great and I think a lot of middle-income people need that, and I think we should support the child tax credits and eliminate the marriage penalty, my own opinion; but to give millionaires a hundred thousand dollars back at the expense of veterans, investments in education and all these other things.

I mean, for example, and I am going to finish here, when we tried to come here about maybe a couple of weeks ago, maybe 3, 4 weeks ago, and we wanted to say the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY), the ranking Democrat on the Committee on Appropriations, tried to pass an amendment, and he is the Democrat. We tried to pass an amendment that would rescind the tax cuts for millionaires. The millionaire worker would still get \$23,000 back from the Bush tax cut. So we did not completely eliminate the tax cut for him, but we reduced it in order to fully fund veterans, fully fund No Child Left Behind, fully fund college education, reduce the cost of tuition, double the Pell grants, the whole nine yards, invest in health care, provide more coverage for children, and it went down.

And I think that, if there is one vote over the last 2 years for this Congress, that will be the vote. Were you going to stand here and vote for millionaires and make sure that these programs are not funded, or are you willing to say we need a certain percentage of that tax cut back, because the long-term interests of the country are at stake? And I think those are going to be clear votes that a lot of people will hear about, and I just think it was an opportunity for all of us to straighten up this budget, the problems that we have been having, and invest in our country. And we did not do it, unfortunately.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, there are a few Republicans that joined us in that philosophy, those individuals who raised their right hand at the beginning of this Congress.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And this is not a partisan issue.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. This is about who is for real and who is willing to put their future in the House on the line on behalf of what they believe in. That is what it is about. And guess what? We have elections here in this House every two years. And guess what? Any American can run for office when they are ready.

And another thing that we have to do, we have to do and we have to live through the day, because guess what, tomorrow is not promised. As it relates to doing the right thing, the right thing is making sure the Americans get their fair shake out of this Congress.

I am going to talk about a few statistical issues, talk about the voter suppression, and if you can do your e-mail thing. See, I do not want to even give the e-mail address out, because that is your thing. David Letterman has his Top 10. You have the e-mail address. You have a couple of e-mails after you read the e-mail address. This is what I like watching you do, because you do it so well.

You mentioned something as it relates to the tax cut and really what it means to working Americans. Health care premiums are escalating, middle-class tax increase, I must add. Health care costs increased by 13.9 percent nationwide last year, the third year in a row double-digit increases and the largest increase since 1990. Florida, the State that I am in, the Florida region health care insurance premiums have increased by 65 percent since the beginning of the Bush administration.

Nationally, the increase in family health care insurance premiums over the past 3 years has tripled. The amount of the tax cut that is ongoing for middle-class income families over 4 years, now, that is fact. Okay.

Also you have the college education issue. We talked about that. We talked about raising taxes on college. These are raising tax on middle-class working families. Guess what? Millionaires and billionaires, they do not have to worry about paying for college, because nine times out of 10, their kids are welcomed into the university and their grandchildren are welcomed there because of the legacy, because they have given money to the institution. But guess what? Those individuals, I mean, we may not know their story, we are not saying that we are upset with them. We are just saying that we should not have two Americas. We should have an America that everyone has a fair shake at a fair opportunity towards higher education.

When we look at the whole situation, and I cannot help but continue to talk about Florida, because it is the reality in many of the States that are out

there, the cost of college education has increased by 29 percent in Florida's region since the beginning of the Bush administration.

At the same time, Republicans are refusing to increase funding for Pell grants and also for Perkins loans to defray the costs of higher education. The cost of college has increased steadily in the Florida region. Tuition for a 4-year public college education has increased by \$852 over the past 3 years.

I will tell you, this is from the college board. There are a number of issues that are out there, but I just want to say that it is important that we share this information with the American people. It is important that they understand that they do have a choice in the matter. It is important that they know that Democrats in this House are willing to be able to carry a bucket of heavy water on their behalf, because we look forward to the opportunity.

Matter of fact, we pray for the opportunity to be able to govern, to be able to make a better situation and home-front as it relates to health care costs, health care access, making sure that we have a stronger America in the future, that our children when they graduate and they walk across that stage with that diploma, or as an individual walk across the stage, at a technical high school, that they are guaranteed a future in this America, that they do not have to move offshore for the job that they have trained and hopefully educated themselves for, that this it will be here for them and that this government will not have them in debt, leaving a 4-year institution and even those individuals that are fortunate enough to qualify for future student loans to get through a graduate program.

This is about America. This is not about what the people of Iraq want or what people of another country want. This is about making sure what Americans want. I can tell you, there is no partisanship there. I mean, so leadership is important, and we need it and we need it desperately.

Last point, and I want you to do the e-mail and read the e-mails and do the e-mail address, we want to give a big shot out to Rock the Vote. We are getting a lot of response from the voter suppression issue. I just want to share with the Americans we had supervisors of elections telling people that they could not register to vote if they go to school. Right now we have a lot of young people that are in school, summer school right now. The fall semester will start in mid-August.

Ladies and gentlemen, when you go back, you can register where you are going to be in September or late August, and definitely in November you can register to vote there. There is a 1975 Supreme Court decision that was made saying that if you are registered in school, even if you are from Sioux City, Iowa, and you are going to school in Georgia, you can register in Georgia.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And let us be clear. Go to the board of elections, and they will tell you you cannot and you say, yes, I can. Do not take no for an answer when you go to the election board, because they just do not know. They are misinformed.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Rockthevote.com.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Rockthevote.com.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. That can give you more information on voter suppression. I want to thank those individuals that have sent us e-mails and said, listen, we thank you for letting us know. We had one young man who had to go and get a lawyer to register to vote in America. Can you believe it?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Well, I want to say, too, you were talking about college education, and we only have a few minutes left. One of the studies that was done here, they are calling it the "Boomerang," and this article was on "CNN Money." It says study hard, get into a good college. Graduate. Move back in with Mom and Dad; 61 percent of college seniors plan to return to their family home after graduation, according to a survey taken this spring by monster.com. Sixty-one percent. So I think that illustrates the trouble we are having with the job market, the failure to invest, the failure to invest in science, the box that this administration has put us in.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I know you have to give the address out and then read the e-mails.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. You said you wanted me to say it, but now you are cutting me off.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. You said you were looking at the e-mails, and I thought you were going to read those. What you are saying as it relates to 61 percent, we will have more Americans writing their name on the orange juice at home after they graduate.

□ 2300

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Yes. Have you seen that one Cellular One commercial, with the first kid in their class to get a job, and all the other ones are home not working yet. It is a funny commercial. Pay attention. You need to see that.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I will, when I have time.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. It is good. 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov. Send us an e-mail.

I am going to read you one real quick from a Daniel Spitsburgh in Pennsylvania. He says, "I saw the e-mail address on CSPAN on June 22. My name is Dan Spitsburgh and I am a registered Republican. I fall into the 1 percent sub-class of voters who are totally undecided and will probably decide who to vote for immediately before the election." He is a Penn State student, considers himself right down the middle, "waiting for someone to go out and grab our vote."

They are concerned about the present circumstances in the Middle East.

"Don't forget the college voter. They are often the most spirited, live most densely around others and are most able to attract support. We are concerned that we just want the best for our country. Thank you, Representative MEEK and RYAN. If there is any way to get involved in the election process or any literature, please let me know." Signed Dan.

We also have one here, "I am a 40-something conservative Republican, who watches you and I, which is interesting, is it not? A 40-something.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Some demographic.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. "Thank you both for speaking honestly and not being mean-spirited in the talk about our President and other Republicans. The growth of Federal spending also concerns me. I agree in general concept with your ideas you spoke about. We all want what is best." But a Republican concerned about Federal spending.

The one I want to end on here, "Dear Members, this is a note to ask for help in getting a state of emergency declared for the unemployed." State of emergency. He is a union member. "Talented trades and craft union people are proud, hard-working, well-trained people who seem to always have work. Things have really slowed all over the country or gone to low paying, no benefit, nonunion contractors. We serve 4 to 5 year apprenticeships to learn our jobs properly as well as yearly updates to stay current, and we don't need to retrain." He says, and this is interesting, "I wish you would look into this matter, as time is crucial. We need your support right now. We union folk are in great numbers and a little help from you could mean a lot."

These are people that are out struggling. And the CEO of Aetna, and I do not know if you saw this quote, the CEO of Aetna said, "We are pretty sure that the jobs that are going to be created will not have health care benefits associated with them."

So talk about two Americas. I mean, literally, you are going to have millions and millions more than we have now of people who are going to be without health care. There is not a bigger stress that you could have as a parent than thinking, I cannot take my kid to the clinic, I cannot take my kid to the doctor, to the hospital, because I cannot afford it, and then when you do go, you go to the emergency room. That is no way.

I think we do have universal health care in this country, but it is just administered through the emergency rooms, and that is the worst way to do it, it is the most inefficient way to do it, and it is the most costly way to do it. Instead of providing the prevention up front, which would save everybody money in the long run, we wait. Instead of going to the doctor with a cold, you go to the emergency room with pneumonia, and it costs the tax-

payers a lot more money. It just is a bad way to administer. So, 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov, wrapping up another edition.

I want to say hello to my cousins that are in town, actually aunt and uncle, Jimmy and Tammy Schick, who are here, who took me out to dinner tonight, it was very nice, my wife Julie's aunt and uncle.

So, that is it.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. There is nothing like family. Nothing like family.

I say to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), it was an outstanding pleasure once again. God has made it able for us to come back again to be able to speak to the American people and Members of the House.

Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the opportunity to address the American people and Members of the House tonight.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

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

Ms. CARSON of Indiana (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and the balance of the week on account of personal reasons.

Mr. ENGEL (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of a death in the family.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and the balance of the week on account of official business.

Mr. HINCHEY (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and the balance of the week on account of an injury.

Mr. HONDA (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and July 7 and 8 on account of official business.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and July 7 on account of personal reasons.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of illness.

Ms. SLAUGHTER (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of official business.

Ms. SOLIS (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of official business.

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 Mr. EMANUEL) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

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

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. EMANUEL, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. LIPINSKI, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BLUMENAUER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MCDERMOTT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HOLT, for 5 minutes, today.

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

Mr. COLE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. ISAKSON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BURGESS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PAUL, for 5 minutes, July 7, 8, and 9.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, July 7 and 8.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan, for 5 minutes, today and July 8.

(The following Member (at his own request) to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, for 5 minutes, today.

SENATE ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The SPEAKER pro tempore, Mr. PENCE, announced his signature to an enrolled bill of the Senate of the following title:

S. 2507. An act to amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 to provide children with increased access to food and nutrition assistance, to simplify program operations and improve program management, to reauthorize child nutrition programs, and for other purposes.

BILL PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Jeff Trandahl, Clerk of the House reports that on July 1, 2004, he presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bill.

H.R. 4103. To extend and modify the trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 4 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, July 7, 2004, at 10 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

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

8872. A letter from the Deputy Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting the semiannual report of the Inspector General and the classified annex for the period October 1, 2003 — March 31, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. app. (Insp. Gen. Act) section 5(b); to the Committee on Armed Services.

8873. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. ACT 15-460, "National Capital Revitalization Corporation Eminent Domain