

Make no mistake, if the war against terrorism is lost, it will not be lost by our magnificent troops on the battlefield. It will be lost right here at home by politicians who lose their resolve.

AMERICA'S ECONOMY IS IN TROUBLE

(Ms. SCHAKOWSKY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, the President would have us believe that all is well with our economy. But the American people know better. Despite finally receiving some good economic news, middle-class families in this country continue to fall behind as incomes remain flat or drop.

Gas prices fluctuate, health care costs soar, and home heating costs skyrocket. Americans this week are paying nearly 70 cents more per gallon on gas now than in the first year that President Bush came to office.

According to the National Energy Assistance Directors Association, the average family using heating oil or natural gas will pay nearly three times the amount families paid the first winter President Bush was in office.

For the past 5 years, health care costs have increased by nearly 60 percent, driving up the number of uninsured by 6 million since the beginning of the Bush administration. Under President Bush, college tuition has gone up about 40 percent, even taking inflation into account.

Meanwhile, real household income fell for the fourth year in a row in 2004. Together, America can do better than an economy in which middle-class families are seeing falling incomes in the face of rising prices. The American people know it and so should the President.

BORDER SECURITY AND PASSPORTS

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, the 9/11 Commission report concluded: "Americans should not be exempt from carrying passports when they enter the United States, nor should Canadians or Mexicans. The 9/11 experience shows that terrorists study and exploit America's vulnerabilities."

Exempting anyone from carrying a passport when crossing into the United States is blatantly ignoring the commission's suggestions and is posing yet another serious vulnerability in our country's border security.

Neither Mexican nor Canadian visitors are required to show a passport to enter the United States, despite the fact that they rank number one and number four respectively as the largest sources of illegal immigration in the United States. Small wonder the governments of those nations oppose passports to enter America.

We need to do what is best for the United States, not what is best for Canada or Mexico. The 9/11 Commission stated that the United States is still at risk by not requiring passports to enter this country. Our border is seriously vulnerable. What is it going to take for us to figure this out?

Congress must make serious changes in our immigration policy before we lose the sovereignty of this Nation and become a Nation illegally colonized by other nations. That's just the way it is.

AMERICA'S WEAK ECONOMY

(Mrs. MALONEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, data released this Monday on productivity and wages show why the American people do not believe President Bush when he says our economic prospects are as bright as they have been for a long time.

Yes, productivity is strong, and the economy is growing. But the benefits of that growth are showing up in the bottom lines of companies, not in the paychecks of the American worker.

While productivity grew at a 4.7 percent annual rate in the third quarter, workers' pay, including their benefits, shrank at a 1.4 percent rate. Americans are working harder and harder and producing more and more, but they are getting paid less. This is not a bright economy.

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ANOTHER IRAQI MILESTONE

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to thank the Latvian government for extending their troop commitment to Iraq for another year. Last January, 8.5 million Iraqis voted. Last October, more than 10 million voted. In both of these elections, the Iraqi people refused to be cowed by terrorist threats.

A week from today, Iraqis will, once again, defy terrorists and go to the polls a third time this year. They will choose their first 4-year parliament since Saddam Hussein was removed from power.

More than 300 parties and coalitions are registered for this election, and even those who opposed the October constitutional referendum have organized for this vote.

In his speech last week, President Bush mentioned Marine Corporal Jeffrey Starr who died fighting in Iraq. In a letter found after his death he wrote, "I don't regret going, everybody dies, but few get to do it for something as important as freedom. It may seem confusing why we are in Iraq, it's not for me. I'm here helping these people, so they can live the way we live."

Mr. Speaker, it is because of soldiers like Corporal Starr that Iraqis will one

day live like we live, under freedom and democracy.

SWEET TRADE

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, well, just in time for the holidays, the Republicans have prepared a bevy of treats known as tax cuts favoring those who earn over \$300,000 a year. One of the most delectable is a 60 percent tax cut in the tax on stock dividends for millionaires. It costs \$13 billion in revenue foregone, unfortunately. But with new found concern about the deficit, the Republicans are going to pay for that tax cut for the millionaires by raising fees and interest rates on students who are struggling to get an education.

What a sweet trade. More tax cuts for billionaires as they trickle down on the students who are struggling to live the American dream.

AMERICAN ECONOMY FLOURISHES

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, workers throughout our country have over 4.25 million reasons to agree that the American economy continues to improve under Republican leadership.

Since President Bush signed the Jobs and Growth Act of 2003, the news about the economy has been overwhelmingly positive. 4.5 million new jobs have been created. The unemployment rate is lower than the average of the past three decades. The economy grew at 4.3 percent over the past 10 quarters. Tax receipts increased by \$274 billion in just one year after the tax cuts, the largest increase ever due to economic growth.

As the Republican Congress continues to pass legislation that will decrease the tax burden upon American workers and eliminate excessive government regulations, our economy will continue to flourish. We will work hard to ensure that the American people, not the Federal Government, have control over their hard-earned money.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, we will never forget September 11, and the lifetime of service of the late Governor Carroll Campbell.

ECONOMY NOTHING TO BRAG ABOUT

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

Mrs. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, when I am here in Washington I hear the administration and the House majority brag about how great our economy is,

but when I go home to Long Island, I hear a different story.

My constituents know the state of our economy is nothing to brag about. Prices at the pump are still alarmingly high. Home heating costs are skyrocketing. Corporations have stopped paying into their employees' pension plans. Taxes on student loans have increased. Despite rising health care costs, Medicaid faces deep and painful cuts; and American companies are closing plants and cutting jobs. In fact, almost 3 million manufacturing jobs have been lost since the administration took office.

The American people deserve better than lip service. The American people need an administration in Congress that will put their concerns first. We have seen over the last couple of years certainly the middle income families, which is the great portion of this great country, suffering. It is time that we look at them, help them and do a better job. America can do better.

DON DEGARMO

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

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding achievements of Don DeGarmo, a senior at Newton High School. Mr. DeGarmo has received the General Spaatz Award. That is the Civil Air Patrol's highest cadet honor. In only 4 years, he has demonstrated excellence in leadership, character, fitness, and aerospace education.

On average only two cadets in 1,000 ever receive this reward; and in over 40 years, only about 1,500 cadets have ever received it. I am confident that Mr. DeGarmo will continue to fulfill the Civil Air Patrol's mission, which is to serve America by performing Homeland Security and humanitarian missions for our communities, States, and Nation.

Upon graduation, Mr. DeGarmo plans to enter the U.S. Air Force and continue his commitment to protecting our values and our freedoms. We owe a great deal of debt to young men such as he who will protect and preserve the United States of America. At his young age, he is already becoming a role model for future generations, and I come here today to commend him for his exceptional career.

CORRUPTION

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

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, as the Republican leadership spends more time in the courthouse than the People's House doing the people's business, defending itself from charges of bribery, tax evasion and money laundering, the President is traveling the country

telling the American people how incredible this economy is.

Yet, survey after survey shows the American people do not agree with him. This despite the fact that the economy grew 4.2 percent last year. It is the best statistical performance since 1999. Why? Well, in part because very little of this growth is impacting them. 5.4 million more Americans live in poverty than they did before President Bush came into office. Six million more Americans are without health insurance, and the average income fell for the fifth year in a row last year.

The administration's stock explanation for this is always the same, "September 11. We are at war."

Well, being at war has not stopped corporate profits from soaring more than 50 percent since 2001. And when you have Members of Congress pleading guilty to having accepted bribes from defense contractors, ongoing investigations into lawmakers' agreeing to perform official acts in return for lavish golf trips, expensive dinners and campaign contributions, it is easy to understand why corporations are doing so well.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to put the needs of families before the special interests of lobbyists.

TAX RELIEF FOR AMERICANS TODAY

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

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, you know, you can choose to be negative. You can choose to be positive. And with this economy and this great Nation there is a lot to be positive about. Everybody is writing about it. Even the good old Washington Post talking about we are going to move to cut taxes another \$94.5 billion. That is one of the things that makes this economy work. It is why we are seeing record economic growth. Over 4 million jobs created. And today this body is going to take action on H.R. 4297, which already extends tax relief for millions of American families.

There is a provision, sales tax deductibility for States. Sales tax deductibility for individuals who, when they go to file their Federal income tax every April, they can deduct the sales tax they pay every year from that Federal income tax filing. This affects over 60 million individuals, hardworking Americans. We are going to give them tax relief today.

I encourage all Members of this body to support H.R. 4297.

POLITICAL CRONIES IGNORE THE LAW TO INCREASE REPUBLICAN POWER IN WASHINGTON

(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, the Bush administration is scaling new heights in political cronyism. Not long ago, America cringed watching on TV as a presidential buddy could only manage to create a disaster, not respond to one in the Gulf Coast. But now we are finding out that political cronies ignored the voting rights of African Americans and Hispanic Americans in Texas.

The Washington Post uncovered a 73-page report that says that the Texas redistricting plan illegally diluted black and Hispanic voting in two of the State's congressional districts. The report received the unanimous support of eight Justice Department career employees, but the Republican political cronies ignored it.

One Justice Department attorney told the Post it was "highly unusual" for political appointees to overrule the unanimous findings such as this. But this is business as usual for the President's political appointees. Just ask the people of Louisiana, Mississippi, and now Texas.

It is time for the Republican cronies to go and let the people's votes count.

A TIME FOR EVERYTHING

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

Mr. SODREL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to respond to the critics of our Iraqi policy. No one questions their right to criticize our commitment to the Iraqi people or the rate of progress being made. It is not their right I question but rather their responsibility. For every liberty there is a responsibility, and for every freedom a duty.

I just returned from Iraq. Much progress is being made towards a stable Iraq and a democratically-elected government. It is to me irresponsible to enter into the current debate on the very eve of the Iraqi election, the most important election in the history of that country.

Our words should be words of encouragement. Our words should lend support to this important election. Words do have meaning and ideas have consequences. At this critical time, our words should support the Iraqi people, our soldiers and the process.

In Ecclesiastes it is written, "There is a time for everything." The critics are using the wrong words to express the wrong idea at the wrong time.

RISING HOME HEATING COSTS

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

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, right now it is 25 degrees near Washington, DC. It is 22 degrees in my home in Chicago. It is 3 degrees in Denver and a chilly 19 degrees in Dallas. As the song goes, "Baby, it's cold outside."