

So if we start messing around with the benefit structure under the privatization scheme, guess what? We are going to have to take care of our parents and our grandparents. We are going to have to subsidize their income. We do now, but it will be greater. So that is the reason why this is important, that the facts are put forth. Forty-seven years of solvency, the way Social Security is right now will continue.

So, Mr. Speaker, I look forward, as long as there are those that are in this Chamber and outside of this Chamber that are sharing with the Americans inaccurate information and saying that privatization is good and it is going to be a really nice thing for all Americans and we all should do it, the 30-something Working Group will continue to work not only with the Democratic leader, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), who is our whip, and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ), who is our chairman of the Democratic Caucus, and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN), who is our vice chair of the Democratic Caucus, and sharing accurate information with the American people and staying in the fight of informing them on the truth about what is happening right now; not what might happen, what is happening right now and what is going to happen for years to come.

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Because, remember, I say to my colleagues, Social Security in the 1980s was saved by a Democratic House, working along with Ronald Reagan in the White House, doing what we had to do on behalf of individuals that were carrying Social Security cards to keep our promise to them. We did the right thing, and we will continue to do the right thing. But the right thing is not increasing the Federal debt, and it is not taking a gamble on private accounts.

So we will continue to share this information. I want to thank the Democratic leader for allowing the 30-something Working Group to have this hour. We look forward to being back next week, sharing good and accurate information, and the topic will be Social Security, with the Members of the House.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND U.S. ENERGY POLICY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PRICE of Georgia). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be here on behalf of the Republican leadership in the House. It has been so interesting listening over the past hour as my col-

leagues from across the aisle have talked about various and sundry issues, as they have gotten around to talking about Social Security.

I am here to talk about energy tonight, but before I do that, I want to spend just a few moments and dispel some of the myths that we have been listening to for the last hour.

I think that possibly my colleagues do not intentionally mean to misrepresent the facts. I think, though, that they are just sadly misinformed many times and have a misunderstanding of some of the facts. I would like to, if I can, clarify a few of these, dispel a couple of myths.

We have heard that Social Security is fine until 2052. Then we have turned around and heard that benefits are going to be cut immediately, and that is of concern to me.

I think we all know that there is a date, 2018, and 2018 is the date when the Social Security system will stop running a surplus. Now, this is important to us, because it is at that point in time when those IOUs that the government has been writing, the Social Security system, the Social Security fund, those are going to come due in 2018. Now, 2042 is the date that the IOUs run out. The question for us to answer is this: what are we going to do? How are we going to pay it from 2018 until 2042.

My colleagues have come against the President for raising this issue. I would like to commend the President for having this discussion with the American people, for encouraging us to talk about how we go about addressing Social Security. It is important for those of us, the Members of the House elected from 435 districts around this great Nation, to decide what is going to be the best way to address Social Security.

With my constituents, we look at it as two tracks. One, the stabilization and solvency, how are we going to address this? The other we look at is the enhancements. That is where we begin talking about the personal accounts.

Mr. Speaker, one of my colleagues today has called it a privatization scheme, and I find that very sad. Because the money that men and women, each and every one of us, pay into Social Security is money we have earned, and that is something that we deserve to have, that our children deserve to have as a nest egg to build from as they get ready to retire. It is not a scheme. It is called working and earning a living and setting aside, and that is money that you have earned and you deserve to have, to be able to pass on to your heirs.

Personal accounts is your own personal lockbox to be certain that that money is going to be there at the time that you get ready to retire.

I have also heard them talk about we need to stop deficit spending. Well, lo and behold, I would just love it if they would join us as we as the majority try to work on deficit spending. But do my colleagues know what happens? Every

single time we talk about reducing a program, every single time we talk about eliminating a program that has outlived its usefulness, every single time we talk about government efficiencies, what do they want to do? They want to grow the program. They do not want to cut a program.

Mr. Speaker, Ronald Reagan said the closest thing to eternal life on earth is a Federal Government program, and he was right. Because once you got it, it is so incredibly difficult to get rid of it. So I invite our colleagues from across the aisle to join us.

We passed a budget this year. We have done some great things this year, and I commend our Republican leadership for some of the steps that we have made, such as the budget. Our budget chairman, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUSSLE), did a great job working with the committee bringing forward a budget that has a reduction in nondiscretionary, nonhomeland security defense spending. Many of our colleagues wanted to vote against that and did vote against that, because it was not spending enough.

Mr. Speaker, you cannot have it both ways. You cannot have it both ways. So we invite our colleagues to work with us to get the spending down.

We also want to be certain that we take a look at some of the things that need to be addressed as we talk about Social Security, as we talk about the future, as we talk about education for our children, as we talk about opportunity. One of my colleagues said they went to college on a scholarship and talked about scholarship and loans and ways to get through college. A lot of us did like me: worked, worked hard, worked hard selling books door to door to get through college. And for many, many American men and women and young people today, they are working and they are striving to get that education so that they can enjoy hope, opportunity, and benefits of this great Nation, so they can build a nest egg and have a great retirement and a solid future, not only for them but for their children and for their grandchildren.

So we invite our colleagues from across the aisle to join with us to reduce this spending and to address the solvency of the Social Security system, to join with us as we talk about passing a budget that is going to reduce spending, cut the deficit in half in 5 years.

One of the reasons we are here talking about this deficit, and Mr. Speaker, I just cannot let this go by, they say you have to cut it, you have to stop spending. We have this national debt.

Do my colleagues know how we got here? We got here because of 40 years, 40 years of Democrat control, Democrat spending, programs that were growing and growing and growing and were not being called into accountability; 40 years of just taking that credit card and running those numbers off, swiping them away, run it up, run it up, run it up. Pass that debt on. Let

future generations worry about it. Live for today. Enjoy it. It is the Federal Government's money. Spend it all before you get to the end of the year.

I commend our Republican leadership here in the House: our Speaker, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT); our leader, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY); our whip, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT); our conference chair, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. PRYCE); and I commend the President and our administration for working with us to say, let us begin to turn this ship around. We did not get here overnight. We did not. And we are working diligently every single day to turn this around. I think we are seeing great success.

As I mentioned a moment earlier, we have had a busy agenda. Despite what my colleagues from across the aisle would like to say, we have had a busy agenda this year. We have gotten a few good things done. We have passed class action reform, which has been a long time in coming. Greedy lawyers, greedy trial lawyers have just had their way too often for too many years with the American court system.

As I said, we have passed a budget that puts us on the path to fiscal responsibility. It is not going to be done overnight. It is not going to be done today or tomorrow. It is going to take us some time.

We are having a national discussion on the issue of Social Security. Yesterday, we passed a permanent repeal of the death tax, which is a triple tax on many farmers, on many small businesses in my district in Tennessee. Today, we passed bankruptcy reform.

All of these are steps in the right direction. They are good things. At the same time, we have been talking about reducing taxes and cutting spending. We have to have that discussion one with the other. You cannot leave it unattended.

At my town halls over the past couple of weeks, we have heard a lot about Social Security. We have heard a lot about immigration, also; and, Mr. Speaker, I hope that at some point we will be able to come back to the floor and address that. But we are also hearing about energy and about the price.

One of my colleagues earlier this afternoon said, we need immediate relief from \$2 a gallon plus gas, and we need to do something right now. There is something that we can do, and it is called passing an energy bill, because it is a step in the right direction; and there are few issues that are more central to our economy and to our national security than energy and having a good, solid energy policy. There truly is no single American whose livelihood, whose standard of living, whose security as a citizen of this great Nation does not depend on our access to a stable and abundant energy supply.

Now one would think, given the absolute critical nature of this issue, that we would have been able to easily pass a national energy policy bill several

years ago, but, Mr. Speaker, that has not been the case. I commend our chairman, the gentleman from Texas (Chairman BARTON), for the great work he has done on this issue this year.

We are going to hear over the next week as we bring this bill to the floor that, oh, my goodness, it was passed in haste. Well, let me tell my colleagues what. We started a hearing on April 6 with opening statements. We finished in committee last night, which was April 13. And I would remind my colleagues that during the 107th Congress, from 2001 to 2002, the Republican-led Committee on Energy and Commerce held 28 hearings related to the comprehensive national energy bill. Mr. Speaker, in 2002, the Committee on Energy and Commerce spent 21 hours marking up an energy bill and considering 79 amendments. In 2003, they spent 22 total hours and 80 amendments. In 3 years, House Republicans have held 80 public hearings, with 12 committee markups and 279 amendments. Senate Republicans have held 37 public hearings and 8 markups.

What is the common theme here?

The common theme is that conservatives keep pushing for reform, and conservatives keep pushing for a national energy policy. We get it. Republicans in Congress have dedicated hundreds, if not thousands, of hours over the past several years making energy policy for this Nation a priority. During the 107th Congress, we proposed the Securing America's Future Energy Act. In the 108th Congress, it was called the Energy Policy Act of 2003. And while many across the aisle opposed this effort, we are not giving up.

This week at the Committee on Energy and Commerce we met for nearly 28 hours and considered almost 70 amendments. Thanks to the leadership of the gentleman from Texas (Chairman BARTON), we were able to pass this bill out of committee; and it is a tremendous step toward a goal of national energy policy. It is a big step toward having a national energy bill, and I do commend all of my colleagues on the Committee on Energy and Commerce and our chairman for their diligent work and tremendous efforts.

Time and again, we face Democrats in the House and the Senate who put their pet projects over this matter of national security and economic security, this energy bill. Mr. Speaker, part of the hold-up on this issue has been a group of extremely liberal ideologues who think we should require half the Nation to give up their cars and bike to work. They have made every attempt to halt progress on this bill because the bill will help open new domestic sources of oil, domestic oil that will ease some of our reliance on foreign sources.

I want to say that one more time, to be certain that everyone gets that. They have opposed it because this bill will help open new domestic sources of oil, domestic oil that will help ease our reliance on foreign sources.

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And that must be a priority. And I agree there has to be a balance between efforts to develop alternative energy sources, but that cannot come at the expense of our current need for access to oil and gas supplies. And I believe the bill that the gentleman from Texas (Chairman BARTON) has put together meets all these needs, and it should have the support of every single Member of this body.

I would like to spend a few moments with this poster right now and go through some of the things that we have covered in our Energy Committee this week and things that the American people and the Members of this House are going to become very familiar with over the next week as we look at energy policy.

At the top we have got a quote from our chairman, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BARTON), who said, I agree with our President, 4 years is long enough for an energy bill. That is how long we have been working on this. And for individuals who will say we have not spent enough time on it, I do not think there is ever going to be enough time spent on it. And the reason for that is this, because they are just not getting everything they want; and so therefore, they are going to try to keep the bill from moving forward. Four years is enough.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005, this is what you are going to find in that bill. It improves our Nation's electricity transmission capability and reliability.

Mr. Speaker, this Nation has suffered a series of blackouts over the past decade. All of us remember the August 2003 blackout that affected the Northeast. And that is what we are trying to prevent with this legislation.

We are providing incentives for transmission grid improvement and for strengthening reliability standards. It is important to do that. It is important to be proactive, to provide those incentives for the grid improvements. This is about providing the resources our economy needs so that it can grow and about protecting ourselves from future blackouts.

We have heard some discussion today about needing jobs, needing to grow the economy. One of the ways we can do that is having a stable, safe, secure, dependable energy supply. One way we can do that is by reducing our reliance on foreign oil sources.

Number two, the bill will also encourage development of new fuels, of hydrogen fuel cell cars, and give State and local governments access to grants that will support acquisition of alternative-fueled vehicles. And that program with the alternative-fueled vehicles is the Clean Cities program. This is something that will provide those communities that are dealing with transportation the opportunity to look at alternative-fueled vehicles. We are going to see some of these alternative fuels come about. It is important to Tennessee, my State. It is important to others.

We are hearing a lot about biodiesel, about ethanol, about the hybrids that some of the auto manufacturers are producing. And of course in Tennessee we have a Nissan plant. We have a Saturn plant, and we know that research and development and new design for hydrogen cell cars is there. It is on the drawing board. We need to do what we can do to encourage that. This bill will do that.

Number three, we have also made sure this effort does not ignore clean coal technology, renewable energies like biomass, wind and solar hydroelectricity.

Number four, the Federal Government is going to help lead the effort in energy conservation through this legislation by requiring Federal buildings to comply with efficiency standards. We can help set the example, and we should be setting the example, and we are going to do that with this piece of legislation.

We are targeting those high utility bills. When it comes to liquefied natural gas, we are clarifying the government's role in the process of choosing sites for natural gas facilities. By streamlining the approval process for this important energy sector's facility construction, we can provide some stability to those large segments of our country that depend on natural gas for fuel.

Mr. Speaker, every American knows our country is dependent on oil. It is essential to our economy. By increasing oil and gas exploration and development on nonpark Federal lands, and by authorizing the expansion of the strategic petroleum reserves capacity to a billion barrels, we are doing everything we can to meet our domestic demand and to protect ourselves from future shortages.

Both nuclear and hydropower have a significant role in providing energy for millions of Americans, and our legislation will allow the Department of Energy to accelerate programs for the production and supply of electricity and set the stage for construction of new nuclear plants and improving current procedures for hydroelectric project licensing, looking to the future, and looking to the nuclear and the hydropower and the role that they will supply.

Mr. Speaker, all of this is good for our economy, and it is good for our national security. We know that. We know it is important that we continue to have a ready energy supply for manufacturing.

One of my colleagues earlier today was talking about, my goodness, you know, China, and dealing with China and the currency there, it concerns us. It concerns us when we see jobs leave. It concerns everyone. And one of the ways that we make sure manufacturing continues to grow as it has done over the past 2 years, and I will remind my colleagues this past quarter we had the best manufacturing numbers we have had in this country in about 2 decades.

We give this Republican leadership in the House and the Senate and the Republican leadership and the administration a little bit of credit for working to create the environment that the private sector needed to do what, go create jobs, two million new jobs, and also, to increase the productivity and the output in manufacturing and also, as that has happened, to increase the capital investment. It will become a little bit better, a little bit more affordable for the private sector to create those jobs and to increase that manufacturing output when we have a stable, a dependable, an affordable energy supply. And that is one of the things that the Energy Policy Act of 2005 will help to do.

Now, I heard one of our colleagues earlier talking about the gas shortages of the 1970s. And I think that many of us can remember those. And everyone who does agrees that economic security and national security, when it comes to energy, certainly go hand in hand. And for those across the aisle, many, like the minority leader across the aisle, who have worked against our effort to secure America's energy sources, I hope that now, after the Republican leadership has made the case for this bill and legislation, and after 4 years, 4 full years of work, that they will join us, that they will vote for and support this legislation.

And if the liberal leadership in Congress does not really see the light on this issue, let me help to clarify this. I would like to show our second chart.

Mr. Speaker, this is where we have been over the past two Congresses, the 107th, the 108th, and the 109th Congress. On the left, you will see that you have the Congress and the energy legislation that the Republicans tried to pass, but were unable to get through because of Democrat opposition.

And on the right you have the national average prices of a gallon of regular unleaded gasoline for the second week of April each year that this legislation was going through the floor, and each time the Democrat leadership was fighting passage of an energy bill. And I hope that the individuals that are watching are going to see a trend here, because we have had a lot of inaction since the 107th Congress. And with that inaction, guess what has happened? Higher prices. Democrat obstructionism means a bigger bill at the pump. And for my colleagues that earlier today were saying you have got to do something, gas is over \$2 a gallon, well here is the something to do. It is called vote "yes" on the energy bill. Let us move this process along. There are Members that have been obstructionists for too, too long. Let us vote "yes" and let us move the process along.

Now, during the 107th Congress, in 2001 and 2002, we pushed a comprehensive energy bill. And at that time the gas prices averaged \$1.46 a gallon. During the 108th Congress, in 2003 and 2004, Republicans in the House were again

supporting a national energy policy. Gas prices had increased by an average of 20 cents, and they were at \$1.69 a gallon.

Mr. Speaker, now the 109th Congress, we are facing \$2.28 a gallon. My question is, how can the Democrats continue to say no? They need to join us and show some support for the energy bill.

This bill is a bill about options. It is a bill about options for today, more affordable oil and gas. It is about options for the future as we look at research and development, as we look at new technologies. And it is important for our Nation's economy and for our Nation's security that we move this along.

So I hope that next week, as we take up the national energy policy act on the floor of the House, that Democrats will enthusiastically and finally join Republicans in passing this legislation. Time for inaction has long passed.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is time we passed this bill next week and that we answer that question that some of our constituents are asking: What are you going to do about it? We are going to do what we have been trying to do for 4 years. We are going to pass an energy bill.

We hope that the Democrats across the aisle will join us in passing this bill, helping to secure our Nation's energy supply and helping us plan for the future.

VICTIMS OF CRIME ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PRICE of Georgia). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak for a group that live in the silent storm of stressful sadness. They live with the vicious wounds of being a victim of crime in America. To be a victim, to be chosen to be the prey by a predator, to have a life stolen or broken by criminal conduct, Mr. Speaker, it is a terrible and tragic travesty. But to have your own government desert you, abandon you, too, is an injustice. It is an injustice to the injured, to the innocent, to the victims.

Mr. Speaker, the Victims of Crime Act, VOCA, the VOCA fund was created in 1984 by President Ronald Reagan to provide the most consistent stable source of funding for services to crime victims. It included counseling, victim advocacy programs, safety planning, State victim compensation funds that would help crime victims recover the costs associated with being a victim. Yet the current budget proposes to rescind the over \$1.2 billion presently in this fund and redirect its resources to the Department of the Treasury, where it will be treated in the general revenue. It would go to the greater business of the general fund.

Mr. Speaker, VOCA funds, these funds that we are talking about, are