

take the very difficult, make the very difficult decisions that we had to make in 1993?

Mr. SPRATT. What we have seen in the 1980s and 1990s in coming to grips with the budget deficit, a compelling problem that nevertheless eluded a solution for years, is that unless the administration, the President and the leadership of the Congress, is focused upon this problem and there is a driving priority, it simply will not be resolved.

And that is the problem we have today. When we finally put the budget to bed, the deficit to bed, got rid of the remaining deficit in 1997, it was because President Clinton had not only made that his number one priority for his second term, but he put his first team on the field.

Every time we met for negotiations, Frank Raines was there, Bob Ruben was there, Erskine Bowles was there, everyone in the room had the President's proxy and could speak for him; and the participants, the budget principals, knew that the administration was pushing hard.

Unless everybody pulls hard in that same direction, there are too many otherwise outside forces that stray you off course. So you have got to have leadership to get this done. And we do not have that leadership.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. What you are saying about leadership, I think, really is important, because it is pretty easy to get cynical about Congress and the budget process over the 1980s and the 1990s as so often action was pretty ineffectual. But there were three times, were there not, when Congress rose to the occasion: once in 1990, on a bipartisan basis when the first President Bush joined with the Democratic congressional leadership and concluded a significant budget agreement; in 1993, with Democratic heavy lifting alone, an agreement that was actually rather similar to 1990 and moved the ball further; and then the 1997 agreement led by President Clinton, but with some bipartisan support.

Looking back to that 1990 agreement, which I think most of us remember as a difficult time, but a very positive achievement, is there any prospect that this present administration or this present congressional leadership has any inclination to undertake this sort of tack?

Mr. SPRATT. Well, if the gentleman will recall, in the late 1980s, we came to this conclusion that we had to have Presidential leadership as well as congressional leadership solidly behind us. And so we sponsored resolutions several years in a row which called for a budget summit.

We finally passed such a resolution, convened a summit, they met at Andrews Air Force Base something like 60 different days, and once again they succeeded. They capped discretionary spending; they devised the PAYGO rule. They reduced entitlements, rates of growth, did all of the things you needed to do.

The results were obscured by the fact that we had a recession. But the Clinton administration built upon the successes and upon the processes of the Bush administration, the Bush budget that moved us from a \$290 billion deficit, to a \$236 billion surplus. That was built on that foundation.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. If you fast forward to the present, as the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) was suggesting, the budget situation is actually worse; the objective budget situation is actually worse now than what we faced in 1990.

This President Bush, unlike the first President Bush, does not seem inclined to even agree there is a problem. And the congressional leadership is totally disinclined to take this up. So it strikes me as a very dangerous kind of complacency that really, I guess, bespeaks a deterioration of the budget process, but also of leadership to use the budget process to get our fiscal house in order.

Mr. SPRATT. Well, the chart that the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) is holding tells an awful lot. Every year during the Clinton administration, due to those three budget agreements, which the gentleman just described, the bottom line of the budget got better and better to the point where we finally had the budget in surplus for the first time in 30 years.

Every year since the Bush administration came to office in 2001, the bottom line has gotten worse to the point where today we have record deficits, three in a row, record deficits: 378 last year, 412 in the year 2004, it looks like 350 this year. There have been changes made in the margins, but nothing as dramatic and emphatic as what we did in 1993 and 1997, and that is why you do not see any real results of any substance on the bottom line.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. In 1994, there was a change in leadership in Congress. What happened in 1995?

Mr. SPRATT. In 1995?

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. When the Congress passed budgets that included massive tax cuts, what happened to those budgets?

Mr. SPRATT. Well, in 1995 and in 1996 we had better and better bottom lines because we had a PAYGO rule, and we had discretionary spending caps.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. But did President Clinton, when he looked at those irresponsible budgets, not have to veto those budgets, showing Presidential leadership?

□ 1915

Mr. SPRATT. He did indeed. And then we had a point where we could not come to a conclusion on the budget. As a consequence, the whole government was shut down and President Clinton, upon being reelected said, I do not want to go through that again. I would like to see the budget principals get together with the White House budget principals and try to negotiate a deal earlier in the fiscal year, as opposed to

near the end of the fiscal year with our backs against the wall.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. But the Presidential leadership would not allow an irresponsible budget to become law?

Mr. SPRATT. Absolutely not. And then took the situation by the scruff of the neck the next year and saw to it that we finally brought it to a successful resolution, a phenomenal resolution: a surplus of \$236 billion in the year 2000.

On that high point, since we are just about out of time, let me thank the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT), the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE) and the others who participated, about a subject that is of great concern to all of us. We all have this feeling that the day of reckoning awaits us, and we would like to see this done consensually, with good policy.

REPUBLICAN AGENDA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCHENRY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here with some of my colleagues this evening, and we have a great agenda. We are going to talk about the agenda that we have had for this session of the 109th Congress and some of the positive accomplishments that we have made. But before I start on that, I do want to make a couple of comments, Mr. Speaker, regarding my colleagues across the aisle and some of the things that they have had to say.

They are so very concerned about the budget and how the budget works and about spending. Mr. Speaker, I just have to say it is interesting for me to hear them. Some of them are talking about how we cannot have tax relief that grows the economy because we would be doing away with needed programs. And then we hear that we are not growing the economy enough. And the interesting thing is you cannot have it both ways. You cannot have it both ways. You know, you have to set a course and you have to move forward on that course, and that is what this leadership has done.

We know that it is the people's money that we are here to be good stewards of. And it was so interesting, one of my colleagues just said, tax cuts are going to cost us. Tax cuts are going to cost us. Well, you know what, every time we pass a bill that spends another dollar, it is costing everybody that is paying taxes. When we reduce taxes, we give money back to the people that earn that money, the taxpayers. We leave that money in home communities. We leave that money where it belongs, with families.

Right now in this great Nation of ours, taxes are the biggest part of any family budget. We will set about on a course, the leadership in this Congress

has set about on a course, the President and the administration have set about on a course to get some of that burden off the backs of the American taxpayer; and we are working to reduce the size of this government.

Mr. Speaker, I tell you, I am so pleased that tonight we can take a moment and reflect. This is day number 169 on the 2005 calendar. It is day number 67 in our legislative calendar of the 109th Congress. And the majority in this Congress has, we are approaching the halfway point for this year and we have made substantial progress.

Mr. Speaker, you cannot help but notice that a remarkable thing has been happening on the floor of this very House over the past few months. It is something most people probably are not very aware of and I can assure you, listening to my colleagues tonight, it is something that the minority leader, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) probably hopes will remain unnoticed by most of the American people, but my colleagues across the aisle, many have been abandoning their party leadership in droves and they are voting in favor of a Republican agenda and our legislation. And it is worth noting tonight.

People say, oh, Washington is such a partisan town, nothing ever gets done. The town is in gridlock. And the minority leader will come to the floor and she will rail against the legislation that is being brought forth, and she will call it virtually everything in the book but good. And after all the hot air hits the rafters and people put their card in and cast their vote, dozens of Democrats vote for the legislation that she has just taken 5 minutes criticizing.

Why is it, Mr. Speaker? I think it is probably because the leadership in this body is crafting legislation to solve problems. We are here to solve problems for the American people. We are here to work to reduce regulation. We are here to lessen the tax burden. We are here to cast votes that will preserve individual freedoms for this great Nation. And we are attracting so many Democrat votes because the legislation that is in this body is legislation that appeals to the folks back home, regardless of what the party is. They are folks who are interested in a better life and a better quality of life for their families.

Here are just a few examples of what we have seen many of the Democrats come over and support, Mr. Speaker. One, bankruptcy reform. We passed that bill with 302 votes, 73 of those were Democrat votes.

Class action reform. We passed that with 200 the votes, 50 of those were Democrats.

The REAL ID Act. We passed that with 261 votes, and that included 42 Democrats who joined us in saying let us secure these borders, let us stiffen up these immigration policies.

The Continuity of Government Act passed with 329 votes, 122 of those were Democrats.

The Energy Policy Act passed with 249 votes, 41 of those were Democrats.

The Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act, 207 votes, 54 of those were Democrats.

Mr. Speaker, it is phenomenal, but the good thing is it is an agenda that the American people are interested in. It is an agenda that they support.

Mr. Speaker, I want to yield some time this evening to our chief deputy whip, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CANTOR) who is going to talk to us about some of the ways that that this legislation impacts those in his State.

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), and I commend her for conducting this Special Order tonight. It is a great opportunity for us to gather here and to really do a number of things. First, to set the record straight after responding to the comments made from the other side; but also, as the gentlewoman pointed out, to talk a little bit about our vision for America and what the majority has been doing in pursuing that vision through legislation that we have worked on here in the House of Representatives.

First of all, I would like to join the gentlewoman in supporting her statement that we are here as shepherds of the people's money. It is and should be our aim to give back as much of the money that is earned by the taxpayers, to the people that are earning that money, so they can use the money and put it to the work in the best way and the most efficient way possible.

In that spirit, Mr. Speaker, I would also point out that the other side, in making the comment that the President nor the leadership has noticed that there is a problem with the deficit, nothing could be further from the truth. All that needs to be done is if they would look back to the deficit, to the budget that we passed to deal with the deficit. The President has set the goal that we must halve the deficit within 5 years. And this House of Representatives along with the entire Congress managed to pass a budget which for the first time in at least 8 years begins to chip away at the so-called entitlement programs. And we will have a bill later this year which does that, to begin to arrest the exponential growth in those programs.

But also we passed a budget that actually achieves an approximate 1 percent across-the-board cut in non-defense, non-homeland security spending. Although those savings may seem meager, this is the first time that we have done that since the Reagan era. So, Mr. Speaker, I would differ strongly with the statements made by the other side to remind the people across this country that we are serious. We are serious stewards of their taxpayer dollars, and aim to be able to give back more of the hard-earned money that the families and businesses across this country earn on a daily basis.

Now, let us turn to maybe the accomplishments that the gentlewoman

talked about just now, and make an introductory remark about how we are leading this country, how we are responding to those issues that are on the top of people's minds across this country, and certainly are doing everything we can to make safer our young men and women in uniform as they have volunteered their time and made a sacrifice for us to go over and to conquer the enemy that poses a tremendous threat to our freedom.

First of all, almost 4 years ago, on September 11, 2001, there is no question that all convention in terms of security was turned on its head. It was on that day, Mr. Speaker, that we saw 19 terrorists kill 3,000 Americans in about 20 minutes with box cutters on a plane. And that was something that was really demonstrative of the fact that we were not thinking the unthinkable. I dare to say that not many of us would think that such an awful, awful terrorist attack could occur on our own soil, but it did. And as the gentlewoman mentioned, we rose to the occasion and we passed the REAL ID act to make sure that no longer could a terrorist have access to false identification issued by any State government to board an airplane and use that airplane as a missile to kill thousands of Americans. No longer will that happen.

And as the gentlewoman points out, we were able to garner an awful lot of support on the other side. But mind you, it was not support coming from the ranks of the minority leadership, but rather it was the leadership on the Republican side of the aisle that took the lead on that issue.

But in terms of security and what is going on here at home, we are also dealing with a very real problem, and that is the spread of gang violence. This is not only a State problem, it is a national problem. It is an international problem that reflects the growing influx and occurrence of terrorists making it across the border, joining gangs, and participating in some very violent acts.

A little over a month ago here on the House floor, we passed what was called the gang buster bill to provide Federal law enforcement with extra tools to go ahead and identify and apprehend individuals connected with these gangs, and also to strengthen penalties so that we can put an end to violent activity in our community.

Once again, leadership position that was taken on the majority side of the aisle and, frankly, has not been at all echoed or supported by the other side's leadership. None of this, Mr. Speaker, none of this would be possible if we do not ensure that our economy remains strong.

In going back to the point the gentlewoman made about ensuring that the more taxpayer dollars that we can return to the people that earn it, the better off and the more productive our economy can be, we have witnessed over the last several months an incredible surge in the rate of job creation in

this country. We are at about a 5.1 percent unemployment rate nationally, which is a lower rate, the lowest rate that we have experienced in this country since September of 2001.

I can say, Mr. Speaker, in my home State of Virginia, we have an approximately 3 percent unemployment rate, which again demonstrates the productivity gains that we have made, but also demonstrates that we have got an environment where individuals have taken to putting their capital at risk to create jobs and creates value.

Now, we all know we are in a 24-7 global economy. We make no mistake about that. I think it is an agreed-upon fact that today we in this country, it is not just that our constituents are competing across town, that it is not the competitor there that we are only worried about, but the competitor across the globe.

□ 1930

You talk to some of the economic developers that are active in today's global economy and they will tell you there is just as much of a chance that an individual or company looking to invest resources would do so in Lima, Peru, as they would in Lima, Ohio. That is the reality of today's global economy.

That is why we must compete. We must ensure that our tax laws are competitive. That is why we need to make sure that we enact some permanency in the Bush tax cuts because there is nothing more obvious than the impact of those tax cuts on the economy itself and the tremendous surge that we have experienced.

We need to make sure that the regulatory environment is competitive. We cannot have our regulators promulgating burdensome regulations that inhibit capital formation in this country, because literally we are competing with every nation in the world.

Mr. Speaker, we also must be mindful of what we have seen as the proliferation of junk lawsuits. Nothing can be more inhibitive of capital formation than for an individual or a company to realize that they may be subjected to frivolous lawsuits and exposure to liability that simply is not warranted.

All we have to do is recall the class action suits against some of the fast-food chains that posed a potential risk to them, exposing them to liability for making hot coffee. Frankly, for an individual to drive up to a drive-through window, purchase a cup of coffee and then not realize that it is so hot that if it spills on them it would cause a burn, to me, defies common sense and reason.

It is those types of frivolous lawsuits that were included in this class action reform bill that we have passed and the President actually signed into law. It is that type of legislation that has been guided through this House, through the support of our membership, and certainly at the direction of our Speaker and our leadership.

Mr. Speaker, we have a daunting task ahead of us in approaching the

very real problem of Social Security. This is one of the most successful programs that we have ever faced in this country; but yet it is a program, given the demographics that we face in this country, that frankly is unsustainable.

The law, as it stands today, will not allow us to continue on the current course, and we have got to do something to bend the curve to ensure long-term solvency of our Social Security system and, at the same time, ensure that it is not only today's seniors that are beneficiaries of that program but it is our children and our grandchildren.

That is what we and the majority side of the aisle have set out to do. That is where the proposals have stemmed from. It is from the majority side of the aisle, and to date, Mr. Speaker, save but one Member on the opposite side of the aisle, we have seen nothing, nothing, no contribution from the other side of the aisle, not even contributing to the discussion that there is a problem facing the Social Security system today.

It is on that note, Mr. Speaker, with an issue of such import that I implore the other side of the aisle to join our discussion, to contribute to trying to come up with solutions for the American people. I implore the other side and the leadership there to begin to join the discussion in arriving at solutions for the American people.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Virginia and thank him for his thoughts on the issue and the things that we have been able to accomplish so far in the 109th Congress. As the gentleman had said, there have been so many things that we have been able to do.

I have got a list of 100 ways in 100 days that we have been able to pass legislation that at some point he just mentioned: class action reform, funding for the troops, workforce job training, a highway jobs bill, a budget that reins in spending, boosting our border security and tsunami relief, all things that are very important. As he said, when it comes to issues of taxation, we are reducing the rate of taxation and the impact that has on our families.

Talking about the need for deregulation. We like to say in my district, we need deregulation that fosters innovation and spurs job creation because that is what it is about, creating those jobs, keeping this economy moving, keeping it effective. Of course, litigation, and being certain that we look at class action reform, the need for class action reform, the need for medical liability reform.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I am going to yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) who has certainly been very active in this agenda that we have in the 109th Congress, the common sense Congress; and he has truly been a leader as we have looked at many of the taxation issues, as well as many of the health care issues in this great Nation.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Ten-

nessee for yielding. I appreciate very much the opportunity to be involved with her in this discussion tonight.

I was listening a little earlier, and I was thinking, do you not just get tired of the naysayers? Do you not just get tired of the folks who have nothing but doom and gloom to offer? It really is remarkable. I do not know what I would do if I felt that way every single day; the other side of the aisle seems to be so depressed and demoralized about what is going on. They are obviously not paying attention. This is an exciting time to be an American. It is an exciting time for all Americans.

The gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CANTOR), our whip, mentioned that it is a serious time, and it is a very serious time; but it is an optimistic time as well.

The gentlewoman mentioned many of the issues that we have acted on these first 169 days. It is the summer solstice. It is the longest day of the year, and the light in this longest day we ought to use to shed light on what we have done over these first 169 days. The gentlewoman mentioned a couple of them that I wanted to touch on.

Class action reform is one of them, real lawsuit abuse reform that we have been able to enact, and we have been working on that in Congress for years, literally, trying to get that done, and it took Republican leadership and it took a Republican Congress to get it done. We will end some of the harassment that is going on in terms of local lawsuits and protect consumers.

The budget resolution was mentioned where we are actually cutting real spending. The unsustainable rate of Federal spending that we have we are ending. We are ending that unsustainable rate and moving in the right direction. That is optimistic. That is positive for our Nation.

REAL ID, the border security that she talked about, and we are getting good support from other side of the aisle for these things. Forty-two Democrats were on that who voted for that, and it is a first step in the right direction as it relates to border security.

The bankruptcy bill the gentlewoman mentioned as well. That is real reform that had 73 Democrats.

The energy bill we have not talked much about, 41 Democrats on that bill.

I want to talk briefly tonight about something that is near and dear to my heart and I know near and dear to the gentlewoman's and that is tax reform. The tax reform that we have acted upon this year in this Congress is the death tax, permanent repeal of the death tax.

This is part of that, those posters and the items that the gentlewoman talked about 100 days, 100 ways, what House Republicans have done to strengthen America. The death tax, the other side of the aisle earlier this evening said that tax cuts hurt Americans. I was dumbfounded when I heard that. Tax cuts hurt Americans. Do my colleagues know that the death tax itself costs

the American economy up to 250,000 jobs annually? By permanently repealing the death tax, we would add more than 100,000 jobs each year. Nearly 60 percent of business owners say that they would add jobs over the coming year if death taxes were permanently and completely eliminated.

What does the death tax do? Well, it is the leading cause of the dissolution of thousands of family-run small businesses. Small businesses owned by families, the death tax comes at the end when somebody dies who is the senior in the family, and what happens is that that death tax is instituted, and they have to sell that family business in order to pay that death tax. It penalizes work. It penalizes savings. It deals an incredible death blow to small businesses.

Get this statistic: more than 70 percent of family businesses do not survive the second generation. Eighty-seven percent do not make it to the third generation. Why is that? How much does that death tax take? You talk about 15 percent taxes here is high, and 20 percent there, and the income tax has a rate that is higher than that; but what does the death tax take? Forty-seven percent. Forty-seven percent. It is no wonder that 70 percent of small businesses do not survive to the next generation.

So the death tax is unfair. It is unjust. It hampers economic growth. It increases the cost of capital. It artificially elevates interest rates, and this is another astounding fact: it probably costs the government and taxpayers more to collect the tax than the tax revenue that is gotten. That is the kind of nonsense that Americans are tired of.

So what did our Congress do, led by Republicans and joined by some commonsense Democrats? What did our Republican leadership and our Republican House do? We passed a bill to repeal permanently the death tax. I could not be more proud to serve with men and women who act on this issue and other issues in such a responsible way.

I am here to tell my colleagues that it is a positive thing that this Congress is doing, that this Republican leadership is doing, and that this Republican majority is doing; and we ought to be excited about where we are as Americans about the leadership that we have.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I am certain that in the gentleman's district in Georgia, just like in my mine in Tennessee, he has many family farmers. In our district in Tennessee, small business is the number one employer; and when I meet in my district with many of our farmers, with many of our small business owners, this is one of those issues, a permanent repeal of the death tax, this is something that they want to be certain gets signed into law. They are so supportive of the President and what he is doing there, and they want to be certain we get rid of that.

We look at it as a triple tax. You pay tax when you acquire an asset; you pay

a tax when you earn your income; you pay a tax when you maintain that asset; and then you die and you go and you pay it again. I talk a lot about sweat equity. Being a small businessperson, when somebody goes in there and they have that bright idea and they start that business and they put years and years and years into building that business and building that customer base, they want to be able to with pride give that to their children and their grandchildren, for that to be their livelihood, to continue that legacy.

I look forward to our being able to put an end to such an egregious tax, and I thank the gentleman for his leadership on that issue; and I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE).

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman ever so much. I appreciate that. I always thought it was two bites at the apple, but she is right. It is three bites that the government takes. That is unjust and unfair.

I just wanted to come and add a little perspective of what I believe is the optimism that this Congress is leading with, this Republican leadership and this Republican majority is leading with. I appreciate the gentlewoman doing this this evening and giving us an opportunity to show the American people and talk with the American people about the positive things that this Congress is doing, and I thank her very much.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) for his comments, and he is so right. There is a spirit of optimism in America; and we see that in our districts, folks that are growing new businesses, folks that are working, getting new skills, training for new jobs; and we appreciate that about them. We love seeing that in our districts, and we like seeing that optimism, and certainly here on Capitol Hill we are encouraged when we hear from our constituents that they are excited about some of the legislation that we are passing here, whether it is with bankruptcy reform or the REAL ID Act, taking steps to secure those borders, reducing taxes, supporting our troops.

A gentleman who knows quite a bit about supporting those troops is the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. DAVIS) with his military background. He is new to us this year here in Congress, and we welcome him, and we welcome his energy and his willingness to work on the great agenda that we have established in this 109th Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. DAVIS).

Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Tennessee for yielding.

I believe that we have much to be pleased about; and contrary to the obstinate obstructionism of the far left, much is being done. There is a lot of talk about how Republicans and Democrats cannot seem to agree on anything, and I do not think that portrays

an accurate picture of the work that is being done in the 109th Congress.

So far we have seen several significant pieces of legislation passed with overwhelming bipartisan support. We have watched as a significant number of Democrats have broken ranks to support business and family-friendly legislation.

□ 1945

So what have we been spending our time on? For starters, we have given a helping hand to small businesses by passing class action reform, a permanent repeal to the death tax, and a comprehensive energy policy, all of which contribute to the overall good health of our economy.

More importantly, these measures will help create jobs. Americans want to work. Americans want to earn a paycheck and want to feel like they have contributed to our part of the world.

We in Congress can help Americans do that by continuing to support and pass legislation that creates jobs. Consider this: the energy policy will create 40,000 new construction jobs by building about 27 large clean-coal plants. That will benefit the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the Ohio Valley, workers, suppliers, and also manufacturers and energy producers.

It will create 12,000 full-time permanent jobs related to plant operations, and the legislation allows for increased natural gas exploration and development that will create jobs and provide more than \$500 million in increased revenue for our economy. The comprehensive energy policy passed with the support of 41 Democrats who believe more in creating jobs and establishing an energy policy than playing petty politics.

Let us also consider the permanent repeal of the death tax which passed with the support of 42 Members of the Democratic Party. They voted to allow small businesses and family farmers to keep jobs and our dollars in communities, rather than sending them to bureaucrats in Washington, D.C.

There is the highway bill that will create more than 47,000 new jobs for every \$1 billion invested in our country's transportation system. Not only does this create jobs, but it increases road safety so that our families and everyone else who travels them can be assured of a safer ride. And 198 Democrats supported this legislation. The minority leader did not, despite the fact that that bill alone will lay a tremendous foundation for future growth and future economic development throughout this land.

Mr. Speaker, 71 Members of the Democratic Party joined with us to pass the Gang Deterrence and Protection Act of 2005, again without the strength or support of their leadership. Gangs are increasingly becoming a problem in nearly every community in the Nation, and we are starting to hear disturbing whispers about gangs that

regularly bring illegal immigrants into this country to boost their gang membership and may be teaming up with terror cells to smuggle in terrorists. This is a serious threat to our national security that we must address.

But what can we expect from our Democratic leadership that continues to insult and denigrate our troops and the mission of our military, those who serve on the front lines? So we continue to be joined by rank-and-file Democrats, like the 54 Members who helped us pass the Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act, the 42 Members who helped us pass the Border Security Act, and the 122 Democrats who helped us pass the Continuity in Congress Act.

Moreover, 143 Democrats joined with us to support our troops at the tip of the spear, fighting the war on terror to protect our Nation and keep our communities and our homeland safe. They made sure that they ensured our troops have the resources and tools they need to fight and win this war on terror.

Contrary to what the liberal media implies, there is strong bipartisan work in Congress; and there is a lot being accomplished. It is just too bad that the Democratic leadership continues being obstinate and obstructive when there is so much at stake for our future, our continuing economic well-being, the security of our homeland, and the security and jobs of ordinary Americans who depend upon us to pass commonsense, reasonable legislation.

As a joint team, we are doing our part and we are getting some great help teaming with rank-and-file Democrats. It is too bad the liberal minority leader does not want to join her own colleagues who did the right thing in passing helpful and progressive legislation.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for taking the time to share his thoughts tonight.

The gentleman is so right: it is family friendly, it is business friendly. That is the agenda that this leadership has. It is an agenda that is based on hope. It is an agenda that is based on the love of opportunity and knowing that we all want something better for our children, for our grandchildren. We all want to see America be vital and vibrant with a great economy and opportunity for all of our children.

As the gentleman was speaking, I thought about a great Tennessean, Alex Hailey, and a comment he used to make regularly. He was a wonderful author, and we are so proud of the works he created. He had a phrase that he would use often. It was "find the good and praise it." In this 109th Congress, the agenda that we have brought forward has a whole lot of good in it. It is wonderful to take a few moments on this first day of summer, on this 169th calendar day of the year, the 67th day of this 109th Congress, and praise the good work that is being done on this floor.

We have talked a lot about our economic security and homeland security.

Let us focus on moral security and the obligation we have for health care in this great Nation. One of the leaders in this debate here in this Congress is the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BRADLEY), and he is going to talk about health care and some of the items we have been able to accomplish on our health care agenda.

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to join with the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) to talk about an agenda that helps get Americans back to work, that wins the war on terrorism and makes our Nation secure, and an agenda that focuses on affordable and accessible health care for all.

Like the gentlewoman, I go home every weekend and I do town hall meetings. I am going to do my 100th town hall meeting this weekend since I have been a Member of Congress. One of the things that keeps coming up is the cost of health care and what can we do to further that agenda.

There are a lot of things that we can do and have voted on in the past and will vote on in the future. It starts with the fact that doctors with high liability costs are being driven out of the practice of medicine because of those soaring liability costs. We need to confront that. We have done that on our side of the aisle and will continue to do that. Some reasonable limits on pain and suffering awards, which some States have enacted and have seen medical liability costs come down and stabilize.

In my State of New Hampshire, we have seen higher-risk specialty doctors, obstetricians, gynecologists, trauma doctors, surgeons, actually have to relinquish or curtail their practice because of soaring liability costs. What does that mean? It means people that need medical care may not be able to get it from the doctor of their choice, or they have to travel further, or it is simply not available in certain regions of my State. This is a national issue, and we need to get this on our agenda. This is something that we voted on on our side of the aisle and supported, and I hope that the other side of the aisle will join in this commonsense reform to make sure that doctors stay in business.

There are other things that we can do. Small businesses have so many employees, and they constitute about 70 percent of the new jobs; but for many small businesses they are also where, unfortunately, a number of Americans cannot afford health insurance through their business, the business owners, that represents a significant number of the uninsured people in our country. So allowing small businesses the same opportunities that large corporations have, to pool together and to do so across State lines, to join through bona fide business organizations, whether it is chambers of commerce, or like-minded business groups around the country, to be able to purchase health insurance through what are known as associated

health plans, is a commonsense reform that, once again, we are leading the way on.

I hope that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, and there are some that support this because it is a great idea, it will give small businesses the same buying power that large corporations have so they will get better discounts in health care. It will allow them to spread out the risk of expensive treatments and to spread out high administrative costs, all things that small businesses endure. I hope that we are able to pass this here in the House and the Senate to enact this reform.

A couple of things that we have done in the 108th Congress, and we need to look at that because one of the big things that we have done is going to take effect on January 1, 2006, and that is a Medicare drug benefit for senior citizens. It is long overdue for senior citizens, especially those who are lower income, who are facing the cost of high prescription medicines, to have access through Medicare to prescription drugs so they can live healthier, more independent, longer lives. This was a reform that was adopted in the 108th Congress and will be implemented on January 1, 2006.

As part of that legislation, we also allow families and businesses, if they choose to match contributions of families, to create health savings accounts, and to do so up to an amount of \$5,000 for a family of tax-free dollars that they can actually use to purchase their own health insurance.

So this is a reform that we both know is something that will allow people to be wiser consumers of health care because it is their money that is going for either the purchase of health care or the purchase of higher deductible health insurance.

These are reforms, the Medicare drug benefit and health savings accounts, that we have accomplished in the last session of Congress. It is my hope that we will be able to push this agenda forward, this positive agenda, so we have lower liability costs for doctors and we allow small businesses to pool together to purchase health care in collective units.

Now one last thing that has enjoyed bipartisan support and the President deserves a great deal of credit for, those are community health centers. I have one in my district that recently got Federal funds that is going to expand its operation, nearly double its square footage. Community health centers are alternatives to more expensive hospitalization. And they give people of lower income or people who need preventive care, primary care, better access to health care facilities. We have dramatically increased the funding for community health centers over the last several years from about \$1.1 billion when President Bush became President to this budget, the Labor-HHS budget, to about \$1.83 billion. This will enable more of these community

health centers to be built, improve access to all Americans, but in particular lower-income Americans.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the poster that is right behind the one that is displayed next to the gentleman. It is the commonsense Congress, and the gentleman has touched on this several times. I think it is worth drawing some special attention to: common sense.

The legislation that the leadership has brought forward in this Congress, the things that America supports us on that we are hearing from them, they are pleased with the agenda that we have moved forward on, is based on common sense. A couple of other things the gentleman has mentioned, whether it is the community health centers or the health savings accounts or the medical liability reforms, one of the points the gentleman just made is so true.

What we are talking about is the taxpayers' money. The gentleman said, "It is your money." That is so true. We realize this is the taxpayers' money. It is not our money. It is not government's money. It is the taxpayers' money. I agree so wholeheartedly with the gentleman from New Hampshire. We trust the individual to make those decisions on how to spend that money. We trust those local governments and those wonderful community health centers. The gentleman has them in his district. I have them in mine. What wonderful work they do, and how cost effective they are.

It is exciting to see that we have a budget where we have had a reduction in discretionary spending. We have a budget where we are putting the emphasis on priorities. We are beginning to turn this around. Forty years of Democrat control grew program upon program upon program without accountability. Now we are beginning over the past decade to see that accountability move in place; and with the positive proactive agenda that we have this year, we are seeing action.

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. Mr. Speaker, that brings something we have to reiterate. When the tax cuts the gentleman referred to were passed, we had an unemployment rate of over 6 percent. Today, that unemployment rate is 5.1 percent, and 3.5 million jobs have been created.

□ 2000

When we talk about making our economy more competitive so that Americans can compete around the world, tax reform is a significant issue, and a stimulus package that drives jobs is a huge issue to make sure that Americans have every opportunity, anybody that wants to find a job has the opportunity to find a job. As I have noted already, making health care more accessible and more affordable through some of the reforms that I outlined will make our economy more competitive and enable businesses to better afford health care for employees and our Nation to grow.

I thank the gentlewoman so much for organizing this hour.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I thank the gentleman for joining us. He is so correct in jobs and talking about jobs. We are pleased that the unemployment rate is at 5.1 percent. One of the points that we have accomplished this year, with bipartisan support, is the jobs training bill, giving the training that is necessary, and allowing that to be accessed by individuals right there in their home communities so they have the skills necessary to move forward and to secure good jobs right there in their communities for their families.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) for his comments and thoughts on the agenda in his first Congress here with this 109th Congress.

Mr. MCHENRY. I certainly appreciate the leadership of the gentlewoman from Tennessee here in Congress, and I know her constituents are well represented by her values here. We are talking about the GOP agenda here in the House, our conservative agenda, our agenda that has solutions, real solutions for the American people. We passed a conservative budget that reins in non-defense, non-homeland security discretionary spending by 1 percent. It is a start. It is a move in the right direction. It is the most conservative budget since Ronald Reagan was in office. However, at the same time it funds key priorities, like our national defense, our homeland security. It funds fire departments. It funds police officers. It does the right thing for the American people. We passed a good budget.

We also passed class action lawsuit reform with bipartisan support. It reins in trial lawyers. It reins in these out-of-control lawsuits and lawsuit abuse.

We passed bankruptcy reform that says you should make good on your bills. We have bankruptcy reform. It was bipartisan as well.

REAL ID, Border Security Act. Border security, ladies and gentlemen. The Republicans in this Congress have taken on this challenge and some Democrats bought in.

Death tax repeal, eliminating the death tax.

A transportation bill that ensures that we have good roads in this Nation and funds priorities.

We also passed pro-life legislation, reasonable pro-life legislation that does the right thing for minors and does the right thing for the unborn child as well. We have passed good legislation.

The American people need to know that, Mr. Speaker. The American people need to know that we are a Congress that is focused on getting real results for people. We are not here about partisan rhetoric. We are not here to complain about the process. We all know the process here in Washington, D.C. is not what it should be. That is the way it has been for over 200 years in this Nation. But we are a free people

with high ideals that we try to live up to as a Nation. And we are a Congress that respects those values.

But I certainly appreciate the gentlewoman from Tennessee having this hour so that we can discuss the solutions that we have put forward, not just as Republicans but as Americans, working across the aisle on a bipartisan fashion.

Before me is a chart, Democrats Running to GOP Solutions. They are buying into our agenda. They are buying into our agenda. Bipartisan Victories for America Expose House Democrat Leadership's Lack of Vision. We have had five major pieces of legislation pass the House with strong bipartisan support that has an impact on people's lives.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I thank the gentleman so much for his comments. I think this is one of the things that we hear repeatedly from our constituents. They want to see us solve problems. They have appreciated how aggressively we have attacked the agenda this year and have worked to move forward on a positive, proactive track.

Bankruptcy reform. That is something that they have tried to pass for years here in Washington. For years. As I was in the State Senate in Tennessee, we would hear about the gridlock in Washington in not being able to move this forward.

Class action reform. We have been hearing for a decade that that was needed.

The REAL ID Act. Since September 11, 2001, we heard about the need to secure our borders and to be certain that those driver's licenses were using proper documentation.

Permanent repeal of the death tax. I cannot remember a time that I was not hearing about the need to repeal this. A continuity of government, having a plan for that. There again, since September 11, 2001, we have been hearing of the need for this.

I would just express to the gentleman that I feel it has been a very aggressive 67 session days that we have had and 169 calendar days that we have seen so far, and we have our list that we have been talking through tonight of 100 ways, in 100 days, that we have been able to pass legislation.

One thing I think that is important to point out, also, is that not always does it mean when we say we are passing legislation that we are adding another law to the books. Many times what we are doing is repealing and taking laws off the books, repealing. We are deregulating instead of increasing regulation. We are lowering taxes instead of increasing taxes. We are trusting people to make the decisions they need to make for their families. I think that is one of the differences.

Mr. MCHENRY. If the gentlewoman will yield, the gentleman outlined a few major pieces of legislation. We had 73 Democrats vote with our Republicans for bankruptcy reform. The leader on the left voted no.

Class action lawsuit reform, we passed with 50 Democrat votes. Their leader, out of step with her own Members, voted no.

REAL ID Act, 42 Democrats voted yes. Their leader voted no.

Permanent repeal of the death tax. What happened? Forty-two Democrats voted yes. Their leader voted no.

Continuity of government, bipartisan support for this, included 122 Democrats voting for it. They thought it was the right thing to do. Their leader voted no.

The agenda on the left is all about no. No action, no results, no ideas. And we on the right, we the Republican majority, are acting. We are moving forward. We are trying to do what is right for all Americans, not just say no.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. We have a newspaper here in Washington, D.C. It is called *The Hill*. Today there was an article, Progressives to Unveil Their Core Principles. The article talks about how some of the liberal Members in the House felt sidelined, and I am quoting, "felt sidelined as more centrist Democrats have chosen to side with Republican leadership on several issues."

I would suggest to the gentleman that the reason so many Members of this body do talk with us, side with us, work with us, vote with us to pass this legislation, is because it is what America wants to see happen. It is what their expectation is and the legislation they want to see.

Mr. MCHENRY. That is a wonderful way you put that. We are trying to take a consensus agenda on what the American people need and want and the direction this country wants to continue heading. And that is more local control, individual ownership and responsibility, keeping more of what they earn to help their families, help their communities, help raise their children and improve small businesses around this country.

I certainly appreciate the gentlewoman from Tennessee taking the time to be here tonight to discuss our agenda, not a Republican agenda but an agenda for America, to do the right thing for all American people. That is what we are trying to do. My constituents back home in western North Carolina certainly have those same ideals in mind. I am sure yours do as well there in Tennessee. I thank the gentlewoman for hosting this hour.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I thank the gentleman so much for being here this evening. I think one of the things that we have seen is that so many Members of this House have supported tax relief for every taxpayer. They know that this majority has supported tax relief for every single taxpayer, not for just a few. And, true, we have targeted that relief to those at the lower end of the earning scale and that is an important thing to do.

In the past few years, we have also reduced income tax rates across the board. We have eliminated that death tax. We hope that the Senate works

with us, making this a permanent elimination.

We are allowing businesses, we talked about small businesses and jobs creation, allowing businesses to deduct more for their equipment, for their depreciation, for their leasing, so that they can up those capital expenditures. We are seeing capital investment increase and jobs growth take place.

For States like my State, Tennessee, and others that do not have a State income tax, we have passed a bill restoring the Federal sales tax deduction. In my State in Tennessee, that is putting hundreds of millions of dollars back into our State economy. It is a great thing. It is a great thing for Main Street. We know that it is the right thing to do, to be sure those dollars stay at home. The last thing we need to do is to take more out of somebody's paycheck, more out of their pocketbook, and turn around and send it here to Washington, D.C. to try to decide how we are going to send it back. Leave it at home.

The tax relief for individuals and for small businesses has paid off. We started with a recession in 2001 and now we are entering the 25th month of steady jobs growth. Twenty-five months. Since May 2003, this economy, not the government, not Washington, D.C., but this wonderful free enterprise system in this great Nation has created nearly 5 million new jobs. The reason we see this jobs growth is not because government is creating jobs, it is because this leadership in this Congress, in this administration, understands create the right environment and get out of the way. Let the free enterprise system do what they do best, which is create jobs. Over the past couple of years, 25 months, an average of 146,000 jobs a month. We have got historically low unemployment and we have got steady growth.

We have led on tax relief. We have led on the effort to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse in government and on the effort to cut Federal spending. We passed a budget, despite outcry from the left, that allowed a .8 percent, nearly a full percent cut in budget authority in non-defense, non-homeland security spending.

An issue I know my constituents care deeply about is the growing problem of illegal immigration. We have taken a strong stance on this issue and have made a terrific start with passage of the REAL ID Act. We are funding more border agents. Our list goes on and on, 100 ways, in 100 days.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be here to visit with my colleagues tonight. We look forward to continuing the conversation and to continuing to work on a positive, progressive, proactive agenda for America.

ANNOUNCING FORMATION OF OUT OF IRAQ CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK). Under the Speaker's an-

nounced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I am here this evening to talk about something new and wonderful that has happened in the Congress of the United States of America. I am here to talk about a new caucus that is named Out of Iraq Caucus. I am here to talk about the men and women of this House who have decided they can be silent no longer. I am here to talk about men and women who represent various points of view relative to support for the President from the time that he first announced he was going into Iraq to now. I am here to talk about why we have formed this caucus, what we plan to do, but more than that this evening, we are going to focus on our soldiers and those who are in Iraq serving this country, those who are there in harm's way, those who have been killed in Iraq, those who are up at Walter Reed Hospital suffering from serious injuries, having lost limbs, having lost their eyesight, those who do not know what the future holds for them.

□ 2015

We are going to focus on that this evening because it is extremely important for the families of these soldiers to know and understand that we support these soldiers. We know that many of them went there because they were called to duty. They were recruited to go to Iraq because their President asked them to do so, and they wanted to serve this country despite the fact they did not understand all of the reasons why. Many of them went to serve because they thought that Saddam Hussein was responsible for 9/11. But, of course, we know now that Saddam Hussein was not responsible for 9/11, and many of the soldiers know that now.

So this caucus has been formed. We have 61 members, and they are still adding on. We met this morning at 10 a.m., and we will continue to meet as we develop our mission statement, as we help to define who we are.

Basically, we have come together to say we want out of Iraq. We want out, and this caucus is not putting a time certain. This caucus has not concocted demands about how we want to get out. We simply want our young people out of Iraq. So we will provide support to other Members of Congress, other caucuses who want to get out of Iraq. We will provide support to the citizens of this Nation, the organized national groups who want to get out of Iraq.

We will organize not only coming to the floor as we are this evening to talk about various aspects of this war. We will also organize workshops and seminars. We will travel, some of us, to different regions in this country, responding to citizens who are asking for Members of Congress to come and explain this public policy to them. We will be available to meet with the families of servicemembers who have been killed,