

less and less important to the Carolinas as crops such as cotton and tobacco were better suited for that climate. But it was not until the war between the States, as advancing Union armies in the 1860s put the great rice plantations to the torch, that farmers picked up and moved west to the rich, fertile land of the Mississippi Delta and the lowlands off the gulf coast of Texas and Louisiana.

Today, there are only six States that have land and climate suitable to produce rice. As a \$2 billion cash crop, rice is the fifth most valuable food crop grown in the United States. Ninety percent of the rice consumed in the United States is grown here.

The people of the United States consume approximately 18 pounds of rice per person per year. That amount continues to increase.

Until recently, the combined acreage of rice farms in the State of Texas was over the size of the State of Rhode Island.

Rice is vital to agriculture producers through exports, too, as the United States is one of only two or three major players in the world rice market. We export rice to more than 120 countries and supply 14 percent of all the rice in the world trade. It is one of the world's most important foods. It is a primary staple for more than half the world's population.

The U.S. rice industry has a long, successful past. However, Mr. Speaker, its future is much in jeopardy. These are tense and troubling times. The American rice farmer is becoming an endangered species.

Ray Stoesser, a constituent and friend of mine down in Liberty County, Texas, is struggling like many other rice farmers. Ray, like most farmers, simply wants a market to sell their product. They want a sanction-free world.

American political policies keep prices of rice depressed while increasing costs to American farmers. World markets are being lost to others. While farmers like Ray are doing the most to improve their yields, they have nowhere to sell their rice. Rice farmers do not want more government subsidies. They want markets for the rice that they sell.

The three largest foreign markets of United States rice producers has historically been Iran, Iraq and Cuba, countries in which the United States has heavily sanctioned against. Those sanctions do not hurt those countries. They hurt American rice farmers. We need to have free rice trade with these countries. The people of these nations are going to eat and buy rice. They should buy rice from America, because that is where they want to buy their rice. But in the name of politically correct sanctions, American rice farmers are hurt because the government does not allow complete free trade with these nations.

The Cuban market and its \$64 million in sales last year has been lost to more

government sanction, red tape, regulation and lack of common sense. Mr. Speaker, however, this resolution, H.R. 3058, the Transportation, Treasury appropriations bill, contains a very important provision to keep rice sales thriving. So as we recover from the stress of the hurricane and fuel price increases, it makes sense that we would want to ship rice to generally a close country such as Cuba who wants to buy it. If we get rice moving to Cuba, it would solve many problems.

We need to make it easier to sell rice to Iraq. We need to drop the agricultural sanctions to that nation.

As we celebrate National Rice Month and look back on its historical importance to America, we must ensure our government gives our rice producers the opportunity to keep the tradition long and strong and end those stupid sanctions. We need to keep the great American rice farmer like Mr. Ray Stoesser on his combine harvesting rice in Southeast Texas.

FORGOTTEN POOR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, for too long we have borne witness to relentless attacks on America's poor and working families. Abandoned by corporate America, betrayed by the political right, largely ignored by the mainstream media, our Nation's poor have become little more than an afterthought, most recently evidenced by what we as a Nation saw in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

While productivity and profit in America are up, wages are falling, and poverty is increasing. Since 1973, not coincidentally the year this country went from a trade surplus to a trade deficit, since 1973 the average worker has seen his or her wages go up about 10 percent in real dollars, while productivity has increased to almost 90 percent.

It used to be in this country since World War II that when productivity went up that workers' wages went up roughly the same amount, that workers shared in the wealth that they created for their employer.

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Those days, unfortunately, have passed.

An August census report revealed that in the United States the number of uninsured Americans has increased dramatically. In the last 5 years, the total number of Americans with employer-sponsored health coverage has fallen by almost 4 million. Because 1.1 million Americans dropped into poverty in 2004, almost 2 million more Americans enrolled in Medicaid that year; and yet in the face of growing poverty, the rising number of uninsured Americans, this administration and Republican leadership are demand-

ing that we cut \$10 billion from Medicaid.

Just think about that again. More and more people need Medicaid, not just because of Katrina, but because of layoffs, because of plant closings, because more and more employers are dropping their coverage. More people need Medicaid. More people need health care because they have lost it. The congressional response is cutting Medicaid by \$10 billion in order to continue to give even more tax cuts to the wealthiest 1 percent of people in this country. That is a choice this Congress is about to make, and it is scandalous.

Household incomes fell for the fourth year in a row in 2004, something we had not seen in this country perhaps ever, at least since the Depression.

The reality is that every segment of American society, except for the very wealthy, has seen its income decline under this administration. Men working full-time have seen their earnings drop below what they earned 6 years ago. Women working full-time have seen their annual incomes decrease also. America's men and women working full-time are the reason our Nation's productivity is up; and yet they are earning less every year.

The number of people living in poverty increased in 2004 by 1.1 million people. Eight million children are uninsured. Thirteen million children live in poverty. The infant mortality rate is rising in the U.S. The infant mortality rate in Washington, D.C., is double that of the infant mortality rate in Beijing. This is the first year infant mortality has increased in this country since 1958.

A U.N. report on global equality sheds light on the shadows of this administration's policies. This report said there are parts of the United States that are as poor as the Third World. One nation cannot survive as a thriving democracy, certainly our Nation cannot, under policies that rely on trickle-down economic theories.

The aftermath of Katrina, when government should be at its most proactive to ensure the return of a thriving economy, this administration is working actively to lower wages in that region. An executive order handed down by President Bush will allow companies that win Federal contracts, companies that are the President's contributors, Halliburton, which is still paying Vice President CHENEY retirement benefits of \$3,000 a week, companies like that, while those companies are rebuilding, the President's executive order allows them to pay lower prevailing wages indefinitely.

The community hit hardest by Katrina is the working poor. These men and women will literally do the heavy lifting in rebuilding the region. Yet the President is saying cut their wages. Cheating workers out of fair wages robs them of the ability to take ownership in their own community. One must ask why the President could depress wages for a community in crisis. It makes no sense.

Mr. Speaker, these issues represent a divide in government policy, a betrayal of values that I thought Americans hold dear, that most of us do. These issues represent a moral obligation in the fight for dignity of every American.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SCHWARZ of Michigan). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. HULSHOF. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim my time for my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

SEVENTH ANNUAL HOOPS FOR HOPE BASKETBALL GAME RESULT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. HULSHOF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HULSHOF. Mr. Speaker, I rise and have the privilege perhaps on a lighter note to report the outcome of the seventh annual Hoops For Hope basketball game between Washington, D.C.'s elite lobbyists and Members of Congress. Perhaps the broad smile on my face or the gleaming hardware to my left might provide some clues as to the outcome of last night's contest.

Seven years ago, Paul Miller of the American League of Lobbyists hit upon the idea that perhaps lobbyists and Members of Congress could move away from the political arena and actually have a contest on the court. While I will report to my colleagues the games have been intensely competitive, the game has had a more noble purpose, and that is to raise money for kids in the inner city of Washington, D.C.

Last night, through the generosity of a lot of people, we raised \$50,000 from just last night's event, bringing the running total of these several contests to over \$200,000. Again, there were a lot of people that deserve a lot of credit for helping make that event a success.

Certainly our former colleague, Jack Quinn of New York, who, of course, now has gone over to the lobbyists side. When Jack Quinn was a colleague here and was our coach, he had an undefeated record. Unfortunately, his former colleagues last night marred that record and gave him a defeat; but, again, I appreciate all the work that Jack did, that Paul Miller did.

George Washington University was very gracious in hosting the event yet again.

I would also like to talk about someone who donated his time, that is, Mis-

souri men's basketball coach Quin Snyder, who is a personal friend who accepted my invitation to come, who came at his own expense, at his own effort, to prowl the sidelines to give some guidance for us. The game got a little close in the waning moments, and it was his presence on the sidelines, maybe working the officials just a little bit, but I really appreciate my friend Quin coming here to Washington, D.C. again for this purpose, his executive assistant Donna, as well as my own executive assistant Eileen, who helped work on the logistics.

Finally, this was a bipartisan, bicameral team. When you think that, on paper at least, the universe of lobbyists is about 10,000, and of course, House Members and Senators, there are only 535 of us from which to draw this team, we really on paper should not even be on the same court with these lobbyists; and, nonetheless, thanks to Senators ENSIGN and THUNE, thanks to my colleagues here in the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS), the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIAHRT), the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE), the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY), the gentleman from Washington (Mr. LARSEN), the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE), and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND), we happened to have a winning margin in the double digits. The final score was 44 to 33; and yet the real winners are the kids from the inner city D.C. area who are the beneficiaries of the proceeds that we raised.

We had a chance at half-time to personally interact with dozens of these kids. Again, this is a community effort to provide a solution for some kids growing up in some really tough circumstances. So they are the real winners of last night's contest; but even as they are the beneficiaries of those proceeds, we will proudly hang on to this gleaming hardware for yet another year.

I thank the Chair for allowing me this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. EMANUEL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the gentleman from Illinois' (Mr. EMANUEL) time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Oregon?

There was no objection.

HONORING THE OREGON NATIONAL GUARD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to thank the Oregon National Guard. There is a lot of discussion here about the things that went wrong with the response to the Hurricane Katrina disaster; but yesterday, I had the experience of accompanying the adjutant general, Major General Fred Rees of the Oregon National Guard, to New Orleans to see the guard units there in action.

We have one of the largest, if not the largest, contingents in New Orleans. They have one of the most difficult sectors, a large portion of the city, particularly the portion of the city that is still submerged; and I had an opportunity there to meet with the troops. They are basically living in battlefield conditions, eating meals ready to eat, sleeping in an abandoned school and a university that is vacant at the moment, and they are doing extraordinary work.

One of the first people I met from the city when we made our first stop was a woman who was still in her house. I went to ask her why she was still in her house, because they have been trying to encourage people to evacuate. She said, well, I feel safe. I said, well, I can understand that. She said, no, thank God for the National Guard; I feel safe. She says, you do not understand. She was telling me that she felt safe in her neighborhood for the first time in years, an incredibly high crime neighborhood, because of the Oregon National Guard presence.

Then we went on from there to the flooded areas where, in the preliminary stages, they are still rescuing people. The day we were there they rescued people; 570 people rescued so far by the Oregon National Guard.

They have begun in their own small way to contribute to the restoration effort of the school, the high school that they are living in which was pretty trashed and this other university campus that they are on, beginning clean-up; but their efforts are just extraordinary.

The thing about the National Guard is they do not just bring the military precision to these sorts of efforts. I mean, they have got the discipline, the training, the logistic support, the unit cohesion, those sorts of things; but they have something else special. They are citizen soldiers, and they have other skills, and those other skills are needed more than ever in a disaster, more than regular Army troops.

They can certainly restore order. We have quite a number of police officers who have been heavily relied upon by other troops and other units of Guards not from Oregon in dealing with the residents and some of the problems still in the neighborhoods that they are assisting.

We have firefighters. We have people with expertise in heavy equipment. They found and repaired an abandoned bulldozer to begin clearing streets for