

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER
TIME

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON).

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

There was no objection.

U.S. ECONOMY CONTINUES TO
GROW AND FLOURISH

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

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I want to take just a few minutes to talk about the economy. We have all kinds of news rushing around here, but I think it is very important for us to talk about the economy and what we as Republicans have done on this pro-growth issue. It is unfortunate that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, when it comes to the economy, seem to offer nothing more than a coordinated chorus of contrarian criticism. I mean, they have offered no positives, just complaints.

So I want to take a moment to shine some light on the recent good news concerning the economy. Because of Republican pro-growth, pro-trade, pro-innovation policies, our economy is strong by virtually every single measure. Just today, just a few hours ago, the Commerce Department announced that the economy grew at a 3.8 percent rate in the fourth quarter. Now, that is ahead of expectations; well, well ahead of the second quarter rate of growth and, Mr. Speaker, it marks the 16th consecutive quarter of growth that we have seen. This is especially remarkable to see this 3.8 percent growth figure, given the hurricanes that decimated cities and towns, crippled trade, and devastated energy production along the gulf coast.

So even having gone through these horrible natural disasters, we have been able to see this amazingly strong 3.8 percent GDP growth rate.

We have found that our economy has been able to weather these storms. Overall, as we know, Mr. Speaker, we have a 5.1 percent unemployment rate, which is lower than the average in the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. There are 142 million Americans working, the greatest number in our Nation's history; and over the past 28 months, the economy has added more than 4 million new jobs.

In every single quarter since Congress passed the President's tax cut package in 2003, economic growth has been very vigorous. In 2004, real GDP growth was 4.4 percent, the strongest annual performance in 5 years and one of the strongest growth performances of the past 2 decades.

Our housing market also remains very, very strong. A record 74 million

Americans own their own homes; and for the first time, Mr. Speaker, minority Americans own their own homes at the highest level that we have ever seen.

Now, what does all this mean for the American people? It means job opportunities and entrepreneurship, it means achieving the dream of homeownership, and it means a better quality of life.

Now, as the people affected by hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma rebuild their lives, the best thing we can do here in the Congress is to make sure the economy stays strong and continues growing. Now, Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues know very well, Republicans have taken action to keep the economy on the right track to keep it growing. We are following our pro-growth agenda of tax relief, tort reform, energy solutions, and fiscal restraint.

The tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 have allowed hard-working Americans to keep more of what they earn. Now, this has led, as we all know, to increased investment, increased economic opportunity, and more Federal revenue coming into the Treasury. Recent history has shown that when government takes less money from the people, the people invest and spend more and Federal revenues go up. In 2004, following the 2003 tax cut package, Federal receipts grew by 14 percent. We cut taxes, and Federal receipts grew.

Because of this tax cut that has fueled our economic growth, the Federal budget deficit for the fiscal year 2005 fell \$94 billion, a 22 percent reduction in the deficit over the past year. Now, Mr. Speaker, that is outstanding progress in just 1 year; and contrary to what critics have said, it proves that low taxes and lowering the deficit do, in fact, go hand in hand.

We are also putting a stop to frivolous litigation that clogs our courts and drains the profits from small business owners. In the last 2 weeks, Congress has passed three bills that honor the purpose of our legal system and make it harder for lawyers to file junk lawsuits.

We have taken action to address high energy costs. Just a few weeks ago, the House took an important step to boost our gasoline refinery capacity to help stabilize the price of gasoline in the long run.

Now, I have noted that the GAS Act was passed unfortunately without a single vote from our colleagues on the other side of the aisle. To me, that is absolutely astounding. It is astounding to me that not a single Member of the minority would vote in favor of this effort to increase refinery capacity and deal with the issue of price-gouging. In the face of high energy prices that are making it hard for the American people to make ends meet, Democrats unfortunately feel constrained to continue to build this great wall of obstruction.

Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely essential that we do everything that we can

to keep the economy growing, to focus on reduced energy prices; and we have the policies to do just that. We must continue them.

□ 1330

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

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

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

There was no objection.

IRAQ AND CONSTITUENT LEADERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, the war in Iraq is like one of those bridges in Alaska. You can give it all the money in the world, but in the end it goes nowhere.

People all around the country are waking up to the fact that this war is not making the United States safer, like the President promised. It is actually jeopardizing our national security.

It is the very presence of nearly 150,000 American troops on Iraqi soil, appearing as occupiers, that galvanizes and unites the dissatisfied people in the Arab world.

The American people get this, people like Cindy Sheehan, whose son Casey was killed in Iraq. Cindy has been calling on the President to bring the troops home for months now. Her mission is a righteous one, that of a grieving mother who simply wants to know what noble cause her son was killed for.

People in groups get it, like the members the northern California Ruth Group, who turned out in the hundreds to call for an end of the war last weekend. Over 500 people from my district joined me and fellow Members of Congress, Ms. LEE and Ms. WATERS, and Cindy Sheehan at an important Ruth Group event to discuss ending the war. I have to tell you, discuss is a bit of an understatement. These folks are through discussing. They want our troops home. They want the war to be over.

Mr. Speaker, there are thousands of individuals like Cindy Sheehan and the members of the Ruth Group around the country, all calling on their government to quickly end the war in Iraq and bring our servicemen and women home. They join with 66 percent of

Americans who disapprove of the way President Bush has handled Iraq.

The point is that the American people are speaking out. They are speaking loudly about the U.S. role in Iraq. They are sick and tired of reading reports of more young soldiers being killed, leaving behind grieving widows and children and parents and friends and communities. They, like me, believe that more than 2,000 American soldiers killed is 2,000 too many. They think 2,000 soldiers, just think about it, 2,000 soldiers is an entire Army division gone. They know that for every insurgent killed, three more rise up to take their place.

They are tired of watching bombs go off in Iraqi cities, killing innocent civilians and American soldiers. They want to see the U.S. continue to support Iraq nonmilitaristically by assisting the Iraqi people build their war-torn economic and physical infrastructure. They want the United States to help in a nonmilitaristic role.

Members of Congress are actually joining this debate, too. There are no fewer than five Members of this House who have policy proposals to end the war, and 127 Members joined me in voting for the amendment I offered in May to this year's defense authorization bill expressing the sense of Congress that we need to end this war.

On the other side of the Capitol, Senators KERRY, KENNEDY, FEINGOLD and others have offered their plans for Iraq as well.

I held an informal hearing last month to address how the United States can achieve military disengagement. Thirty other Members of Congress joined me at this hearing, listening to military, academic and governmental experts discuss the best way to end this devastating war.

Clearly the majority of the country has started the conversation about these issues. It is necessary that the President join in. Mr. Speaker, individuals around the country have given us their plans to end the war. It is time for the President to give us his plan, the goal of which needs to be bringing the troops home to their families.

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

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

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

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

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

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

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

There was no objection.

ENERGY PRICES

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

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of an energy crisis. Gas is at \$3 a gallon, and utilities are now predicting that families could pay as much as 70 percent more to heat their homes this winter. Natural gas prices are so high that the Energy Department predicts that the average natural gas bill for every family will be about \$350 more this winter. Home heating oil used by many in the Northeast has skyrocketed. But while American families struggle with sky-high energy bills, and oil and gas companies are facing an entirely different picture, an entirely different crisis, to be exact, what to do with all their profits.

For example, yesterday Exxon Mobil reported that its profits increased by 75 percent in the third quarter alone; their revenues, more than \$100 billion. Shell Oil said that their earnings increased by 68 percent. ConocoPhillips' third-quarter earnings surged 89 percent, and BP reported a 34 percent rise in quarterly earnings.

To summarize, as American families are struggling with massive energy bills, both at the pump and home heating, energy companies are reaping huge profits.

Now, Henry Hubble, Exxon Mobil's vice president, said, "You have got to let the marketplace work." As a Democrat, I could not agree more, which is why I oppose what my Republican friends try to do, which is provide the oil companies \$16 billion in taxpayer subsidies. To quote again the executive from Exxon Mobil, "You have got to let the marketplace work."

My view is we have got to stop corporate welfare in its worse take. If you are making \$100 billion or a run rate of \$100 billion, profits are at \$9 billion for one quarter, the taxpayers should not be footing the bill, both at the pump and on April 15 when they are subsidizing corporate America, big oil. This is corporate welfare at its worst. The corporate oil companies should take their historic profits and use them, in my view, to execute their business plan. The taxpayers should not be subsidizing big oil's business plan. You are in the energy business. Drill for oil. Taxpayers should not be subsidizing it for \$16 billion.

Remember, college grants, the Pell grant system for college education in this country is a little less than \$12 billion a year. Our corporate subsidy, taxpayer subsidy, for corporate America for big oil is \$16 billion. It is more than we actually give for college assistance for people going to college. And they are making, just one company alone, \$100 billion, \$9 billion profit.

Right now Americans pay twice. Once at the pump, once on April 15, subsidizing big oil.

Again, Exxon Mobil's vice president, "You have got to let the marketplace work." Therefore, give us back the money we are subsidizing you. That is not the free market when we are subsidizing corporate America. It is corporate welfare. It is time for corporate big oil to get off the welfare roles and start executing their business plan.

While Congress subsidizes big oil to the tune of \$16.5 billion, we have cut home heating assistance to the elderly. What Congress would subsidize big oil for \$16 billion and cut home heating assistance to senior citizens? A Republican Congress, but of course.

The energy bill we passed earlier this year contained \$14.5 billion in subsidies to the energy industry. A few weeks ago we just had not done enough; in a refinery bill, a bill for oil and gas companies, which they did not even ask for, this Republican Congress gave them another \$2 billion in subsidies.

This week the Resources Committee marked up a bill which would allow oil companies to drill near the coral reefs of Florida and in the pristine Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Yet at the same time, we are cutting the low-income heating assistance program that helps the elderly and those most vulnerable in our country. It is notoriously underfunded. As part of the energy policy Congress authorized an increase in funding to energy assistance to \$5 billion. However, we only allocate \$2 billion. Some of us voted to try to bring that up to snuff so we could do the full assistance for the elderly low-income, those most vulnerable, and we are underfunding it; therefore, a cut in the program.

My view is it is time we stop subsidizing big oil and stop having the taxpayers who are very stretched, do not ask them for \$16 billion when you have record profits throughout the energy industry and are cutting assistance to our elderly and most vulnerable. We can do better. We need a new set of priorities, and we need to change the direction of this country to reflect the values of the American people and their generosity.

CONGRATULATING THE CHICAGO WHITE SOX ON THEIR WORLD SERIES VICTORY

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

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, after 88 years of anguish and torment, baseball