

damage that they brought to our shores. Economists have estimated that if those events had not occurred, this economy would have grown at about 5 percent in the last quarter. The good news is that this economy continues to grow.

The question that most thinking people would ask, how can this be when most of the media, financial and otherwise, keep saying how awful this economy is, how it has no staying power, how it has no energy at all? I am reminded of the old adage that says that even a broken clock is right twice a day. If people keep predicting that there will be a recession, sooner or later they are going to be right.

This chart demonstrates that the past 10 quarters have been phenomenal. That is 2½ years. Growth during that time has been greater than 3 percent for every single quarter and in some of those quarters it has been greater than 4 percent. Again thinking people would ask, What happened 10 quarters ago to bring this about? What began this growth cycle? Curiously, that is about the time when the tax cuts on dividends and the tax cuts on capital gains and the tax cuts on income taxes were clear that they were going to take effect retroactive to January 1, 2003. That is all good news.

What is more, real business investment has grown at an average annual rate of 9 percent over that period of time, nearly twice the rate of the overall economy. This investment in business is exactly what the tax cuts were meant to address. The evidence is very, very clear. The tax cuts have had the effect that they were desired to have.

How about the deficit, you ask? Well, that has improved as well, decreasing by nearly \$100 billion over the past fiscal year alone. That is good news, Mr. Speaker. How could that be, lowering tax rates, increasing tax revenue and decreasing the deficit? That is exactly what lowering taxes does.

I have heard my colleagues on the other side say, well, nobody else is being lifted up. In fact, the unemployment rate reached 4.9 percent in August 2005. Most economists will tell you that an unemployment rate of 5 percent is full employment, because people are changing jobs and moving. That is good news surrounding our Nation as it relates to the economy.

Soon Congress must decide whether to make these tax cuts permanent or they will expire. I think the evidence is extremely clear. If we wish this good news on the economy to continue, the tried and true policy of decreasing taxes will result in an increase in economic growth, more money in people's pockets and more financial success for more Americans. Just look at the evidence. This is the evidence that decreasing taxes works for all Americans, 10 straight quarters of economic growth.

I urge my colleagues to embrace this good news and act expeditiously to make certain that the tax cuts be permanent.

TAX COMMISSION MISSES OPPORTUNITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LINDER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, the President's tax commission has completed its work and sent its report to the Treasury Department. When this started 8 or 9 months ago, I said as often as I could that I wish you would not appoint a commission because the only thing that I have seen commissions do in my lifetime is raise taxes. Only on the rich, of course.

Well, guess what: This commission has decided to raise taxes only on the rich. They chose not to do anything bold. They took a tax system that you and I have come to know and love and kept it in place and did nothing to do the exciting things they could have done. The FairTax bill, which I have introduced, would have changed much of what we know about the tax system. For example, the commissioners knew that 22 percent of what we currently pay for at retail represents the embedded cost of the current IRS. You are paying the tax cost and compliance cost of every one of the thousands of corporations and businesses that it took to make that house. The only way a business can pay a bill is through price and consumers are the only taxpayers in the world. They chose to ignore that and leave us disadvantaged in the global economy with a 22 percent tax component in our price system. The FairTax, by getting rid of the IRS, would have ended that. The Tax Foundation has concluded that in 2003 we spent \$203 billion just complying with the Tax Code. We spent 6.6 billion man-hours. They chose to ignore that. Getting rid of that cost would add a 2 or \$3 trillion tax cut over 10 years to create jobs and create wealth. They chose to ignore that. The FairTax, by getting rid of the IRS, would have eliminated that.

They knew, as we know, that currently 2 to \$3 trillion is in the underground economy, not paying taxes. They chose to leave that in place and not change that by keeping the IRS in place. The FairTax, by getting rid of the IRS and taxing consumption, would have taxed the underground economy.

They knew, as we know, that there is today in offshore financial centers, in dollar denominated deposits, \$10 trillion. These are deposits that want to be in dollars for safety and they want secrecy. If we were to get rid of the IRS, those dollars would be in our markets and our banks and our credit unions. And we would not have the bankruptcies of Delta and Northwest and United and future bankruptcies to come because their pension plans are not up to par because the driving up of the markets with those \$10 trillion would have saved them. They chose to ignore that and did nothing bold.

The President has made a very clear case that Social Security can drown us

all. What he did not say was that Medicare was four times as bad as Social Security. They constitute for us today and our grandchildren a \$75 trillion problem. Let me put that in perspective for you. If you started a business on the day Jesus Christ was born and lost \$1 million a day through yesterday, it would take you another 719 years to lose \$1 trillion. \$75 trillion.

The FairTax changes the way we gather money for Social Security. Instead of taxing 158 million workers to pay for the retirees, we tax 300 million Americans every time they buy something and 50 million visitors to our shores to save those programs in 15 years by doubling the size of the economy in 15 years. The tax commission chose to ignore that.

Mr. Speaker, it is sad to put all of that effort into play for so many months and come up with such a predictable result, which is to raise taxes on the wealthy. This is not going to change anything. They pointed out in an article in today's paper, two of the commissioners, that the last major simplification was in 1986 and they reduced two levels of taxation and eliminated many deductions. They further pointed out that it has been amended 15,000 times since then. Do they believe that future Congresses are not going to be the same if you have the income tax in place? I think they are wrong. I think they missed a wonderful opportunity to do something bold for our economy and something bold for our country and it saddens me.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 55 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. GINGREY) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Lord God, the Founders of this Nation were not merely reacting to the problems of their day. They lived with the conviction that something totally new was happening.

The great seal of this Nation presented to the world a new order of the ages. And lest anyone forget where this all came from, the Founders added to the seal, "He," presumably You, Lord God, "has favored our beginnings."

Eternal as You are, enlighten the Members of Congress today to understand that the challenges to be faced today are as old as society: poverty,

education, health, stability, and peace. All must be looked at with the freshness of new ideas and contemporary resources. But any attempt to be free of the past is an unworthy illusion, and any attempt to be free of the future is a dangerous mistake. You tell us, "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," both now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. BLACKBURN led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 3010. An act making appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate insists upon its amendment to the bill (H.R. 3010) "An Act making appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes," requests a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon, and appoints Mr. SPECTER, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. GREGG, Mr. CRAIG, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. DEWINE, Mr. SHELBY, Mr. DOMENICI, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. INOUE, Mr. REID, Mr. KOHL, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. BYRD, to be the conferees on the part of the Senate.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages in writing from the President of the United States were communicated to the House by Mr. Sherman Williams, one of his secretaries.

RESPONDING TO AVIAN FLU

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, this morning the President at the National Institute of Health outlined his plan for dealing with pandemic flu should this illness jump from birds to people. The President outlined a plan that essentially covered three areas: to be able to detect the outbreak of avian flu anywhere in the world; stockpiling vaccines and medicines; and the response from both the local, State, and Federal level.

To be able to detect the outbreak of avian flu anywhere in the world is going to require a partnership of several countries that will share information and samples, but it is important to remember a threat anywhere is a threat everywhere.

Stockpiling vaccines and increasing the rapidity with which this country can make vaccines ensure that there is reliability and regulatory protection for those countries that are making vaccines.

And, finally, response. Response needs to be at the local, Federal, and State levels. Local officials need to be ready to go, but there also needs to be strategic national stockpiling of supplies and equipment.

Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that the best way to deal with panic is through preparedness. The best way to deal with inflammatory rhetoric is with information. I think the President took some bold steps this morning to outline these plans, and I look forward to the release of the preparedness plan tomorrow.

THE REVEREND DR. SHELVIN JEROME HALL

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to congratulate the Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall on his 50 years of service to the Friendship Baptist Church and its surrounding communities in the Chicagoland area. Reverend Hall and his family have been tremendous assets to our community. His wife, a retired Chicago public school teacher; one daughter, Priscilla, a supreme court justice in the State of New York; another daughter, Shelvin Louise, an appellate court judge in Cook County; and his son, an esteemed psychologist. They have been assets to our community, and I congratulate Reverend Hall and his family on 50 years of service.

JUDGE ALITO

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, our Founding Fathers devised a system of government which has served us well for more than 200 years. Ultimately, though, no constitutional system can survive un-

less it is respected by those who have sworn to protect it. We will find out in the coming weeks whether the liberals in the Senate value demagoguery more than the Constitution.

Judge Samuel Alito has every qualification and character trait you could want in a Supreme Court Justice. He has reverence for the Constitution, he has the humility to remember that his job is to judge, not to legislate. He has a brilliant mind, a compassionate character. He comes from humble origins, which will keep him rooted in the real values of this country. This is precisely the kind of person we need on our Court.

Unfortunately, there are a handful of Senators who are so obsessed with a few controversial issues that they seem bent on tearing down good people no matter what the cost to our democracy. I urge the other body to proceed fairly toward an up-or-down vote on Judge Alito's nomination.

SERGEANT MICHAEL TREMAIN ROBERTSON

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to one of my fallen heroes, Sergeant Michael Tremain Robinson, who died October 25, 2005, of injuries suffered in Samarra, Iraq while serving in the war. He was only 28 years old.

He died at Brooke Army Medical Center, but he suffered his injuries on October 17 when a bomb exploded near a Bradley Fighting Vehicle. We also know that he was known as a humble and quiet spirit, a wonderful medic. He was called Doc Bob.

His Aunt Alma Newsom; his wife, Tanya; his baby son, Xavier; his mother, Barbara Booker; his father, Michael Robinson; grandfather, Simmie Newsom; and his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. William Robinson, all mourn the loss of this quiet giant, this young man who believed in his country and went back for his second tour of duty.

Mr. Speaker, it is appropriate to honor these fallen heroes, 2,000-plus and growing. In his name, as he is now buried and gone home to his maker, may he rest in peace. But I ask this Congress, this House and Senate in his name to begin to open up and to hold the hearings to determine why we went to Iraq, to treat him as the hero that he was and also so that his family may know the truth.

He took his duty seriously; he was an outstanding and passionate medic and a great American. I pay tribute and finality to Sergeant Michael Tremain Robinson, and my pledge to you is to find the truth.

WATAUGA COUNTY RELAY FOR LIFE

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