

their own paycheck for their productivity. Average hourly earnings have not kept up with inflation for the past 2 years, and they barely kept even the year before that.

Median family income has failed to keep up with inflation every year under President Bush. Mr. Speaker, even more disturbing than the general stagnation in wages and incomes is the growing gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" in this country, as income earnings disparities have widened.

This is an extremely troubling trend for everyone in our country. Those who are already well-to-do are indeed doing very well in the Bush economy. But the typical American family is struggling to make ends meet in the face of high costs for energy, health care and college education for their children.

This chart illustrates the problem very clearly. The red bars show the growth in the inflation adjusted usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers under President Bush at different points in the earnings distribution.

You have to be in the upper half of the distribution to have seen any gain. Earnings at the top have grown fastest relative to inflation, and earnings at the bottom have fallen farthest behind inflation.

I would note the contrast with the last 5 years of the Clinton Administration, which is illustrated with the blue bars when earnings and gains were strong and spread throughout the earnings distribution.

Mr. Speaker, the economic policies of the Bush Administration are not benefiting ordinary American families. The Bush economy and Bush economic policies have produced a widening gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots," and they have produced a legacy of deficits and debt that leaves us unprepared to deal with the budget challenges posed by the retirement of the baby-boom generation.

And that weakens the future standard of living of our children and grandchildren. We need to do better. We can do better if we focus on policies that address the economic challenges facing the ordinary American worker.

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

(Mr. DREIER 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 Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

PROBLEMS WITH MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the countdown to the Bush drug tax, 44 days before May 15. May 15.

Last week, during the break, I held six town hall meetings throughout my district on the new Medicare Part D prescription drug program. And I would encourage all of my colleagues to do the same. Not only did it give my constituents a chance to get the help that they needed and answered their questions, it gave me an opportunity to really find out how the new program is working or, should I say, not working.

Unfortunately, I heard a lot of horror stories from a lot of people. Not only is picking a plan extremely complicated, but the arbitrary date of May 15 makes absolutely no sense. I have been an elected official for over 25 years. And this is the first time I have seen people who are going to be penalized for the rest of their lives if they do not sign up by a certain date, May 15.

Not only having them to set a ridiculous short time to sign up for this complicated plan, but the next time seniors can sign up will be November 15 through December 31, that includes both Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. So it is very complicated for seniors.

The Republican leadership wrote a bill that prevents the Secretary of Health and Human Services from negotiating the price of the drug, even though both the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of DOT are negotiating these prices right now.

Can you imagine what would happen if Wal-Mart, if we told Wal-Mart they could not get a reduction price on bulk buying? Every Republican in this House would be on this floor screaming bloody murder. But when it is the needs of our seniors, there is a deaf ear; you do not hear them.

This bill allows the private plans to take drugs off of their approved lists and even charge more for drugs during that year. They can charge more, while seniors are locked in and cannot change plans until the next year.

It also turns seniors into criminals. Yes, criminals. What do I mean? If they buy drugs that are cheaper, let us say in Mexico or Canada, they will be criminals.

And one of the most troubling aspects of this bill, and the one that most people talk about is the doughnut. What do you mean doughnut? Well, no coverage is provided after you spend \$2,250 until your cost reaches \$5,001. That is \$3,000 out-of-pocket.

Lastly, I want to talk about the independent pharmacists. This bill is killing your small town pharmacists who have been in business for years. They still know their customers by name. They are the only pharmacists who are

still delivering medicine to seniors who cannot come out of the house or after hours when someone needs an emergency prescription.

This Congress needs to do the right thing for our parents and grandparents and extend this silly deadline date of May 15, allow the Secretary to negotiate bulk prices, and should make the appropriate changes that will save America's local pharmacies from extinction.

Again, I encourage my colleagues to hold their meetings and talk to their seniors and pharmacies about the drug plan. And seniors, for God's sake, please look at this: May 15, you need to sign up. But if you have questions, call Medicare counselors at 1-800-Medicare, that is, 1-800-633-4227. That is May 15. That is the drop-dead date. Thank you.

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

(Mr. JONES of North Carolina 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 gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

AMERICA'S POLICIES IN IRAQ

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

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I just returned from Iraq on a congressional delegation trip with Senator MCCAIN. And I wanted to report to my constituents.

The first thing that I have concluded in looking at the situation there and in visiting there is that we need a special envoy sent by the President of the United States to move forward with a national unity government.

Things on the ground are not going well. Things are deadlocked. There has been no government since 3 months after the election. We have a lame duck government, and we have a crucial international situation going on.

The current government is riddled by corruption and inertia. So, Mr. President, we need to send a special envoy.

Secondly, I visited the troops in Iraq, some New Mexicans and many others from across the country. And when I think of what they have done since the invasion over 3 years ago, it makes me very proud. Saddam Hussein and his sons are out of commission. We have held three elections, and the Iraqis have adopted a constitution.

We have trained over 224,000 troops to the highest levels of training, more than 100,000 police and security personnel. We have spent billions of dollars in reconstruction.

The Iraqis have made progress, and I do not know what more we can ask of our troops. But overall this visit solidified my belief that it is time for the Iraqi people to step forward and take control of the situation in their country.

Our troops are caught in the middle of religious and ethnic disputes. Sectarian violence is rampant in many areas. Iraqis must step up to the plate and resolve these disputes themselves.

As President Kennedy said of South Vietnam in the summer of 1961, “In the end, it is their country, and they are going to have to fight for it.”

Therefore, we need a change of course in our foreign policy. Staying the course is no longer acceptable. We need to take two actions: One is announce a phased redeployment of our troops outside of Iraq. This redeployment should be complete by the end of this year, by 2006. Number two, we need to put the Iraqis on notice that they must assume responsibility. Of course, as we phase this redeployment, we need to assist them and train them and do everything we can during that period to make sure they have the best chance of success.

But this is their fight at this point.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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.)

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

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

YUCCA MOUNTAIN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. BERKLEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, earlier this morning, I came to the floor of the House and stood in the well to tell the American people about a cartoon character by the name of Yucca Mountain Johnny that the Department of Energy has created which has been funded by the taxpayers of the United States of America.

The purpose of creating this cartoon character is to help convince the children of the State of Nevada that storing radioactive toxic nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, is okay for them. It is bad enough that the Department of Energy has been trying to convince the people of the State of Nevada and the United States of America that shipping 77,000 tons of toxic nuclear waste across 43 States to be buried in a hole in the middle of the Nevada desert

where we have got groundwater problems, seismic activity, volcanic activity, is good for the health and well being of this Nation.

It is not. And Yucca Mountain Johnny has got to be dumped before there is a nuclear dump at Yucca Mountain. But the latest thing that has just occurred that I want to share with the American people, through you, Mr. Speaker, is it makes Yucca Mountain Johnny pale in comparison.

□ 1530

Let me read to you what came over the wire today that I read: “The U.S. military plans to detonate a 700-ton explosive charge that will send a mushroom cloud over Las Vegas. ‘I don’t want to sound glib,’ says the head of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, ‘but it is the first time in Nevada that you will see a mushroom cloud over Las Vegas since we stopped testing nuclear weapons.’”

Well, it isn’t glib to me, Mr. Speaker. It is a very serious thing when I have an administration official, the head of an agency, stating that he is going to detonate a 700-ton bomb that is going to send a mushroom cloud over the community that I represent, where my parents live, my children live, and 700,000 Nevadans live as well. So I called this gentleman, and I asked him to please explain this quote.

Glib? He is going to send a mushroom cloud, detonate a mushroom cloud over Las Vegas, Nevada. Well, he said, it was a poor choice of words, but that is what we are going to do. So I asked him, When is it going to take place? It is going to take place in June. I said, Is it really going to be a mushroom cloud over the State of Nevada. Isn’t that a tad insensitive given the fact that we had nuclear experiments and weapons detonated at the Nevada test sites in the fifties and the sixties? He said, Well, it might have been a little insensitive, but that’s what we are doing.

So I said, Well, is it going to be over Las Vegas? Well, not really Las Vegas. I misspoke. It is going to be at the Nevada test site. I said, Well, will we be able to see it from Las Vegas? Yes, you’re going to be able to see it from Las Vegas. Well, how big is it going to be? Well, we don’t know yet how big it is going to be. I said, Well, where at the Nevada test site is it going to be detonated? He said, Well, we are doing studies, and it is going to be detonated in a place that is safe.

I said, Well, how can it be safe when there were over 900 nuclear detonations in the fifties and sixties and that land is very toxic and very radioactive? He said, Well, we are going to do it in a place that isn’t radioactive, although he couldn’t tell me where, he couldn’t tell me how.

If I can continue reading this, he says: “We also have,” are you ready for this, this man doesn’t realize how serious what he is proposing is, “we also have,” are you ready for this, “a 700-ton explosively formed charge that

we’re going to be putting in a tunnel in Nevada.”

So I said to him, Well, if it’s in a tunnel, how come we are going to get a mushroom cloud? Oh, well, I wasn’t quite right about that either. It’s not really in a tunnel. It’s going to be above ground. I said, Well, how can it be above ground at the Nevada test site and not disturb the dirt that is radioactive? He said, Well, we’re taking care of that too. I said, What happens if there’s wind? Is the wind going to be blowing this mushroom cloud to Las Vegas? Is it going to Utah? He couldn’t tell me that either.

This is a serious issue for the people of the State of Nevada. It’s bad enough that we didn’t get prior notice, and obviously the congressional delegation wasn’t briefed; but the people of the State of Nevada haven’t been briefed either. But if you look further at this press release that has been sent out, it says the Russians, the Russians have been notified of this test. So we have notified the Russians. We just neglected to notify the Americans?

I think this is a bad idea. We need more information. And before you start detonating 700-ton explosive devices at Nevada test site, we’d better do a thorough study of the environmental impact. Because if you are going to be disturbing that dirt that is radioactive and having a mushroom cloud out of Las Vegas, the people of Las Vegas, the people of the State of Nevada better know about it, and we better stop this madness if that is what is going to happen.

So I call upon this Defense Threat Reduction Agency to work with my office, work with the congressional delegation from Nevada, and let’s figure out if we can maybe put this explosive detonation some place else where there aren’t 1.6 million southern Nevadans and hundreds of thousands of tourists in the Las Vegas area at the time.

REFORM LIBERAL LUNACY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak about 527s. 527s are groups, shadowy groups, that work outside of campaign finance disclosure laws. They work outside of our campaign finance reforms that we passed just a few years ago. They are groups that do not disclose their donors in the way that other traditional campaign groups do. They are groups that have unlimited contributions. They are groups that come in and perhaps target members in different races or candidates in different races, yet they do not actually say who they are.

So today I want to say that as a conservative and as a Member of this House what I am fighting for is openness and full disclosure and allowing sunshine on this political process that we as Americans grow to trust.