

you went from being on no medications and would cost the program very little, and all of a sudden when you have that angina, as we call it, chest pain, and you realize you are now on five medications and you want to hurry up and sign up for the program, that is not fair to the others because, after all, this is an insurance program and it is pooled and that is the way we keep costs down. So I think it absolutely makes sense to get everybody signed up by the deadline, which is fast approaching.

Madam Speaker, it has, as always, been a pleasure to have the opportunity to be given by our leadership, by Speaker HASTERT and Mr. Leader BOEHNER and our conference chairman, DEBORAH PRYCE, to spend this hour with my colleagues talking about something that is so important. And if we can ever in this body, and I know we can, put policy ahead of politics and realize that we can work together in a bipartisan way when we have got something that clearly is a tremendous benefit to our seniors, let us all pull together.

When we go home tomorrow, if we have got some time on Friday, or Monday before we come back to Washington, let us all have town hall meetings and workshops and computers and pharmacists there and vendors and maybe some health screening kiosk as well, and help our seniors take advantage of this great benefit.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. Foxx). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Madam Speaker, it is an honor to come to the floor once again. As you know, night after night, and even earlier tonight, Madam Speaker, during the first hour, we had members of the 30-something Working Group on the floor talking about plans that we have on the minority side here in the House of Representatives and assisting not only Americans, but also those that are in the industry of providing energy to this country, who are also Americans and some of them are foreign companies, to be able to provide cleaner burning fuel and also alternatives that Americans will be able to hopefully enjoy for years to come. Energy independence is something that we have embraced for a very long time.

And the debate this week has been about energy, the debate this week has been about ethics, the debate this week has been about a budget vote that we are all waiting to take. But it seems that on the majority side, Mr. Speaker, that the votes are just not there to pass the budget, the Republican-led budget, which I must say that a number of Members on both sides of the aisle have issues with, apparently.

In the 30-something Working Group, we want to thank Leader PELOSI for allowing us to have this hour once again,

the second hour of tonight on the Democratic side, and also Mr. Steny Hoyer and Mr. James Clyburn, who is our chairman, and Mr. LARSON, who is our vice chairman, and all of the members that go to committee meetings and fight on behalf of the American people.

Madam Speaker, I believe that we are all on one team until it comes down to what the special interests want and what the American people want. I think that is where the divide comes in. As we start looking at what is happening and the conference calls that I have had and the constituent meetings that I had when I was back in my district during our work break, of just outrage about what is happening in this country as it relates to gas prices, I think that it is very important that we pay more attention than what we have paid to energy and alternative fuels here in this Congress.

One may say, well, we have already passed an energy bill; where were you? Well, there was an energy bill, yes. It was an energy bill that was passed, but for whom? For the special interests, or for the American people?

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the evidence is overwhelming, the fact that right after Hurricane Katrina, and even before, Democratic amendments were voted down here to do exactly what some Members on the majority side, the Republican side, have said that we need to do now, making sure that we put forth penalties to companies that price-gouge the American people. And I am talking about serious penalties, criminal penalties and fines up to \$3 million.

We have ExxonMobil executives and oil executives making \$150,000 a day in a pension; a day, not a year, not a week, not a month; in a pension with record profits and investors in these corporations that are making money hand over fist, and we have constituents in our districts and Americans throughout this country who cannot even afford to put a quarter of a tank in their car because it is outside of their budget. They cannot afford to take their kids to school. Even when they have a carpool, they cannot afford that.

In rural America there are stories throughout the papers today that are saying, yes, we carpool, but when you are in rural America and you have to drive to the nearest school, that is now a \$30- or \$40-a-day proposition.

So we look at alternative fuels and we look at penalties that will not allow these oil companies to be able to get away with what they are getting away with.

□ 2145

Mr. Speaker, I think it is also important for us to understand that the President comes out and he says, well, things are going to be the way they are, and prices are going to be high, and it is what it is, but what we are going to do is relax environmental

standards to bring the price of gasoline down.

It is almost like a firefighter saying, I know the house is on fire, and it is hard for me even to come up with a metaphor, Mr. Speaker, to describe what the President has done and what the Congress has allowed him to do. The house is on fire. We are going to put a little water here, but not totally put it out, even though we could have prevented that by putting smoke alarms in and other things in to bring attention to all of us as it relates to making sure we keep the house from burning.

I think it is also important for us to pay attention to the fact that the 30-something Working Group and also on the Democratic side, we have put forth proposals in the past that could have avoided this spike in prices right now. There was a press conference today, and a reporter asked me, well, Congressman, are you representing to us that the Democrats, that you all have a plan that will take gas prices down right now, right now, like tomorrow?

No. But if amendments were adopted that were offered here on this floor that Republicans voted down to provide criminal penalties for executives and price gouging, \$3 million fines for individuals that knowingly price-gouged Americans to make sure they can have a return for those individuals that are investors, the Federal prosecutor would be in the middle of this.

The situation we are in now is that these oil companies are saying, well, what is the penalty, and who is going to enforce it? The Federal Trade Commission is saying, well, you know, we are not sure if we have jurisdiction.

Now we have the leaders on the Republican side in the House and Senate saying, well, Mr. President, writing him a letter, maybe you want to have these folks look into it, and maybe we need to take back the tax cuts we just gave the oil companies, over the objection of many of us here in this House.

Then you have some Members say that, well, we did it because they needed money more for more exploration. Well, some of that may be true, but when you have oil companies that are beating some countries in revenue and beating all companies on the face of the Earth in profits, and still saying, well, I know you have all this money, and it is heavy, and you can't carry it around, but can I give you some of the taxpayers' money? Maybe, just maybe, you will go out and find oil or go out and drill in some environmentally sensitive place to be able to push up profits.

What it is going to be very disappointing this time, Mr. Speaker and Members, is the fact that we know that when companies present their quarterly reports, it will be another record-breaking quarter for oil companies.

Now, don't get me wrong. Profits are good. It is not a bad word. But I do take issue with the fact that if individuals are making profits, and it is on

the backs of everyday Americans, Democrats, Republicans, Independents, and even those that cannot vote yet, and individuals are making record profits on the backs of them with the help of their government, I think that is the reason why the latest polling indicates that individuals are ready for a change.

Just so Members don't feel this is a Kendrick Meek report or just something the 30-something Group came up with, September 28, 2005, a motion by Congressman STUPAK from Michigan giving the Federal Trade Commission and also the Justice Department authority to investigate and prosecute oil companies for price gouging. Republicans, 226 voted against it; 195 Democrats voted for it. That is roll call vote number 500, H.R. 3402. That actually happened here on this floor. That is not fiction, that is fact.

October 7, 2005, amendment by the same Member, Democratic Member, allowing the Federal Trade Commission to enforce and ban price gouging and set tough criminal and civil penalties, up to \$100 million, on oil companies, and allow the President to declare an energy emergency when he needs to. Republicans killed the amendment; not Democrats, not Independents, but the Republican majority killed that amendment, 222 to 199, roll call vote number 517, H.R. 3893.

Time after time after time, Mr. Speaker, the majority has proven when it is time to go on this board and vote on behalf of the American people, that it is whatever the industry wants, they get.

I am so glad to say, Mr. Speaker and Members, that on this side of the aisle, Democrats have said on behalf of the American people, not just on behalf of the Democratic Party and not just on behalf of someone that served here long ago in the majority here long ago when the Democrats were in charge, but on behalf of the American people, that we have come to the floor and we are here to talk about the record. We are here to talk about what we would do if we were in the majority.

Those two votes that I just named a year ago would be law today if Democrats were in the majority of this House. If NANCY PELOSI was Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, without any hesitation this legislation would be in place, and we would challenge the President. When he makes decisions, and the Republican Congress rubber-stamps those decisions, rubber-stamps those decisions by saying, Mr. President, whatever you want, so shall it be written, so shall it be done, has gotten us in the situation where we are now.

The same amendments that I just pointed out would have provided relief also to consumers facing skyrocketing home heating costs by expanding the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program that would have been paid for, Mr. Speaker, and I think this is very, very important for the Members to un-

derstand, would have been paid for not with dollars borrowed, and, Mr. Speaker, I am going to talk a little bit about that, too, not with dollars borrowed, but a pay-as-you-go philosophy.

Even when we are dealing with enforcement of energy companies, where there is evidence and also a very strong concern by the American people of how in the world individuals can be paying \$3 and change a gallon, and saying it is an issue with production and flow and all of these different examples and explanations and excuses to the American people that no one can really put their hands around, their arms around, and look in the paper and find these companies are making money like countries, these oil companies are making record profits.

Now, pay-as-you-go. I am going to read that again. It dealt with providing consumers facing skyrocketing home heating costs to expand the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program through the fines from price-gouging companies; not we are going to pass a piece of legislation and just borrow the money.

Mr. Speaker, just to talk about borrowing the money, I want to talk about responsible governance, and I also want to talk about what has happened.

You want to talk about borrowing the money? Some folks say the Democratic plan, they don't necessarily have ways to pay for things. Well, in every piece of legislation that we are putting forth, a supermajority of the legislation that we are putting forth, we are using the pay-as-you-go philosophy. Why do we do it? Because it is the right thing to do on behalf of this country.

I can't help, Mr. Speaker and Members, but think about the fact that there is someone right now, a he or she or someone's mother or father or son or uncle, grandchild, nephew or niece, that are not celebrating what we are celebrating right now. They have been asked on behalf of their country to go to war. They have sand in their teeth, and they probably haven't been able to take a shower like most Americans have been able to take a shower in the last couple of days or this morning or last night or whatever the case may be, so that I would have the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to come to the floor in this great democracy of ours to talk about what we would do if given the opportunity to lead and to share with the Members and the American people what is happening here in this Capitol.

I will tell you, this chart alone is self-explanatory. Never before in the history of the Republic, I am going to say that again, never before in the history of the Republic, has this country been in the fiscal shape or disrepair that it is right now.

Some folks may say we have our challenges. Yes, we have our challenges, but guess what? There were Congresses before this, the 109th and the 108th and 107th, and Congresses going back 100 years, that have had

challenges, too. It is something we called the Great Depression. Another challenge was World War I and World War II. Another challenge was Vietnam and Korea. You name it. Another challenge was times that we had fuel crises. Other challenges have been natural disasters. I know Americans and the membership are very familiar with that.

But when you look at history making, borrowing from foreign nations, \$1.05 trillion, \$1.05 trillion borrowed in 4 years by the Republican majority and the President, I guarantee you the President could not do it by himself, in 4 years he accumulated more than 42 Presidents and a number of Congresses before them that could only borrow \$1.01 trillion. You want to talk about fiscal responsibility? You want to talk about who is spending or who is borrowing the money?

I just want to bring this chart up. Here in the 30-something Working Group we try to break this thing down to the lowest denominator. I want my 8-year-old son, I want my 11-year-old daughter to get it, because it is all about them, and it is all about right now.

We used to, Mr. RYAN, say the future generation, this, that and the other. This generation, we all owe \$26,000 and change because of this ever-growing debt. But this is something that I think Members should pay very close attention to. We have divided the debt that this country and this Congress has put on the backs of the American people. We went from surpluses to this.

Japan. Japan, \$682.8 billion of our debt. Let me just break that down for you. I am going to take this. This is actually my debit card, but we will say it is a credit card for right now. What the Congress has done, and what the Members on the majority side have done, and what the White House has done with the rubber-stamp Republican Congress, what they have done is said we can have tax breaks that we cannot afford. Swipe the card. We can have a war without a plan and without an exit strategy. Swipe the card. We can spend money, because we weren't prepared for a response to natural disaster in this country without any accountability, without any restraints and no-bid contracts. Swipe the card. We got it.

Oh, no problem. If we want to have government waste on all levels with very little enforcement, and want to give tax breaks to oil companies in the time they are making record profits, and we want to give the top 1 percent tax cuts that they are not even asking for, that is fine. Swipe the card.

By swiping that card, we have now given Japan the power. Japan said, fine, we will buy your debt. Guess what? They are buying a piece of the American pie, \$682.8 billion.

China. Red China. Some folks had some concerns. We just had a state visit from the Chinese President. But guess what? He came here knowing

that he owns a piece of the American apple pie at \$249.8 billion of our debt.

Did Japan or China come over here and make us overspend? Did they put the credit card in our hand and say, let me force you, Congress and President? Okay, we will buy it. No, they didn't do it.

□ 2200

It is the irresponsible spending and borrowing that the Republican majority has that has put this country in this posture. The United Kingdom, \$223.2 billion. This is the truth. This is not fiction.

The Caribbean. Many of you know I am from south Florida. Many of you come through our airport going through. The Caribbean, \$115.3 billion of the American apple pie. Taiwan, \$71.3 billion of the American apple pie, buying our debt.

OPEC nations. Well, Madam Speaker, let us just talk for a moment about OPEC nations. Who are they? Well, Iran. I think we are pretty familiar with Iran right now. Iraq. We are definitely familiar with Iraq. Saudi Arabia. Oh, definitely heard of that. The United Arab Emirates, UAE, owns a part of this OPEC debt. And I think it is important for people to understand that. And guess what? We are paying through the nose for gas. 67.8 billion.

Germany, \$65.7 billion of our debt. Korea, \$66.5 billion of our debt. Canada, just north of us, \$53.8 billion of our debt.

Now, I am holding this map up empty, Mr. RYAN, and the reason I am holding this map up is because this is the way it looked before President Bush became President, because it was a surplus. This is the way the map looked, Madam Speaker, before the Republican majority became the rubber-stamp Congress.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And the Democrats time and time again have tried to put provisions in place that we call PAYGO to try to limit the spending of the Republican Congress. They run away. They spend. They charge on the credit card. Many, many instances over the past few years.

Mr. Stenholm from Texas tried to put provisions in as we were raising, as the Republicans were raising the debt limit. He tried to put these PAYGO provisions in saying if you spend any more money, saying you have either got to raise taxes for somebody to pay for it or cut a program so we can balance the budget. Representative MOORE from Kansas tried to put this provision in through an amendment to try to limit the spending. We have Members on the Democratic side who time and time again have tried to limit spending in the Congress so we do not keep borrowing from the Chinese, so we do not keep borrowing from the Japanese, the Arab countries who we are also buying our oil from, oil-producing countries.

We are trying to limit spending, but it is the Republican side who continue, Madam Speaker, time and time again

to waste our money. The tax money that comes into this country time and time again goes out as corporate welfare for the oil companies, corporate welfare for the HMOs and the health care industry, time and time again.

And I want to share with the Members, Madam Speaker, a chart here that is based on the 2007 budget of how much interest, net interest, we are going to pay on the national debt. So all the money that Mr. MEEK was talking about, all the money we are borrowing, we have got to pay interest on this money, Madam Speaker.

This is not a free ride. This is like a bank. You go to the bank, you buy a house, you borrow money. Then you have got to pay interest on it. You buy a house for \$200,000. Well, you end up paying \$300,000 for the house over the course of the years. It is the same thing that we are doing.

If you look at this chart, the big red tower that we have here is the interest, the net interest that we are paying on the debt. Almost \$240 billion of the 2007 budget will be spent on interest on the debt. We are not paying it down. This is just interest payments.

And when you compare that to what we are spending on education or what we are spending on homeland security or what we are spending on veterans benefits, it pales in comparison.

So, Madam Speaker, the folks at home, Members of Congress have to ask themselves, would you rather have your tax money going to pay interest, which makes its way back to the Communist Chinese Government, the Japanese Government, OPEC countries, or would you rather have your tax dollars that come down here? Nobody likes to pay them, but it is like, well, if you are going to pay them, where do you want them to go? Would you not rather have that money invested into the educational systems in the United States of America? Would you not rather have that money focused for Pell Grants? Would you not rather have that money for Head Start?

We are not saying that we do not need reforms in the education system. We do. We admit that. But if you are spending money, and you are asking an American taxpayer, Madam Speaker, you make the decision. Mr. MEEK, you make the decision. Would you rather have your tax dollars go to pay interest on the debt that will make its way back to the Communist Chinese Government, or would you rather have that money invested for educational opportunities for your kids, for you to pay less in tuition costs because we are able to fully fund the Pell Grants?

I remember going to school. I remember looking and seeing what my mom got back or got grant money that we got from the Ohio Instructional Grant, from the Pell Grant. That was a good deal of money to defer the costs of my college education. And because of that, Mr. MEEK, we, my brother and I, we were able to go to college.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, you know I would be a little concerned, just

a little, if the validation by the American people, Madam Speaker, was not so strong. I mean, the American people are saying, Congress, what are you doing? Let me just back up. The Republican Congress, what are you doing? It is almost like the Republican majority got elected, started a football game, and at halftime switched jerseys.

I mean, some of the folks who are running down here on the floor having press conferences, you know, fiscal conservatives, fiscal responsibility, we believe it is your money. Well, Mr. RYAN, what you are talking about, what we just talked about here is exactly what is happening here.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. MEEK, it is their money. It is the American people's money. They do not want it sent to Communist China to pay down the interest on the debt. They want it invested in the United States of America. They want this money put into our country, not put off and sent to the Communist Chinese Government so that they can start state-owned companies and basically take work from the American people.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, you could not say it better.

But, Madam Speaker, let me just back up, because I want to say this before I talk about why the Republican majority should be alarmed. It is almost unfair, and I said it last night on the floor.

Being in the minority, if someone would have told me at the beginning of the 109th Congress, at the beginning of the 108th Congress, that the cards would be laid out on the table the way they are laid out now, I would say that, wow, that is a lot of work to have the American people understand what is going on here in the Capitol. But guess what? They are getting it. And they got it.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. The constitutional amendment in 1994 was a part of the Contract with America.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, Contract on America, because that is what it turned out to be. And that we would have Republican and Democratic States suing. And I am talking about Republican and Democratic Governors suing the Federal Government because Leave No Child Left Behind is so underfunded, and that we would have individuals running around here saying, what do you mean we do not have a plan? What do you mean you do not want to talk about how we should take the training wheels off the Iraqi Government and share with them that we cannot be there forever?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I want to say that this government run by the Republican majority is in complete disarray.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Can I give you a third-party validator right now?

Madam Speaker, this man has to look familiar to the Republican majority. He has to. Newt Gingrich was the man that came to the floor night after night and talked about what the Republicans would do if they were able to

take control of the House. He talked about all of the things that, you know, he was talking about that just good government. All right.

Now what is Newt Gingrich saying? They, talking about the Republican majority, are seen by the country as being in charge of a government that cannot function.

Madam Speaker, they. Not, my Republican colleagues; not, my good friends in Congress. They. Here is a major Republican that served as Speaker, the first Speaker in a number of years to serve, Madam Speaker, as the Speaker of this House, calling his former colleagues and the people that he worked with, and his office is right down the hall, they.

Because if Newt Gingrich is saying that this Republican Congress cannot function, cannot run the country like it is supposed to be run, cannot oversee the finances, cannot make sure that Americans have health care and small businesses are able to provide health care, cannot give guidance and oversight to the Department of Defense and Secretary Rumsfeld, cannot make sure that we let oil companies know that we are here to represent the American people and not their special interests, not their profits, and not their CEOs that will retire to a pension making \$150,000 a day, not because they are that great, it is because we have taken the taxpayers' money and we have given it to them.

And now we have Republican leaders saying, well, maybe we need to take the tax cuts back you just gave them. And then you read something else. No, we should not take that tax cuts back because, guess what, the oil companies have representation in the Republican majority, period.

As I said last night, a black man with a conspiracy theory. But, Mr. RYAN, I believe, and I know, and it is documented that the Vice President and others sat down with these oil companies and put this in motion long ago.

So Members walking around here were having press conferences talking down this. I do not know what happened. I do not. I did not see it coming. What do you mean you cannot enforce prices? It is just insane, Mr. RYAN, for us to be the country that we are, and for the Federal Trade Commission to say, well, you know, we think we have power, we do not have the teeth that we need to really find out what is going on with those oil companies.

But I will tell you this. I believe that these oil companies have been a part of writing this legislation in the way to where that is hard to prosecute them, and it is hard to get to the bottom line of who is doing what. And guess what? When there are no penalties, it is almost like having a house full of kids saying there is no time out, there is no discipline whatsoever, do as you may. And everything in the house will be broken, and every picture will be ripped off the wall. That is what these oil companies are doing.

Now, I do not fault them. I fault the Republican majority. And like I said last night, Mr. RYAN, I am not going to ask them to lead anymore. If they want to work in a bipartisan way, we are ready to go. We have been ready to go. And if the American people see fit for us to be the majority party in the 110th Congress, Madam Speaker, and they will see an opportunity, we will be able to work in a bipartisan way.

□ 2215

There will be a number of Republicans, that I do know. Some of my friends, Mr. RYAN, and we do know them, a very small number on the other side of the aisle see things the way we see it and the way the American people see it. I know the reason why the poll numbers are what they are right now.

The President is not running again, but the Congress and this House, every 2 years we go before the voters. Like I said last night, Mr. RYAN, Madam Speaker, I do not care if it is a local Republican committee chairman, he or she has to have a problem with the borrowing that has been going on in this Republican majority Congress.

He or she must have a problem with the fact that no one can answer the questions on intelligence and the outing of CIA agents. He or she must have a problem if there are Republican committee persons at the local level and on the State level, with the fact that the K Street Project, Madam Speaker, was allowed to operate under this dome by individuals that wore congressional pins that say, yes, we do have a K Street Project; and, yes, if you are not on this list, you don't get access to this government.

Guess what? That was okay. We talked about it, Mr. RYAN. The good thing is, it is almost like showing up somewhere at the scene of an accident and saying, time and time again, we went to the police department, we went to the city hall and said we needed a stop light here. Now, look at this fatality.

I used to be a State trooper. I can see it all the time. Report after report. We didn't get the traffic light out there in time and people died because of it.

Well, guess what? The people were beat down by this Republican majority as it relates to good government, because, not what I am seeing and not what you are seeing, Mr. RYAN, here is what Members on the Republican side of this House have said: Yes, we have a K Street Project.

Then we have a gentleman who admitted you don't have to call the jury, you do not even have to assign a courtroom. I am guilty, I did it. That is what this Republican lobbyist said. Not only did I do it, but I am going to help you go after some Members of Congress that were part of it. I am going to help you identify other lobbyists that were a part of this great operation, the K Street Project.

Then the Republican majority, after he said what he said, and the Federal

prosecutors, Madam Speaker, did what they did, said we denounce, no longer, K Street Project. We don't know what you are talking about. We will no longer condone it, the K Street Project.

Well, Mr. RYAN, it sounds like when the President says, well, I don't know quite what we can do about gas prices, but I do know that Americans are addicted to oil, come on. The President and the Vice President were part of putting this thing into motion. The Republican Congress rubber-stamped, Mr. RYAN, everything that this administration said they wanted.

Mr. President, you want tax cuts that you cannot afford so that we can put ourselves in debt and allow foreign countries to own more of America. Fine. Mr. President, the intelligence on Iraq is kind of shaky, but we have to do what you want, and anyone who goes against you or says anything against you is unpatriotic, and we will have Congressional hearings to humiliate those individuals.

Mr. President, pay-as-you-go. I know the Democrats are there talking about maybe we need to pay as we go right now, since we are in so much debt. You want to continue to borrow and spend? We got your back, Mr. President, because we are the Republican Congress, and we are going to allow you to continue to drive this country in the way that special interests want to drive it. Because you know something? When all the resources are gone, and when all the opportunities are gone, and when it is American taxpayers that are in debt, where will the special interests be? That is the question.

Will they help bail this country out of the debt that this Republican Congress has delivered to them? No. That is the reason why, Madam Speaker, that Members, if they are in their offices, or they are walking around this building, and if they are at home right now, they need to sit up in bed and say, you know something, I need to go to work tomorrow with a new attitude. I need to make sure that I fight on behalf of my constituents. I need to have the same kind of drive that I had the night that I was elected, doing all of those things I said I would do. All of those things, all of those plans, everything I talked about in the campaign, about representing whatever district they may be running from, in my case, the 17th Congressional District. They call that being born again, Mr. RYAN, and a Baptist term, being born again to public service.

I am excited by the fact that the American people, they are not getting it, they got it. They got it. Then we will continue to get it, because time after time, Mr. RYAN, this Republican Congress has proven that they are, their allegiance, and I do not want to generalize because there are a few that I know of and you know of, Madam Speaker, that walk up to Mr. RYAN, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. DELAHUNT, and say you all are doing a

good job, keep doing what you are doing. Because if you all are not pointing out what this Republican majority is doing, these are Republicans, then they will continue to do it, Mr. RYAN, and that is the word that they use.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Inexcusable incompetence, my friend. Inexcusable. If you look, and I do not want to dwell on this, but if you look at Katrina, if you look at the lack of preparedness in FEMA, if you see a storm coming 5 days in advance, and you have the complete lack of competency to deal with the problem, that is an issue that this Congress needs to look at and needs to fix. If you look at all the promises before the war, day in and day out, we are going to use the money for reconstruction, we are going to be greeted as liberators, this is going to reduce the costs of oil.

All of these things that were promised never came to be. The Medicare prescription drug bill, the costs never came to be. It ended up being almost half a trillion dollars more than what the Republican Congress told us it was going to be. Time and time and time again, the tax cuts were going to create all these jobs.

None of this has happened. And now when you look at what is going on here with the gas prices, if you take what has happened since 2001, and you see that there has been no comprehensive energy policy in this country, and you see the end result 4, 5 or 6 years later, that is higher gas prices, reduced supply, which increases the cost for the average American consumer, when you add all this together, you see that the Republican Congress, as stated by former Speaker Newt Gingrich, is incapable of governing the United States of America.

They are too ideological, they are too tied to the special interests. They have the country going in the wrong direction, and it makes it more and more difficult for us to fix the problem.

Now, I think it comes down to one thing, my friend, and I appreciate your help. I think it comes down to one thing. It comes down to leadership. The Republican Party controls the House of Representatives. The Republican Party controls the United States Senate. The Republican Party controls the White House. They have been in charge of this government, this House, since 1994. Their leader, who led the revolution for them to come into power, is now saying they, calling them "they," as my colleagues stated, they don't know how to run the government. It is total incompetence.

But, and I agree with you, I am excited too, Madam Speaker. I am excited because the American people are beginning to understand. Like you said, they got it that this country needs to go in another direction. We are borrowing money from foreign interests left and right, selling off pieces of the American dream, piece by piece. And average people in Youngstown, Ohio; Warren, Ohio; Akron, Ohio; and

in Miami, Florida, it is harder now for them to go to work. Their budgets are getting squeezed. Their health care costs are up. Their gas costs are up, their fuel costs are up. Natural gas, whatever it may be, up, up, up, up, up; tuition costs, up. Everything is making it more difficult for families to make ends meet.

So the Democratic Party, we have a bushel full of plans now. I have noticed that we have got so many plans in our caucus that we have a bushel now, full of them, on homeland security, on education, on technology, and energy. You can go to our Web site that we will show later and find all of those charts, Madam Speaker. Members can look at all of the plans that we have.

I want to make one final point before I kick it back to my friend. This comes down to leadership. After September 11, and I am sure we all remember those difficult days, after September 11th, this country was united and the world was united behind the United States of America.

Even in Europe, at that point, there were European op-eds saying that even in Europe, my friends, they were saying that today we are all Americans. Today we are all Americans. We are such a far cry from that. But the important part was that our President at that point, Madam Speaker, had an enormous amount of political power, and the world was looking at our President.

If he would have asked us to walk to work, if that President, if our President would have asked us to ride a bike to work because we have to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, we would have all done it. We were sending checks to every nonprofit organization because we wanted to give money. We were giving blood until the Red Cross said we do not need any more blood. The American people wanted to give, Madam Speaker. We needed at that point leadership. The best our President could come up with at that critical juncture, the most important moment in the history of the United States of America, was go shopping, Madam Speaker, go shopping. That is leadership? Give me a break.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. And buy duct tape.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Buy duct tape, get your plastic. Go shopping. That moment, if there was leadership in this country, that moment, Mr. MEEK, we could have converted our economy over into all kinds of different alternative energy sources, and we could have done it in the next decade. But we lacked the leadership at that critical moment in this country's history, and that is a shame. That is something that you look back on and you regret that we didn't have the proper leadership at that time, and this Republican Congress was a bobble-head. Yes, Mr. President, yes, yes, whatever you say, yes, yes, yes. No leadership.

I am saying, KENDRICK, that 5 years later when we see these increased gas

prices, and the President stood here just a few weeks ago and said to the American people, we are going to reduce our American dependency on foreign oil by 50 percent by 2025.

Now, let me just suggest that if we can go to the Moon in a decade that we can certainly convert our economy over and become energy independent in a decade. It is not going to take 20 years. We can do it in 10 years. We need the leadership of this Congress, Mr. President, to do it. And it is obvious that you are offended, and I call them our friends, because they are on the other side of the aisle, are so tied to the special interests in the oil industry, the most profitable industry, that they are even giving them billions of dollars of corporate welfare, that they refuse to put significant resources and a significant commitment into alternative energy.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, it is not personal, it is just business. That is the bottom line.

Madam Speaker, I would kind of, when I walk through the halls of Congress, walk along the walls if I felt that we were coming to the floor, saying things that just were not true. But the sad part, Madam Speaker and Members, that everything that we are sharing with you is a fact, not fiction. It is sad. Like I was saying to Mr. RYAN, if I was a political consultant, I would say, wow, do you mean to tell me not only do we have to work with the fact that Americans do not have health care, small businesses cannot afford to buy health care, we owe foreign countries money that we have never owed them before in the history of the country?

We don't have a plan in Iraq as it relates to a leave-alone coalition in Iraq? We have troops dying every day. Do you mean States that are red States and blue States are suing us at the same time for the underfunding and the mandates that we put on them of Leave No Child Left Behind Act? You mean White House individuals are outing CIA agents that might, some of this outing might have gone as high as the highest office of the land maybe?

Do you mean to tell me that individuals, contractors, have no-bid contracts in war and in natural disasters, without accountability, and American taxpayer dollars are being spent without anyone having any real concern on the Republican side?

□ 2230

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Where is the oversight?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. You mean to tell me that anything that the President of the United States says that he wants, that the Republican Congress would give it to him; even if it is bad policy, even if it put this country into a record-breaking deficit in a period of 4 years? You mean to tell me, and without naming at least eight other things, Mr. RYAN, that I have all of that to work with, to share with the

American people? I will start with independence. I will start with the Republicans, and I will also share it with some Democrats that may have some concerns.

I tell you this, Mr. RYAN, Democrats will, not maybe, not if we get an opportunity to do so, not we will say it now but we won't do it later, we will, Madam Speaker, work from day 1 taking control of this House.

And someone may say, you know, why is this thing about being in the majority so important? Well, I can tell you the reason why, and I want to make sure everyone understands. It is important because Democratic Members that are putting forth amendments in committees that are being voted down on a partisan vote, like my committee today and homeland security, dealing with this port security, bipartisan bill we are working on of 100 percent container check, Mr. RYAN, versus whatever we can come up with in a year using a "steady" kind of philosophy to try to get to some sort of container scan phase-in thing. Now, I am going to tell you, a partisan vote down the line. A 100 percent container check lost, Madam Speaker and Members, by two votes.

If Democrats are in control of this House, for those individuals who are objecting to a 100 percent container check, and I want to be sure we are clear on this, some businesses may say, well, you know, it may slow down the process of trade. It will back up supplies. We are not ready for that.

You know something? We will never get there, because we have allowed the special interests to stand in front of the will of the 9/11 Commission. The Republican majority has allowed special interests to dictate how this Congress will legislate. That is stomach-turning that we would allow individuals, based on their salary, based on their suit, whether it is a Brooks Brothers or a Saint John's, to walk into the office of a Member of Congress and say, this is the amendment language we want.

And individuals go to committee hohum and read right off that piece of paper, Madam Speaker. I am talking about what I know. And the American people around here are counting on us to protect them.

Now, I am going to tell you something, Mr. RYAN, and I am going to say it just as clear as my name is KENDRICK MEEK. We get a container that ends up blowing up in one of these major ports or while it is in transit going to where it needs to go to, I guarantee you Republicans will be running: Where is that amendment for the 100 percent container check? We need to do that. Madam Speaker, file this. Madam Clerk, can we do it?

You know something? I bet they will be looking out in the hall looking for the special interests who were telling them they couldn't do it, and they will be nowhere to be found. I didn't see the special interests standing around on 9/

11 at the end of those buildings saying, what can we do to dig these people out and give them their lives back? I am not blaming it on them, but I am just saying that kind of attitude gets us in the position that we can't do something. And we're the country that says we can. We are leading this country.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. What you are saying is it is an issue of priorities, and why do we continue to focus down in Washington, D.C., Potomac fever, the Republican majority continues to focus on how do we get corporate welfare to the oil companies? How do we subsidize the health care industry, all our friends who donate us billions of dollars? How do we give tax cuts to the wealthiest people?

If you made \$10 million in 2003, Mr. MEEK, you got a million-dollar tax break. That is where the focus is. And what we are trying to say here is that we need to focus on port security. So instead of giving a man or a woman who made \$10 million in 2003 a million-dollar tax break, we want to spend that money protecting our ports.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, the million-dollar tax break came on behalf of, and I am just going to grab China here, this is the million-dollar tax break right here.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. You have Japan. Mr. MEEK of Florida. Oh, Japan. I'm sorry, I didn't even look. It was red, so I just assumed.

Let me just say this, Mr. RYAN. Japan. Little Japan. This is what gave that \$10 million person their tax break.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That is right. Mr. MEEK of Florida. Not money we had in surplus. Not money that was there and we had it to spend. This was based on a credit card.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And it was another example of lack of focus, lack of leadership, lack of priorities. And look what our friend says again, our guy, Mr. Gingrich, who I like.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. The former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And the father of the Republican revolution. He said, on March 31, "He noted that a congressional watchdog agency recently smuggled a truck carrying nuclear material into the country to test security. Mr. Gingrich says, 'Why isn't the President pounding on the table? Why isn't he sending up 16 reform bills?'"

This is the father of the Republican revolution asking the President, why are you not a good leader? That is what he is saying. Why aren't you leading the country? Focused on oil subsidies? Focused on corporate welfare? Focused on subsidizing the energy companies? Not focused on Katrina. Not focused on the war. This administration has attention deficit disorder of immense proportions, Madam Speaker. They can't focus.

Get this country on the right track. Let's focus and let's get the country moving in the right direction.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, talking about the right direction, I

spoke to the fact that we are calling for energy independence from the Middle East in 10 years by developing emerging technologies that work to be able to provide energy for our country, energy alternatives; also to make sure that we make a substantial investment in research and development that is critical in creating cutting-edge technologies that will allow us to develop clean, sustainable energy alternatives that capitalize on America's vast renewable natural resources.

This is what we are talking about, Madam Speaker. We are willing to make the investment as relates to innovation.

Mr. RYAN, you have the Web site, sir. Mr. RYAN of Ohio. www.housedemocrats.gov/30something. All of the charts that you have seen here or have seen in the past will be available on the Web site.

But it is important, Mr. MEEK, and I appreciate your vigorous defense of what the Democrats have done and what we want to do because we do have an agenda. We have a bushful of ideas over there that we want to implement, and we need to state this pretty clearly.

Article I, section 1 of the United States Constitution creates the House of Representatives. We are directly elected. You cannot be appointed to this body by anybody. So the American people speak here. When we get in, we will balance the budget. We will get rid of the deficits over time by restricting spending in certain areas, eliminating the corporate welfare, and asking someone who made \$10 million in 2003 to actually pay their fair share.

We don't believe that profit is a dirty word, but we also don't believe that we should go borrow money from China to give the wealthiest people in our country a tax credit.

We will invest this money into reducing the cost of higher education. We will make sure that the least among us have health care and have a roof over their head and have food, which is a pretty basic necessity.

And let me just say, before I kick it to you for one last comment, if we are going to be able to compete with 1.3 billion people in Communist China and over a billion people in India and billions of people around the world, we have to have all 300 million of the citizens in our country on the field playing. Right now we are going on with about a quarter of the team, and they have got the referees and 1.3 billion and 1 billion.

We need to make investments in America. We need to put America first. And we need to make sure at the end of the day that we are guardians of the public tax dollar, and so we need to invest that money back into the United States of America that will yield us value for generations to come, just like the GI bill did. The greatest investment we ever made was the GI bill. Let us do it again and get the country on the right track.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, you are talking fact, not fiction. Anyone who wants to talk about balancing the U.S. budget, the Democrats are the only party in the House, Madam Speaker, that have a right to say that we have done it. We have actually done it.

You have a lot of folks saying, well, we are going to try to cut it in half, and maybe we will get it to a quarter or whatever on the Republican side, the Republican majority with all the power, control of the House, control of the Senate, and control of the Presidency. It should be a smooth-sailing process.

If someone wants to call Democrats names and point fingers, call the former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives a name. Call him a liberal. Call him someone who is irresponsible, if you want to name-call. And I challenge Members to come down here and talk about what is good about owing foreign countries money, not because they did something to us, but because this Congress gave the whole country a self-inflicting wound of debt. They have been saying we are going to spend your money irresponsibly, and then we are going to allow these other countries to own a piece of the American apple pie.

Mr. RYAN, you did an excellent closing. I want to thank you, sir, for coming down to the floor.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Democratic leadership for allowing us to have this second hour.

91ST COMMEMORATION OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to commemorate the 91st anniversary of the Armenian genocide. As the first genocide of the 20th century, it is morally imperative that we remember this atrocity and collectively demand reaffirmation of this crime against humanity.

April 24th marked the beginning of the systematic and deliberate campaign of genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire in 1915. Over the following 8 years, 1.5 million Armenians were tortured and murdered, and more than half a million were forced from their homeland into exile.

Last week I was joined by my cochair of the Armenia Caucus and many of my colleagues in Congress on a bipartisan basis in sending yet another bipartisan congressional letter to President Bush urging him to use the word "genocide" in his April 24th commemorative statement. With over 178 signatures, the message in that letter is loud and clear: 90 years is too long to wait for justice to be served and proper recognition to be made.

The President should have used the 91st anniversary of the Armenian genocide to promote the U.S. foreign policy that reflects appropriate understanding and sensitivity to human rights, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. But, instead, President Bush once again failed to honor his pledge to properly characterize the Armenian genocide in his annual remarks. Despite pleas by Members of Congress and the Armenian American community, and recognition by much of the international community, he continues to avoid any clear reference to the Armenian genocide while consistently opposing legislation marking this crime against humanity.

The Bush administration continues to be influenced by the Government of Turkey by placing parts of our foreign policy in their hands. When it comes to facing the judgment of history about the Armenian genocide, Turkey, rather than acknowledging truth, has instead chosen to trample on the rights of its citizens to maintain its lies. The U.S. cannot continue to submit to Turkey's shameless threats and intimidation.

Madam Speaker, the U.S. owes it to the Armenian American community, to the 1.5 million that were massacred in the genocide, and to its own history to reaffirm what is fact. As we have seen time and time again, the United States has a proud history of action and response to the Armenian genocide. During a time when hundreds of thousands were left orphaned and starving, a time when a nation was on the verge of complete extermination, the U.S. took the lead and proudly helped end these atrocities. In fact, Americans helped launch an unprecedented U.S. diplomatic, political, and humanitarian campaign to end the carnage and protect the survivors.

If America is going to live up to the standards we set for ourselves and continue to lead the world in affirming human rights everywhere, we need to stand up and recognize the tragic events that began in 1915 for what they were: The systematic elimination of a people. The fact of the Armenian genocide is not in dispute.

Madam Speaker, regardless of President Bush's inaction, I call on Speaker HASTERT to bring the resolution to officially recognize the Armenian genocide to the House floor. The resolution that passed in committee last September, again on a bipartisan basis by an overwhelming majority, has over 148 cosponsors. Now is the time to allow Members to reaffirm the United States' record on the Armenian genocide.

The U.S. Government needs to stop playing politics with this tragic time in history and take a firm stance for the truth. Genocide must not be tolerated.

□ 2245

HEALTH CARE AND WHERE WE ARE GOING

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. FOXX). Under the Speaker's announced

policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I come to the floor tonight to talk about health care, but I have to spend just a minute or two addressing some of the things that we just heard in the previous hour.

There has been a lot of discussion about the Jobs and Growth Act that was passed in 2003, in fact in May of 2003, a reinvestment of \$80 billion back into the American economy, back into the productive sector of the American economy. The American people rewarded the United States Treasury with an increase in collections to the Treasury the next year with \$260 billion that were not anticipated. Investment in the productive sector of the American economy works every time it is tried, and I am grateful to be part of the Congress in 2003 that provided that reinvestment opportunity for the American people.

There has been a lot of discussion this past couple of weeks about gas prices. We passed an energy bill at the end of July last year. Part of the deal on that energy bill was that there was going to be no liability protection for a compound called MTBE, a federally mandated oxygenate in gasoline that is sold in this country in order to comply with clean air restrictions.

Without MTBE, we are left with only ethanol as the only oxygenate available for the mixture of gasoline that is required to be sold in States that have clean air issues. We removed the MTBE because it was placed in legal peril.

We had an opportunity in October after the hurricanes hit, after we knew there was going to be trouble, we had an opportunity to address the oxygenate requirements in the blended fuels that are going to be blended and sold for this summer's driving season, precisely the time we are up against right now.

This House passed that bill which would have allowed for that relaxation of oxygenation requirements. We passed it with no Democratic votes. It was only Republican votes that passed the bill, and it has never been taken up by the Senate. The consequences are quite predictable.

Now, we were told during the hearings on the energy bill the prior year by individuals from, and you talk about a special interest group, that is the ethanol lobby; we were told that the ethanol manufacturers in this country had unbelievable success and they were able to produce ethanol that exceeded their wildest expectations. Well, they were wrong and they have not been able to produce the quantity they said, and it is time for this country to look at the tariff that we place on foreign imported ethanol. If we are going to require foreign imported ethanol to be part of our gasoline oxygenate system, we are going to have to import ethanol at least temporarily until we can increase production in this country.