

\$65 billion worth of illegal drugs and 4 million people coming across the border. This will shut off almost all of that. This will direct almost all of it through our ports of entry.

Those are the reasons, some of them, not all of them, Mr. Speaker, on why we need to build a wall. But in the brief time that we have, I want to make sure that I can yield to the gentleman from Georgia who has been such an eloquent voice on this issue.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. KING very much for controlling the time in this hour. I thank him for yielding, and certainly Mr. MILLER and Mr. TANCREDO, Mr. GOODE and others that have spoken during this hour. Those are the eloquent voices on this issue. They are not crazy voices. They are voices that are basically saying, you know, we got laws in this country and we need to enforce them.

We need to secure our borders first and foremost before we consider any other options in regard to things like a temporary worker program or what to do with the estimated 12 million people here that have been in this country for various and sundry periods of time illegally, most of them working, yes. There is no way in the world you can determine really how long they are here because of fraudulent documents.

But the ideas that have been proffered, like the idea that my friend from Iowa has suggested in regard to this, because I do not know if we need a fence, Mr. Speaker, for 2,000 miles all of the way from Brownsville to San Diego, but we definitely need some fencing. There is no question about it. There are certain areas of our southern border that you cannot control without the type of fencing that Mr. KING has described.

And we need to do that. In fact, in this body, in this House of Representatives, in our bill that we passed, actually we passed two bills over the last couple of years, the first one being the REAL ID Act, which is exactly what the 9/11 Commission has asked for, that bipartisan commission in unanimous fashion, we responded to exactly what they were asking us to do in the REAL ID Act.

Then we followed up with the Border Security Act toward the end of 2005, calling, Mr. Speaker, for 750 miles of fencing, not 2,000, but 750. What does the Senate do? They come along with a bill that calls for about maybe 300 miles of fencing, at the very most 370 miles.

My friend, Mr. KING, who has been such a strong advocate on this issue of border security knows that that is totally, totally inadequate, particularly if you are talking about the dense population centers below our border States. I know in the REAL ID Act, we finally completed 14 miles of fencing at the San Diego border that the environmentalists had blocked for years because of some endangered shrub the hordes of illegals that were crossing trample those shrubs down pretty ef-

fectively, taking care of any concerns that the environmentalists may have had.

But listen to some of the things that are in the bill on the Senate side compared to what we have passed on the House side. They would allow guest workers, so-called guest workers to be paid the prevailing wage. That is the Obama amendment, when American citizens do not have to be paid prevailing wage.

They expand the visa waiver program to countries in the European Union in good standing with the United States and allow the State Department discretion for adding new member countries. Mr. Speaker, we need to suspend the visa waiver program. We absolutely, after 9/11, this idea of saying that people can come into this country with a passport, no visa, and stay for 90 days, no way of knowing exactly who they are, just a routine stamp of a passport, and then they may or may not go home after that vacation or that summer that they spend in one of our colleges or universities, and we do not know where they are.

We need, and we called for this in the PATRIOT Act, we called for this in the 9/11 Act, that we knew, we could verify entry and exit. Until we can do that, the idea of expanding, Mr. Speaker, the visa waiver program is ridiculous.

The bottom line is this. I think the House has got it right. I think the Senate has it wrong. We need to secure our borders first and foremost. And no amnesty. I yield back. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. KING of Iowa. I thank the gentleman from Georgia. I yield back, Mr. Speaker.

### 30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WILSON of South Carolina). 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. Mr. Speaker, once again it is an honor to come to the House floor. We would like to thank the Democratic leadership for allowing us to have this hour. The 30-something Working Group, as you know, comes to the floor if not daily every other day when we have the opportunity to do so, to share with the Members of the House initiatives and plans that we have on the Democratic side of the aisle that will make America better and stronger.

As you know, we have been on the message of a new direction for America, and we have been working very hard on that because that is the message that we have and that the American people are looking forward to seeing implemented.

So many times here on this floor, we talk about ideas and concepts, but they never really make it to the legislative debate, due to the fact that here in the House, Democrats are in the minority;

and the majority has adopted a rule that there is not a true bipartisan spirit here in this House, only when we vote on post offices and naming bridges.

But when it comes down to policy, policy that is affecting the people that we represent every day, there is a great divide, a divide to where we are not sitting down at the negotiating table, in committee, in subcommittee, and definitely not sitting down before legislation comes to the floor in a conference committee to talk about what is best for America and how can we make it better.

The American people yearn and hope for Democrats and Republicans and the one Independent in this House to work together. I think it is important to outline the fact that our leadership has said if given the opportunity, earning the opportunity of the American people to lead, that you will see a bipartisan spirit, not only spirit, you will see bipartisan action in this House on major pieces of legislation dealing with health care, education, how we are going to balance the budget, just not talk on how to cut the deficit in half or we may cut the deficit in half, really breaking down the deficit so that we will not pay more than what we are spending and investing in education, homeland security, and veteran affairs.

That is why we come to the floor. And we start talking about a new direction for America, making sure that health care through prescription drugs, and also making sure that HMOs eliminate wasteful spending and a number of other reforms that should take place there so that we do not have so many Americans going into emergency rooms.

Also lowering the price of gas and achieving energy independence is one of our major goals. There was just a report that was released by the Agriculture Department that is now having some sort of discussion about ethanol and what we can use, how we can use the ethanol and how it can play a role in making us independent, the E-85, and our proposal of putting America on a new direction or in a new direction.

□ 1830

We talk about the importance of alternative fuels, not just investing in the Middle East and not investing in the Midwest. So we look forward to continuing to push that philosophy here on this floor as we have the opportunity to lead this House, knowing the American people can deliver that, making sure that working families making more than what is presently the minimum wage, increasing that minimum wage, making sure they are able to bring home more to their families.

Millions of Americans are living on the minimum wage. It has been very difficult. And we have charts here, Mr. Speaker, that would illustrate how the minimum wage, we haven't seen a national minimum wage hike since 1997,

but we have seen increases in other areas where families are still expected to perform under those circumstances. And I think that is where we are finding our shortfall as it relates to individuals being able to afford college. Cutting the cost for college, making sure that there is a tax deduction for college tuition and expanding the Pell grants and cutting the student loan costs in half, making sure that college is affordable, and rolling back the increases that Republican Congress have put on students.

Not just students. When people talk about students, they think that we are just talking about young people that graduate from high school. We are talking about families that have invested their entire lives with their children to make sure that they can go to school, that it is affordable, that we don't continue to move the goal post the closer families get to making sure that they can provide for their young people to achieve a college education.

Also, preventing the privatization of Social Security, coming up with real Social Security reform, and making sure that folks can retire in dignity knowing that they have a Social Security plan and a Social Security card that is more, that stands for the security of their retirement.

Also, those individuals that are on disability, those individuals that are receiving survivor benefits, making sure that they don't end up in some line somewhere reporting to some private institution because someone thought it was a great idea to make money for individuals on Wall Street.

And, lastly, I would say a part of a new direction for America is really being fiscally responsible. Now, the first Democratic hour out here, Mr. Speaker, we had the Blue Dog Democrats that were here, and they spent the entire hour talking about fiscal responsibility. And I think it is important that the American people and the Republican majority House understand that we have the will and the desire and the track record to show that we truly know how to balance the budget, surpluses as far as the eye can see when President Bush went into office and a Republican majority was emboldened, and now we are borrowing at a rate that one writer in the Washington Times, Mr. Chapman, had said that the President has dethroned Lyndon Johnson as it relates to spending. And that is a heavy statement to make, even though I feel very strongly that President Johnson at that time of transition invested truly in America and not just in billionaires and millionaires receiving tax cuts, and also oil companies running away with public dollar giveaways to them and record profits at the same time.

I am so honored tonight, Mr. Speaker, as usual, to be joined by my colleague just north of my district and just west of my district and east of my district in some areas, Ms. DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ from Florida, and

also Mr. TIM RYAN from Youngstown, Ohio.

As you know, last evening, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, I was sharing with the Members we don't just come to the floor, we actually meet to talk about these issues that are facing Americans. And I think it is important that we continue in that spirit and moving America in the right direction, in a new direction than what they see right now from the Republican majority.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. And it is a privilege to join you and Mr. RYAN and Mr. DELAHUNT each night that we take the House floor and talk about the new direction that we as Democrats would take this country. Because what most people have seen in America recently is essentially the Republican leadership's efforts to engage in the politics of distraction, because they have to distract the American people from what is really going on here because the reality that is going on here is too painful to closely examine.

I mean, they certainly can't hold up their wild success to the American people for examination and celebration because they haven't had any wild success. We are looking here at a record deficit, as you discussed, Mr. MEEK. We are looking at record gas prices. We are looking at record numbers of Americans who are without health insurance. We are looking at record increases in the cost of health insurance, small business owners who are unable to continue to support their employees and provide them with health insurance benefits. And we are looking at a woeful inability on the part of the Republican administration and this leadership of this House to protect the homeland and focus on domestic homeland security.

That is why they instead have focused on things like the Pledge of Allegiance and whether students are saying "under God" in school when they recite the Pledge of Allegiance, and they are focusing on amending the Constitution to prohibit flag burning or amending the Constitution to ban gay marriage. Now, each of us might have our own individual opinion on those matters, but when you go to Youngstown, Mr. RYAN, when you go to Miami, and when I go home to Broward County, I just don't hear, and I would bet you my last dollar that the vast majority of our Republican colleagues don't hear one, two, three, four, or five on the list any of those items. More likely, you have the father of four who leaves his house in the morning not worried about whether his son is going to be able to say "under God: In the Pledge of Allegiance that day, but whether or not he is going to be able to afford the \$55 it is going to cost him, at least, or around, to fill up his gas tank.

And how about the mom whose son or daughter is fighting on our Nation's behalf in Iraq or Afghanistan? Do you think she is worried about whether Congress is going to pass a constitu-

tional amendment to ban flag burning? Because that is certainly a notion of patriotism. Or is she more likely praying every single day that her baby is going to come home to her? I would say it is more likely the latter. And those are the kinds of issues that people are addressing with us when we go home.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Or at least have a discussion about how is this going to end; how is this thing we have in the Middle East going to end. We are not having that discussion. We are all patriotic; we all support the country. We are Members of Congress. For God's sake, we love America. That is easy. And if you want to say "under God," say it. Parents should tell their kids, just say it. Problem solved.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. But could you imagine, they actually rolled out an agenda that those items were at the top of the list. Because what they have to do is they have to try to distract the American people from their pitiful failure here, from their inability to get a handle on the deficit, from their inability to do anything about alternative energy exploration and reducing gas prices, about their inability to expand health care to more people, and their inability to develop any sort of plan to eventually get us out of this endless war in Iraq, and their inability to deal with domestic homeland security, border security, while protecting our American people here at home.

They are real focused on protecting everybody else in the world and making sure that everybody else in the world's quality of life is in good shape. What about the folks here? No, instead they just want to spend a lot of time on the issues that are really none of their business, that are really just decisions that families make inside their own homes among family members.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I guess if we were on the other side, Mr. Speaker, I guess the question we have to ask ourselves is, Why are they trying to distract? What are they distracting us from? And I think when you look at what is happening and why the Democrats want to take the country into a new direction, all you have to do is look around. And I know, Mr. MEEK, and you know, Mr. MEEK and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, there are a lot of Republicans, when we start saying this stuff, they have got to turn their TV off, they can't listen to it because I think it rings true.

The bottom line is this, the neoconservative Republican agenda has been implemented into the United States, period. And look around, here is what it looks like: Iraq, Afghanistan, gas prices, health care prices, tuition costs, minimum wage. Look around. Deficits, who are you borrowing it from? That is the neoconservative agenda. It is here. And we need to take the country in another direction. So they obviously don't want to talk about it.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. So as Mr. MEEK was saying, what we would

do if we were in the majority, and hopefully the American people will give us that opportunity in November, we would make sure right at the get-go as Leader PELOSI, who will be Speaker PELOSI when we win back the majority, as she talks about, one of the first things that we will do the first week, raise the minimum wage. It hasn't happened since 1997, going on 9 years now. That is just pitiful. You have got people in America, 7 million people in America making \$5.15 an hour. That is just an outrage. And we have got to make sure, that is the kind of issue that people need the Congress to deal with.

I mean, in our home State we have had to address it inside the State of Florida. Because the Federal minimum wage hasn't been raised in 9 years, we have got to make sure as we take the country in a new direction, as Democrats would do, we would focus on fixing the ridiculous prescription drug plan that they passed for Medicare beneficiaries. We would make sure that the doughnut hole that provides this humongous gap that senior citizens are falling through after they reach I think about \$2,500 in coverage for prescription drugs, they fall through that doughnut hole, and they literally have to spend several thousand dollars out of their own pocket before the part D prescription drug benefit picks back up.

It also prohibits the Federal Government from negotiating with pharmaceutical companies. We would make that change, and we would require the Federal Government to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies. Literally, the difference between prohibition and requiring it, and just like they do in the VA right now, and save millions and millions of dollars. I mean, who was this bill for?

If you want to make sure that there is a part D prescription drug benefit that benefits senior citizens, then people will vote for us. If they want to make sure that there is one that benefits the pharmaceutical industry, then people will vote for them.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And just those few steps that we can take in the first week that we are here, talk about taking the country in a new direction. Imagine if we raised the minimum wage that first day, imagine we cut the student loan interest rates in half saving students and parents \$4,000 or \$5,000 over the life of the loan, the negotiation by the Secretary of Health and Human Services with the pharmaceutical companies, the money we would be able to save the government just in those three steps. We are not talking about brain surgery here. We are talking about basic fundamental commonsense moves that will benefit everyone, commonsense moves for the common good. And I think moving the country in a new direction is what we need to do.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. And when people ask what the Democratic

agenda is, that is it right there. That is what we would do.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That is it. We don't have some elaborate playbook that is going to run left and fake this way and run this way. Three or four different basic things, and you will see the difference between having Democrats running the government and Republicans.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. And Republicans can't get away with saying all the things that we would do would cost money and build the deficit, because we would reinstate the pay-as-you-go rule, the PAYGO rules, to ensure that we don't spend more money than we take in, which is how when President Clinton was in office we had a surplus and not a deficit.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I would like to yield to Mr. DELAHUNT.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I thank my friend and chairman of the 30-something Group for yielding. I apologize for being a bit tardy, but I had business back in the office.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Something more important than us.

Mr. DELAHUNT. No, that is not the case.

But I heard you talk about Medicare, and it provoked a special interest.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. A personal reaction?

Mr. DELAHUNT. A personal special interest, because I don't know if you are aware of this, I am somewhat embarrassed to acknowledge this in a venue such as this, but a week from today I will be on Medicare.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Wow. When is your birthday?

Mr. DELAHUNT. July 18 is my birthday, and I hit that magic figure that entitles me to be eligible for Medicare. And if there is a single program that has made a difference in the lives of senior citizens, I was going to say elderly, but I think I will change that now, of senior citizens in this country, it is the Medicare program. There has been study after study which concludes that there is a connection between longevity and the advent back in 1965 of Medicare and health that now the older segment of the population enjoys. It is absolutely an essential, critical program.

□ 1845

Part of that, as Congresswoman WASSERMAN SCHULTZ was saying, is the fact that today, rather than referring people to hospitals, the percentage of treatment that is given to senior citizens is through prescribed pharmaceuticals. It has made clearly a world of difference.

And when we had this debate back in December of 2004, about the so-called prescription drug benefit, Democrats argued that to prohibit the Federal Government from negotiating with the large drug manufacturers for discounts, substantial discounts, as you just indicated, as they do now with the VA, was nothing but a windfall profit

for large drug companies. I don't know what the estimate is now, but you said millions. Let me respectfully disagree with you and say tens of billions, maybe in excess of 100 billion, but it is clearly a substantial amount of money.

Just stop and think for 1 minute. That money would eliminate the doughnut hole. And by the doughnut hole, we mean once the cost of a particular prescription exceeds an amount, I think it is \$2,600, for the next \$3,000-plus a senior citizen has to pay for that prescription out of his or her own pocket.

We are already receiving calls, I do not know if your district offices have had this experience, but the volume of calls from seniors saying, you know, I didn't realize how quickly I would reach that so-called doughnut hole, and I can't afford the next \$3,000 to meet my medical needs. And I need those drugs that take care of my cardiac problem, for example, and I can't afford it, Mr. Congressman. What am I going to do?

I know you are saying that we can address that, and we can address that without adding to the deficit, but I think that is a commitment that ought to be made to people who are on Medicare so that they can enjoy a longer and more healthy life as they age, because they deserve it.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, Mr. DELAHUNT, I think it is important to take it away from the political debate here on this floor, between what we believe that the American people want and need versus what the special interests must have. The only way that people are going to win on this floor is if we give them voice.

Last night, we got into a passionate discussion about the minimum wage and why it was important. And we, I think, all agree that we give those individuals voice that are punching in and out every day and catching the early bus. We give voice to that mother that is trying to figure out how she is going to get the kids to school and make it to work making minimum wage, working more than half a day to even cover the gas costs, let alone having to buy groceries and do all those other things; and that father that catches the early bus and is trying to make it happen.

So I think that as these fuel prices continue to go up, as it relates to Medicare, there is this quiet inching up the storm of new requirements and new loopholes for seniors to jump through in the hopes they will not follow through or go through all those hoops, so that they do not get what they deserve.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I don't know if any of you saw it, I think it was yesterday in our major newspapers, I noticed that there was a story relative to a report that indicated that much of the information that seniors received relative to the prescription drug program was erroneous and inaccurate. And we all know about the confusion at the beginning of the program.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Remember the error that was made by the Department of Health and Human Services in the Medicare and You handbook they sent out to all the Medicare beneficiaries? And when they recognized the error in information about the prescription drug program and advising people who were dual-eligible what kind and how comprehensive their benefits were going to be and how much they were going to have to pay for them, they refused to send out a correction. The only way they were going to make the real answers available was via the Internet or if people called and asked.

Now, how is that a commitment to clarity, to making sure people can truly access the benefits that they are entitled to and that they do not pay more than they are supposed to?

Mr. DELAHUNT. And what is happening now, as I said, senior citizens were unaware of the fact that that limit would be reached so quickly, which would put them into the doughnut hole, or I call it the "abyss."

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. The belly of a whale.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Right. Because that has happened so quickly that they believed initially that it was only the moneys that they had to pay out under the so-called copayment system. But, no, it was the total amount of the cost of the drug between what they had to pay out of their pocket and what the government was paying.

So all of a sudden, people who are spending \$600, \$700, \$800 a month on a drug regimen for, let us use the example of those who have a cardiac problem, will find themselves, in 3 or 4 months, having already reached that cap and now they are on their own. And that is happening now.

Meanwhile, we cannot negotiate with drug manufacturers because the Republican majority was protecting the pharmaceutical industry.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. DELAHUNT, the American people want to be leveled with, that is the bottom line. Mr. RYAN said it earlier. They just want us to shoot straight. They want someone to be truthful with them. In some parts of America they say, it is what it is; and if it is about the numbers of what the private sector and what the special interests can make off of every deal.

Yes, we all want a prescription drug plan, but at the same time we want to be able to make sure we get the biggest bang for the buck. And not for the special interests, but for the people that need the drugs and the meds. Yes, we want to help oil companies be able to be innovative and to find alternative fuels, but not on the backs of Americans paying \$3.25 a gallon. And, yes, we do want people to have the opportunity to have quality health care, but not being gouged as it relates to health insurance, watching out for the health insurance companies first.

The Republican majority has done that, and then confusing people to the

point where they are misled, and so some of them just throw their hands up and walk the other way.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, you talked about the changes and the problems and the mistakes within the literature that was given out. I was about to say, this is the big leagues. This is the big leagues. We are the Federal Government. The lights are on in this Chamber not because we are great people, but because the people of America pay taxes so that they will have a government that will stand up for them.

I have never seen a campaign sign saying I am running for Congress to protect the special interests, vote for me. No one said to me, Congressman, I want you to make sure ExxonMobil and companies like that get what they need to make sure their shareholders are making the kind of money they need to make. They sent me here to make sure they can get from point A to point B and so that we would watch out for their dollars when we got here.

I am telling you, I am very, very concerned, Mr. DELAHUNT, and beyond partisanship, of what is happening to the majority as it relates to the ongoing blocking on behalf of the special interests. You can see the tracking as it relates to fund-raising, the K Street Project, a number of other issues we know so much about: the scandals here in town as relates to special interests getting what they want; Members being pushed up to the back of the wall there in the corner, with leadership saying, you will vote for this or you will vote against that; and the voting board being held open for not only several minutes but hours in some cases to make sure the special interests get their way.

Mr. DELAHUNT, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, and Mr. RYAN, it would be wonderful to see the board held open so that the American people can get a minimum wage increase that they haven't gotten since 1997.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER stood right here and told the Speaker, it is a shame that we are leaving here on the 4th of July break and we haven't addressed the issue of millions of Americans still making \$5 and some change since 1997; meanwhile the cost of milk, bread, health insurance and everything else has gone up.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Really, what it boils down to is exactly what you are saying, it is that they are completely out of touch.

And I just want to pull up this illustration. We have our third-party validators here that really help us demonstrate what we are talking about on the floor each night, Mr. Speaker. It is not information we are making up. It is not the Debbie Wasserman Schultz encyclopedia or the Tim Ryan dictionary. These are facts we are laying out in front of the American people so that they can decide whether they want to continue down the path the Republican leadership has taken them on or whether they want to go in a new direction.

It is clear that the Republicans have made these decisions because they are out of touch. I mean, let us just look at the real economic changes under this administration, under President Bush and the Republican leadership, as opposed to the bogus one that they rolled out today with their economic midyear review.

You can make numbers, as they have done, look as rosy as you would like, but this is the real deal. Let us be clear, the Majority Leader, Mr. BOEHNER, specifically said on June 20: "I have been in this business for 25 years, and I have never voted for an increase in the minimum wage. I am opposed to it, and I think a vast majority of our conference is opposed to it." And he said that on June 20 of 2006.

So let us take a walk down memory lane here. If you actually are in touch with what everyday Americans are dealing with, then you will know that, of course, since 1997, there has been no minimum wage increase. But if you look at the price of milk, the price of milk has gone up 24 percent. And if you actually shop in the supermarket, like I do, then you will know that the price of milk has steadily increased when you are trying to buy a gallon of it.

How about the price of bread? That has gone up 25 percent. We are talking about staples that people actually pay for with their minimum wage increase, if they get one. Or don't get one.

Let us take a look at the cost of a 4-year public college education. The cost of that has gone up 77 percent since 1997.

Look at the cost of health insurance. That has gone up 97 percent. But no minimum wage increase in 9 years.

How about the price of regular gas? That has gone up, as every working family knows, 136 percent. And while I am at it, I might as well pull out my little toy prop here, because I think it is illustrative.

I think part of the problem is, it is clear by that chart that most Republicans obviously aren't dealing with these issues every day. They are not buying their own bread. They couldn't be; otherwise they would know that it has increased as much as it has. They are not buying their own gallons of milk. Maybe they have their household staff buy these things for them, or maybe they do it on the Internet. Or I am not sure what is going on.

But when it comes to the price of a gallon of gas, this is an old-fashioned gas tank, or gas pump. I have just concluded that it is obvious that the Republicans have not done anything about gas prices, Mr. RYAN, because most of them clearly have not used their own gas pump to fill their own gas tanks since they looked like this. Because otherwise they would be more committed to, instead of doing the bidding of the oil industry by passing legislation that puts money, more and more millions and billions in their pockets, they would make sure we invested, truly invested in expanding our

alternative energy resources, so that we could reduce the cost of a gallon of gas, and so that we could make sure that the Congress would focus on the issues that people in America really care about.

□ 1900

But it is clear to me that they haven't used one of these for a really long time, and that is the reason they are so out of touch.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. It is the same old song, we don't need a minimum wage increase. Things are going just fine. The President said the economy is doing great and it is benefiting all Americans. Well, he hasn't been to my district, and I am sure he has not been to a lot of districts around the country where people are struggling.

I found it interesting, over the 4th of July break where we do a lot of parades, and doing a parade is like taking a poll in your district as to how people feel. They will shout at you exactly what they are thinking. As you are going down and shaking hands and meeting people, you hear about the gas prices and the lack of vision; you hear about the trailers sitting in Hope, Arkansas. And you hear about the \$9 billion being lost in Iraq. This is what average Americans are talking about.

And then the kicker is when the Republican Congress pushes a pay raise for themselves, but not a pay raise for the American people. Give me a break. They raise the salary for Members of Congress, but at the same time not at least tie it to minimum wage and say the American people need to be a part of this, too? Come on. What is going on?

No matter what issue you are talking about, and this is the thread that ties all of this together, the Republican majority is incapable of executing government as stated by our friend, Newt Gingrich.

Mr. Speaker, he said, "They are seen by the country as being in charge of a government that can't function." He, the former Speaker of the House, the father of the Republican revolution, is now calling the leadership and the Republican Members of Congress "they" and also saying that they are in charge of a government that can't function.

Whether you are talking about negotiating down the drug prices or the \$9 billion in Iraq, or FEMA, or any other issue, I think time and time again they are seen as being incapable of being able to execute government.

Mr. DELAHUNT. They don't believe in government. That is the truth. Their version of government is simply the smaller the better.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Unless, of course, it involves their personal life.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Exactly. Unless it involves involving the United States in a quagmire.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. DELAHUNT, I don't want you to get too far away from "they believe in smaller govern-

ment." They believe in big government. The government has grown larger than any other time in recent history. Out-of-control discretionary spending, pork barrel spending. An article I read last night, they said that the President has dethroned President Johnson as it relates to spending. What they say and what they do, that is the reason we are here on this floor. We are saying "they" because that is what Newt Gingrich called them, "they."

Mr. DELAHUNT. I was going to make that point and you did it for me.

But let me say what we now see is big government, big government promulgating and pursuing an agenda that is not a conservative agenda. I think we should make that distinction. It is a neoconservative direction because traditionally Republicans have been committed to responsible government, pay as you go, live within your means.

And government is important, but there are areas where government does not have a role. And yet here we are today with this President and this Republican majority presiding over the largest expansion of government in American history. And the expansion of government only benefits a small segment of the American population.

That is what I would suggest is causing the anxiety and the negative reaction that we hear when we march in those parades.

What about this Medicare drug program? It sounds good, but it is not helping me. Who is it helping?

And how do you respond to a question: Why can't you negotiate with the large drug companies and secure discounts like you do through the Veterans Administration? Why can't you secure discounts of 40, 50, 60, 70 percent? Why can't you do that? Why can't Congress insist?

And the answer is because the Republican leadership will not allow it. It simply won't allow it.

And, Congressman, we read about the oil companies, the energy companies, Big Oil, if you will. We understand that in 2002 their combined net profit was \$35 billion; that's a lot of money. Now we see new figures that it exceeds \$113 billion. It has tripled in about 3 years. Congressman, can you explain to me why you and your colleagues approve of giving taxpayer money to Big Oil in the amount of \$14 billion? Can somebody help me answer that question?

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Because they care more about the special interests than they do about the people they represent. It is as simple as that. It is the only logical explanation.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Last night, and Mr. Speaker, I hate to keep referring back to last night for the folks who did not see us here on this floor, the Members who did not see us here on this floor last night, we talked about the chart Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ broke out with minimum wage at zero, and we talked about the White House meeting in the complex, and I am not going to read The Washington Post article

again, but it happened in 2001, Mr. DELAHUNT. And these are the profits that oil companies earned, record profits. In 2002 it paid off immediately at \$34 billion in new profits to oil companies. And in 2003, it went to \$53 billion in new profits.

This is not something just coincidental. There was a strategy. They wrote the energy bill. They came up with the plan and they had access in the White House and here in this House of Representatives under the K Street Project and got what they wanted. In 2004, \$84 billion. In 2005, \$113 billion.

Now these oil companies, as far as I am concerned, they are just doing what they have access to do. I am more concerned with those of us with voting cards, Members of Congress, those of us who have an A pass over at the White House in the East Wing, that allow oil companies to go in, say what they want and get it on the backs of the American people.

Those profits don't just come out of the sky. They come out of the pocketbook and wallets of everyday Americans. While they are reaching into that credit card and while they are reaching in for that cash, they are passing their voter registration card. It can have REP on it, it can have DEM on it, it can have IND on it. Whatever the case may be, the bottom line is it is the same amount of money coming out of those wallets, not because of their doing, the American people's doing, but because of the special interest influence over the Republican majority. So that is what I am mainly concerned about here.

The last chart I want to share, oil companies, they are telling our friends they are trying to head towards energy independence. They will come to the Hill and say this is what we are doing with the money you've given us, the taxpayers' dollars.

I will tell you what they are doing. I happen to be one of these "Today Show" watchers, and the CEO of ExxonMobil was on there, a really nice guy with a deep voice and everything: "I thought I would come in." This was before Katie Couric left. "I thought I would come in and give our side of the story. We are for energy innovation. We are for getting oil and gas prices down."

This is what they are doing. This is E-85, what we call ethanol. This is supposed to be the alternative to help us with our energy independence. This is regular, special, and super plus. This is their deal. This is the old-school way of doing things. This is the expensive way of doing things. I am going to show you how this discourages you from getting ethanol.

You can use a Mobil credit card to buy the three levels there where we invest in the Middle East versus the Midwest. This is the Midwest investment using corn and other resources to make it happen. But it says here "Cannot use your Mobil credit card," period.

Now you can walk in the store and you can buy a bag of chips, you can

even probably buy a carton of cigarettes with your Mobil credit card, but you can't get E-85. The reason you can't get E-85 is because they don't want you to get E-85.

So when the President is running around here talking about Americans being addicted to oil, well, guess what, oil is addicted to the free-fall access that they have here in this House of Representatives and in the White House. They are getting their way. The American people are not getting their way, and it is point-blank.

And I would like to break this thing down to where everyone can understand. I don't need to tell you that I am on your side as a Member of Congress on this side of the aisle. I think those who are paying attention know whose side we are on. They know based on the record. It seems like they are more interested in helping the special interests. That is what the record reflects.

The record reflects that the special interests are getting exactly what they want. It is the best time in special interest days. It is not the best time in America; it is the best time for all of the big guys that wear nice ties and ride around in big cars, being driven around here in Washington, D.C. It is the heyday for them. It hasn't been better for special interests.

There are record-breaking profits for the oil companies. It hasn't been better in the history of drilling into the ground for oil. And guess what, it is on the backs of the American people. I mean, they are riding the backs of the American people, riding them down into the ground until their faces hit the ground and they scratch their forehead, on the backs of the American people, a la the Republican majority, the rubber-stamp Congress and the White House.

When you say that, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, we just have to break it down.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Let's break it down further, Mr. MEEK. If that was not enough evidence, let's take a look at a Congressional Research Service report, which is an objective body which provides information to the Congress, both parties, totally objective entity, provided a memo to Senator WYDEN last week, and that memo outlined the profits and revenue return for the oil companies from 1999 to now. And it demonstrated that the annual revenue return for eight oil companies increased from 2.88 percent in 1999 to 7.1 percent in 2005 while the return on shareholder equity went from 4.64 percent to almost 30 percent. Cash reserves for those same companies shot up from \$9.5 million in 1999 to \$57.8 million last year, and the capital investment that they made went from \$32.8 million to \$68.8 million in the same period.

The bottom line is that when they say they are investing their revenue that they are generating into alternative oil exploration, it is baloney. It

is absolutely not true. What they are doing is they are keeping their profits. They are holding onto their profits, and we are giving them the money by forgiving them royalty payments for the land that we are letting them drill for oil on.

So who is for the American people and who is just kidding?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. We had a debate right before the July 4 break.

□ 1915

When I was a State trooper in Florida, we used to have these little different details around the State of Florida. I was in Sebring, Florida, which is Highlands County, and I was talking to this farmer, and he said that "Pigs get fat and hogs get slaughtered."

And I am going to tell you right now, the oil companies and the access that they have to Members of Congress on the majority side to give them what they want, they are getting it all right now.

Let's look at the oil leases. They want to drill off the coast of Florida. Less than 1 percent, super less than 1 percent of 4,000 leases that they already hold, that they are actually going and drilling in those areas, but they wanted even more.

They wanted more, Mr. DELAHUNT. They wanted more because you know something? They can get it. It is like a kid sitting down at the table and they are eating ice cream and they have a tummy ache and they have ice cream all around their face, and they say, give me another gallon. And you give it to them.

And that is exactly what this Republican majority, this rubber-stamp Congress has done, everything they have asked for, because they have access through the K Street Project and other programs that allow them to see through the doors of this Chamber and have Members vote "yes" for what they want and "no" for what they don't want. And what they don't want is for the American people to be on a level keel to be able to push back on this feeding frenzy of not only their tax dollars and special interest giveaways, but to kill them at the pump.

I mean, I see people hesitate when they get out of their cars because they are, like, I don't know if I have room on my credit card. I don't know how much it is going to cost me today. The gas stations can't even change the charts out front fast enough because gas prices are going up.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Do you know what my husband and I noticed the other day when we were filling up our tank? That the dimes, you know how when we were little kids and the pennies are what scrolled really fast when you were filling up your gas tank. Now it is the dimes that scroll as fast as the pennies used to. I mean, that is how much things have changed. So dimes, you know, 10 dimes, that is a dollar. Bye-bye, every 10 dimes, another dollar gone.

And we have got to start moving energy policy, health care policy, the deficit in a new direction, which is what we would do with our innovation agenda. We would make sure that we commit to reaching energy independence through our midwestern, as opposed to the middle eastern dependence, through our ability to generate ethanol and invest in the research that would help us truly utilize ethanol as an energy resource.

Mr. DELAHUNT. If I could ask our chairman from Florida, just to raise once more that chart.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. This one?

Mr. DELAHUNT. Right. You know what I find interesting is, you pointed it out. It is the first time I have heard it, that you can't use that particular credit card, a Mobil credit card, did you say?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Yes. It says you cannot use your Mobil credit card, and then it has another sticker that says, not a Mobil product. But at the same time, neither are the potato chips, neither are the cigarettes, neither is a six-pack of beer.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Right. But it is at a Mobil station?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. That's correct, yes, sir.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Okay. But it is not a Mobil product. And you interpret it, as I did, as a way to discourage people from using a fuel source that, over time, could wean us from that mid-eastern oil and allow us to rely, again, once more on that farmer, that American farmer from the Midwest?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Yes, sir.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Okay. That is what we are talking about. That is really what we are talking about.

But you know what I find interesting? You raised it here in our conversation this evening. But has anybody, any chairman, if you are aware of any committee, standing committee of this House with this majority, requested or invited or insisted that the chairman of ExxonMobil come before it to explain to us and to the American people why does that product have that sticker about it when it is at a Mobil station? Just a simple question to educate us.

And it is clear that if it is a question that is not being asked by the majority, then nothing will change. And I would suggest it is the responsibility of this Congress and its committees to ask those questions because the American people deserve answers. And we are abrogating, we are not meeting our responsibility of oversight when those questions are not posed; and they are not being asked in this House of Representatives at this moment in our history, and it is a disgrace.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Look, the retirement package, Lee Raymond, CEO of Exxon, \$398 million retirement package. He gets a \$2 million tax break. So it is bad enough you are already subsidizing his business to the tune of \$14 or \$15 billion.



And this is the kind of disparity, we have the highest disparity between the wealthiest people in the country and the poorest people in the country since the 1920s, that is going like this. And the whole idea is to try to lift all the boats up into the middle class.

And we were talking earlier about the economy. This is, again, third-party validator, as we begin to wrap up. The long term, because we get a lot of happy talk, but the long-term outlook is such a deep well of sorrow that I can't get much happiness out of this year. That's a former director of the Congressional Budget Office that used to work for President Bush. It is such a deep well of sorrow.

This country is going in the wrong direction, whether you are talking about oil or Medicare or the war or Katrina or whatever, and my friend has got his toy there. This country is going in the wrong direction and we want to go in another direction.

If you like the neoconservative agenda that has been implemented, look around, gas, oil, retirements, pensions, minimum wage, Social Security, college tuition, keep the Republicans in office.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, just very quickly, the bottom line is, Mr. DELAHUNT, to your point, sir, the reason why the chairman hasn't called ExxonMobil in, the reason why everything that we have described here today is that we are on the total opposite side of their position.

We are not willing to rubber stamp everything that the President and the administration says must happen in this Congress. We are not willing to rubber stamp the special interests just because they are contributors to a particular campaign or something.

We are willing to stand up for the American people. And the reason why we have this rubber stamp down here on the floor, just to illustrate exactly what the Republican Congress has done, and that is the reason why we are in the situation we are in now.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I just think, at the end of the day, we need to stress that in November, when we have the opportunity to take the majority of this institution, we will move the country in a new direction.

We will make sure that we make a commitment to reducing the deficit and reduce it. We will expand access to health care. We will actually invest in alternative energy resources so that we can truly reduce gas prices. And we will make sure that the American people know that their Representatives are here for them and not for the special interests.

Mr. RYAN.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And even in the first couple of days, we will raise the minimum wage and cut college loan interest rates in half for parents and students. Just in the first couple of days, once we get this signed into law, we will recognize a huge difference.

Www.housedemocrats.gov/30something. All of the charts that we have here can be accessed on the Web site. Wwww.housedemocrats.gov/30something.

It has been a real pleasure.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, you did such an excellent job with the Web site.

I want to thank Mr. DELAHUNT for coming down and joining us this evening. We know that he could not join us yesterday evening.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, always a pleasure working with you here on the floor and off the floor.

What is good for the American people; and with that, Mr. Speaker, we thank the Democratic leadership.

#### EMBRYONIC STEM CELL RESEARCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WILSON of South Carolina). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, we have appeared here on the floor several times to talk about a subject which is very important to a number of Americans, particularly those with some debilitating diseases that they believe might be cured with technology developed from embryonic stem cells.

I have had the privilege of having several Members of the House to work with me in developing the legislation that we are going to talk about tonight. And one of those Members is Congressman TOM OSBORNE from Nebraska, who is here with us this evening. And I would like to yield to him.

Mr. OSBORNE. Thank you very much, Mr. BARTLETT. I really appreciate your leadership on this issue. And you are obviously the expert.

Mr. BARTLETT is a geneticist and understands the topic very well. I would just like to set the stage for some of the debate tonight.

Many of us have been impacted directly or indirectly by diseases like juvenile diabetes, Alzheimer's, Lou Gehrig's disease, Parkinson's and so on. And so I think everyone understands the desire for people to find a cure. And for many people, the silver bullet is embryonic stem cell research. And they feel this holds great promise. It has been going on now for about 7 years. We have not seen great progress, but it is still early in the process. So, as a result, there are many people who are pushing very hard for embryonic stem cell research.

On the other hand, many oppose embryonic stem cell research because they see the embryo as a living, viable human being; and therein lies the moral dilemma. On the one hand, people see the possibilities and on the other hand they see the destruction of life. And so is there a possible solution? Where do we come out on this?

If you believe that life begins at conception and if you believe in the sanctity of life, the destruction of embryos for research purposes would be largely unacceptable. And so, Mr. BARTLETT's legislation holds great interest to me, because we have found that there is a possible alternative.

The President has said that he will veto H.R. 810, which is a stem cell research bill. And if it is passed by the Senate, and people predict that it will be passed, then it will probably be vetoed by the President. And at that point, it appears as though the House will sustain that veto and probably the Senate as well. So we are right back to square one.

So is there an alternative? And that is why I am here tonight.

As many people may be aware by now, there is still the potential for a morally acceptable stem cell research to be conducted with Federal funds through the Bartlett bill. And evidently there is a process at the present time whereby embryonic stem cells can be extracted, and it is still in its elemental stages, without destroying the embryo. So I have great interest in this because it does provide an answer to the dilemma that I have just outlined.

And so, without a lot of further commentary from me, being somewhat of an amateur in the area, I would defer to Mr. BARTLETT, because he truly understands this research, which I think can be the answer that so many of us are looking for.

I personally am a very strong prolife individual, have voted consistently in that direction. And so I welcome this opportunity to look at a prolife solution to embryonic stem cell research.

I appreciate the gentleman's work on this bill, appreciate his knowledge, his expertise, which is certainly unparalleled in the Congress.

And with that, I just wanted to make those opening preparatory remarks and lend my support to this bill and this work that you are doing, and thank you for doing it.

□ 1930

This is all probably going to come to a head here in the next week or so; so this is a critical time. And what I think and others are trying to do is to create awareness and to make sure that people in the Congress understand the nature of the research that he is proposing.

So I commend you for your work. I want to wish you the very best, and hopefully in the next week or 10 days, we will see some positive results. So thank you for your leadership.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman for his support, for his leadership on this, and for his kind words.

I was fortunate in another life, before I came to the Congress, to have the privilege of working in this general area. I have a doctorate in human physiology, and I had the privilege of