

not have work now have work. How many of them used to have to settle for a welfare check, but now they have a paycheck?

How many took from the system, from unemployment and food stamps and Aid to Families with Dependent Children, who now get to pay in the system because they have a paycheck?

We have one of the strongest economies that we have had in decades. We have one of the lowest unemployment rates we have had. All of that was due to tax relief.

And, Madam Speaker, for purposes of this debate, and this is a very important point, and don't take my word for it, go to the United States Treasury. Tax rates have been lowered, and guess what? We have more tax revenue. We have more tax revenue than we have ever had in the history of the United States of America.

Now, how can that happen? Well, maybe it is difficult to understand in Washington, D.C., but it is pretty easy to understand in Tennessee Colony in Anderson County, Texas, that I have the pleasure of representing in the United States Congress. If you will allow farmers and ranchers, if you will allow small business people, if you will allow American families to keep more of what they earn, guess what? They will save. They will invest. They will go out and create their American dream and put a new automobile transmission shop on one street corner. They will add another couple of jobs at a barbecue stand. And guess what? They create jobs of the future, and we have more revenue.

Now, Madam Speaker, some people may reject this theory. You can't, you may have your own opinion, but you are not entitled to your own facts. You cannot debate that we have more tax revenue. But some people don't see a link between job creation and tax relief.

Even if I am wrong, Madam Speaker, if you will look at the Federal budget, if you will look at the Federal budget, if we had a line item called tax relief in the Federal budget, it is 1 percent, a little more than 1 percent of the entire Federal budget. Even if that money was wasted, burned, buried and didn't do any good to the economy, had no connection to job creation, to home ownership, to people being able to send their kids to college, it is about 1 percent of the budget.

My point is if you want to do something about the deficit, your focus needs to be on the spending side. We have a deficit not because we are undertaxed; we have a deficit because we are spending too much.

And listen, I take a back seat to no one as far as my concern about passing debt on to future generations. I am the father of a 5-year old and the father of a 3-year old. But even if we were to balance the budget today, and thanks to Republican progrowth economic policies, we will balance the budget, it has very little to do with spending dis-

cipline. We know we don't find any of that among our Democrat colleagues. It has everything to do with tax revenue growth.

But even if we were to balance the budget in the next few years, as my colleague from Tennessee has indicated, in Washington, D.C., tax relief is temporary, but spending is forever. So much spending has been put on automatic pilot. And it just doesn't grow horizontally, it grows exponentially.

If we don't do something now to reform the spending patterns in Washington, D.C., the next generation will face a nasty fiscal fork in the road. And don't take my word for it. Go to the General Accountability Office, the Office of Management and Budget, the Congressional Budget Office. They will all tell you the same thing. We are on the verge of either having to double taxes on the next generation or practically cut out the entirety of the Federal Government except Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security.

Just think about it, Madam Speaker. There will be no United States Marines. There will be no Border Patrol. There will be no student loans. There will be no airport security.

If we don't take fundamental steps now to end wasteful, unaccountable, runaway spending in Washington, D.C., that is the future we are facing. The Comptroller General of the United States has said in testimony before the Budget Committee that we may be on the verge of being the first generation in America's history to leave the next generation with fewer opportunities and a lower standard of living.

□ 1545

Madam Speaker, I don't plan to be a part of that, and I am going to do everything I can to fight this on this House floor. So those who go around saying we must balance the budget and those who won't do anything to try to find ways to get better retirement security and better health care at a lower cost, what they are really telling you, Madam Speaker, is, I want to double taxes on the next generation. I want to leave your children and your grandchildren with less freedom and less opportunity.

Madam Speaker, how anybody can look themselves in the mirror and do that, I don't know. Again, that is the magnitude of the tax increase that Democrats are going to have to have if they won't join us in a bipartisan fashion and do something about out-of-control entitlement spending. It will be a massive tax increase the likes of which America has never seen before. And once they impose that tax increase on the American people, how many of our children will be able to send their children to college? How many of our children will be able to realize their American Dream and start their first business? How many of our children will be able to buy their first home when this body doubles their taxes for refusing, refusing, to do anything to stop runaway spending?

So, Madam Speaker, that is where the fight is. That is where the fight is. Republicans want to try to reform. Democrats want to raise taxes, but they don't own up to the magnitude of the tax increases. But the future of our country is resting upon this debate, and I hope the American people will watch very, very closely.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman. As he has pointed out, in the 2006 budget we had reduced spending by \$40 billion. It was called the Deficit Reduction Act, a first step. Our colleagues across the aisle immediately increased spending in what was to have been a continuing resolution.

Then we look at taxes. We reduced taxes, which stimulated the growth of the economy and growth of jobs. Our colleagues across the aisle have already raised taxes by \$32 billion.

And as my colleague from Texas said, we have more workers than ever in the American workforce at this point in time. There are more Americans than ever holding a job and getting a paycheck. And over the past 4 years, we have seen the addition of 7.2 million new jobs to the U.S. economy. Now, these are not new hires. These are new jobs, newly created jobs. And, Madam Speaker, I think that that is important for us to put the attention on. These are jobs where a business owner sits down and says, "I can create a new position. We have our taxes down. We have seen some regulatory relief. We are doing well. We see growth in this business. We see a future that indicates growth." So they create a new position, and they hire someone to fill that position. That is how we get business growth. That is how we get business expansion.

And now we find that on top of increasing spending and on top of increasing taxes, our friends across the aisle are saying, We want to let the union bosses get another hit at those workers. We want to take away the workers' right to a secret ballot. We want to infringe on that freedom in the workplace that American workers enjoy that was a hard-fought battle decades ago, and we want to compromise that and give big labor a win."

And that, Madam Speaker, is how the liberal elites couch this battle. It is, as was said in the letter that I read, a return to coercion and intimidation. It is something that in the 21st century we should not do. I do personally consider it an inappropriate step for this House. This House should be focused on how do we expand freedom? How do we expand hope? How do we expand opportunity? And how do we make certain that every man, woman, and child has their shot at the American Dream in a safe, free, and productive country.

THE 30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. CLARKE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the

gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be here on the House floor to kick off another segment of the 30-something Working Group Special Order, soon to be joined by a group of 30-somethings in the Democratic Caucus to address issues pertaining to not only young people throughout the country, but citizens of our country and the kind of leadership that the Democratic Congress is providing here. So I appreciate the opportunity to be here.

Several issues that have been discussed prior to this by our friends on the other side that I would like to at least comment on. The first one is: The economy is going great.

I read an article with great interest today out of *The New York Times*. The title is "Growth in U.S. Economy is Slower Than Thought." This economy is only growing at 2.2 percent, in large measure, due to the fact that we haven't balanced our budget. We are nowhere near balancing our budget because of the Republican leadership in the House since 1994, and in the Senate and also in the White House. For many, many years, the Republican answer to balancing the budget or trying to make our payments is to go off to China and go to the banks in China and borrow money from the Chinese government in order to fund the increase in spending that the Republican House, Republican Senate, and Republican White House were pursuing.

And one friend, Madam Speaker, the gentleman from Texas, said that the economy has created 7.2 million new jobs.

When President Clinton was in and the Democrats balanced the budget in 1993 without one Republican vote, the expansion years under President Clinton, we created 20 million jobs. Welfare rolls were the lowest they had been. So you have to balance your budget, so you stop borrowing money from China.

And we have got a lot of other issues dealing with China as well. They are manipulating their currency, Madam Speaker, and we are starting to generate some support in the Democratic Congress for addressing this issue. China is not giving the proper alignment to their currency, and it gives them a 40-percent advantage to goods that they ship over here. And so if you have a company in the United States of America, like I do in Warren, Ohio, called Wheatland Tube, and Mr. ALTMIRE, who may join us here later, their raw materials cost as much as the product from China when it hits the shores of the United States, final product, because there is a 40-percent advantage that the Chinese have, Madam Speaker.

So because these issues haven't been addressed, Wheatland Tube is laying off 30 or 40 people, white collar jobs. So our friends have not addressed any of the issues.

But they have been talking about an issue that is near and dear to my heart, and that is the Employee Free Choice Act. This is a wonderful piece of legislation that is going to allow members of a workforce to merely sign if they want to start a union or not. And I hope that our friends recognize why. And I am from Youngstown, Ohio; so I find it funny when our friends start talking about these big labor bosses, to try to portray good, hardworking Americans who want to work for a decent wage and have health care, that somehow that is wrong and somehow that is unAmerican.

So this Employee Free Choice Act will allow our folks, our workers, to merely sign a card. And if half sign that they want to start a union, it is basic democracy at the workplace. You will be able to start a union.

Here is the reason why there is so much anxiety in the United States of America: We have had economic growth, but if you are not in the top 1 percent, you are getting squeezed. If you don't have a lot of money in the stock market, you are getting squeezed. And it took us almost 10 years to raise the minimum wage for average workers, and one of the first things the Democratic Congress did under the leadership of the Speaker, Speaker PELOSI, was to raise the minimum wage to try to get everybody in on the game.

But here is what has happened: This is from 2000 to 2004. The red line that is increasing is productivity, the change in productivity, the growth in productivity percentage-wise from 2000 to 2004. You see a tremendous increase in productivity.

Median income is the black line. It has actually gone down. So for the first time in history, increased levels of productivity have led to the decrease in median income. That means that our globalization, although it may benefit certain people and certain sectors of the economy, is leaving a lot of people behind.

So if workers want to join together to say how do we be a part of the solution here, how do we try to increase income? I think we should allow them to do that. We are not saying they have to. There is nobody intimidating anybody.

And my friend from Tennessee made a mistake, Madam Speaker, when she spoke. She was saying that the National Labor Relations Act and the National Labor Relations Board were there so workers didn't intimidate other workers to join unions.

The whole premise of the National Labor Relations Act is because business folks in that time had a tremendous advantage on firing workers and threatening workers. So we don't run from the fact that we want to allow people in the workplace to be empowered, and this is the reason we need to do it.

Now, as we do this, we also need an expansion of our international stand-

ards that we have. We have clean air in the United States, and it needs to be a lot cleaner, but we have made great progress. We need clean water in the United States. I am from the State of Ohio where the Cuyahoga River caught on fire because there was so much industry and pollution that it literally caught on fire.

We need to make sure that these standards that we have here in the United States somehow are transferred to the global economy so that when we are dealing with China, when we are dealing with India, when we are dealing with some of the Asian Pacific countries, we try to lift up the standards. It doesn't do us much good to clean the air in the United States of America and have dirty air in China. We are not making progress. So we have a long way to go. And I think what we are doing this week is making sure that our workers in the United States of America are allowed to do what we all do on election day, and that is join together and vote, and they should be allowed to join together and to vote as well.

One of the myths that we have with the Employee Free Choice Act is, well, you are going to have to sign a card and someone is going to know.

If you want to sign a card or a petition to even have an election, you have to sign a card or a petition in order to even have an election to start a union anyway. So we are not doing anything that is not already going on. You are either going to sign a petition to vote on it or you are going to sign a petition to actually create a union. And if you are willing to stick your neck out to have the vote, you are certainly going to be willing to stick your neck out to sign the petition in order to cast a ballot to create a union.

□ 1600

So I think we are dealing with very troubling times. We need to make sure that we are representing all of our country because, quite frankly, Madam Speaker, for the longest time in this country, the last decade or so, at least from this institution here that we represent in the House of Representatives, there has been such a tilt, such an emphasis on cutting taxes for the top 1 percent. And you are not going to see the Democratic Party raise taxes on the middle class at all.

But if we have a choice to make between borrowing the money from the Chinese in order to fund our government or asking people who are billionaires to pay a little bit more in taxes so that we can provide health care for children, we are going to ask the millionaires and the billionaires in the United States to pay a little bit more and to meet their obligation and to meet their responsibility to society. They have benefited from the United States stock market. They have benefited from the protection of the United States military. They have benefited from the infrastructure. They have

benefited from the Internet, which was developed from public research. They benefit from the vaccines. They benefit from the Centers for Disease Control. They benefit from public education. So if we ask the wealthiest to meet their obligation and their responsibility, as a beneficiary of this great society, to put back into our society in order to keep the game going, we are going to need to do that.

And if you question the priorities of the Democrats, all you need to do is look at what is going to happen in our supplemental, where there is going to be an additional millions of dollars, to the tune of \$750 million, for health care for children, Children's Health Insurance Program. Do you want to talk about priorities, Madam Speaker? Under the Republican leadership, 6 million children were eligible for the SCHIP program, but weren't registered.

So all we are saying is we are going to take every opportunity we can possibly get to make sure that those kids get the kind of health care that they need and they deserve in the wealthiest country on the face of this Earth in the entire history of our planet, Mr. MURPHY.

And we don't shrink from these. I would be happy to talk about our decisions that we have made here in this Congress since we started several months ago to anybody who wants to listen. We passed the minimum wage increase out of this House with \$1.3 billion in tax credits for small businesses so that they can reinvest back into their companies to keep the game going, to keep the economy going.

We reduced and cut in half the interest rates on student loans, which will save the average person who takes out a student loan almost \$4,500 over the course of the loan. That is what the Democrats did in the first 100 hours. We increased the minimum wage. We cut student loan interest rates in half. We repealed corporate welfare by about \$13 billion. We are going to take that money and we are going to invest it into alternative energy research.

We put PAYGO on because we are signaling that we are going to make a balanced budget a priority in this House. Got to be done. Got to be done. We have implemented some of the recommendations from the 9/11 Commission report to make the country safer, and we allowed the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate down drug prices on behalf of the Medicare recipients.

That is what you call governing. That is what you call moving an agenda forward. And that includes making sure that these workers who work every day, work hard every day, go to work every day, work overtime, lead increases in productivity, that they can at least benefit a little bit from it.

And I would be happy to yield to our fearless leader from Connecticut, the fighting Irishman, Mr. MURPHY.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Thank you, Mr. RYAN. And it is quite an honor

to be able to share the floor with a gentleman as articulate as yourself.

I know where you are from, and I can imagine that you have a lot of families, probably including your own, that shares the story of my family. My great-grandfather and my grandfather both worked at Fafnir Ball Bearing, which was a massive ball bearing factory in New Britain, Connecticut. It employed thousands of people in the New Britain area and partnered together with the Stanley Tool factory. Those two together employed over 10,000 people in New Britain in its heyday.

The city looks very different today. Those sites are either brownfields with nobody in them, or now sort of struggling office parks. My office, which I inherited from Congresswoman JOHNSON, is in actually a site that used to be owned by those manufacturers.

But the story that we are talking about today is not necessarily a story of manufacturing, it is a story of the workers that were there. It is no coincidence to me that as you chart the history of our middle class in this country, as you chart the growing disparity between those that are doing very, very well and those that are struggling just to get by and cope with the daily cost of their lives, I don't think that it is just a coincidence that during that time, as we have seen a middle class vanish before our eyes, or at least become on the precipice of vanishing, and you see that disparity, that gap between rich and poor grow bigger and bigger, that that has happened during the same time that we have seen unionization rates drop through the floor. Because the middle class that my family came up through, which is that working-class middle class, the folks that are making enough money to get by, enough money to give their kids a little bit better chance at life than they had, but they are not doing enough to buy a second home, they are not doing enough to buy many luxuries, that group of Americans, diminishing by the year, doesn't have a lobbyist up here. That group of Americans doesn't have a pool of money in which they can employ people to advocate on their behalf here in this Chamber.

The group that has done that historically over time have been unions. They advocate to make sure that their ranks are swelled as well, but they also have been, frankly, the people that have been advocating year in and year out up here in this House to make sure that we have a healthy middle class.

And so I am fairly unapologetic about my support for the bill tomorrow, that we are going to basically level the playing field. I think that is what you were talking about, Mr. RYAN, is that we are not giving any unfair advantage to workers, we are simply saying that we want to level the playing field when it comes to organization in this country. And I think that is the right thing to do for work-

ers. But as a member of a family that only has survived because of a society and an economy that once produced jobs that had real pensions and real health care benefits attached to them, we need to start figuring out a way to make sure that those folks get advocated for here in this House.

And as you recited that long and important list of achievements here in the House during the first 100 hours, that is all about that group of people. That is all about making this House a place where those middle-class, working-class folks get a voice: again, minimum wage; taking away the big tax breaks for the oil companies; starting to lower the cost of health care; investing in life-saving research. That is bread-and-butter work for the middle class.

The gist of it is this: This bill, the Employee Free Choice Act, tomorrow is going to level the playing field to allow some of these folks that have been before Congress fighting for a very long time for that healthy middle class to be able to continue to emphasize and increase that voice. And that is as important as anything we do here because, as Mr. RYAN and Mr. MEEK and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ have been talking about on this floor night in and night out for far too long, the voices that have mattered here have been the folks that have the big wallets that can pay the high-priced lobbyists to come in this building. And we don't begrudge the work that people who advocate on behalf of people do here, but frankly, we need advocates here for folks that don't have those dollars. And whether we like it or not, unions in this country have done that job, and they have done it well with decreased numbers because of a system we have set up that ends up making it very difficult for workers to organize.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And this is not by any stretch of the imagination are we saying that workers don't need to be flexible, unions don't need to be flexible. We are now competing with the globe. And our workers now, as we have seen in large measure through the suppression of wages and everything else, this is a global workforce where just from 1985, where it was 2.5 billion people, now it is up to almost 6 billion in the global workforce. So that in and of itself increases the level of competition for our own workers, which has led to the wage issue that we have to deal with and everything else.

So we are not saying that unions don't need to be flexible. I come from an area of the country where we had a lot of steel mills. Now there is just one or two left of the integrated variety, and the tremendous, tremendous changes that the steelworkers have gone through. And I have a good friend, Gary Steinbeck, Madam Speaker, a friend back home who is subdistrict director for the United Steelworkers in Ohio, and the tremendous changes in work rules that the steelworkers have made in order to keep the industry

afloat. These folks are ready to sit down and figure this out, and they know that.

But our point is look what has been happening here. This is a chart, "Change in Share of National Income from 2003 to 2004." The bottom 99 percent has had negative 2 percent change in their share of the national income; the top 1 percent has seen almost a 2 percent increase in their share of national income. This is a structure that cannot stand, man. It cannot stand, man. This cannot stay the way it is. This cannot continue.

You can't have this separation where the top 1 percent is increasing their share of the pie and everybody else is getting reduced. You can't have it. And so what we have tried to do here is bring some equity to the system and, since we have been in Congress, increasing the minimum wage; cutting student loan interest rates in half; investing in stem cell research to try to open up another industry where we can create jobs for our kids, the next generation; making sure we repeal the corporate welfare for the oil companies and invest that money in alternative energy sources so we can open up a new sector of our economy with research and health care and biotechnologies and alternative energy sources. We have a long-term agenda here by helping people today and open up these two new sectors. This can't go on. We can't continue like this, Mr. MURPHY, and call ourselves the greatest democracy in the world.

And when you go around the world and you are trying to sell democracy and capitalism, that is not a very good argument. You know, that is kind of what a lot of countries in a lot of other parts of the world look like, where the top 1 percent get all the benefits, and the rest of the rest of their country doesn't see the progress.

Can I make one final point, because I am getting worked up. We only have 300 million people in the country. We don't have the luxury of having a billion people like they do in India. We don't have the luxury of 1.3- or 1.4 billion like they do in China. We only have 300 million people. So we need to make sure that everybody is on the field playing for us, educated, skilled, and moving the country forward. This cannot stand, man.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Here is what we are talking about here. So how do we take that chart that you are showing there, which I agree cannot continue to be the way that our society operates. We cannot be a flourishing democracy, we cannot be a flourishing economy if we have so many people doing so poorly and a small group of people doing very well. So how do we go about changing that?

And I think the message is that we are not talking in this Chamber about big new government programs. We are not talking about creating new departments and new bureaucracies. All we are talking about is take the existing

programs, take the existing set of rules and make them fair. Make them fair. Give everybody a chance to compete. That is what increasing the minimum wage is. I mean, 10 years, while every other cost goes up and the minimum wage stays where it is? Just bring it up to where it needs to be. Just match inflation with your minimum wage.

Student loan rates. As the cost of college goes up 41 percent since 2001, well, let's help families match that increasing cost of higher education.

And the same thing with the Employee Free Choice Act.

□ 1615

Let us have our eyes open to what the reality is on the ground for those who want to organize. Let us recognize how employers have changed some of their tactics, and let us give employees the opportunity to operate on that same level playing field.

That is what this is all about. This is about taking the rules that we have and making them fair, not coming in and creating big new government bureaucracies to help these folks.

One of the most important things we did here was the bill in the first 100 hours that allows the Federal Government to negotiate lower prices with the drug companies. That is a great example of one of the few instances where this Congress did create a new bureaucracy, and when they created it, they set rules that disadvantaged regular, average taxpayers and the senior citizens who were supposed to benefit. They created this big new health care program and created the rules to tilt the playing field in favor of those people who needed no extra help.

This Congress has to be about taking those programs that are right there in front of our faces and making them work again. I think if we do that, we will live up to your mandate that we cannot let this stand.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. It cannot stand, man. It cannot stand. I totally agree with you.

The fact that our friends, and can you imagine our friends on the other side of the aisle, our Republican friends, who are deficit hawks, and they are still talking about it. It is hilarious to hear, Madam Speaker, the contradictory aspects of their words and their deeds. There is still a lot of talk about, you know, being a deficit hawk and balancing the budget.

It was the Republican party, Madam Speaker, that started the Medicare prescription drug bill. They originally said it was \$400 billion, then it was \$700 billion, and then it was a trillion. And the night we voted on it at 3 in the morning, it was a \$400 billion bill. That was a good deal. Then we find out months later it was actually a trillion dollars, and that the actuaries that knew it was going to cost a trillion dollars, they weren't allowed to tell anybody.

So this Congress voted on legislation without all of the facts, and a major fact was the cost. But the point here is

our friends not only passed that bill without telling us all of the information, they also put, as you said, a provision in there that explicitly would not allow the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate down drug prices on behalf of the Medicare recipients. They didn't leave it ambiguous, they stated in the bill you're not allowed to negotiate down drug prices on behalf of all of these millions of seniors who want to participate in this new drug benefit.

Now did it have anything to do with the pharmaceutical lobby being up here so much and donating all kinds of money, I will leave that for the American people to decide. But the fact of the matter is, within the first 100 hours that we got in, we changed that provision. Once we passed it out of here, we need to get it through the Senate and hopefully the President will sign it. But in our legislation we allowed the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate down drug prices.

We hear a lot about the free market, but what is a better representation of the free market than allowing all these consumers to join together and negotiate down drug prices or anything else on behalf of the recipients.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. You spoke earlier about the need for unions to be flexible. I couldn't agree more. This is an inexorable march to a very new global economy, and nobody can deny that is happening, and we have to ask our workers and the unions that represent them, just like we ask our employers, to figure out a way so America can compete in that new environment.

You talked about the steel industry. That is a remarkable instance. Actually, not that remarkable; it happens more than I think people are given credit for, of workers and industry really coming together before this body and singing a very similar tune.

We have to remember that as much press might be given to unions and the companies that they work for fighting over contracts, when it comes down to it, both of them only are able to prosper if the economy is strong and if their company is strong. So on the vast majority of this that they are going to come and talk to this Congress about, they are going to advocate in their communities for, they are going to be on the same page.

When you talk about that, maybe there is no better example than our health care system. You are talking about it in the context of our new Medicare prescription drug program, but if we want to figure out a way to compete in this world, we have to figure out why \$1,500 of every car sold in this country goes for retiree health care benefits compared to only a couple of hundred dollars in Japanese manufacturing plants. We have to figure out a way to deal with the fact that 16 percent of every dollar spent in this country goes to health care costs compared to 9 or 10 cents in most of the

countries that we compete with. We put an exorbitant amount of money into employee benefits and health care in general, which puts us at a tremendous competitive disadvantage compared to the rest of the world. That is something that employers, workers, government officials, we should all be able to agree on. We should all sit here and try to tackle that very grave question of how do we get health care costs under control. That is the salvation of American manufacturers and American small businesses. Frankly, it is also the salvation of American workers and unions. If we can figure out a way to have that conversation, that benefits everybody.

We have given a lot of emphasis and put a lot of light on the fact that everything we have done here as part of that 100-hours agenda has had very large numbers of our friends from the Republican side of the aisle supporting us here. You have the numbers right in front of you. You can tell the story, Mr. RYAN.

Sometimes government gets shed in a light that tries to accentuate controversy, just as sometimes the relationship between workers and their employers tends to be told in a manner that accentuates adversity and strife.

Well, in this Chamber, in my first 8 weeks as a Member of Congress, it has been remarkable the amount of bipartisan cooperation we have seen. It shows in the vote totals. Maybe it doesn't show in the headlines, but it shows in the vote totals.

I think the same story can be told about the relationship between workers and employers in this country. I think there will be a bunch of people grouching about what comes out of this House tomorrow, but I think in the end, by leveling that playing field, we will stimulate a lot of productive cooperative relationships in our economy.

I thank the Members of the 30-something Working Group who have over the last 2 to 3 years stood up on this House floor to talk about the fact that this place had to work together. I think a lot of sectors of our economy, a lot of members of our community takes cues from what happens in Washington. I think to the degree they see this place just being about Democrats and Republicans fighting, then I think they may reflect that in their operations and in their daily life. I thank members of the 30-something Working Group and other Members who have talked about bipartisanship. I think what has happened here in the past several weeks is going to be instructive to a lot of relationships in our country and in our economy going forward.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. To further our point, this is real median household incomes as to why we need to do this. The Free Choice Act that we are going to pass out of this House tomorrow, it is not for the employers who treat their workers well which most are. It is for a few people that are obviously getting mistreated and they want to join

together. Now that seems to me a basic principle of our democratic society.

This is real median incomes from 2000. In 2000, they were \$47,500. In 2005, it is \$46,300, a decline. This is what we are talking about.

Now you can either be in a position of power and say that is fine and you are not going to do anything about it, or you are going to be in a position of power and say we are going to try to help, we are going to try to fix this. Do we have all the answers, no. But we are going to try to raise the minimum wage so this person may get a pay raise. We are going to pass the Employee Free Choice Act, so maybe if you are having a problem and want to join together and try to affect this situation, you can. We are not saying you have to, we are saying you can.

And if you happen to be this same family who has seen a decline and you have a kid in school and you are taking out loans, we are going to cut the interest rate loan in half to try to close this gap a little bit because we are in a position of responsibility. We are not here to give away the store, but we are here to say there are issues where we can help people.

You know what, if we have to ask somebody who makes a million dollars a year to help us do this, to invest in education, invest in the stem cell research and invest in alternative energy resources, we have to do it.

As a politician, as a Member of Congress, I would love to go to all of my constituents and say you all get a tax cut, and we are going to lower your tuition costs, we are going to provide health care for poor kids, we are going to retrain workers, and we are going to build roads and bridges, we are going to provide for the defense of the country to make all this possible, and we are going to have stable financial markets, but we are also going to give you a tax cut. We are going to put a court system in place so that we have the rule of law.

You know, one of the most expensive things to do is have a justice system with police and sheriff departments and courts and judges and attorneys and public defenders and prosecutors to make this whole thing go, to enforce contract law. That is all expensive stuff. All we are saying is we are trying to keep this thing rolling, man. We have had a pretty good thing going on. We just want to keep it going, and you can't see the top 1 percent do well and the bottom 99 percent, as I was showing in the earlier chart, not do well, actually see a decline in income by 2 percent.

So what we need to do is move forward in a very comprehensive way, not in a radical way, but some of the stuff we have already done.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. I was asked a question at a Chamber of Commerce meeting that I went to back in my district last week. Someone challenged me and asked a question that went something like this. They said if

you had the choice to take a dollar and put it back into the economy through the private sector or through the public sector, which one do you think does a better job at stimulating our economy. I kind of didn't understand the gist of the question.

What he was getting at was this idea, I think, that he thinks that people on this side of the aisle somehow think that government spending should be done for the purposes of stimulating our economy. Listen, that couldn't be further from the truth. What we want to do is decide on a set of services and a set of priorities that the government will be a part of, and then find the money that is sufficient to pay for that.

We all agree that if we have our choice, every extra dollar goes right back into people's pockets. Every extra dollar we have goes right back into the economy. All we need to agree on here, and it is a big all, is what those set of priorities and services are. People in my district think one of them should be investing in stem cell research. That is just my district. But they think you know what, one of the things that we can probably do better together rather than separately, rather than simply through philanthropic contributions, is to take on some of the most insidious and terrible diseases known to man. That is something they think we should do.

It wasn't agreed upon by this Chamber until the Democrats took back this House and NANCY PELOSI took over the Speaker's chair, but now we include it in the group of things that we think we are going to do better together.

I think we all agree that every extra dollar we have goes right back into this economy. But let us think about this. When we are talking about putting dollars back into the lands of middle class folks, lower middle class folks, working class folks, whether it is through tax breaks to small businesses that employ them, whether it is through a cut in the student loan interest rate, or whether it is through a minimum wage bill that gives them a little more every week, we know that every single one of those dollars is going right back into the economy.

Now that is, in part, because there is not a lot of flexible income for people in that situation today. Every dollar they get has to go back into the economy. When you talk about tax cuts and where they should go, you talk about new government programs and whether they should benefit the pharmaceutical companies or whether they should benefit senior citizens, I will take middle class workers, I will take senior citizens every time, not just because I think they are who we should be here sticking up for, but because I know that every dollar we put back in their pocket is going to end up at the local florist, is going to end up at the local grocery store, is maybe going to end up being put into a local charity or community group. We are talking about recycling good community money when

we are talking about trying to give a leg up, Mr. RYAN.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. There was a funny article in, I think it was Roll Call when we first got in how frightened the banks were about the whole student loan deal.

□ 1630

Because we have been talking about possibly doing just direct student loans, here is the government money, here is a student, you give him the money, he takes it and he pays you back with a little bit of interest, boom, done. That sounds pretty efficient to me.

Well, the banks are upset because they were worried that if we changed the system as it was, that they were not going to make money, the banks, thanks to the student loans. And I am sorry, but we are not here to make you money. You want to talk about welfare, you want to talk about getting on the public dole, my God, you go out and compete with everybody else. We are not here to pay you 6 percent or 8 percent on a student loan. We are here to get a kid into college that cannot afford it otherwise. That is our responsibility, and this kid is going to get a degree and then a master's degree, and he is going to help us create this new economy.

Here is what we are talking about with cutting student loan interest rates in half, the stem cell bill for stem cell research, and alternative energy, repealing the corporate welfare.

We have got to create new industries. Whether you vote for the free trade agreements or not, we are in a global economy, and we are competing with China and India and the rest of the world. As we see some of the traditional manufacturing move offshore, some legitimately, some not so legitimately, because of what China's doing with their currency, we have got to come up with what the new industries are. So what we have tried to do is invest in the stem cell research and invest in alternative energies, the future job creators, and then also make sure that college is affordable by increasing the Pell Grant and making sure we cut student loan interest rates in half so kids will go to college and then have these long-term sectors of the economy that are growing that they can move into.

But if we do not have healthy, educated citizens moving in, getting educated, moving into college and helping us create this economy, all this is for naught. We need a lot more people creating a new economy than we did 50 years ago.

My grandfather worked in a steel mill. He went to high school until 10th or 11th grade. That was another world ago, and unfortunately in this institution, if we start playing the same game we have been playing for 50 years, and I think both sides, and I think we have recognized this because the minimum wage bill that we passed had \$1.3 bil-

lion in tax cuts for small businesses to reinvest back into their companies.

So the idea of if you cut taxes for the rich, they are going to invest back in the United States and create jobs, that is done. We know that. They get a tax cut, and they invest it in Asia, okay. It is your money; do what you want with it. But let us not pretend they are going to somehow build a factory in Niles, Ohio, and hire a thousand people. Not going to happen.

And the Democratic philosophy, old one, not the one as we know from what we have already done here, was if you write a bigger check, somehow the problem is going to go away.

I think the king of leadership that the Speaker is providing, and STENY HOYER and Blue Dogs and JIM CLYBURN and some of the newer members in the 30-something Working Group is there is a middle way here. There is a way where we can raise the minimum wage and give small business tax cuts. We can cut student loan interest rates in half and do stem cell research. We can repeal corporate welfare that is going to energy companies who seem to be doing okay, they do not really need our \$13 billion, and put that in alternative energy research.

There is a middle way here that we are trying to negotiate that I think is 21st century government.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. You are exactly right, and that is where the American people are. There are folks out there that are far to this side of the political and ideological spectrum, and there are people out there that are far to this side, but you know where the majority of bread-and-butter Americans lie. They lie in that place where they are seeking some solutions here that are part of that middle way, a part of that third way.

In Connecticut, I spent 4 years as the chairman of the Health Committee. In Connecticut, we have a lot of pharmaceutical companies, and we found a way to try to mitigate some of the deleterious influences that that structure imposes on citizens, while trying to partner with them to do some of the good work that can grow that new economy.

I disagreed day and night with the pharmaceutical industry when I tried to get Connecticut to be part of re-importing prescription drugs from Canada, but you know what, we fought hand in hand, arm in arm, linked together when we were trying to make Connecticut one of the first three States to invest in stem cell research because we knew that our pharmaceutical industry, we knew that our biotech industry were going to flourish if we helped plant some of the seeds with government funding because we know in today's economy that venture capitalists are not terribly interested in funding some of those new biotech ideas, funding those new baseline pharmaceutical research. So government in that instance can spend a couple cents to grow a couple private dollars.

So there is that way to sort of say enough is enough, we are going to do something about trying to help citizens get some cheaper drugs from Canada, we are going to talk about trying to use the power of the Federal Government to negotiate lower prices, but there are so many places we can cooperate. There are so many places that you as a pharmaceutical industry, you as an information technology industry can be part of growing this country.

You know as well as I do that the reason that businesses are still here in the United States and the reason why businesses come to a high-cost area like the Northeast is the workforce. We still have the best trained, most highly educated and, most importantly, most productive workforce in the Nation. So when we are investing in the minimum wage, when we are investing in higher education funding, I mean, we are investing in what is the current and the future of this economy.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I agree, and there are so many fields that we need to explore. It is nice to say, well, everyone is going to go to college and do this and do that, has my boy not done well, but there are a lot of other things that I think have great dignity and great contributions to our economy.

By the year 2010, we are going to need 200,000 welders that pay pretty well, and in my community I met with a vocational school. They are starting at 13, 14, 15 bucks an hour. People told me a story of a guy making 30 bucks an hour as a welder with full health care benefits.

So as we pursue this college, we also have to remember the community college pipeline, the vocational school pipeline for truck drivers and welders and a lot of these other industries that we continue to figure out how does this company, as China is expanding, how do we export and sell them something and grow our employment base here.

So there are a lot of different things that I think we need to talk about that the approach is so much different from what we are doing than our friends on the other side.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. If the gentleman would yield for a moment, a story for you.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. A good Irish story.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. I like sharing stories, an Irish story from my Polish mother.

She tells a story about she was going back to school to get some classes for her degree in teaching. She was getting some classes at the local community college, and she told this story to me when she came back from registration.

She was in a line to register for her course, and there were a number of different lines to register for different courses. About three or four lines down from her, there was a gentleman who was waiting in line sort of nervously, thumbing through his pockets, sort of counting the money in his pockets. He got to the head of the line, and she

could sort of see what was happening over there and realized that he was maybe \$30, \$40 short of the cost of that particular class. He fumbled through his pockets. A couple of people behind him tried to help him come up with the money. He did not have it and walked away, walked out that door.

What my mother said, and I agreed with her, was you can imagine the courage that it took that young guy who maybe had not been to school in a very long time, decided this is it, I am going to go back, I am going to start down that path again, I am going to go to my local community college, I am going to have the courage to step up and restart my education, and gets in the line and realizes he does not have the \$380 that it costs to get that class. That right there, that could be that welder. That could be that information technology worker. That could be somebody using the stepladder of education to become part of this incredibly productive economy.

Because we still have barriers to increasing your educational opportunities, to being a more productive member of our workforce, we handicap ourselves. We handicap ourselves.

And I think of the story of that guy over and over again when I think about higher education funding, when I think about not only what that would mean for him personally, but what that means for our economy in general. Our strength is our workforce, and if we do not start investing in it, we are going to have even more trouble than we are competing in this global economy.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. There is no question, and the more you get into this, the more you see, and again it is not that government is the only answer, but I will give you an example.

We had today in our Health Appropriations Committee, there is a tremendous nursing shortage, health care shortage, and there are some programs that will help nurses with low-interest loans. If you are going to go into nursing, you get these low-interest loans to try to get minority and low-income nurses and health care workers into the field. So there is another program that will go in and try to recruit and get people in and help them pay for it in order for us to get nurses and health care workers in the underserved areas.

That program, I think this is the one that was zeroed out by the President in his budget. Now, does that make any sense at all? We have a nursing shortage, and we have tremendous health issues for our kids and poor families that we need. As I said earlier, we have only got 300 million people. We need them all on the field playing against China and India, that we are not going to make this little bit of investment into making sure that we get health care workers in underserved areas?

The health care system is already getting skewed to the suburbs where a lot of these health care systems can make money in the suburbs, and the level of charity care in the cities are going through the roof.

So it does not make any sense not to make those investments because the yield that we are going to get is going to be tremendous. Not only are you getting someone that otherwise would be less productive to be more productive, they are in a field of nursing. They are going to make decent bucks, going to pay taxes. Their kids are probably going to go to college. I mean, this cycle continues.

Let us get it going in a positive way, not dissimilar to what is happening, like you mentioned, with the college tuition costs. Four hundred thousand kids in this country qualify and have the grades to go to college but do not because they feel they cannot afford it or they can afford it, one or the other, but either way it is an impediment for 400,000 Americans going into college. Now, would that not be great?

These are the kind of issues that I think we need to fix, and to ask a millionaire to pay a little bit more, I think, is a lot better than borrowing it from China, which is what we are doing now, and there is a real decision that we need to make.

We are talking about in our committee about streamlining the SCHIP program, you know, like when you qualify for free and reduced lunch, you just sign your name, how many members of your family and what your income is, and you qualify for free and reduced lunch. Well, we want to do that for SCHIP so we make sure we are covering all our kids, that they have health care.

You can argue about the situation of parents and everything else, but you do not blame the kids for that, and you make sure they have got the kind of health care that they need. And how do we make sure that my goal, and I do not know how long this is going to last, but my goal is to make sure we have nurses and doctors and clinics in some of these schools. You have some of these schools where 80, 90 percent of the kids qualify for free and reduced lunch, qualify for SCHIP. Let us put a clinic in there and tie it to the health care program, tie it to the wellness program, make sure these kids are getting the kind of attention that they need, and in all the while, make sure that we demand as elected leaders and leaders in our community, demand from the parents to send your kids to school ready to learn, and you as a parent do your share, too.

This is not a one-way ticket where we are going to do everything, or the teachers are somehow going to have to do everything, but both sides. We need to be innovative. We need to create these new ideas and implement them and reform government and make proper investments in a balanced way, but the parents and the schools need to also step up, and the parents especially. The basic fundamental structure of our society is the family. They need to step up, send their kids ready to learn, and provide their own personal leadership.

So I yield to my friend for some closing remarks.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Thank you, and I do not know how long my career will last either, but it is starting here in my first 8 weeks in the House only because me and 100,000 other people in northwestern Connecticut decided things had to change, there was no choice; that we could not sit back any longer and let the status quo go on; that we could not watch the disparity between rich and poor, those doing well and those struggling to make ends meet, could not watch that get any worse.

So what this election was about, what this first 100 hours was about, what everything that comes after that is about is about restoring that balance. So for all of the challenges that we put before this House during the time we spend here, for as many charts that paint a gloomy picture, I mean, there is light on the horizon. The work we have already done here means something.

You talked about the 400,000 kids that did not go to college because they could not afford it. Well, if we can get this student loan bill through the Senate and to the President's desk, that is almost \$5,000 in savings. I bet you there is a good percentage of those 400,000 families that if they knew that college ultimately, after they paid back all their loans, was going to cost \$5,000 less, they would make the choice to go.

Things are happening here which are going to make those concerns of middle-class families tomorrow with the Employee Free Choice Act and later as the bills in the 100 hours come through this process, they are going to make a difference.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I agree with you. One more, with the SCHIP thing, I get excited about this stuff because it is really cool, but with the SCHIP thing you will fill out your form, you do your free and reduced lunch, you will do your SCHIP deal and also start to get letters from the Department of Education at third, fourth grade as to what Pell Grant number you will get as far as how much you will be able to receive from Pell Grant based on your income. So these kids, this is the new way of doing things. This is you do not just spend the money. You change the psychology of the kid and the family.

If a kid in third grade who would never think of going to college starts getting this Pell Grant, you qualify for \$4,000 or \$5,000 a year in a Pell Grant when you go to college, not if, when, you know that kind of kid all of a sudden is now thinking about college or trade or something.

□ 1645

So we are trying to do this all in the same way. And I hope that we recognize, I think as NANCY PELOSI has, Madam Speaker, that America was great because we were the ones who wanted to be the best at everything. So why don't we have the best health

care? Why don't we have the best education? And let's get down to business and start doing it.

Any questions for Members who are listening. www.speaker.gov/30something is our Web site. E-mail is 30SomethingDems@mail.house.gov.

And I have got to confess, I did not know your mom is Polish. I just figured you were 100 percent Irish.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. It is not a secret, Mr. RYAN. I am very proud of my Polish heritage. I'm glad that it has come out into the open this afternoon.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. It is now public.

And we yield back the balance of our time.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Ms. Wanda Evans, one of his secretaries.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. CLARKE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Welcome to the Speaker's chair and the gavel of the United States Congress. It is a big and important thing to serve in this place, and it is always an honor to walk down here on the floor. It is absolutely an honor to be seated there in the Speaker's chair that has seated so many esteemed colleagues on both sides of the aisle. And the kind of leadership that has come from there back through history, the halls and the floor here echo with their influence, and the destiny of America has absolutely been redirected by that seat and by that gavel, and will continue to do so. And I very much look forward to continuing to work in this capacity.

I come to the floor this afternoon, Madam Speaker, to raise an issue here and carry on a discussion that is the most intense discussion item across America. And I would challenge anyone to walk into a coffee shop or a place of work or anyplace where Americans gather to talk about the issues of the day, and you don't have to change the subject, just stop and listen, ask a question and see what comes up first. Maybe the weather, maybe a sports team.

But when it shakes down to it, Madam Speaker, and we have talked about all of the amenities and the niceties and the general discussion topics that don't have a lot of substance but carry on the day, in the end, in America we get down to one of two subjects, and that is either the global war on terror on which Iraq is a principle battleground, or it is immigration. And sometimes it is both.

And having just come back from another trip to the border last week about now a week ago, and having been

flush full of the things that I learned down there, I am compelled to come here to the floor, Madam Speaker, and raise the issue and begin to examine this subject and topic a little bit more.

We have now, for about 3 years, had an intense debate and discussion on immigration, and there are those of us here in this Chamber, in fact, this House of Representatives last fall voted to build a double fence/wall on the southern border, and laid out the distances, the locations and the distances from those locations. And, when calculated and totaled up, it becomes clear that Congress has mandated, the House and the Senate has mandated that there be 854 miles of at least double-walled fencing, a double fencing or a double fencing and wall constructed upon our southern border in priority areas, Madam Speaker. And last week, I went down to review some of the beginnings of that construction.

It also establishes a mandate that the Secretary of Homeland Security, Mr. Chertoff, will establish interlocking cameras and other technology along the border, and he has until May 31 of this year to complete the construction of the interlocking technology according to authorization of the Secure Fence Act, and another year to complete the construction of the double fencing and that 854 miles of that priority area. And then, with the exception of an area at Laredo that is 15 miles, that are 15 miles of either side of Laredo, and that those 15 miles can be constructed in the 2008 construction season on up until December 30 of 2008, that is the congressional mandate, Madam Speaker.

That is the mandate that was passed by a significant majority here in the House of Representatives, and a mandate that was passed by a vote that I do remember in the Senate that was 80-19. It was bipartisan, obviously. It had very solid support. And the reason that it had such solid support is this physical barrier that is mandated by Congress and signed by the President, bipartisan mandate, House and Senate, Madam Speaker; these physical barriers or these pairs of physical barriers, double fencing and walls, are something that is not an administrative decision; it is not something that is necessarily prone to human failure or human error or human lack of will to enforce. If you put those barriers in there, they are going to do some good regardless of whether there is anyone there that is maintaining and manning and guarding them or not, which, of course, we need to do.

And any kind of a structure that we put in place must be maintained, it must be guarded, it must be manned. It needs to have sensors on it. But these barriers will allow our Border Patrol officers and other backup enforcement officers that we have to be able to respond in a more effective fashion. And if they are going to defeat the barriers, it will take time to do that. And if they trip the sensors, and they should,

that will give our Border Patrol officers an opportunity to descend upon that site and make the kind of arrests that are necessary so that the word gets out that there are areas of this border at least that you had better not try to cross.

Now, this area in San Luis, Arizona is just south of Yuma. It is a community on the U.S. side that is as far southwest as you can get on the border in Arizona. This is a location that has had some rather permanent steel wall right on the border that has been there for some time, and we have added to that. Now, this permanent steel wall, this is a steel landing mat, interlocking landing mat that is welded together along that border, is being extended in both directions from San Luis. And I reflect also in hearing the remark from the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) that we need some 200,000 welders by the year 2010 or 2012, I forget which exact year that was.

I have heard those kinds of cries for help before, and I have lived through those deadlines, and we always seem to come up with the number of people we need to do the job that is necessary. One of the things we do is we just simply pay people what it is worth and they show up to do the job. But if they are short about 6 or 7 welders in 2010, they can get ahold of Secretary Chertoff who picked up a welder down there and welded some of that steel wall together right on the border of San Luis, Arizona. And that also was the case with Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON, Senator BEN NELSON, Congressman MIKE PENCE. And I am not sure, that is the ones that I saw, there were probably others that also lended a hand, as I did, to weld some of that fencing and wall together. It was more symbolic than production, but symbolism does matter in this business, and it helps encourage the people that are down there building those barriers.

And particularly, our National Guard that are down on the border, approaching 6,000 strong, they freed up at least 500 on-line slots for Border Patrol agents that can be up-front patrolling. And they are constructing fence and wall with the time that they have down there on the border. Their morale seems to be good. They act like they believe in their mission. I believe in their mission. I am encouraged by the fact that they are there, hands on, building, constructing, putting barriers in place, because this Congress mandated and the President signed, however unenthusiastically, he did sign the authorization of the Secure Fence Act that mandates 854 miles of double fence wall on our border.

And then, after the mandate and the authorization, the authorization which is the mandate, then we heard continually from the critics across the country, well, you will never fund it. And if you never fund it, then it will never be built. So it was only, the allegation that it was only the part of Congress to just simply make a promise that we