

Our time is running out, but I want to just talk about a real world experience. There is a family, Mr. and Mrs. Smith living in my hometown of Hollidaysburg or maybe even Youngstown, Ohio, or a small town in Florida or California; that person, Mr. and Mrs. Smith making \$40,000 combined income, if these tax cuts are allowed to expire, they are going to pay about \$2,100 more in taxes a year. And there are some people in this country who may think that \$2,100 isn't a lot of money; but for that family struggling in Youngstown, Ohio, \$2,100 a year, if you put \$2,100 in the bank every year, at 5 percent interest return on that \$2,100 and you invested it every year for 10 years, that turns into over \$30,000. That is a good nest egg for that family to put their son or daughter through college or pay a good chunk of that if you are going to a great State school. So these things are serious, they are real life, and I just want to thank all the Members who came down here tonight who come from, whether it is a home care business, as Mr. DAVIS, or CPA or Mr. NEUGEBAUER being a builder and a developer, myself running an automobile dealership, people just like us all across America that have to be concerned about what is going to happen here in the next 2 years. And all Americans need to understand that they have to talk to their Members of Congress and put the pressure on them to make sure that these tax cuts stay in place so that the American people can keep more of their hard-earned dollars in their pockets and they can spend it as they see fit and not send it here to Washington, D.C. to be spent by faceless, nameless bureaucrats in many of these agencies.

□ 2230

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 45 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to be before 110th Congress. I can tell you that as the 30-something Working Group has been coming to the floor for 3-plus years and talking about what we would like to do if we were ever in the majority, and the American people saw fit to give the Democrats the majority here in this House last November. And we are appreciative and grateful, and I am glad to be here with my good colleague Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

Mr. RYAN is around here on the floor somewhere, Mr. Speaker. I believe he is hiding because of the lashing, or it is hard to put it in words, that the Florida Gators, who, it was reported that it was said that they shouldn't even get off the bus to play against the number-one ranked Ohio Buckeyes.

But I am going to yield to Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, and then we will get into the meat of our discussion, because Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ has a

degree and paper hanging on her wall from University of Florida, and on her car she has Florida tags. I mean, she is a real Gator. I just kind of happen to be from the State of Florida.

But go ahead, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Congratulations.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you so much. We are all Gators today. It is a Gator Nation. And we were just thrilled that the fighting Gator football team came to play yesterday, dominated Mr. RYAN's team, although Mr. RYAN went to Youngstown; so he is not technically a Buckeye, but I guess anyone who hails from the State of Ohio is a Buckeye. And we enjoyed showing the Buckeyes that we belonged in that game, and we are just very proud of our Florida Gators.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. If the gentleman from Florida would yield, I am happy to take my whooping like a man, Mr. Speaker. And let me just say to you, Mr. Speaker, and any of the other Members who may be Buckeye fans, not only was the game horrible, a complete whooping, but then I woke up this morning and the first thing I did was I called Mr. MEEK, and I said, "Mr. MEEK, I had a terrible dream last night. It was awful. Let me tell you about it." And he reminded me that it actually happened. And then our first meeting this morning, I ran into Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, who was in her beautiful outfit that she has on now but also the University Florida Gator glasses, and her Coke this morning had a little cozy on it that was also blue and orange. So she is very humble about her victory last night. And the only thing I can say is that the coach of Florida is an Ohioan, born just a few miles outside of my district. That is all I am hanging on to.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. We will give him that.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That is all I am hanging on to. But it was a great game, and you have got a great coach and a great team, and see you on the basketball court.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, you did take it like a man. We were watching the game together, and it was great for college football and great for all of us here in the country to see the underdog win. And it kind of tells our story here in the U.S. House of Representatives. And I just want to thank everyone on behalf of all of us. But tonight we are going to take a moment because, Mr. Speaker, when we come back to the floor, we have a number of freshmen that are coming in that are new 30-somethings that were elected in this election, and they are going to come to the floor. I believe, and all of us in 30-Something Working Group believe, that we were effective in the 108th and the 109th Congress, communicating with the American people. We want to thank not only the Speaker but also the majority leader, Mr. HOYER; and also Mr. CLYBURN, who was our Democratic leader, now our Democratic whip; and now Mr. EMANUEL for

his good work, who is our chairman of the Democratic Caucus; and Mr. LARSON, who is the vice chairman, for all the support they gave the 30-Something Working Group, including the Members on the Democratic side of the aisle.

We talked about what we would do, Mr. Speaker, if we had the opportunity to get into the majority. And I am happy to report that we talked about putting in standards on PAYGO, making sure that whatever we appropriated, wherever we spend, that we also identify how we are going to pay for it so that we can get away from owing all of these countries money as we owe now. And there is a lot of work that has to be done that the Republican Congress has left us with.

Looking at records like this, \$1.05 trillion borrowed by the President and the Republican majority in the 109th Congress and the 108th Congress over 42 Presidents at \$1 trillion. So all of the charts you see here tonight, Mr. Speaker, will only be resurrected, if I could use that word, every now and then because the charts are going to be talking about what we have done. We did that last week.

Today we implemented the 9/11 Commission's recommendations, all of them, here on this floor. And we had some of our Republican colleagues join us, and we are going to work in a bipartisan way to make sure that we do what we told the American people we would do in our Six in 2006 plan.

Also, I think it is important, on Wednesday, we are going to raise the minimum wage. Tomorrow the minimum wage will be raised here on this House of Representatives floor. This House that we talked about time after time again that we would do if given the opportunity. Later this week, securing low prices on prescription drugs, giving the Federal Government negotiating opportunity with the drug companies. Also stem cell research, ethics reform. These are things that the 109th Congress under Republican control, they didn't even do it. And we have done it within the first 100 hours, and we have a lot more that we would like to do. So I would not only like to thank our good friend, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, which our districts neighbor each other in Florida, but Mr. RYAN and Mr. DELAHUNT, Uncle Bill, in his absence.

Mr. Speaker, he apologized for not being here tonight, and I told him, this is the first night that we are on the floor coming back in the majority. And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, as I yield to my colleagues, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and Mr. RYAN, that I know from me and from all of us in the 30-Something Working Group, we are forever grateful to the American people for allowing us to have the opportunity to lead in a commonsense way on their behalf. And it took Republicans and it took independents and it took Democrats and it took the Green Party and it took folks who

voted for the first time because they had hope that we are going to move this country in a new direction. And I am so happy to our leadership and also to the members of the Democratic Caucus that we are following through on what we said we would do. It is going to be painful, but we are going to do it because the American people want a new direction. I am so happy that I am a member of a caucus and a party that has said they are going to do something, and they are actually doing it. That is a paradigm shift here in Washington.

I yield to Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you so much to my good friend, Mr. MEEK, and it is so wonderful to be with my good friends in the 30-Something Working Group. We spent so many nights here talking about the need for us to move this country in a new direction, a new direction for America. That is what, Mr. Speaker, you and others talked about during the campaign. We went out and talked about making sure that we could increase the minimum wage for the first time in 10 years; have the student loan interest rate; fully implement the 9/11 Commission recommendations; make sure that we repeal the energy industry subsidies that they don't need because they are the most profitable industry in the entire world so that we can truly fund alternative energy resources; eliminate the prohibition against negotiating for lower prescription drug prices; and putting the stem cell research bill on the President's desk once again; and making sure that we can finally establish some accountability with this administration on the war in Iraq.

□ 2240

At last we will have the opportunity to bring them in and ask them the tough questions that our good friends on the other side of the aisle refused to ask for years.

We had an opportunity as the 30-something Working Group to point out and contrast what we would do in the majority if we were given that opportunity versus what the Republican leadership was doing for the last 12 years. And the American people responded and gave us that opportunity.

Some people might have started at the top of this hour, kind of scratched their head and wondered why we were talking about the University of Florida national championship and the Gators victory, but there is some analogy, all kidding aside.

The Gators showed that they came to play last night when no one expected them to win, when for months people didn't give them any chance of coming out on top and winning the national championship. I think that our victory on November 7 is analogous to that because certainly at the beginning of my first term in Congress 2 years ago, no one gave the Democrats a chance. No one gave us a snowball's chance of reaching the point that we did on No-

vember 7 and being able to elect enough Members to truly move this country in a new direction.

In part because of the Members that joined us on the floor each night and our Democratic Caucus colleagues who were so committed to get the message out and talking to their constituents and really appealing to the issues that the American people cared about, as opposed to the special interests and the culture of corruption and the pall that was cast over this Capitol for so long, now we are finally being given that opportunity. It is incredibly important.

One of the most amazing things for me as a woman was that last Thursday we were able to watch history in the making when the gavel was passed to Speaker NANCY PELOSI as the first woman Speaker in United States history. I had my twin 7-year-olds on the floor that day, and I know you had your children on the floor with you that day, Mr. MEEK, but the opportunity for our kids to see, and especially for little girls in America, to see that really anything is possible in America, for that, for us to be able to witness that was just incredible.

And today for us to be able to witness Speaker PELOSI preside over H.R. 1, the passage of H.R. 1, which was the first bill that we adopted in the 100-hours agenda that fully implements the 9/11 Commission agenda. The Republicans minimally implemented those recommendations, and that is why the 9/11 Commission co-chairmen gave them Ds and Fs, because they had not allocated funding on the basis of risk and vulnerabilities. They had not created and rehearsed State and local emergency response plans. They had not addressed the interoperability issues between intelligence agencies and first responders. There were at least 10 items. They have not protected privacy and civil liberties with an oversight function. They have not improved air passenger screening. They were not checking all the cargo. There was no funding or mechanism to check all of the cargo that came through our ports.

H.R. 1 that we adopted today implements that right now. It was a thrill to watch Speaker PELOSI preside over the passage of the first item in our 100-hours agenda.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the gentlewoman is right. Last week during all of the Speaker ceremonies, one of the things was a mass up at Trinity College where the Speaker went to college. There were two pictures up on the altar. One was a picture of a kid in Darfur and the other was a kid from Hurricane Katrina. There were pictures of these kids from New Orleans and Darfur all over. I think that kind of symbolized where this Speaker is taking this House of Representatives, that is, we are going to act in the best interest of those kids to protect them by implementing these recommendations.

I think the frustration we see on the other side of the aisle, and there is always a level of frustration because you

are in power and then out of power, but the one level of frustration from the other side of the aisle is this stuff isn't brain surgery. We have been waiting years to implement some of this stuff. The minimum wage, 10 years. The 9/11 Commission report has been out for a long time. Some of these other things such as negotiating drug prices, we are actually going to get this stuff done in the first 100 hours of legislative business we are doing here. I think there is a level of frustration on their side because some of them wanted it and it couldn't get through, or they don't want it and we are implementing it. But this agenda has the support of the American people.

In some ways, these are broad parameters for us. But take the PAYGO rules. We are going to make sure that we are only spending money that actually comes into the Treasury. We are not going to go out and borrow from China. I know our friends who were here before were talking about we are going to get rid of all of the tax cuts. We are going to implement middle-class tax cuts, and we are going to ask some of the people who have been making millions, if not billions, of dollars over the past couple of years to pay more. If you are making millions of dollars a year, we are going to ask you to pay more in taxes. And the reason we are going to do that is we are either going to ask you or we go and we borrow it from China. You are benefiting a great deal from the economy that we have here, from the political system we have here, and we need your help in balancing our budget.

Now, there is nothing that has more of an effect on average people than increased interest rates. As we borrow money and borrow money, money becomes scarce in the market, and interest rates go up. If you try to buy a house or car, interest rates have gone up and you are paying more. We are going to keep those tax cuts for the middle class, and we are going to ask the wealthiest to pay a little more. And by balancing the budget, we are going to try to reduce interest rates, and that will lead to another economic boom like happened in 1993 when President Clinton and a Democratic Congress balanced the budget. That is the way it is going to be.

We are proving to the American people, and this is the exciting part, I think the American people took a leap of faith on us. In the last few days, we have actually done what we said we were going to do. Later this week we are going to continue to do what we said we were going to do, and next week we will do what we said we were going to do. And when the President gets here to give his State of the Union, he will have a Democratic agenda lying on the table to have to discuss, and that includes the war in Iraq.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is making an excellent point. If you can

elaborate more on what you were talking about, I think that is very important.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. When you talk about PAYGO, and we were talking earlier about the college loan interest rates and in cutting these interest loans in half for both parent and teachers, the bottom line is we are going to cut those interest rates and make college more affordable. You are also talking about the minimum wage and the stem-cell research which we want to talk a little bit about tonight. We are talking about bread-and-butter issues, investing in science and cutting interest rates in half, making sure the bottom is lifted up. I think we have a lot going on.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Expanding access to higher education was one of the critical elements, is one of the critical elements of the 100-hours agenda because America is all about opportunity.

Our good friends on the other side of the aisle talk about prosperity and how it is essential to make sure that Americans can continue to prosper, and we absolutely believe that. But there is no denying that prosperity isn't possible in this or any other country without an education.

If you are denied access to education because of the lack of affordability, because you can't pay for it or because your ability to repay a loan is prohibited because the interest rate is so high that you are paying for the rest of your natural life and it takes such a huge chunk of your income that eventually you have to decide not to pursue an education, then prosperity isn't possible.

As you have in this chart, and Mr. MEEK is going to talk about minimum wage, we lag behind the world in terms of global education standards. You have thousands of students who will graduate with engineering degrees this year. And look at the difference in numbers: 600,000 engineering degrees in China; 350,000 engineering degrees in India; and 70,000 engineering degrees in the United States of America.

□ 2250

Now, if that isn't an example and evidence of where we need to focus our priorities and make sure that we expand access to higher education so that we can grow that number, then our ability to be competitive globally is severely, severely impacted, and individual's ability to prosper is severely impacted.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, just to be fair, these numbers have been shifted and I have seen different numbers for China, India and the United States. But the bottom line is no matter which ones you are looking at, they have a significant advantage on some of these. You look at our math and science scores, they have gone up a little bit, I think in the fourth grade range, but not nearly where we want them to be. We still have a tremendous

gap between the wealthiest and poorest districts. We have a tremendous gap between minority districts and white districts. We have got a lot of work to do.

The No Child Left Behind Act is coming up this year to be reauthorized and hopefully funded at the levels. Hopefully we can make the kind of changes that we always hear about on the campaign trail when it comes to education, teachers grabbing us about No Child Left Behind. We have a brutally competitive world out there waiting for us, and these changes need to happen, and some of them need to happen in the first 100 hours.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. If the gentleman will yield, one of the things I wanted to point out is it could ultimately, as we continue to do these 30-something hours, it could be easy to presume now that we are in the majority that we would come here and only talk about the Democrats' agenda and what we are planning to do, and we are going to spend quite a bit of time talking about that during these hours.

But I think it is important that our colleagues and others who might hear us talking tonight understand that the reason that our taking the majority in the Congress was so important, besides our being able to implement an agenda, is the accountability factor.

We are going to come here, now that we are in the majority and control the agenda here, it is absolutely our responsibility because we have the ability to do it to hold this administration accountable, to ask questions, to hold hearings, to bring them here and make sure that they answer questions about their policies that the American people showed us on November 7 they don't agree with.

It is going to be incredibly important in the time that we spend on this floor that we not only talk about our agenda, but what we are doing to make sure that we restore the Congress' role, constitutional role, where we hold the administration accountable and reestablish the system of checks and balances.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I think it is important, Mr. RYAN, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, and also Mr. Speaker and Members, a perfect example of the balance of power. Now, in the 109th there were a lot of things said. I won't be giving any speeches any time soon saying I was proud to be a Member of the 109th Congress, because we had Members that were indicted, we had Members that were saying "I have a list, and if you are not on my contributors' list, you can't have a meeting with me." We had the K Street Project. We had a number of other things. We had the page scandal.

We had a number of things, because no one was policing the body of this U.S. House. No one took responsibility on telling the special interests, no, you can't have that. No one took the responsibility in standing up to the big oil companies and saying we are going to legislate on behalf of the American people.

When we start talking about investing in alternative fuels on this floor within the next couple of days, next week or what have you, that is going to be something that no one dreamed would ever take place.

I am holding this chart up because we have been holding it up, especially in the 109th Congress, to talk about the increases that Members of Congress have received in pay and what the American people have received, zero, since 1997 as it relates to an increase in the minimum wage.

Guess what? This chart, we can send it over to the National Archives across the street, because tomorrow we are going to increase the minimum wage.

Guess what a little legislative leadership brings? Now the President is saying "I am for the increase in the minimum wage." Isn't that something? And when we get on that board tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, I guarantee you that there are going to be a lot of Republicans that are going to say, you know something, and they are going to send a press release out and say "I voted for an increase in the minimum wage." Unheard of in the 109th Congress.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Unheard of in the 108th Congress, unheard in the 107th Congress.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. And on and on under Republican control. So I think it is very important for everyone to understand when we have legislative leadership, the writers of Constitution said there is going to be a legislative, an executive, a judicial. They did not say executive and legislative together. They didn't say someone calling from the White House and saying this is the way the vote is going to go down, and if you like it or not, this is what is going to happen.

I have been talking to some of my Republican colleagues, and we all have great relationships with our Republican colleagues, many of them. We had an issue with the Republican leadership leading them down the wrong road, and we even tried to correct some of those issues here on the floor saying, you know, we want to get in the majority, but we care about the American people first, so, please, vote for our amendment, when we could get one on the floor, a motion to recommit, saying we want to make sure the American people are involved in this. We couldn't even pull one Republican on many of those issues.

But tomorrow, thank God for our democracy, thank God for folks that voted for Democratic control of the House, we are going to have many Republicans that are going to vote. It is not going to be where were you yesterday, it is going to be thank God we are able to do something for the American people. So that is where we are.

When Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ talked about legislative leadership, it is important. We have to be bold and we have to be bipartisan. I am just so happy that we are going to have the opportunity to do that. That is major,

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, that is major, Mr. RYAN, for the American people to vote for change and to see it, immediately. Not, well, when is the next election? What? Two years and some change.

We are not even out of January yet, and we are already voting in a bipartisan way because of the leadership of the Democrats that say we have to increase the minimum wage, something we told the American people we would do. So I am excited about the fact, Mr. RYAN, that we are able not only in our lifetime but in our political lifetime to be able to deliver to the American people something that is important.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and Mr. RYAN, when we come back to the floor, we are going to have members of the Freshman Caucus, of the Democratic Caucus, that are going to be joining us here on this floor. These are individuals that are fresh, out of not only the campaign, but out of private life, to bring to this House the kind of input that we need.

One thing we are committed to do in the 30-Something Working Group, there is an old spiritual that says “we are in no ways tired.” We are in no ways tired, because we have a war that is going on, we still have people without health care, we have a deficit that is continuing to run out of control. But we have now passed legislation to pay as we go. We now have the will and the desire to do the right thing on behalf of our veterans. All of the things we talked about.

So I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to coming to the floor to not only report on progress, but also to ask the Members on both sides of the aisle and the American people to give us the kind of input that we need.

We had the rubber stamp, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and Mr. RYAN, that we asked the American people what should we do with the rubber stamp. I want to thank Mr. Manatos with the Speaker’s office, I like to say that, with the Speaker’s office, that facilitated that asking of the American people.

We are going to keep the rubber stamp, the Republican Congress rubber stamp of the 109th, to remind us that we never, ever want to go back to a rubber stamp Congress. It is not good for the country and it is not good for our future, and it is not good for the men and women that are our veterans and those that are now serving for our independence for us to be able to salute one flag. It is not good. That is not what the Constitution called for and that is not what we are going back to.

So there was a discussion of destroy the rubber stamp, or put the rubber stamp on E-Bay and give it to the Troop Relief Fund or whatever the case may be. But the overwhelming e-mails that we received in the 30-Something Working Group was keep the rubber stamp as a reminder of what you don’t want to do in the 110th, if God is willing, in the 111th and the 112th and so

on and so on Congress, to not allow that to happen.

So, Mr. RYAN, I just want to say, I know Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ joined us in the 109th, I want to thank you personally on the 108th, because it was kind of lonely. It was just the two of us. Every now and then we would get other members of the 30th-Something Working Group. I want to thank you for sticking in there over the years, and then when you are in the majority, commit to coming back with the same enthusiasm to say not only thank you, but to say that we are going to continue to work and we are going to continue to reach out and continue to do the things that we did in the minority to make sure that we have a strong majority and make this country stronger.

□ 2300

And I want to thank Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ for all the things she does. And I don’t know how she does it all, being a mom. I am a dad, but to be a mom is a totally different definition. But she comes to this Congress and brings not only what she brings from the Florida senate, but the same kind of energy, integrity and good will on behalf of the American people, so I want to thank you and all the other Members.

I want to thank Uncle Bill for being an individual that is receiving Medicare. He is a Medicare recipient now. The fact that he comes to the floor.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. When we are here early, he comes to the floor.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Right. When we come earlier, he comes to the floor.

And Mr. Manatos, he is the glue that keeps this whole thing together. I can’t say enough about him. I want to thank him for all the work he has done. Even though we are all paid to do what we do, Mr. Speaker, it takes an extra wanting to serve the American people to come to this floor night after night.

And I want to take just a personal point. I want to thank my family for allowing me to be here, because I have two kids and a wife here in Washington, D.C. with me. They allow me to come to this floor. But the whole thing comes down to the fact that we have men and women that are deployed for 15 months at a time, so at least I can go two to three blocks to the Capitol at 10 o’clock at night, give them voice and those out in America voice that are punching in and out every day trying to figure out how they are going to get health care for their kids, how they are going to move in a direction where they will be able to have some savings and a tax cut as a middle class.

So I am very thankful. You all can tell I am a little emotional tonight. I see folks here, the Capitol Police and other folks here working tonight, saying, Congressman, you have a big smile on your face. It is my first time being on the floor in the majority. It is not only a historic majority but I am glad to be part of change and glad to do

something on behalf of the American people.

Mr. RYAN.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Cheers, brother. I couldn’t agree with you more, and we want to thank you too for your leadership. We have had a good couple of years where one of us is inevitably tired and cranky, maybe hungry, and the other one has said, we have to go. We have to go do it. We have to keep going.

But when you look at what we are able to do, and I was just glancing over at the minimum-wage stuff, 13 million people would likely benefit from the increase. 7.7 million women, 3.4 million parents, and 4.7 million people of color will benefit, with an average family of three getting \$4,400 more a year in their pocket. That is why you do what you do. That is why you get into public life.

You start looking at some of the funding streams for community health clinics and safe and drug-free schools, and the Pell grants, and we are not going to be able to wave a magic wand, because we are in a heck of a hole, so it is going to take us a few years to get out of this, but we are going to start bringing some balance to this process. And I think average people are going to start being represented here under the dome.

We are not perfect. We will probably make some mistakes along the way, but I think they are going to be mistakes of us trying to do the right thing and make things happen. This is an incredibly complex system we run, with 435 Members from different walks of life, different States and different regions to try to make things happen. Then to go across the hall and try to agree with 100 people from 50 States, and balance that off the President and the executive branch is difficult, but I think we are laying down some good framework here that we can work in the next few weeks and hopefully in the next few years that will affect average people’s lives.

So, cheers. And now to my Gator friend.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you. I think the key word you touched on is balance. That is why I am thrilled, and I know the two of you are as well, to have the opportunity to restore balance and to restore the American people’s confidence in their government again.

Because, Mr. MEEK and Mr. RYAN, that is one of the things that was a casualty of the last several years, with the headline every other day, every day sometimes, about a colleague of ours on the other side of the aisle being indicted, as Mr. MEEK said, or arrested. We have former colleagues in jail. We have lobbyists that inappropriately tried to influence this process that are in jail.

This election, I think, was a reflection of the American people’s desire for change and to move in a new direction. And one of the things that Speaker

PELOSI has talked about, and talked about so often in the campaign, is what her speakership and our majority will be about is making this the most bipartisan Congress in the United States history, with the inclusiveness and the participation that Members on both sides of the aisle will have an opportunity to have, and that that is incredibly important.

That extends beyond just the Members here, but extends to the voices of the people that we are serving. The net roots, for example. That is a community that has been so instrumental and so involved in getting the message out about what people in the country care about. I know that the three of us have interacted during our time on the floor here with folks involved in the net roots and they have given voice to so many people exponentially that would not have had the ability to get our message out. It is incredibly important.

Inclusiveness and balance and confidence in government is I think going to be the watch words that will be really the clarion call of our majority, so I really look forward to that opportunity.

I tell you, where we are at this stage of our careers and our lives, I have been in public office now for, gosh, I guess it is 16 years, which is kind of amazing. But it is actually 16 years, and I have spent 4 of those years in the majority in the State House. Mr. MEEK, we served a couple years in the majority together in the State House, and that is the last time that I had an opportunity to actually advance an agenda. We definitely spent a lot of time honing our defensive skills, and I think we have gotten pretty good at that and comparing and contrasting. But at the end of the day, most of us, the vast majority of us ran for office in order to make the world better, and now we have that opportunity.

Like you said, Mr. RYAN, we might not always do it right, but it won't be for lack of good intentions and it won't be for lack of trying to stand up for those who have no voice, which I think will be quite a marked contrast compared to, and I hate to directly question the intentions, but compared to the intentions of some over the last few years. That is the most diplomatic way I can put it.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Very diplomatic. I want to make one final point before we close up here.

If the elections didn't go the way they were supposed to, or the way they did, I should say, and this was still a Republican-controlled House and a Republican-controlled Senate, just to put all this in context, what would have happened is the President would have said that we want to put 20,000 or 30,000 more troops in Iraq, and this Congress would have got out the rubber stamp, and it would have been a done deal. And in several months there would be a \$100 billion supplemental and there would be 30,000 more troops in Iraq, and

we would be further down the line. There would be no question that that is exactly what would have happened.

So the power and the force of the American people in their statement that they made basically says we are going to have a discussion about this. Now, how this ends up, we don't know. But I know from a personal perspective there is going to be some strong resistance to adding any more troops, and we are going to have a discussion about money and everything else.

Now, we don't have a caucus position, but the bottom line is this: there is going to be a discussion. And that is what is great about this country, and that is what is great about the elections. It is not just going to get rammed through this House, and the American people are not going to feel helpless. They are going to feel like they are here.

I know we are ready to wrap things up. Mr. MEEK, great game last night. You are actually a Miami of Florida fan.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Miami of Florida? I can tell you are from Ohio.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Miami of Florida. Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Go Rattlers.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That is what I said.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. No, you said I am actually a Miami of Florida fan. I can tell you are from Ohio. Miami of Ohio? We say Miami, Florida. We don't say Miami of Florida. But thank you, Mr. RYAN.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. All I am saying is that last night he was like a big Gator fan.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. We are all big Gator fans.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Now, I can see Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, because I have seen the outfit. But you, all of a sudden they win and you are now a big fan.

But I want to congratulate you. This is not poor sportsmanship. Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, I want to congratulate you as well. Thank you for all your hard work.

And I yield to my good friend.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, you claimed Ohio State, but you live in Niles, Ohio, far from where Ohio State is located.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Wait a minute, I want to clarify, it is the Ohio State university.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I am not yielding to you. I am yielding to Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ for closing. I am going to close, then you are going to give the Web site. Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I just want to close by saying that I look forward to the opportunity to continuing the balance that we have been trying to strike the last number of years and having the opportunity to implement our agenda, to move this country in a new direction, and begin to establish some real accountability and oversight with this administration.

I look forward to joining you on the floor with the 30-something Working Group and having our new colleagues, the new additions, the new recruits in the 30-something Working Group, which is the freshman class.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Thank you, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

I can tell you that in the 30-something Working Group we do, Mr. Speaker, kind of mix it up here and there, but I think it is very, very important. I am glad we came tonight just to reflect on the work, and to say thank you to the American people, and to say thank you to the staff here in the House, and to say thank you to all of our families.

I would like to say thank you to our personal staff that work in our offices. We get together, Mr. Speaker, and we go over this information, what works best here for the American people. So we just don't come to the floor. We actually spend a lot of staff time. So we want to say thank you to our staffs.

Once again, we would like to say thank you to the Speaker for creating this group and sticking with us and giving us the resources that we need to come to the floor night after night, and we look forward to continuing to do that.

The good thing about this 30-something Working Group, Mr. Speaker, is that this wasn't a project to get in the majority; this was a project to work on behalf of the American people. So in the majority we will continue to do the things we did in the minority because we still have people out there that need the kind of representation in a sensible way. This is not partisan. We are going to read off the song sheet of whatever the Democratic National Committee puts out. That is not what it is all about. It is about giving voice, commonsense solutions, and moving in the direction that we have to move in.

So we look forward to working with our Republican colleagues. And I am so honored, Mr. Speaker, to yield to Mr. RYAN to give the Web site out, and then I am going to yield back our time. But since we no longer can use our old Web site, because we are in the majority now, Mr. Manatos had to write it on some notebook paper to give out to the Members until we get our Web site memorized.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We are still maintaining our grass-roots approach here with the legal pad. WWW.Speaker.gov/30something.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Can you give that out one more time?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. WWW.Speaker.gov/30something.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. ORTIZ (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today.

Mr. BUYER (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today and the balance of the week on account of medical reasons.