

show the world community that the United States stands with its allies.

COLOMBIAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

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

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by associating myself with the very eloquent remarks of my colleague from Miami, Mr. DIAZ-BALART.

Mr. Speaker, you never get a second chance to make a first impression, so the old saying goes that we've all heard. Once first impressions are made, it can be difficult to reinvent oneself. Circumstances may change, but assumptions and perceptions are very stubborn things. Just ask any Colombian.

People became familiar with the country of Colombia in the 1980s and the 1990s as the drug wars exploded. We didn't know much about the place, but we were familiar with the highlights: Bloody drug wars fought in jungles and on the streets of cities like Medellin, Bogota and Cali. And although we probably couldn't name many of the elected officials in Colombia, everyone knew the name of Pablo Escobar, the drug lord.

But over the course of this decade, a dramatic transformation has taken place in Colombia. The rule of gang lords has been replaced by the rule of law. The streets have become safe again. Armed terrorist organizations no longer operate in huge swaths of the country with impunity, and paramilitary groups have been dismantled with their leaders having gone to jail.

Funding for the Colombian Justice Department has nearly doubled, to ensure that criminal cases, old and new, are dealt with professionally and expeditiously, sending a clear signal that the days of impunity are long gone. Poverty has been cut dramatically, while social spending has increased. The Colombia of today is unrecognizable to those who knew it just a decade ago.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the privilege of being there on several occasions and have been amazed by what I have seen. Nowhere is the transformation starker than in the city of Medellin. This city was ground zero for the Escobar drug cartel. Its murder rate rivaled the most dangerous places on the face of the Earth. Terror and violence ruled everyday life.

Today, the city tells an utterly different story. Violence has plummeted. New public transportation projects and schools have given hope to previously blighted neighborhoods. New jobs and development, especially in the apparel industry, have provided a path to that first rung of the economic ladder, and greater upward mobility which was totally unheard of just a few years ago.

Mr. Speaker, fair trade and specialty coffee industries have also provided

new opportunities for well-paying jobs in the area. This thriving community is a shining example of the stunning turnaround that it has made since 2002.

And yet much of the world has failed to take notice. While hostages and explosions make for front-page headlines, the slow and steady work of rebuilding a country is far less flashy. But the very difficult and remarkable work that has been done deserves recognizing. Many of us in Congress are working hard to solidify the gains that have been made through the implication of a free trade agreement. This agreement is strongly supported by the private sector unions of Colombia because they welcome the jobs and opportunity that the agreement will bring.

I hope very much that the free trade agreement will be considered soon for a vote. But as this debate does go forward, I believe it must proceed based on facts, not assumptions, inaccurate perceptions, and outdated figures. When we talk about Colombia in the year 2008, we are not talking about the Colombia of Pablo Escobar. We are talking about a country transformed and on the mend. After the long, difficult struggle of the Colombian people, we owe them a little credit and recognition for the remarkable things that they have accomplished.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

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

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

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

BUDGET SCHOOL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the recognition and I appreciate the opportunity to come and talk about a subject that is near and dear to the heart of every single taxpayer in this Nation. That subject is the Federal budget. It is something that as we debate issues here, we say it affects 10 percent or 20 percent or 50 percent of the population. Our Federal budget, it affects everyone, Mr. Speaker, and I think we should start this second session of budget school with a little bit of perspective.

I have got a copy of the Constitution of the United States, and there is also included in this a Declaration of Independence. Now this copy is small enough to fit into my pocket. I could put it in my jacket pocket and carry it with me all day long.

What is a little bit frightening, Mr. Speaker, is here is the phone book for the news media that covers Washington, D.C. We are one of the most covered places on the face of the Earth, and here is the phone book that covers that.

Well, I also have the Federal budget. As you can see, it is an enormous document. It is much larger. By the time you have the tables and the justifications and the analytical information and go through the appendix and find what you need, it is a huge document. It is much larger in size than the simple documents on which this great Nation was founded.

What we are going to do today is talk a little bit about this budget and talk about what our response should be on behalf of the American people.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the time. I am coming to the floor as a

member of the Republican Study Committee. This group of conservatives within the Republican conference have developed this project called "Budget School" because we think that it is imperative that the American people know what is in this budget and know where to find this budget and are fully aware of how their money is being spent because we realize it is not the Federal Government's money that is being spent, Mr. Speaker, it is the money of the taxpayers of this great Nation.

This evening to open our session as we begin this period of time called special orders which comes at the end of our workday, and Congress has finished its regular business for the day, and it is 5 minutes of 5 in the afternoon here in Washington, and we are moving into the period of time called special orders. It is the period of time when we can come to the floor and talk a little bit more at length about the issues that are very important to us.

This evening we have several of our colleagues from the Republican Study Committee that will join me to talk about the budget and their concerns with the increase in spending, the concerns with the increase in taxation and their concerns about the long term fiscal health of this great Nation.

I would like to begin our conversation this evening by yielding to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON) to hear his comments on the budget.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Tennessee for yielding, and there are a couple of points I want to make. One is just now a lesson that we have simply learned or seen, I guess, witnessed, if you will. The Democrats passed a budget the week before we adjourned for a 2-week work recess, so it would have been 3 weeks ago. So 3 weeks the Democrat budget is passed, and it had in it \$30 billion for AIDS money for Africa.

As we know, the President has been very passionate about getting AIDS support for the continent of Africa. Indeed, Africa has suffered a lot because of the AIDS problem. But the President called for a \$30 billion expenditure.

□ 1700

Now, the Democrats called for a \$30 billion expenditure as well in the budget 3 weeks ago, but something may have happened in their districts over the last 2 weeks. I suspect person after person who's paying \$3.25 a gallon and who's concerned about the war and concerned about health care ignored that and said to their Democrat Member, you have got to spend more than the President has promised for AIDS in Africa; and don't just spend \$30 billion, spend \$50 billion. So, when we get back to Washington, the first thing the Democrats do is ignore the President's request, ignore their own budget, and go \$20 billion on one vote on one line item expenditure.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. If the gentleman will yield.

Mr. KINGSTON. Absolutely.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. The budget that was presented is over a \$3 trillion budget, and it calls for a \$683 billion tax increase. And discretionary spending is increased in this budget by \$280 billion. So, what I'm hearing the gentleman say, that's not enough. We've already, day two coming back from our Easter district work period, day two we have seen them move forward and increase \$20 billion more.

And I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. KINGSTON. That's correct. So, here we are, the first day back basically voting on anything of substance, we've already spent \$20 billion over a budget that's only 3 weeks old.

Now, you had mentioned discretionary spending, and I want to make sure folks understand. Discretionary spending means Congress has agreed that year by year that level of spending can fluctuate. Now, that's opposed to what we call mandatory spending. And I use the term "mandatory" loosely because nothing is mandatory if you're the legislative branch that set laws. But we call things like Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security mandatory spending, meaning, not just that we're going to spend a certain amount every year depending on a formula, but it also means, and I don't know if my friend from Tennessee or the other gentleman from Texas or Tennessee know this, but we don't have hearings on mandatory spending traditionally.

I'm a member of the Appropriations Committee. We spend a huge amount of money on Social Security and Medicaid, but we've never had a hearing on it. Every year we wrestle on some of the mandatory spending and some of the discretionary spending, but the biggest portion of the budget we don't do hearings on. And I think that it's time that we start talking about some of the mandatory spending if we're ever going to be serious about balancing the budget.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. If the gentleman will yield.

There are a couple of things that I would point out. I'm sure people are sitting there going, I'm not believing this. I have worked all day long, I work all year, I haven't even finished paying my obligations for my property taxes, my state taxes, my Federal income taxes this year because you have to work until around the first of June to meet your obligations on taxes before you're working for money to take home.

So, what I'm hearing him say is, all that increasing, they want you to work further into the year to pay them. Somebody sitting at their desk right now, they're thinking, I can't believe this. If they want to pull down a copy of the budget, here are some Web sites and some resources we would encourage them to use. To get a copy of the President's budget, they can go to whitehouse.gov/omb. To get the Republican response, which our Republican Study Committee was involved in,

budget.house.gov/republicans. And to get some of our budget school resources, they can go to house.gov/blackburn. They can also go to YouTube and Face Book and pull some of this information.

Mr. KINGSTON. Let me ask, before the gentlewoman takes that down, do those budgets balance, by the way; or when do they balance out, when do they balance? And do they have to be passed by the Senate and the House?

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I thank the gentleman for yielding. We're going to work through explaining that process this evening because the budget has come through the House and it is going to the Senate, it will come back to conference committee. And we set all of those different, the template, if you will, and then it will go through the appropriations process this year.

And I wanted to show this second poster. You were just mentioning about Medicare and Social Security and some of the different functions that are entitlements. And then we also have the areas that are seen as being discretionary. And you were mentioning discretionary spending. And those who want to follow the budget discussion with us can follow these different functions in the budget documents that we had mentioned earlier.

And I yield back to the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. KINGSTON. Well, I think, though, that when you're talking about spending, you have to look at everything. And when you have such a large portion on mandatory spending, and I think of it in terms of automatic spending, and I understand that Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare are sacred cows, that if you touch them politically somebody's going to twist your words around and say that you're trying to do something nefarious, but the reality is if you're ever going to balance the budget, you have to look at everything. And there are areas I know that we can do a better job on.

Now I'm on the AG Committee on Appropriations. Many people don't know this, and they always complain about how big the USDA is. Sixty-three percent of the agriculture budget is in welfare. Food stamps, the WIC programs, school nutrition programs, these are supplemental assistance programs to the poor. Now, I was here in 1996 when we reformed welfare, and it went from 14 million people who were on welfare down to 5 million people. That was a step in the right direction because you want to help those who truly need it, but you don't want to create a system where able-bodied people are able to game it and not work.

But what we're doing in AG appropriations is year after year making it a little bit easier to qualify for food stamps. We lighten up on the work requirements. We extend it to this group or the other. The WIC program is a child nursing supplement program. And Dr. BURGESS knows well, it's a supplemental program for nursing mothers,

but you're eligible for age 6. Now, I'm a father of four. I know you're a mama, you weren't breast-feeding your children at age 6, I assume.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. And I'm about to be a grandmother. And I appreciate the gentleman from Georgia's comments about the historical data that is involved in that. And as we look at the budget, and how did this budget get to be so big? That is just so very important. And if you look at the budget, which is what I have right here on the podium in front of me, and you can see it, you can hardly hold it up it's so big, but it comes in sections. This much is just the overview. And I said, that pales in comparison when you look at the small size of our Constitution and our Declaration of Independence.

Here's the appendix. And you would get inside this and look for the program that you're talking about with the Department of Agriculture. Then you would come in here to the Analytical Perspectives. This volume is where you would go to look at the analysis that you were just speaking of. And then, here are the historical tables.

And Mr. Speaker, this is where our colleagues go to look at where a program was when it started, to trace back through why this program was put in place and go back and see if that program is still aimed toward meeting what it was put in place for, meeting that original mission, how has it changed? And as you're pointing out, so many programs get changed on a regular ongoing basis. You go into the analysis and look at if you think this is worthy, if those are certainly the type data and the type premises on which you want to be operating to fund that budget. You look at this appendix to see how much they decided that they ought to be putting into that budget.

So, the gentleman is quite right in explaining how these programs grow, and did they begin to move away from their original mission? That is why some of our colleagues that are joining us this evening have been busy working on fighting waste, fraud and abuse, fighting increased spending, fighting wasteful earmarks, and working for the past few years to raise this issue.

And I know the gentleman from Georgia has constituents, and we have the gentleman from Iowa, Ms. BACHMANN, who is from Minnesota, Mr. DAVIS from Tennessee, who are joining us on the floor this evening to talk about this issue and to talk about where we are seeing the movement in this budget.

At this time, I would like to yield to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) who has worked tirelessly. He was in my freshman class as we made waste, fraud and abuse our freshman class project, and as we have worked to reduce what the Federal Government spends and begin to try to tame this budget and to bring it back in so that it is a friendlier budget for the American taxpayer.

And I yield to the gentleman from Iowa.

Mr. KING of Iowa. I thank the gentlelady from Tennessee for organizing this Special Order and for the privilege to address you, Mr. Speaker.

This budget issue that rolls out in front of us, I'd like to take us back to anchor it a little bit on what's really going on. And we haven't gone very far into all the news and the indicators we have on this economy, but this budget is the largest tax increase in the history of America; it amounts to \$683 billion in tax increases over the next 5 years. That's almost triple the largest tax increase in history that took place in 1993. We remember that year, 1993, that was a \$240.6 billion tax increase, about a third of what this one amounts to in '93. We will look back and remember what happened in 1994, Republicans took over the majority in the House of Representatives partly because of over-spending.

But as we followed this economy a little over a year ago, I remember the swearing-in ceremony here on the floor of Congress when Speaker PELOSI took the gavel for the first time. I watched what went on when all new committee chairs for the first time in 12 years picked up the gavel and began to manage their committees. And I watched as the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee went on the talk circuit all around the country, media stop after media stop after media stop, and he was constantly asked, are you, Chairman RANGEL, going to make the Bush tax cuts permanent? Are you going to preserve any part of the Bush tax cuts? And he demurred on a straight answer time after time. But by a process of elimination it became clear to the American investor that those Bush tax cuts were not going to be made permanent, that every one of them was going to be designed to end, expire and fail at some point.

Now, these tax cuts, the big ones, the ones that matter, was on May 28, 2007. That was when we had the real tax cuts that inspired this economy. And we have been on a growth pattern ever since that time and today we're still on that growth pattern in spite of what they say about our economy if you just track the DOW. But when the public understood and the investment community understood that the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee was going to continue down this path of spending, that he didn't see a tax cut he liked and he didn't see a tax increase that he didn't like, they stopped investing in industrial investment.

The reduction in industrial investment that took place January, February, March, April and onwards of 2007 was the lead indicator for this economic inactivity that we're seeing today. That was item number one, the understanding that there would be tax increases, this understanding that we know, according to Adam Smith and Wealth of Nations from 1776 when he said "the cost of any goods is the cost

of the labor that it takes to produce it and the capital required to support the labor." And the cost of capital went up because of the tax increases that were around the corner, the tax increases that were implicit in this budget. When the cost of capital went up, capital is always reactive and smart, and capital investments declined. That led us into the subprime, and we know about the subprime, but that's only really about \$150 billion in real losses. There might be a greater reaction on that in this Congress, but about \$150 billion. That's equivalent to a dollar a gallon on gasoline. By the way, there's no energy policy either.

But what this matters to us in this country is, we want to slow this growth in spending. We want to balance this budget. We want to bring a budget that gets us down to a responsible budget. And we want to get into the entitlements, fix Medicaid, fix Medicare, fix Social Security. And if we go down this path and we see the tax increases that were part of this, we put in it in one term that's relevant, what's relevant to us, how does this affect the family of four, mom, dad and two kids that are making \$50,000 a year? The result of this budget and the tax increases that are part of it to a family of four making \$50,000 a year, it will cost them annually \$2,100 in additional taxes.

And additionally, we're paying more for gas. We have no plan for a balanced budget coming out of the majority side. This economy has been driven down into the drink because of lack of confidence, lack of an energy policy, because of the tax increases that reduce the capital investment, especially in industrial investment, and because of the subprime.

Things that you do in a bad economy are not increase taxes, not increase government spending. You don't take a larger share out of your gross domestic product and roll that into government, that's the nonproductive sector of the economy. That's one I'm not feeling charitable; I call that the parasitic sector of the economy. We need to have more dollars in the productive sector and the private sector of the economy; that means less taxes, less government, more personal responsibility, more fiscal discipline on the part of this Congress and this House where we start the spending here.

So, I applaud the gentlelady for leading this Special Order. I look forward to many more. I look forward to the day when I can say, I stood on the floor of this Congress and voted for a balanced budget that made it through the Senate to the President's desk, and fiscal responsibility, and letting people keep the money that they earn.

Thank you for yielding. I appreciate it.

I yield back to the gentlelady from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I thank the gentleman for yielding back.

And he is exactly right. In 1993, the \$240.6 billion tax increase that came

about in 1993 is something that people in this Nation stood up and said we are not going to stand for this.

□ 1715

And I appreciate also that the gentleman mentioned Wealth of Nations and made reference to that wonderful work.

I think another one that we could add to the reading list of those who are fiscal conservatives is *Road to Serfdom*, which is a book, and I would commend that, Mr. Speaker, to all of our colleagues, to go back and read that work by a wonderful economist, Friedrich Hayek. And it talks about how, when you tax more and government spends more, and you take more from your people in a Nation, that you're walking on that *Road to Serfdom*.

As the gentleman was saying, we look at the rate of taxations based on our GDP, where we are right now in 2007, and many of us feel like this is too high. We are under 20 percent.

This is the CBO long-term outlook for taxation. You can see by looking at the bars, the red one is net interest. Social Security is the purple area. Medicare and Medicaid is the orange area, and then you have all other spending, which is in green.

Look at this chart, and look at what happens from 2007 to 2015, where we move above that 20 percent. Look what happens by 2030, when meeting the cost of your entitlements and your interest are going to take all revenue coming in on our current percentage of taxation. And then 2040, look at what happens, when you're spending about 35 percent of your GDP on taxes.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Will the gentlelady yield?

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I will yield.

Mr. KING of Iowa. As I look at your chart, it occurs to me that that's Federal spending. And I'm going to speculate here, though, that if we would add to that the State and the political subdivision spending on to that, because that also is a share of the GDP, we have a significantly higher percentage. And I would think that that percentage today may well go to 37 percent.

I've seen some studies by some very well-respected and highly credentialed economists that make the argument that there's a right size to government, and that right size to government, when you add all the taxation across the spectrum, from Federal to State to local, that right size of government taxing a percentage of GDP, they believe, falls somewhere between 17 and 23 percent. So I'd just argue that we've passed that already, and we've got to go down in those numbers. I'd like to see those bar charts go down.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. And the gentleman is exactly right. And we would all like to see, and that is the reason that we are here. And my hope is that as we work with our colleagues on this budget issue, that we will see these charts level off and then head down-

ward, because Federal spending is far too high. And then you're exactly right; when you add your political subdivisions and the State taxation and spending to that, you do see a different picture.

At this point, to talk a little bit more about what we see happening with this budget, I want to yield to the gentlelady from Minnesota (Mrs. BACHMANN) who has joined us this year and has jumped right into the discussion of budget and taxation, and does a wonderful job representing our conservative perspective.

Mrs. BACHMANN. I want to thank the gentlelady from Tennessee and applaud her and thank her for her efforts as she is leading this wonderful budget school for the people of the United States, and I would consider her the dean of our budget school, and she's doing a wonderful job as dean. And I think that Representative STEVE KING may be considered a tenured professor in the budget school that the gentlelady from Tennessee is quite brilliantly hosting for the benefit of the American people.

It's so important that we're taking up this topic and devoting this time, because what all Americans share in common is that we, generally speaking, all are working for a living. And the one thing that we're finding is that more and more of our time is being spent working on behalf of political subdivisions. Whether it's the Federal Government, whether it's State government, whether it's local government, quite often our taxes are taking up perhaps as much time as from when we get up on January 1 and go to work, or if it's January 2, until perhaps in May or June, almost everything that we make during that time period is going to government.

I know that's hard to believe. But when you add up all the money that we're paying in taxes, about that much of our time is going to earn money that will, in turn, be handed over to government to spend our money. That's what's happening, and that's what we're yielding in terms of our sovereignty, is the amount of time that we are spending working to provide for our families; that much time is being spent going to government, because someone is going to spend the money that we earn.

The question is, will we have the power over being able to make those choices over spending, or will political subdivisions, whether it is the Federal, State or local, have the ability to make those choices?

I want to show you now a chart that we have up here. This talks about how much the budget that has just been passed, which the majority, the Democrat majority has the largest spending increases in American history for the budget and the largest tax increases in American history.

Take a look at the numbers. On every State, from Alabama to Wyoming, there's an increase in taxes for

every American across the board, on average, from Alabama to Wyoming. And these aren't small increases. This is over and above what the average American is already paying.

But take a look at these increases. If you're in the State of Alabama, it's over a \$2,500 increase in taxes beyond what you're paying now. If you're in the State of Wyoming, it's over a \$3,100 tax increase.

I represent great people, great people from the State of Minnesota in the Sixth Congressional District. In Minnesota, the average taxpayer in Minnesota will pay over \$3,000 more in taxes than what they're paying now.

Well, take a look at what your grocery bill has been doing. It's been going sky high lately.

And take a look at what we're paying at the gas pump. I was in St. Cloud, Minnesota last week. The price of diesel gasoline was \$3.81. The price of regular gasoline was \$3.14. When I took office and was sworn in for the first time as a brand new freshman Member of Congress, I thought gasoline was too high then, and it was about \$2.25 a gallon.

Well, what has this Congress yielded, the 110th Congress?

So far this Congress has gone for the largest tax increase in American history, the largest spending increase in American history.

And as the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), and as Representative STEVE KING has said, from Iowa, and also the gentleman from Georgia, Representative KINGSTON has said, this Congress has failed to do anything to reform Social Security and Medicare. Every American should take pause right now and realize how sobering that is, because the United States Government has made a promise to the senior citizens of this country, has made a promise. I'm worried that this Congress will have difficulty keeping that promise with our senior citizens if we don't reform these important programs. We can't do that if we are raising the average American's taxes.

And I will yield back to the gentlewoman from Tennessee after I make this important point, and it's this: In the Budget Committee markup of Fiscal Year 2009 there was a unanimous vote to increase the marginal tax rates.

What does this mean?

Whether you are a low-income American, a middle-income American, or a high-income American, guess what? Your taxes are going up. That will impact you in an already weak economy.

Unanimously, unfortunately, the Democrats voted to cut the \$1,000 child tax credit in half. That really hurts. My husband and I have five kids. We raised 23 foster kids. Do you know how important a \$1,000 child tax credit is to the average family? That's really important. Well, they voted unanimously, unfortunately, the Democrats, to cut the \$1,000 child tax credit in half. That will impact average Americans.

They also voted to eliminate the marriage penalty tax relief. Why would we do that? Why would we want to take away tax credits for people who are married? Married people are raising the next generation of Americans. We want to help them, not hurt them.

They also voted to eliminate the capital gains and dividends relief. This was the big driver. From 2000 until 2008, this has driven our economy forward. This has been a good thing.

And also, unfortunately, to bring back the death tax.

This is not the direction we want to go. The direction we want to go is one, a budget that the Republicans have put forward, and that's a growth budget, a budget to cut your taxes, cut wasteful spending, and put in place the mechanisms that will provide growth for this economy so that you can keep more of your income and start working for you, rather than working for the government.

And that's why I commend the gentlelady from Tennessee. As the dean of our budget school, she has been letting the American people know, in the plainest possible language, that we are here because we want to work for you. We hear you. We hear the difficulties that you're laboring under.

And I yield back to the gentlelady now to go on and continue to explain forthwith to the American people how important this ongoing discussion is.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I thank the gentlelady from Minnesota. And as she said, we do have a response to this budget. You can go to budget.house.gov/republicans and pull that budget up, because it is a budget that is there to encourage growth, reduce taxes, and be certain that our constituents have the money left in their pockets.

At this time I yield to David Davis, the gentleman from Tennessee who joined us in this House this year. He was in the State Legislature in Tennessee. He knows firsthand how important a low rate of taxation, low and reasonable regulation is to having small businesses grow and develop jobs. And as we all know, there is no economic stimulus as good as a job. And I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee. I'd like to thank my colleague from Tennessee. Thank you for your leadership, Ms. Blackburn. You're doing a wonderful job. I had the opportunity to serve with you in the State Legislature, and we fought off a State income tax together back in our home State. And it worked well in Tennessee and it would work well here to keep our taxes low.

As you well know, mothers and fathers all across Tennessee, I'm more concerned about East Tennessee, to be honest with you, but mothers and fathers all across East Tennessee and across America sit around their kitchen tables putting budgets together. They have to make decisions on how am I going to fill up my pickup truck or my car and it costs over \$50 a tank? How am I going to put food on my table? How am I going to pay my housing payment? How am I going to pay for my health care? Those are some of the things that real Americans, real

mothers and fathers have to make decisions about.

And if you look at the gasoline prices and you look at the energy bill that actually came out of this House back in December, I voted against the legislation. It had new taxes. It had new regulations. The only thing it didn't have was any new energy. And I think the American people are starting to feel that today, and because of that, they're starting to see increases in things such as their food bill going up.

I know my wife comes home every week and says, I can't believe how much our grocery bill's gone up this month. So people all across East Tennessee are struggling to make ends meet.

The Democrat budget resolution fails the test of fiscal responsibility miserably. Instead of exercising fiscal restraint and lowering taxes, the Democrat budget raises taxes, as you well know, by \$683 billion over the next 5 years. You heard me correctly. \$683 billion over the next 5 years.

And as it's been pointed out, that is the largest tax increase in America's history. Not only America's history. It's the largest tax increase in America's history, but it's also the largest tax increase of any country in the world. That's pretty amazing.

I don't go home every weekend and hear people say, if you could just raise my taxes, my family will do better. I hear just the opposite. Keep taxes low. Keep regulations low. Lower gasoline prices, and let me succeed.

This budget actually blows away the previous record tax increase back in 1993. That was \$443 billion.

These are real tax hikes being imposed on real people. Here are some of the staggering statistics for families in Tennessee's First District. According to the Heritage Institute, because of the Democrat budget, the average taxpayer in my district will be forced to pay an increase of \$1,596, and it will result in almost 2,000 jobs being lost, and a loss of \$188 million in the First District's economy.

□ 1730

That's not what I hear when I go home every weekend to east Tennessee: If you could just raise my taxes, increase regulations, then it's going to be good for my family. That's not what I hear. I hear, Keep taxes low, keep regulations low, lower gas prices and get government out of my way and we will be able to do better.

And by reimposing the marriage tax, you know, I hear comments here in Washington that, well, if we could only tax the wealthy. Well, when I go home to east Tennessee every weekend, there's a lot of married folk that are not wealthy. That's just common sense. And by bringing back the marriage tax, roughly 23 million taxpayers will see their taxes increase by \$466 by the year 2011 simply because they're married. I don't know if that's the policy that we need to be bringing forth in this Congress. That's not what I hear when I go home to east Tennessee every weekend.

We have a choice between bigger economy or bigger government. Taxing

and spending is not a road we need to head down. Ronald Reagan once said, "We don't have a trillion-dollar debt because we haven't taxed enough; we have a trillion-dollar debt because we spend too much."

I think we, as Members of Congress, need to be more concerned about the budgets of mothers and fathers who have to put a budget together around their kitchen tables back in East Tennessee and across America rather than growing a Federal budget that supports out-of-control spending that relies on taking money from the very mothers and fathers who are struggling to make ends meet back in northeast Tennessee and across America.

I would like to thank my colleague, Congresswoman BLACKBURN, for her leadership in putting on this budget school; and if we could just get back to using some common sense, we will go forward in America. It's worked well for over 200 years; we just need to get back to that common sense.

Thank you for your leadership.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I thank the gentleman from Tennessee, and as he said, the loss to the economy is something we hear a lot about.

Look at this chart. You can see what happened with Federal revenues in 2001, 2002. Look at what happened when we reduced taxes in 2001 and then again in 2003, and look what happened, how we took off with a growth in Federal revenues. It just shows you what happened when you reduce taxes, when the government takes less and allows individuals to make those decisions, what to do with that money. When government doesn't take first right of refusal on so much of that paycheck and allows our constituents to make those choices, you can see there are four straight years of increases there.

To talk a little bit about the impact of the economic policy that's before us on his constituents from Ohio, I yield to the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. JORDAN.

Mr. JORDAN of Ohio. I thank the gentlelady for yielding and for her leadership on this special order hour and her leadership in Congress and her work with the RSC along with our chairman.

Mr. Speaker, the Federal Government spends a lot of money. The American people understand that instinctively. In fact, let me give some context to it.

The United States' economy is a \$14 trillion annual economy. The second largest economy in the world is Japan, approximately \$4 trillion annual economy. The third largest economy, if you define it this way, would be the Federal Government. So 1 year of spending by the Federal Government would be the third largest economy in the world. \$3 trillion, the largest budget in history, is what passed on this floor 4 weeks ago.

Again, to provide a little context to that. \$3 trillion budget. That's the Federal Government spending your tax dollars, the American families' taxpayer money for families in Ohio and across this country spending at \$100,000 a second, \$6 million a minute, \$350 million an hour. I mean, even by politicians' standards, that is spending money like crazy.

The Federal Government spends, again, just to provide some context, and I appreciate the work that everyone has done and what the previous figures have said. The Federal Government spends \$25,000 per year per family. Instead of spending \$25,000 per family, if we would just spend \$20,000 we could balance the budget in 1 year. Just spending \$20,000 per family, we could do it.

The previous speakers have talked about the tax burden that was also contained in this budget, \$600 billion in taxes. You always hear about tax-and-spend politicians. I actually argue that it's just the opposite. In fact, the gentleman from Tennessee just talked about this. It's spending tax. Spending always drives the equation.

So to make sure that this \$3 trillion could be spent, this budget contains the largest tax increase in the history of our country. At a time when families are already dealing with tough economic situations in their family and in their communities, the last thing we need is higher taxes.

You can compound all of this situation by what we heard last week. And I just want to read from the trustees' report, the 2008 Social Security and Medicare trustees' report, because I think it's poignant to this, a discussion about where we are at this point in our Nation's history. The trustees said, We are increasingly concerned about the inaction on the financial challenges facing the Social Security and Medicare programs. The longer action is delayed, the greater will be the required adjustments, the larger the burden on future generations, and the more severe the detrimental economic impact on our Nation.

The longer we wait to do anything, the tougher it is going to be to address it and fix the problem.

In fact, outgoing Comptroller General David Walker has said this: We run the risk, for the first time in American history, turning over a worse financial picture to the next generation. It's never happened before in the history of the United States.

One of the reasons we are the greatest countries in history is because parents make sacrifices for their children so they can have a better economic situation, a better life, a better standard of living than what we have. We run the risk of beginning to turn that. We have got to begin to address that.

I just want to bring up two simple concepts that were proposed in the Budget Committee by Members of the Republican party and the RSC. We offered two simple ideas. One was, it's time for a second Grace Commission. If you remember, President Reagan put together the Grace Commission. He had outside business people come in and look at the Federal Government, look at the government, say, Where is the waste? Where is the fraud? Where is the redundancy? Where is the ridiculousness? Let's get rid of it and save taxpayer money and better spend taxpayer money.

Back in the 1980s, they identified \$400 billion in waste, fraud, and redundancy. Certainly we can find some savings by doing that. The Grace Commission, unfortunately, was defeated in committee.

We also offered an amendment that said let's hold the line on spending. Outside of the military, let's just hold the line, and let's keep the baseline lower, which saves us a lot of money in the outyears. And we made the argument in committee that this won't solve the problem, but this will better position our Congress, better position our government to deal with what we know is coming, to deal with what the trustees reported last week is coming relative to Social Security and Medicare. Two simple ideas that we couldn't even get passed in committee because the majority party wouldn't go for it. Things that we need to do to long-term begin to address the situation.

As the previous speaker said, and I will close with this and turn it back over, he's confident that we will get this right. I am, too. Not because the politicians in Washington get it but because the American people do. The old adage is often true: Most politicians don't see the light; they feel the heat. And they feel the heat from their constituents because their constituents have the common sense of the folks, like in East Tennessee and back in western Ohio as well, and they understand the situation is real, they understand it's time for politicians and elected officials to step forward and say, Enough is enough. Let's fix this because it's about our kids and about our grandkids.

That's why I applaud the leadership of the gentlewoman from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I thank the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. Speaker, we have had some absolutely wonderful freshmen to join us this year, and the gentleman from Ohio is one of them; and we are just so grateful to his constituents who have sent him here to join in on seeking fiscal responsibility for this great Nation of ours. We appreciate his leadership, as Mr. DAVIS and Ms. BACHMANN, and the work that they have done.

And now someone who came to this Congress and has been a leader serving on the Budget Committee working toward fiscal responsibility.

I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GARRETT).

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. And I thank the gentlelady from Tennessee for all of your work on this matter and others as well, shining the light of day on the budget process here in the House under Democrat control of this legislature.

That last point, under Democrat control, here we find ourselves 15 months into the 110th Congress under a new Democrat majority in this House, and we have to ask that basic question, What has that Democrat control of 15 months brought? Well, in outside groups in the media, it has been re-

ported this has been one of the most inefficient and ineffective Congresses in passing legislation out of the House and making it to the President's desk and getting it signed, in most people's memory. And that is a bad thing when it comes to trying to solve the problems that are addressing America's families and America's pocketbook as well.

I would like to spend my couple of minutes personalizing this budget process from the great State of New Jersey and other residents of my State as well and how it impacts upon them.

New Jerseyans are already overtaxed. Just recently, the legislature in Trenton, the State capital, raised taxes. They raised the sales tax, they raised corporate taxes, they raised user fees and what have you. And now there is talk about, in our State, maybe doubling or tripling the tolls on the road, and not to speak, of course, about property taxes which are going through the roof in our State. So New Jersey families are already taxed.

What do we see here in the Congress under Democrat control with the budget that they have passed through this House? Well, for New Jerseyans it would amount to around \$3,700 increase, a \$3,700 increase in taxes on the American family or the New Jersey family. More of their hard-earned money being taken from them and sent to Washington.

And what else? Well, another independent analysis, this one done by the Heritage Foundation, shows that folks in my district, the Fifth District in New Jersey, which my district represents, they would lose upwards to 2,000 jobs. So mind you, the budget that the Democrats have passed would do two things: raise our taxes in my State by around \$3,700 for the average family, and we would lose 2,000 jobs. All a bad thing now under the Democrat's Congress.

So while it may have been one of the most ineffective and inefficient Congresses under the Democrat leadership, they are doing some things all bad.

Let me take a moment, if I may, to address three points that went through the budgetary process when the bills came through the committee.

If you hadn't been turned on C-SPAN from 10:30 in the morning when the bills came through with the Budget Committee initially until around 1 o'clock the next morning when the bill finally came out, you may have missed exactly what the Budget Committee did under the leadership of the Democrat Conference.

Let me touch upon three of them. Democrats proposed their budget. Republicans tried to take a bad bill and tried to make it better with a number of amendments, and I will go through very quickly, if I may, three of those amendments. In each instance, when we took our amendments and said, Here is an idea that maybe would make your bill a little bit better, they voted

unanimously, and it shows the bipartisanship is not there in that committee, unanimously against our ideas.

First idea. AMT, alternative minimum tax. We suggested that this very harsh tax should be repealed. Remember, it was the AMT started under 1969 under a Democrat Congress, in the 1990s under a Democrat President, Bill Clinton. We Republicans tried to repeal it. He said no. Now we said we have to get rid of this unfair tax that in just a couple of years from now, around 34 million American families would see their taxes go up incredibly. They said "no" to our amendment.

Secondly, again, Democrats unanimously voted against another amendment that we suggested to their bill with regard to earmarks. We all have problems with earmarks. It made the news heavily in the last months, what have you. We see the waste, fraud, and abuse there. We suggested we could save a billion dollars in earmarks and let's appropriate it over to veterans and for their good causes. That was our amendment. They voted unanimously to oppose it.

And finally in the area of Social Security. You would think here is one area that there would be bipartisanship, that they would reach across the aisle and try to get something done. Again, no go. Earmarks, again, was the basis of our areas that we thought we could save some money. There was so much waste, fraud, and abuse with their earmarks. We said, Let's save some of the money there. Let's make sure that Social Security is here for seniors today and for the next generation and next generation. Let's stop robbing from the Social Security trust fund. We put in an amendment to do that. What do the Democrats do once again? Unanimously they voted against that amendment as well.

The amendments all went down. The bill passed as the Democrats initially proposed it, in essence, and that bill, of course, is bad for my constituents, bad for New Jerseyans as we will be losing jobs, seeing our taxes go up.

So, again, I close where I began, commending the lady for bringing this information to the American public as we work together to make it a better situation.

Thank you.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I thank the gentleman from New Jersey, and I do thank him, Mr. Speaker, for his continued leadership. As I mentioned, we were freshman classmates in the 108th Congress and have worked each session of these past three sessions of Congress to bring to light the needed changes that are there for our government budget processes, the way we go about building this budget, and the way we handle the taxpayers' money.

Another of our 108th freshmen who worked making waste, fraud, and abuse our class project as we developed to the wasteful Washington spending and the Washington waste watchers and started shining some light on earmarks and

the need to change that practice on wasteful spending, on increased taxation, on programs that may be have outlived their usefulness, and that is the chairman of our Republican Study Committee, JEB HENSARLING of Texas.

And as I mentioned, we are all Members of the Republican Study Committee, and I want to yield to our chairman, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) for his comments and remarks on the budget process and welcome him to this session of budget school.

□ 1745

Mr. HENSARLING. I thank the gentlewoman from Tennessee for yielding, and I certainly thank her for her leadership and ingenuity in putting together this budget school for the American people. It is their money. Too often people come to this floor and they think it's their money. It's not. It's the people's money, and they need to know what the U.S. House is doing about it.

The gentlewoman had so many great speakers from our Conservative Caucus, the Republican Study Committee, and I think I just want to sum up really what is probably a tale of two budgets: the Republican budget and the Democrat budget. And, unfortunately, for the American people, it was the Democrat budget that was passed into law.

Number one, the Democrat budget included the single highest tax increase in American history on American families at a time when we know the economy is struggling, American families are struggling. I have two small children. I know what's happened to the price of milk. I know what's happened to the cost of a loaf of bread and to all the various and sundry cereals that they see advertised on Saturday morning that my wife and I are compelled to buy. Groceries have gone up. Gasoline has gone up. Ever since the Democrats took control of the economic policy of America 15 months ago, all we have seen is that American families have to struggle.

But what are the Democrats doing on top of this as American families are struggling? They are imposing a tax increase of almost \$3,000 per American family over the course of the next 3 years. I mean, Mr. Speaker, this is just simply unconscionable. In my district in East Texas, the average family will see their taxes increase \$2,734. Small businesses, as we struggle to make sure that we keep our jobs, that we expand our jobs, small businesses, their taxes are going to go up by as much as 13 percent. Taxes on capital gains will go up 33 percent; dividends, 164 percent. Mr. Speaker, you can't have capitalism without capital. You can't have the job engine if you take that away. And so at a time when people are concerned about their paychecks, the Democrats are going to take even a bigger bite out of their paychecks and the people who create those paychecks in the first

place: the small business. I mean, Mr. Speaker, this is just unconscionable.

The death tax is going to go from zero percent up to 55 percent. People work their whole life to put together a farm, a ranch, a small business; and all of a sudden Uncle Sam can come in and take over half of it, and there's just not enough left to go around. The child tax credit is going to be cut in half. The lowest tax bracket is going to be increased by 50 percent. The marriage penalty will return. This is the Democrat plan for economic growth? This is the Democrat plan to help struggling American families?

A tale of two budgets. The Republican budget has no tax increase, Mr. Speaker. I repeat, no tax increase.

Another incredibly distinguishing aspect of the tale of two budgets is that the Republican budget says enough is enough on these earmarks. No more bridges to nowhere. It's your money. So the Republican budget included an earmark moratorium. They said you know what? The system's broken. The system's wasteful. We're going to stop it. We are going to ensure that there's a select committee to see if there's a better way to spend the people's money. And, instead, the Democrat budget rejects that. And, instead, what do they have? They have almost \$15 billion for congressional earmarks that all too often represent the victory of seniority over merit, special interest over the general interest, and secrecy over transparency.

In the Democrat budget, in the last budget, they financed \$2 million so that one of their committee chairmen could build a museum to himself; \$100,000 is sent to the Los Angeles Fashion District for landscaping at the same time they are increasing taxes on American families. They earmark \$300,000 to train people to work on Hollywood movie sets while they're taxing hardworking American families. And the list goes on and on. They are the party of congressional earmarks. Business as usual.

Some say it's not a whole lot of money. Well, Mr. Speaker, I hope I'm never in Congress so long that I conclude that \$16 billion of the people's money is not a lot of money. It's a lot of money to the people in the Fifth Congressional District of Texas. And at the time when they are trying to keep a roof over their head, send their kids to college, pay for a gallon of gasoline, pay for a gallon of milk, to sit there and be building museums to sitting Members of Congress, to be sending money to the L.A. Fashion District is simply unconscionable.

So, Mr. Speaker, again, when you look at two budgets, it's not just about numbers; it's about visions. At a time when we need more jobs and more growth and we need to secure the family paycheck, all the Democrats offer are more earmarks, and they offer tax increases on the American family as much as \$3,000 per year.

The Republican budget has no tax increase. It will help the family paycheck. It will help create small businesses. It has spending control and will lead to a brighter future for our children and future generations and provide them with greater freedom and greater opportunity. That is the tale of two budgets and how the American people's money is spent.

So I thank the gentlewoman from Tennessee for this wonderful program on the budget. I thank her for her leadership within the Republican Study Committee, the Conservative Caucus in Congress.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I thank the gentleman from Texas for the leadership that he provides every day on these issues.

And at this point, Mr. Speaker, I want to yield to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT), who has such a wonderful understanding of the budget.

And as I mentioned earlier, we have our Constitution and our Declaration of Independence, a little tiny document. Then we've talked about the appendix of the budget, this big volume right here. And what you're going to find there with some of the line items, as our colleague from Georgia was talking about, is the ag program. That's where you find that information. Then there is analytical and historical data that we look at and what we actually find with our trust fund and with our debt.

And to provide some insight into this, I yield to the gentleman from Maryland for his insight into the budget and the budget structure.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I thought it might be instructive for the last couple of minutes of this hour to kind of put what we've been talking about in perspective.

When you say "budget," "you have to know which budget we're talking about because we have two budgets in Washington. We have the one we talk about publicly, and then we have the official budget that we have to deal with, and they're different. You will understand in a couple of moments why they're different.

When we generally talk about public, you'll hear what we call the unified budget. Now, the unified budget is all the money that comes into Washington and all the money that we spend. But about 10 percent of the money that comes into Washington shouldn't be Washington's money to spend because it's moneys that they've taken from you, like Social Security, Medicare, railroad retirement, and about 50 others, presumably to be put in trust for you. But they do not put those moneys in trust for you. What they do with them in Washington is immediately convert them to a nonnegotiable U.S. security and spend them.

When we talk about debt, there's the national debt and the public debt, and

I will bet you, Mr. Speaker, that not one person in fifty out there knows the difference between the national debt and the public debt.

Our time's going to run out in just a couple of minutes, and I would like to come back to the floor to talk again. But there never was a moment in time during those years during the Clinton presidency when we said we were paying down the debt that, in fact, the national debt went down. Because what we were doing with the lockbox money, which was surplus money from Social Security and Medicare, we were taking that money and paying down the public debt. The public debt did go down, but for every dollar the public debt went down, the trust fund debt went up another dollar. So there was no change in the total debt, or the national debt. But there were some trust fund moneys that were not lockbox moneys. In fact, only two of them were lockbox, Social Security and Medicare; so we happily took that additional money and spent that, and so the national debt did go up. As a matter of fact, there was not a moment in time during those years when we said we had a budget surplus when, in fact, the national debt went down.

There's a lot of duplicity in Washington. It probably shouldn't surprise you to learn that you shouldn't believe everything that comes out of Washington. I have the numbers here for that debt, and a half hour ago when I came to the floor, the public debt was over \$5.3 trillion. They call this the intergovernmental holdings debt, which was just a little over \$4 trillion. I have \$4 trillion here, \$5 trillion here, and the total national debt was \$9.46 trillion.

I would very much appreciate coming back to the floor at another time to expand on this because I think it's very instructive for people to know, as your budget school says up there, who have the right to know how Washington spends your money.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I think individuals can see how instructive and how exciting our next session will be because we're going to talk a little bit about this budget, and I thank the gentleman for his insight.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it's an honor to come before the House once again.

As you know, in the 30-Something Working Group, we work very hard to put forth the agenda of the American people. We have been consistent over a number of years in doing this. And I think that it's important for the forward progress of not only the House of

Representatives but also for the American people.

The good thing about coming to the floor and sharing what's happening here in the Capitol Dome, or what's not happening, is its importance in strengthening our democracy and also strengthening our economy and strengthening the faith in government by the American people. And I think that some of the information, especially as it comes in a bipartisan fashion, that it allows our friends on the Republican side of the aisle to be able to take part in legislation that the American people support wholeheartedly.

Case in point: increasing the minimum wage, adopting all the 9/11 recommendations, and also looking at the issue of the greening of America, putting forth incentives of saving our Earth as we move forth, fighting for community police officers for local law enforcement agencies, State law enforcement agencies, and also the Federal outlook of being able to deter crime in this country; also assisting children and getting a level of health care that they deserve in a universal sense as it relates to S-CHIP, or what we call CHAMP here on the floor; and to also have hearings, to open up this government to the American people, of transparency.

As we started talking about Member projects, Mr. Speaker, in the appropriations process, we brought about the transparency that the American people have been looking for, disclosure, to make sure that these projects are worthy projects, and also having what we call reform, and we have shown that.

□ 1800

I want to just talk about a few things, Mr. Speaker, if I can, before the rest of the 30-Something Group is recognized, of what is happening now, not only in America, but overseas. We know that a number of officials from the Bush administration have been asked to come to Capitol Hill to testify before various committees, be they House or Senate. Today's news is the economy. When we start looking at testimony that took place here today, where it was first mentioned, not that we were trying to make history, a Bush administration official saying that the country is in a small recession and that recovery will be soon, and very soon, well, it reminds me of the debate when we talked about what was going on in Darfur, in Africa, if we want to call it genocide or not. We already knew it was genocide so we didn't necessarily have to wait for the President or the Bush administration to say it was genocide. But it did help when they said that it was.

Well, since now the Bush administration has come around to find out that their policies of tax breaks for billionaires and millionaires did not help the economy, and now has testified that we are in a recession, or a small recession, using the R word, maybe we can start