

Development Block Grant and the Head Start programs. We know these two Federal programs provide critical resources to support our Nation's children, educators and working families.

At a time when almost 12 million children under age 5 are currently in child care, the resources for their care and early education continue to be stretched after 7 straight years of nearly flat funding. The stagnant support for these programs has caused thousands of children to lose child care assistance, and fewer children today attend Head Start programs than 6 years ago.

The Child Care and Development Block Grant and Head Start are proven programs that lead to increased cognitive and social development. The programs greatly improve the ability of children to succeed in school. Increased funding will also promote greater employment among parents through less time missed from work, higher incomes, and reduced rates of turnover.

In my State of Pennsylvania, over 522,000 children under age 6 need care because the parents are hard at work trying to provide their children with opportunities for success. That is why I support increased funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant and the Head Start and Early Start programs. I urge my colleagues to do the same.

AMERICAN VICTIMS OF HAMAS

(Mr. KIRK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KIRK. Madam Speaker, yesterday SHELLEY BERKLEY and I, along with 55 of our Democratic and Republican colleagues, sent a bipartisan letter to President Carter calling on him to cancel his meeting with Hamas leader Khaled Meshal.

The State Department lists Hamas as a foreign terrorist organization, and Hamas terrorists are responsible for the murders of at least 26 American citizens, some of them teenagers, children and infants.

Here are two of the victims, 3-month-old Shmuel Taubenfeld and 3-year-old Tehilla Nathanson. They are the faces of American citizens with their light extinguished by Hamas terrorists.

If you live in Illinois, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Ohio, California, North Carolina, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, or Florida, then Americans from your State have been murdered by Hamas.

President Carter, do not meet with the man who ordered the deaths of our fellow citizens.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair.

MCCAIN DOESN'T UNDERSTAND

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. Well, the presumptive Republican nominee for President, John McCain, wasn't kidding when he said he didn't understand the economy. He has proposed a gas tax holiday. Now let's think about it for a minute. Gas today costs three times as much as it did in 1993, but the Federal gas tax hasn't changed since 1993. So what is the cause of the big run-up?

Well, it might be the \$40 billion record profit at ExxonMobil and the \$400 million exit given to their last CEO. That might be part of it.

It might be the OPEC cartel colluding to drive up the price of oil and restrict demand. Or it could be the hedge fund speculators and others on Wall Street driving up the cost unnecessarily so they can make money.

But the nominee of the Grand Oil Party, the GOP, he's not going to take on Big Oil. He's not going to take on Wall Street. He's not going to take on OPEC. What he is going to do is cut Federal investment in our crumbling infrastructure, put hundreds of thousands of construction workers out of jobs, and condemn even more Americans to being jammed on congested highways that need improvement and bridges that are collapsing where we don't have the money to rebuild.

HONORING HOMETOWN U.S.A. PROGRAM

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor an organization in my district in Leesburg, Florida, that is making a difference for the people of Florida.

Florida's Hometown U.S.A. was formed to instill in Florida's youth the value of volunteer service. Students from across the State are selected each year to participate in the program. Each year five students are selected from elementary school to high school as participants. The volunteers' focus is on helping children and the elderly by providing food, clothes, personal care items, and assistance wherever it is needed.

Each year the organization holds its Florida Hometown U.S.A. pageant, which serves as its main fundraiser. Florida's Hometown U.S.A. program has received recognition for the positive impact and outcome it has achieved in the local communities.

I want to congratulate these fine young volunteers, especially the fine young students who are selected every year, and especially program director Linda Watts, for all she has done over the past 22 years. She has enhanced the community of Leesburg which I represent. Thank you, Linda, for all of your hard work. Keep up your hard work for the program, and God bless you.

SETBACKS FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

(Mr. WEINER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WEINER. Madam Speaker and ladies and gentlemen of the House, our bipartisan efforts to isolate terrorism and terrorists and to find a lasting and secure peace in the Middle East got two setbacks this week from sadly predictable sources.

First, the United Nations appointed a human rights inspector by the name of Richard Falk whom my hometown newspaper, the Daily News, correctly called "the nutty professor" because of his position, as he goes into this job of overseeing human rights, that the Israelis are like Nazis. This is who they appoint to try to come to a peaceful human rights conclusion in that part of the world.

And then, sadly, we had another chapter in how not to be a former President from Jimmy Carter who goes to the Middle East, and rather than trying to pursue peace, embraces Hamas, the organization responsible for hundreds of rockets falling in Israel.

It is hard to imagine two institutions or two people that could be more of a setback than these two. The United Nations once again shows that they are unfit for their role of trying to find a moderate and lasting peace in that part of world. And, sadly, Jimmy Carter continues to write a chapter about how not to be a former President.

HONORING THE MEINEKE COMPANY

(Mrs. MYRICK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MYRICK. Madam Speaker, I would like to honor the Meineke Company today and their efforts to employ ex-offenders who have participated in the Second Chance Program.

Meineke is one if not the first national company to actively hire ex-offenders returning from prison while also promoting opportunity within the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

Through participation in this program, individuals are ready to not only enter but also contribute to the workforce once they have paid their debt to society. Meineke continues to promote participation in the Second Chance Program at all of its franchise meetings, in newsletters, and through a publication called Second Chance Profiles. This periodical is sent out company wide, and chronicles the personal story of employees who have truly exhibited the meaning of a life-changing experience.

I commend Meineke CEO Ken Walker, Director of National Accounts Dave Holland, and Cordell Riley, President

of Tortal, which serves as Meineke's online trading portal. The tireless efforts of these individuals and the commitment of their ex-offenders has spawned an authentic modern day success story.

REPUBLICAN ECONOMIC POLICIES

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, with bleak news about the economy continuing to mount, it is no surprise that 25 percent of Americans say their economic situation has not improved in the last 5 years, and 31 percent say they have fallen backward. These represent the highest numbers for the Pew Research Center survey since the question was first asked in 1964.

Economic uncertainty within the middle class is a result of President Bush's economic policies. For 6 years, Republicans have offered tax cuts to the wealthy, refused to close corporate tax loopholes, and even defended multi-billion dollar tax subsidies for big oil companies.

House Democrats reject an economic policy that showers billions of dollars on unnecessary tax breaks to corporate interests and to millionaires, while middle-class families are ignored. This year's Democratic budget makes middle class tax relief a priority by calling for the extension of middle-income tax cuts, such as the child tax credit and marriage penalty relief.

Democrats have also been working hard to close corporate tax loopholes and end costly waste, fraud and abuse. Madam Speaker, Democrats are fighting to put the Tax Code back on the side of the working family.

TAX DAY

(Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, yesterday millions of Americans responsibly filed their taxes with the IRS. At the same time, House Democrats pushed legislation for the largest tax increase in history.

While middle-income families are balancing tight budgets and bracing for an economic crunch, Congress is hastily increasing taxes to keep up with Federal spending.

Madam Speaker, we need to complete an overhaul of the tax-and-spend system in Washington. For taxpayers to keep more of their hard-earned money, the key is to tighten government spending overall now. Next, we need to implement a tax system to revive and stimulate the economy for the long term. This involves offering permanent tax relief for married couples, families with children, small businesses, and putting an end to the death tax.

Reforming the tax system through tax relief will boost the economy, increase revenues, and promote job growth.

American families are acting responsibly with their money. We need to do the same.

CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Madam Speaker, once again this misguided Democrat majority is looking to set a record. But like their tally for broken promises and historic tax increases, this isn't a record of which anyone should be proud. No, Madam Speaker, this Democrat leadership is overseeing the record price of gasoline.

Today, the national average for gas reached \$3.44 a gallon, an all-time high. The American people want to know what Congress is going to do about it, but a crisis of leadership in this Congress continues to leave American families struggling to fill up their tank.

Under this leadership, the price at the pump has shot up more than a dollar a gallon in just 16 months. Now on the campaign trail, they talked about a commonsense plan to bring down gasoline prices. Yet instead of easing the pain at the pump, this majority offers only more gas taxes and less domestic production, and the gas bill only rises.

Madam Speaker, the American people demand relief, and their pleas are being ignored. That is the definition of leadership lacking.

WELCOMING POPE BENEDICT XVI

(Mr. DENT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DENT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to welcome Pope Benedict to the United States for his first visit since becoming Pope in 2005. At this moment, the Pope is at the White House. This historic visit is a significant moment in history for our country, and an important opportunity for the 65 million American Catholics across the country to build a stronger rapport with their spiritual leader.

For one of my constituents, my friend and neighbor, Dr. Brennan Pursell, the Pontiff's visit is particularly special. Although Dr. Pursell has never met the Pope, he shares an intimate connection with him.

Dr. Pursell, a professor of history at DeSales University in the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania, has spent the past 3 years researching and writing about the upbringing, development, and motivations of Joseph Ratzinger, the man we know today as Pope Benedict.

Dr. Pursell's book, "Benedict of Bavaria, An Intimate Portrait of the Pope and his Homeland," tells the story of a gifted intellectual and spiritual man who has been shaped by the rich traditions of Bavarian culture and deep devotion to the Catholic faith.

The portrait that Dr. Pursell paints in his book will help us all understand more about who the Pope is and what informs his perspectives.

I commend my constituents, Dr. Pursell; his wife, Irmgard, who is a German national; their son, Benedict; and daughter, Elena, for their dedication and for Brennan's significant contribution to history and the Catholic faith in capturing the story of Benedict of Bavaria.

I join with my constituents in warmly welcoming the Pope to our great country. I encourage everybody to take a look at this wonderful work "Benedict of Bavaria" by Dr. Brennan Pursell, my good friend and neighbor.

SANCTUARY CITIES SHOULD LOSE FEDERAL FUNDING

(Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, American taxpayers ought not be footing the bill for sanctuary cities to serve as safe havens for illegal immigrants, especially hardened criminals.

Sanctuary cities do not allow money or resources to be used to enforce Federal immigration laws. Police or other employees cannot inquire about immigration status. An example is San Francisco as a sanctuary city.

I support the CLEAR Act authored by MARSHA BLACKBURN. The act would empower local law enforcement agencies in the fight against illegal immigration. Under her bill, sanctuary cities would lose Federal crime funding unless local governments rescind the policies that prohibit local law enforcement from working with the Department of Homeland Security.

Illegal immigrants know they are safe from deportation. If these cities refuse to enforce the law, especially when it comes to criminals, it ought to cost them.

This is a first step, and I urge the House to move forward with this legislation. Americans deserve our full support.

H-2B IS A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

(Mrs. DRAKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. DRAKE. Madam Speaker, H-2B is a legal, temporary worker program that has been very successful in providing our Nation's small businesses with the workforce they need during peak business seasons. However, an important provision expired last September.

Many in Congress have acted in support of legislation that would have fixed this escalating problem. Bills, amendments, and discharge petitions have been introduced as early as last March; yet, no action.

Yesterday, the House passed an extension of the Religious Worker Visa Program while many of our Nation's small and seasonal businesses are still struggling to find workers, and Congress has responded with nothing but a hearing.