

BUSH CONTINUES TO OPPOSE EFFORTS TO PROVIDE COVERAGE FOR THE UNINSURED

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

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Speaker, this is National Cover the Uninsured Week. This recognition is particularly important this year as our economy continues to dip into recession. The Kaiser Family Foundation recently released a study that shows each time the unemployment rate increases by one percentage point, an additional 600,000 children lose their insurance.

Congress has worked hard to ensure that our children have access to health care coverage through the CHIP program. In strong bipartisan votes, this Congress has repeatedly sent President Bush legislation that would provide 10 million children quality health care coverage, but repeatedly, he vetoed the legislation and prevented us from reaching more children.

This legislation is even more important today as more Americans are losing their jobs and their health care, and yet President Bush and most Republicans in this Chamber refuse to ensure that 10 million children have access to quality health care.

Mr. Speaker, as we recognize the uninsured this week, I once again urge President Bush to reconsider his veto of the CHIP bill.

REAUTHORIZE THE COUNTY PAYMENTS PROGRAM

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

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, this Congress continues to break the Federal Government's promise to America's timbered counties, including Klamath County in southern Oregon, by not reauthorizing the county payments program. Klamath County usually receives upwards of \$19 million annually from county payments. The lapse of this program obviously has created a major budget shortfall for that rural county. It's been forced to deplete its operational reserves. It's cut over 10 jobs in areas like the sheriff's office, juvenile justice, administration, and planning.

If revenues fail to meet projections and with the operational reserves depleted, the next rounds of cuts could easily result in more than 25 people in the sheriff's department alone losing their jobs. Klamath County is known for running a tight ship so each new cut carries serious consequences to public services.

Since January of this year, the Democrat majority in this House has sat on H.R. 3058, a bipartisan 4-year reauthorization bill for county payments. Nothing's happened. No vote.

I, again, call on the Democratic leadership: Do the right thing. Keep the

commitment to the timbered communities of this country and pass the reauthorization or put it in the farm bill or put it in the supplemental. Don't strip it out. Restore faith with rural counties all across America. Keep the Federal commitment to these timbered counties.

SOARING PRICES, SILENCE AND SECRECY

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, the President announced that he's open to ideas to lower soaring gasoline prices. That's good news because I noticed gasoline prices began to rise not long after Vice President CHENEY held secret meetings with the energy companies. So the first thing the President ought to do is have the Vice President release the transcripts from those secret meetings. The American people still don't know what the Vice President's energy cabal cooked up. The gasoline prices have skyrocketed ever since.

The President's solution is to allow his oil pals to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. That keeps us addicted to oil, risks environmental catastrophe but feeds the profits of oil companies. Two of the oil companies, BP and Shell, reported almost \$19 billion in profits from the first quarter, and their surrogates in the White House can only meet soaring gas prices with silence and secrecy.

The President claimed he's looking for new ideas. How about an old reliable one: open government. Tell the people what happened in those secret meetings. Maybe then we will find out why I paid \$3.75 for a gallon of gas last night. It was \$1.90 when the President came in.

RECORD HIGH GAS PRICES REQUIRE ACTION, NOT BLAME

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

Mr. SIRES. Mr. Speaker, skyrocketing gas prices continue to squeeze Americans who are now paying more than double the price for gasoline than they did when President Bush first took office. Families and businesses are paying a heavy price for the Bush administration's failure to enact a comprehensive energy plan.

In December, the Democratic Congress passed a historic Energy Independence and Security Act which is expected to lower gas prices for the average family anywhere between \$700 and \$1,000 a year. In addition to this landmark legislation, the Democratic Congress has passed six other bills that put us on a path towards energy independence and crack down on price gouging. However, President Bush and his Republican allies in Congress strongly opposed every single one of these bills.

Mr. Speaker, for years, the President promised to end the addiction to foreign oil, but this administration's energy policies favor massive subsidies for the oil industry. As gas prices hit record highs, President Bush should reconsider his opposition to these bills.

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MORTGAGE CRISIS

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

Mr. CARSON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to an issue of great concern to the people of my district. When I was home in Indianapolis this weekend I heard from countless homeowners who are concerned about losing their homes and the mortgage crisis. These are good, hardworking people, not speculators or investors, who find themselves on the brink of foreclosure. And the Hoosiers I met aren't alone. Some estimate that nearly 50,000 homes in Indiana will be lost to this crisis if we fail to act.

Indiana families are counting on Congress, and we are taking action. I am proud to serve on the Financial Services Committee, where we are continuing to work on a plan that will provide real relief to homeowners who are struggling. Our plan will help ease the mortgage crisis and help more homeowners stay in their homes.

And I am proud that the legislation includes an amendment I have offered to ensure organizations that serve minority communities have the resources they need to counsel and support homeowners in trouble. Many of these communities have been hit especially hard by this crisis, and it's essential that organizations who serve these neighborhoods can step in and help prevent more foreclosures.

Mr. Speaker, the economic downturn is taking its toll on families in Indianapolis, and we know we can't get our economy back on track unless we address the housing crisis. It is my sincere hope that Members on both sides of the aisle and the President will work together to ensure homeowners stay in their homes and end this crisis.

I-376 TECHNICAL CORRECTION

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

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, today the House will complete work on the technical corrections bill for the Federal Highway Transportation Act. This bill includes a project that is critical to my district, the future I-376 corridor.

Pittsburgh International Airport is the only major airport not currently on a Federal interstate. This has hurt the region's ability to compete and limited business development along the highways that lead to it. The redesignation of Pennsylvania Routes 22, 30

and 60 as Federal Interstate 376 is critical to future economic development and the marketability of western Pennsylvania. Completion of the project is also contingent on safety upgrades at two separate interchanges.

With today's passage of the technical corrections bill, we are taking one more step in advancing the I-376 designation and in making the regional priority a reality. I thank the chairman, Mr. OBERSTAR.

REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE OUT OF TOUCH ON THE ECONOMY

(Ms. SUTTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, Senator JOHN MCCAIN admitted months ago that he wasn't an expert on the economy. And that certainly explained his comments earlier this month when he declared, "You can make the argument that there's been great progress economically" over the last 7 years. Great economic progress?

Clearly, Senator MCCAIN has not been talking with the middle class families across America who overwhelmingly believe they are worse off today than they were when President Bush took office in January of 2001. And there is a good reason they're feeling that way. Since January of 2001, health care premiums have increased by more than \$5,000 per year for the average middle class family, while college costs for their children have shot up \$2,500 a year for a public university.

Middle class families are finding it increasingly difficult to find the money for these skyrocketing costs, considering the average median income has actually fallen by more than \$900 over the last 7 years. And Senator MCCAIN calls this economic progress?

Mr. Speaker, the American middle class cannot afford another 4 years of failed Republican leadership in the White House.

WHERE'S THE PLAN?

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

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, talking to folks in the district last night in a telephone town hall conference and visiting with folks in my district, they want to know what Congress is doing about gas prices and energy prices. People are struggling as they try to fill up their gas tank. They're struggling when they go to the store and see inflated food costs. And so far, we haven't seen any results from Congress.

Now the other side of the aisle, the Democrats, are in charge, they've been in charge. They said they were going to take over and they would have a plan. The Speaker, the then leader on the other side, said they would have a plan.

Where is the plan? Gasoline prices when the Democrats took control were just a little over \$2. Now they're reaching \$4 in some areas. Where is the plan?

The only plan I've seen is the \$870,000 plan to replace the light in the dome of the Capitol, a 200-year payout. Where is the plan? People in America want to know where the plan is and how we're going to reduce gas prices for them and food prices for them.

GAS PRICES

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

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, last night, gas prices in New London, Connecticut reached \$3.77 a gallon. When George Bush took office, they were \$1.52 a gallon. Those prices are 72 cents higher than last year in New London County, 42 cents higher than just last month. Commercial fishermen on Long Island Sound have seen their fuel costs double, truck drivers have seen their diesel prices more than double in the last year.

Dozens of Members of Congress have written to President Bush asking him, with one stroke of the pen, to change the delivery schedule for the Strategic Petroleum Oil Reserve, which is a tried and true practice that he himself exercised in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina which brought down the price of gas by 40 cents at a time when the price per barrel was \$75. Today, at \$120 per barrel, it is time for President Bush to listen to the people of this country, Members of Congress, who are asking him to exercise his power to bring down the price of gas. And our Congress, the Democratic-led Congress, is going to keep the pressure on the President until he listens to the people of this country and avoids smothering our attempts to bring this country out of recession with the economic stimulus package.

SOLVING THE OIL CRISIS BEGINS AT HOME

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

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Thank God for George Bush. He's created the hurricanes, the earthquakes and the high price of gas.

There is only one group responsible for the high price of gas for the consumers of America and that's the United States Congress. They have done nothing, nothing since 1973 to increase the productivity of fossil fuels in the United States, and they still are doing nothing, Mr. and Mrs. America. They talk about it. They blame Mr. Bush. That's it. The best thing you can do is blame the other guy. The truth of the matter is that until we start drilling and until we start liquefying coal, until we use the offshore oil we have available, until we use the ANWR in Alaska, we're going to pay a lot more.

The prediction we have now, by the first of next year a barrel of oil will be, get this, \$180 a barrel, because the consumers abroad in other countries are consuming oil at a greater rate than we are. But we sit here and say we're going to solve it by putting \$800,000 on the dome of the Capitol to save, in 200 years, 10 bucks.

What's wrong with this Congress? And remember, I said "this Congress." You haven't done the job. You're not doing the job. Until we wake up, Mr. and Mrs. America, and start drilling as we should drill, you're going to pay a lot more at that tank. You think about it, \$200 a barrel 2 years from now, you'd better get a bicycle.

PORTLAND, OREGON PROMOTES CYCLING

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Following up on my good friend, I'm glad he mentioned bicycles, because there are some people in America that are doing something to provide more choices to Americans, to burn calories instead of fossil fuels. I am pleased that my community, Portland, Oregon, was just designated a "platinum level bicycle-friendly city," the highest rating granted by the League of American Bicyclists.

Portland celebrates three decades of consistently applying policies that promote cycling, and the third consecutive year of double digit growth in bicycle ridership. This makes a big difference for real life people. It's why Portlanders are nine times more likely to ride a bicycle than the average American, and part of the rich choice menu for Portlanders with cars and transit and bicycles that ends up having them drive 20 percent less than the average American family. That translates into a savings of \$2,500 a year per family that they can spend on education, on housing, on entertainment, on investing back into the community.

I would suggest that it's time to celebrate choices, and I'm proud that Portland, Oregon, has decided to give cyclists the choices they deserve and is being honored for that effort.

CONGRESS HAS TO END EMBARGO ON AMERICAN OIL

(Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, recently I met with a number of independent truckers in my district who said that many of their businesses cannot survive the current cost of diesel fuel. And many of my constituents have also said they cannot continue to pay these rising prices of gasoline, the rising prices of food.

What much of this comes down to is: Congress has to end its embargo on American oil. To say we cannot drill in the gulf coast, the Atlantic coast, the