

There are quotes from President Monroe in 1822 when he argued that Federal money should be limited to great national works since if it was unlimited, it would be liable to abuse and might be productive of evil. That's 1822, how interesting.

As we look at the period of time through the 1950s and the 1960s and 1970s and 1980s, how this body repeatedly increased spending every single year and increased the use of those earmarks every single year, and how the practice became commonplace.

Well, some of us feel like enough is enough, that the American taxpayer deserves greater consideration. Now is the time for an earmark moratorium.

DEMOCRATS WORKING TO SOLVE AMERICA'S PROBLEMS

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

Mr. YARMUTH. Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here once again speaking on behalf of the majority makers, the freshmen Democrats elected in 2006 to bring change to Washington and who have worked very diligently over the last 16 months to begin to reverse the damage done to this country over the last 7½ years.

It is interesting, I was planning to talk about what I saw as a very encouraging sign over the last few days, the encouraging sign that we had actually solid bipartisan participation in trying to come up with solutions to some of the very daunting challenges that face this country today, including energy prices.

We had a bipartisan vote, an overwhelming bipartisan vote, to restrict additions to the strategic petroleum reserve, something which the President opposes but which overwhelming numbers of both bodies of Congress supported. And I was going to talk about the farm bill in which we had significant Republican participation in coming to grips with a new solution to our farm policy in this country. And I was going to talk about our housing initiatives, how we had significant Republican support last week in trying to craft policies that would help alleviate the serious housing situation we have and to try to keep things from getting worse.

But after listening to the partisan attack that I just heard, I have to respond because what we have heard is something that is almost in a parallel universe. It is interesting that my colleagues from the other side speak as if the last 7 or 8 years didn't exist, as if the Republicans weren't in charge of the entire government from 2001 until 2007, as if the national debt did not increase by \$5 trillion during their stewardship of this government, as if earmarks had not been developed into an art form under Republican leadership.

It is almost as if there is no history that they choose to remember.

I can understand why they don't want to remember what went on from 2001 to 2006, and before that many of the policies that were developed under Republican leadership in this Congress prior to George Bush's presidency because they don't want the American people to be reminded.

But we know from all of the polls and the voter turnout that we have seen in the last few months, we know that the American people remember what has gone on in these last few years. We know because, as we have seen in a poll over the weekend, when asked which party does the American people trust to deal with the challenges we face as a country, the American people prefer the Democratic policies by a margin of 20 percent, one of the largest margins ever recorded. It is not hard to understand why. What we have seen are failed policies from people well meaning, no question about it, but people who do not believe that government has a role in solving our problems.

We see it when people come to the government, when the average citizen comes to the government for help. We see them in our offices every day, and we talk to them at home on weekends. We know that the American people are hurting. They come to us for help. We know that nurses come to us for help. Teachers come to us for help. Social workers come to us for help. They are dealing with the pain of average American citizens every day, and we are trying to do what we can to help them.

We know that the other side does want to come to the help of American citizens from time to time if they happen to be the CEO of ExxonMobil, if they happen to be the CEO of Chevron, if they happen to be the insurance executives. Those people can always find assistance from the Republicans. But when the average citizen comes for help, no, no, no, we don't want to do that. Government is not in that business.

Well, that's why the American people turned to the Democratic Party in 2006 and said, We have had enough, it is time for a change. We believe that the Democratic Party can help working Americans solve some of the problems that face them.

I think we have made a very, very good start. From the very beginning of our leadership in the 110th Congress last January, we took steps immediately to raise the minimum wage which had not been raised in 10 years. We took steps to change the rules under which drug companies dealt with Medicare. We took steps to end the subsidy of oil companies with huge tax breaks when they are making more money than they had ever made in their history. We worked very diligently, and we talked about earmarks.

My colleagues on the other side want to make it sound like we invented earmarks, which we certainly didn't. We actually provided for the first time

some transparency in earmarks. We said if you are going to put an earmark into a bill, then you have to identify that you sponsor that earmark and you have to attest and swear that you did not reap any personal benefit. You had no personal connection with the recipient of that earmark. Those were not the policies under the Republican Congress when they had in their last budget year 16,000 earmarks. No, you could slip them in there. Nobody knew you got the earmark. You could take credit for it if you wanted to, but if you tried to find out who gave money for XYZ, you couldn't find that unless the person actually took credit for it. We changed that. We required accountability in the earmark process.

So it is interesting to listen to my colleagues talk about the horrible leadership that they contend of this Democratic Congress as if the last decade had not occurred. I think the American people have seen through that. I think there is no question that the recent results, not just in polls but in special elections for Congress, reflect the fact that the American people understand that the Republicans are out of ideas. They just are out of ideas. The idea that government will play no role in solving some of the challenges that we have has proven to be a bankrupt idea. They persist in that philosophy, and they persist as of earlier today, and we have to call the attention of the American people that these are not the facts and that there is a very distinct difference between our policies, the Democratic majority, in which we are trying to use government to help the American people while maintaining fiscal responsibility, while maintaining our PAYGO rules so we make sure that we don't add to the Federal deficit and the national debt and that we pay for what we do when we do it.

Now, there is a huge exception to that policy, as we all know. We are going to see it on the House, on this floor in the next few days. We are being asked once again to allocate billions and billions of dollars to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. We are being asked by the President, who now has the lowest job approval in modern history, we are being asked by him to give him a blank check, once again no constraints on his activities in Iraq and Afghanistan, no restrictions on his troops, no new regulations regarding the deployment of troops, just give him the money and let him try to accomplish the mission which he said was accomplished 5 years ago but which has not only not been accomplished in 2008 but which is something, a mission which we still can't define.

I would like to ask the administration, and we have on many occasions, if you want our support, if you want us to continue to fund this failed policy in Iraq, tell us what the mission is. Tell us once and for all what the clear objectives are, and we will listen and we will use our judgment and see if that is the type of thing that the American people will support.

But as always, we still don't have a clear idea what the mission in Iraq is. It changes on a day-to-day basis. We are being asked once again to spend billions and billions of American taxpayer dollars for a policy which no one really can explain.

I think my colleagues, and several have joined me here now, are in the same situation as I am. On a daily basis I speak to people from my district, Louisville, Kentucky, and they say, we need money for this. We have been cut this way. We are going to have to cut services, why can't we just spend a little less in Iraq. Every day I get that question. I probably got it six times today. Why can't we take some of that money we are flushing down the toilet in Iraq and spend it on the American people who are in desperate need of the things that government needs to do. These are some of the issues we are confronted with today.

It is my great pleasure to be joined by two of my colleagues from the class of 2006, the majority makers, Mr. KEITH ELLISON from Minnesota and Dr. STEVE KAGEN from Wisconsin, and I am going to yield to Mr. ELLISON and have him continue this discussion about what we in the majority makers and we in the Democratic majority are trying to do on behalf of the American people.

Mr. ELLISON. Madam Speaker, I thank my good friend from the great State of Kentucky. He has been helping to lead our majority-maker class in this leg of our two-term service, and has been doing a fine job of it.

As I start, I want to invoke the memory of two young men, one Robert Dixon and another one, Quising Lee.

□ 2130

These are two young men who are from Minneapolis who were killed in Iraq. There have been 64 Minnesotans killed in Iraq, and Robert Dixon and Quising Lee are two gentlemen who lived in my district.

I'll never forget when I went to go see Quising Lee's family after he was killed. He went to North High School. He was 20 years old when he died, and he was killed in a roadside bomb in Iraq.

Robert Dixon was killed in a roadside bomb in Iraq as well. I wasn't able to go to see Robert Dixon's funeral. I was here. My wife went for me. Kim, thank you for doing that. And she sat there and listened to stories about Robert Dixon and his life and his service to our country and the things he hoped for and wanted.

But I did get a chance to visit the family and go to the funeral of Quising Lee. Quising Lee, 20 years old when he was killed, went to North High School, had his whole life in front of him. Only 20 years old.

It's in the memory of those two young men from Minneapolis that I offer remarks tonight, and on behalf of those 64 Minnesotans that have been killed, and on behalf of those 4,500-some individuals, Americans who've

been killed in Iraq, and on behalf of those, probably as many as perhaps 600,000, perhaps even 1 million Iraqis who've lost their lives in Iraq.

That's the spirit in which I approach tonight, my fellow majority makers, because, as you know, tomorrow is the big day we're going to be voting on Iraq appropriation once again.

Just for the facts, I think it's important to point out this will be a three-tier vote. One will be on appropriation for Iraq. I'll be voting "no." The second will be on certain terms and conditions to get out of Iraq. I'll be voting "yes" on that. And the third will be appropriations for GI bill and things like that, and I expect to be voting "yes" on that.

And so I want to just lay this out tonight because I think people that are listening should know that tomorrow is a big deal. Tomorrow is a big day. We're all going to be casting votes, votes, I pray, of conscience, votes that are not based on licking a finger and sticking it in the wind, votes that we earnestly believe in. No matter what you may conclude about how you should vote tomorrow, I pray that you do it based on your conscience, consistent with your conscience.

And as we sit here tonight, you know, I reflect on the fact that I've been to Iraq once, been to Afghanistan once, look forward to going back. I think it's the responsibility of every Member of Congress to see the place that we have these soldiers struggling to survive in. I don't think it's right to just send somebody there and then just expect that they're going to be fine. We should at least go there, eat with them, sit with them, listen to them, their hopes, dreams, aspirations, what they hope to do if they make it out of there.

I think it's important for us, as Members of Congress, to go to the VA hospitals in our local communities and here in Washington, DC.

I think that what we're dealing with is serious issues, life and death. And more importantly, perhaps most importantly for me, we're dealing with issues of how our Nation works in relation with other nations in the world.

I believe that the United States should aspire to be a good neighbor in the world. I believe that our country, blessed with tremendous economic power, blessed with tremendous democracy, meaning not just elections, but the power to respect minority rights, the power to respect religious diversity, ethnic diversity. In America, we're not saying that people don't discriminate, but it's illegal if you do it, and good people fought and even died to make it so.

So I hope that tonight, as we reflect upon our great Nation, we reflect upon our role in the world, reflect upon not only the hard power but the soft power of America; that we all reflect on the sacrifices that were made to make it that way; and that we say that American history is not written yet, and that greater things are left for us to do.

And the greatness of this country is not bound up in guns and bombs, but, my friends, it's bound up in the goodness of the people and our desire to say that we cannot rest on having a democracy at home, but we should model it for the world, but not impose it or inflict it upon the world; and that we are not the world's police officer, but we could be a good example for what people might want to emulate, and that we should use our power to beat swords into plowshares and make war no more.

I'll be voting "no" on that appropriation tomorrow. And so I just want to turn it back, as we reflect tonight, as I reflect on the lives of Robert Dixon and Quising Lee. I know my friends from Kentucky and Wisconsin have some young people, or not so young people who they're remembering tonight as well.

Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. YARMUTH. I thank the gentleman. And now it's a pleasure to welcome Dr. KAGEN from Wisconsin, someone who has been a steadfast advocate for not just the veterans of this country, but for working families everywhere, and has been a champion in trying to bring attention to the serious flaws and opportunities in our health care delivery system.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. KAGEN. Thank you for yielding, and thank you for carrying on for the first few minutes before I was able to attend. Our Committee on Transportation just ended its subcommittee meeting at 9:20 this evening where we were hearing some testimony about the possible merger between Delta and Northwest. And it was a very educational seminar, to say the least.

But it's still an example of how we are working hard to gain oversight over these mega mergers, and taking a look at big business and big insurance and big corporations and the big war machine that's now costing Americans millions and millions of dollars every day.

And if you like numbers, my friend, it's \$14 million an hour that we're spending in Iraq instead of here at home. It's \$338 million per day, \$2.4 billion per week, and \$10 to \$12 billion per month that we have our hard-earned tax money going over to the sands of Iraq and not investing here at home in our own infrastructure, in our roads and our bridges, in our schools and in our social system.

Now, if you like numbers, and I like numbers, I've got a head for numbers. I'll give you the number 300, 200 and 13. 300 percent is the increase in the gasoline price since the current administration took office in 2001; three times as much as what you're paying at the pump as when they started.

Now, my friend, Mr. ELLISON, the right honorable sir, mentioned Iraq and some Iraq tragedies. On Mother's Day I had the occasion, in Wisconsin, to dial up and wish a happy Mother's Day to a fallen soldier's mother, and I spoke

with Donna Opicka. She had lost her son, Dean. And in her words, quote, "It's not working."

She's been against our involvement in Iraq from the start. She has two sons that are there. And we will always support our troops, but not a failed policy. And in her words, "It's just not working."

They told us oil prices would go down. They've gone up 300 percent.

The Number 200, it's 200 percent, the increase in fuel oil that many people in Northeast Wisconsin rely on to heat their homes. And it was a long winter this year.

And what about the number 13? 13 percent increase in your cost for groceries. Your food went up 13 percent.

My friends, if the cost of our food went up 200 and 300 percent, we'd see a revolution in this country. And so earlier today we passed a farm bill that will fundamentally and dramatically change the way we're feeding ourselves. This farm bill determines what farmers will plant, what they're going to grow and, ultimately, what we're going to eat and what we're going to look like.

That farm bill had the overwhelming support of over 300 Members of Congress, and it's a very good example of how Congress really ought to work, in a bipartisan way, Republicans and Democrats together putting their minds together and working out a way in which we can feed not just our own families but continue to feed the world.

Now, as this increase in energy for food and energy for oil has gone skyrocketing, the food prices have held their own until recently, when the energy cost has crept into our food supply.

At the same time as these costs are going up, your income is going down. The median income went down 2 percent since 2001. So at the very same time that middle class Americans are having a hard time keeping their head above water with the escalation in the cost for energy, both food and oil, their income is not going up.

And so I think people watching tonight have to ask a fundamental question. Whose side are we on? Are we on the side of big business? Are we on the side of big insurance, big oil companies? I think not. We're not sitting in a boardroom. We're standing on the people's floor here in the House. And I'm very honored to work with my Class of 2006, the class I brand America's hope for a real positive and a new direction; not just in our farm policy, not just in our foreign policy, but our domestic policy as well, as we pay attention to and continue to work hard for the American people to give them a fair shake in our future.

And I yield back.

Mr. YARMUTH. I thank the gentleman.

I want to pick up on two of the things that he mentioned because I think these are fascinating contrasts and put into perspective some of the challenges that we face.

First, on the subject of oil prices and gasoline prices, he mentioned that 300, the price of gasoline has gone up 300 percent since 2001. What's interesting is, when you look at what we're now paying in Iraq for gasoline, this is one of the truly astounding and very disturbing aspects of our involvement there.

And again, as my colleague, our colleague, Mr. ELLISON said, we're going to be voting on more funding for the Iraq war tomorrow. The American people need to know that right now we are spending \$153 million a month on gasoline in Iraq, \$153 million a month. And we're paying \$3.23 a gallon for that gasoline. It's probably up since then, but the time that we have the statistics, \$3.23 we're paying for gasoline in Iraq.

Meanwhile, the Iraqi people, and Iraq is sitting on one of the largest oil reserves in the world, the Iraqi people are paying a subsidized cost of \$1.30 a gallon. Now, wouldn't we all love to pay \$1.30 a gallon?

Now, that's unrealistic, but it's interesting that we're paying for the entire reconstruction cost of Iraq, we have up to this point; we're spending all this money to try and stabilize their country, and we're paying \$2 more per gallon for gasoline than the Iraqi people are. That's just one of the strange quirks of our involvement there.

Mr. KAGEN. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. YARMUTH. I would be happy to yield.

Mr. KAGEN. Does it bother you at all that we don't have any oversight in Iraq, where 20 percent of the money we're putting in, no receipts, no oversight at all, and it's a culture of corruption? Does that bother you at all?

Mr. YARMUTH. Well, certainly. And again, I referenced the fact that not only are we being allowed to, or being asked to write a blank check for hundreds of billions of dollars, as we've been writing for some time now, somewhere over \$500 billion total in direct appropriations for the war in Iraq, but we're also being asked to give the Iraqi government a blank check; do whatever you want, no accountability, you get to it when you get to it, you'll decide when things are right for us to be able to leave. It's all up to you. We're helpless.

It's a very uncomfortable position for us to be in.

Mr. KAGEN. Will the gentleman yield again for another question?

Mr. YARMUTH. Of course.

Mr. KAGEN. Does it not astound you that the administration today, and our opposing party, has no answer when we say, look, we are budget red. We have a budget deficit and Iraq has a budget surplus. Isn't it time that they paid for their own reconstruction?

Isn't that a reasonable question?

Mr. YARMUTH. It's a reasonable question which we are addressing in legislation. And I think the American people are totally justified in demanding that the Iraqi people pick up some

of the tab when they're running a \$70 billion surplus per year.

And I was actually encouraged to hear one of the representatives of the government over the weekend talk about the fact that they intend to do that. But just their intentions don't seem to be much because, again, as you said, there is no accountability method in place.

But I want to reference one other thing. And it's getting off on a little tangent, but you talked about the merger between Delta and Northwest, and that's being examined by the Transportation Committee now, and I'm glad it is.

One of the things that I've been talking about more and more when I'm talking to the good people of Louisville, Kentucky is, you know, we've allowed, over the last couple of decades, maybe 3 decades, companies to get bigger and bigger and bigger in this country. We really haven't enforced the anti-trust laws in this country in 30 years. And we did it because they said, oh, you know, it's a global economy. We need to be able to get big so we can compete.

Well, unfortunately, what they generally mean when they say they want to get big is they want to get big in revenues. They don't want to get big in job creation. They don't want to get big in many things that are the goals that we hold for this country. And when they want to get big, it generally means they want to save money. So they merge, and then they eliminate jobs, and they close facilities, and they destabilize communities, all in the name of being able to compete in the global economy.

□ 2145

And what concerns me is—and we had a hearing not too long ago in the Oversight Committee in which we talked to several of the CEOs of very large corporations, and this was about corporate executive compensation. And I asked three of the executives, When you have these compensation committee meetings when you're deciding what your CEO is going to be paid and what your top management is going to be paid, do you ever talk about the impact of these huge salaries and compensation packages on the morale of your employees? Do you ever talk about how you could make life better for your working people, your employees? Do you ever talk about how you can improve the communities that you occupy, that you serve?

And the answer was very candid, and they said, No. It's always about just how we get the stock price up and how we compensate our executives.

So the question I ask, and it's one that I hope we continue to ask in this Congress, if you want to get big, we need to make sure that your goals are the same as the American people's goals; and I think people on both sides of the aisle would say we have the same goals for the American people.

We want good jobs, we want stable communities, and we want secure families. And if we have a corporate world that has goals that are antithetical to that, then we need to revise our policy on anti-trust allowing these mergers and try to say if you want permission from us to get big and you want to operate in a certain way, we want you to operate in a way that benefits the American people and not just your CEOs and your stockholders.

Mr. ELLISON. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. YARMUTH. Absolutely.

Mr. ELLISON. As we talk about this merger of Northwest Airlines and Delta, I have a number of serious concerns I'd like to point out. One is that Northwest has a pilots' union, has a mechanics' union, has an airline attendants' union. Delta only has an airline pilots' union. And the fact is that Delta is the bigger entity. And so when they merge, what will happen with these organizations that are designed to make sure working people have some rights? I'm very concerned about that.

And I think that's one of the reasons why I think—and I hope and pray we can pass the Employee Free Choice Act, which we already passed through this House, but we have not yet been able to make into law.

I'm also concerned that Delta and Northwest in the future, if they merge, will never compete based on price or based on product. They will never compete because they will be one entity. They won't make each other better, and they won't make each other more efficient. They're just going to bond together and make some money. And of course, they're quite candid, and they tell you they are going to merge so they can get efficiencies. So what is that? Well, that means somebody is getting fired. That means somebody's got to go. You can't have two Employee Relations offices; you can't have two H.R. offices. Can't have two of everything. Somebody is going to go. And at the end of the day, a lot of folks who are paying property taxes, who are raising families, who are doing well, are going to be out of work and lose their jobs.

So I'm very concerned about this. I'm concerned about what consumers are going to pay in terms of ticket prices. I'm concerned about loss of jobs. I'm concerned about the fact that this Justice Department has never seen a merger that it didn't like, and we are seeing an increasing monopolization, oligopolization of our, what should be, competitive markets.

And I would love to see some of these free-market advocates get out there and fight for a competitive market. They seem to not be in favor of competitive markets. They seem to be in favor of really big business, not competitive markets, not free enterprise. These are things that are on my mind, and I think Americans want to know what is this Justice Department going to be about.

Because as I wrap up and toss it back to you, I would like to ask you gentlemen a question. Did you know that in 1980, the average CEO made about 42 times the average worker; but in 2005, which is the last year I have data, the average CEO made about 411 times the average worker? That is a problem. What do you guys think of that?

Mr. KAGEN. It wouldn't be so bad if everybody else was doing that good. The reason it's bad is because we didn't get lifted up at the same time.

Mr. ELLISON. Did the rising tide lift our boats?

Mr. KAGEN. Not the boats in my district, but median income might be \$28,000 to \$32,000 a year.

When I was home in northeast Wisconsin, I was at a diner, Tina's Roost, in Oconto. And I was meeting with some workers there, and I said, well, listen. We're about to take up this discussion about an economic stimulus package to revitalize our economy and get us out of this upcoming recession; and one of the city workers stood up and took apart some of the six layers of clothing because it was still pretty cold in northern Wisconsin, and he said, KAGEN, look out the window. You can see it right there. The price of gas. You drop the price of gasoline, I have got more money in my pocket. And while you're at it, knock down my health care bills. Those are the two things we could do immediately to put more money in people's pockets.

But my response was very direct and very honest. We're working hard to do that, but it's hard to do it when you have a President who's an oil person and you have a vice president who's an oil person and a Secretary of State who is an oil person. So if you've got oil in the White House, it's hard to move it out until we look forward to that date in November when we get that real positive change that we really need.

So we can drive our economy, but we have to have an energy policy that makes sense, one that is designed in the open and not behind closed doors; an energy policy that will be fashioned towards renewable sources of energy, away from fossil fuels, and it has to make sense for our environment at the same time.

But fundamentally, people are like back home in Wisconsin. A lot of people are like turtles on their back. They just want to get back on their feet and get started. And that's what we did with the energy stimulus bill, and we're also doing that with this housing bill that we put forward, trying to find a pricing floor in the housing market.

Mr. YARMUTH. The gentleman makes some very good points, and one of the things I just mentioned before you arrived was that over the past few days, we've actually done three things in a bipartisan way; and you mentioned one of them. We passed a farm bill with substantial Republican support. The housing bill, we had a number of Republicans join us; and when we dealt with the Strategic Petroleum Reserve

in which we said we don't need to be adding any more fuel to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, taking it off the market, decreasing supply when we're at 98 percent capacity; we've never been, in recent history, below 600 million gallons of our 727-gallon capacity; and the bill, the freshman class, we asked the President to do it by himself. The President refused.

So what happened? The Senate yesterday voted 97-1; the House voted 385-25. I think it shows it was a pretty solid idea. There can't be that many people who have bad judgment. Maybe there are. But 97-1, 385-25 are pretty good odds. So we spoke to the President in a bipartisan way.

So there are situations in which we have found ways to work together, and as you said, that's the way it should be; and I think that's a very encouraging sign. Unfortunately, we have a President who doesn't recognize this body as having any say in policy in this country. He believes he is the decider, and despite provisions in the Constitution in article 1 to the contrary which says the American people are the deciders of policy and the laws through their representatives of Congress.

I think we are doing the people's business, and we're doing it in a very responsible way. And I agree totally that it will be wonderful to have a new chief executive in the White House who maybe understands that government is a partnership and the Constitution was written so that it would be—we would have three branches who are not constantly in conflict but who are working together for the American people.

Mr. ELLISON. I think you're right, Mr. YARMUTH, and I appreciate you pointing that point out.

The article 1, that's kind of our theme this year, isn't it? Reasserting the power of the legislative branch.

I want to pick up on a theme that Dr. KAGEN mentioned a moment ago as he was laying out how he was speaking with some workers in northern Wisconsin.

I was talking with some workers in Minneapolis recently, and we're kind of like cousins, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Folks had talked about how their pay has been stagnant and they haven't seen much of a pay increase except in the late nineties. But the prices of everything seems to be going up: health care, housing prices, and all of that. And what people did in the early part of this decade is they were able to get money out of their houses, right, which has led us into the foreclosure crisis.

But what are people doing now that housing prices are flat? Well, they're turning to credit cards. Charge it. They're putting it on the plastic. And I think this is a big deal because I think we need to know that people are essentially consuming not out of savings, they're consuming out of pay-day loans, credit cards. They used to do it out of the equity of their houses. And this is a serious problem, and people cannot consume out of their savings but have to consume out of debt.

And what it has caused us in our economy today, gentlemen, is that we have seen the credit card debt jump from 6.7 percent in the first quarter of this year, a credit card increase of 6.7 percent in the first quarter of this year to a whopping \$957.2 billion. This is a very serious issue for our economy.

That's why we need a high-wage strategy. We need to put more money in people's pockets by reducing the costs of education, housing, health care, gasoline, and by saying that folks are going to have a fair, decent wage that they're going to be able to earn; and we need a strategy to pull those things together for the American people.

Mr. KAGEN. What we did the other day in terms of trying not to put more petrol into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve is to increase the supply. And the President said what we should be doing is increasing supply by drilling more. But there's a fallacy in that argument. There are thousands of acres available for drilling on public land, and they're not drilling.

So the fallacy is the price of oil is going to shoot up and up and up as long as we have fewer and fewer oil companies that are chasing down the oil. But we cannot drill our way out of this energy crisis. We can't drill and burn and drill and burn. We're going to end up choking on our own exhaust. We're going to inflate the temperature so much in this globe that we're going to melt not just the ice caps but our future at the same time.

So we need to have that energy policy that is not based on increasing supply but finding alternative sources of energy.

Mr. ELLISON. What do you think about an energy policy that would incentivize the production of cars that get 100 miles to the gallon? They're out there. The technology is there. There are a lot of things that we're looking at here in Congress that could help people go a long way. You plug that thing in at night when the load is a little lower, nonpeak hours. What about getting some of these light bulbs that don't use as much energy? What about converting some of these old windy buildings so they don't waste as much energy?

Mr. KAGEN. We're doing that with the Department of Energy building because our Transportation Committee has decided that the energy building, the Department of Energy, should be led with some solar power. It's called future fitting. And if you future fit your home, put up solar cells, not to take it off the electrical grid but knock down your electric footprint, your carbon footprint, you will save much in your electric bill and also in terms of the CO₂ production in the atmosphere.

These are the little things that when they add up, when thousands of homes across the country begin to future fit their homes, we can gain a great deal of energy independence and stimulate

the economy. People underestimate the millions of jobs that can be created by future fitting their home, and we have to help them out here in Congress to create that legislation to incentivize that.

Mr. YARMUTH. Exactly.

I would say you made the right statement. We will never drill our way out of the energy crisis, but we can invent our way out of the energy crisis; and the private sector is in the process of doing that. We need to give them the boost. We need to give them the incentives. We need to provide the tax credits, and in fact, we have tried to do that. And if anything, I think, represents a clear distinction—there is probably nothing that represents a clear distinction between the President's party and ours than the way we have handled the ideas of incentives.

The Republican Congress in 2005 voted a 15—well, the number is vague—but it's around \$15 billion a year in tax incentives to the oil companies to drill. We've tried to take that tax incentive away, that subsidy, and put it into the types of innovative technologies that will be the answer to our energy crisis, will make us independent of imported oil, and oil totally, and will stimulate and create new economies and new economic opportunity in this country.

□ 2200

Mr. ELLISON. I've got to ask the gentleman to yield on this one.

What is the opinion of you two esteemed gentlemen on the \$40.7 billion ExxonMobil cleared? I mean, that's not revenue, that's profit, and yet and still, this President does not want to take away their incentives, their oil subsidies. What kind of sense does that make? Can somebody please rescue me from my ignorance?

Mr. YARMUTH. That didn't make since in 2006 when they made \$38- or \$39 billion. It didn't make sense last year when they made \$40 billion. It doesn't make sense when they made over \$40 billion. Record profits every year since we gave them this huge tax subsidy.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, let me ask you this, do you think there will come a day when the folks in the White House might just say, they might not need that subsidy after all?

Mr. YARMUTH. Well, ironically, in a way, this President did say that because in 2004, when he was campaigning for reelection, he said once oil passes \$55 a barrel, the oil companies will not need any incentive to drill. That was his campaign statement in 2004.

Mr. ELLISON. That's the problem. He just doesn't know that oil is not \$55 a barrel, but actually hit about \$126 a barrel. He just doesn't know. Somebody ought to send him a news flash.

Mr. KAGEN. Let me put it in a different perspective, if you will allow me to. It's not about profits. I'm in favor of profits. We have a capitalistic marketplace. I'd like people to be profitable. It certainly beats the alternative of being negative in red ink.

But let me submit to you that the oil that we're pulling up out of the ground hasn't changed in millions of years. The gold we're mining out of these mines, it's the same gold as it has been for millions of years but it costs more. It costs more because the purchasing power of your United States dollar has declined.

So there's a decline, a reevaluation south of everything you own and everything you do. Every working man and woman today is earning money that has less purchasing power than before, and it's because of our failed economic policy of this administration and the Republican party, the philosophy of borrow and spend and borrow and spend.

You cannot borrow your way into national prosperity. You cannot spend your way into prosperity. We have to have a fiscally responsible and socially progressive House and Nation, and when we do that, when we reestablish these values, we'll begin to grow our way out of this current recession and restore some balance to our economy, wherein an oil company may not have to make that much money at the expense of every consumer who is struggling just to keep their head above water.

Mr. ELLISON. You put your finger on a very important issue. You used the word "philosophy," and I think it's a good time to talk about the philosophical framework that I believe is crumbling before our eyes.

The idea that the middle class doesn't matter, that the wealthiest among us—and let me just tell you, I'm one who says, thank God that you were able to do really, really well. I'm not against people in the top 1 percent. I mean, I'm like great. But I think people in the top 1 percent say, you know what, I climbed up the ladder and I'm going to leave it there so other people can climb up the ladder, too.

But the philosophy that I think we have seen over the last 8 years is the philosophy that says, you know what, we're going to give every opportunity, every incentive to the people at the very tiptop; we're not going to make sure people in the middle are making it. And what eventually happens is that those people there in the middle don't have anymore money to spend. They are now spending out of debt, and then what happens is that they can't even afford the basic necessities of life, which then is going to have an impact on the consumer sector and on corporate America.

Seventy percent of the whole GDP is what we spend, consumer spending, but we ain't got no money. And so the point is, we are literally killing the goose that laid the golden egg. We need to say that we need new politics where the market is a part of our life but not a holy, sacred grail. The market helps to propel productivity, but is not all there is. But we have alongside the market, a regulated market, a market that makes sure that competition is

present, a market that says that consumers cannot just get stuck and gouged and pinched and pulled and taken advantage of, and a market that says that we want to have innovation and room for small producers so that there's this competition over goods and services and brand and innovation and, of course, price.

We need a new market that has the middle class as the VIP of this economy, not the CEO.

Mr. KAGEN. I think that you're headed toward the philosophy that I think America really believes in, getting back to the basics and putting the letters U-N-I-T-Y, unity, back into community.

Mr. ELLISON. Oh, yeah.

Mr. KAGEN. We can do that by helping to evolve our health care system back to community-based ratings so there is no discrimination against any citizen, not just because of the color of their skin but their skin chemistry, not just the content of their heart but the arterial content of their heart.

So we have to get back to a place, again, where American traditional values are reinforced here in Congress. I think that's the hard work, the working ethic. That's the hard work we have been doing here during these past 15 months that we got here.

Mr. YARMUTH. There's another element to the philosophy that I think we need to talk about now, and I see it in discussions that we have in our caucus meetings, and I think it's a growing realization that we have to embrace as a philosophy in this body that we can't think just to the next election cycle. We have to start thinking very long-term, and we have to start thinking about investment and investments that will pay off over the long run but will not get us any immediate gratification or recognition so that we can get votes at the next election.

And you mentioned health care, and that's certainly an area in which we have to start investing because every dollar we spend on early childhood health care we know pays off 10, 20 times down the road. You can't see it today. The CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, won't score it and say, okay, you can take credit for that, but we know that it happens. If children are tended to early on, preventive care, diagnostic work, we catch a hearing problem, a sight problem, you catch them before they get obese, we know how much that returns in savings down the road.

The same way with infrastructure. We've neglected infrastructure in this country for far too long. We know we have to make investments in infrastructure, but those are the types of investments that do pay off. It's not like Iraq where every dollar, once you shoot a bullet, once you shoot a rocket, that's money gone. There's no investment there, no return on investment.

But infrastructure, health care, medical research, if we could spend, let's say we spent \$100 billion over the next

10 years and we were to cure cancer and diabetes, you're the doctor, it would save trillions of dollars long-term.

Mr. KAGEN. Absolutely.

Mr. YARMUTH. And so we have to start thinking I think in that long-term, let's invest money now. You're right, you can't spend your way to solve these problems, but you can invest your way. And I think there's sound, solid, predictable results that we can get from these types of investments.

Mr. KAGEN. But that requires judgment. It requires good judgment at every level of our government, not just a mayor or a county board member, but here in Congress and in the White House. And this is why this next election, I'm looking forward to having the opportunity to work with a President who has good judgment and a philosophy that believes in prevention, not just in health care, but by preventing going to war, you prevent human tragedy and you save tremendous amounts of money.

Mr. ELLISON. That's why I really believe that we need a philosophy and a President who believes in the philosophy of the common good. The common good because, you know, as Representative YARMUTH refers to infrastructure, that's another word for our common wealth. That's our common wealth. That's what we all own together. That's the roads, the bridges, the dikes, the levees, the transit. That's the universities, the public school system. That could be a health care system that we own together, that's ours. And that's all of these things that when we invest in them, they pay dividends back.

Like you just said, that military spending is a one-way good. You shoot that bullet, and it's gone. But when you build that road, all of us who use it for even just our businesses, just to truck stuff over it, are using it, that's a return on investment. Those of us who go to school on it, that's a return on investment. Those of us who use it just for recreation, that's a return on our investment.

It's our common wealth, and we need to get back to the idea that, you know, America is a country where we have our common good and we share it, and we believe it and we have a common wealth that we share and we keep and we promote. And our market is a part of the common wealth, but it's in service to the people of the country. It's in service to tap into the creativity and the productive power of the people so that they can produce goods and services for the people of this country.

Our markets are another, not just to produce goods and services, but to improve our social life because in that way, when I'm allowed to do my thing, right, I can be more happy, more productivity, more creative. And if I had health care and if I had a pension and if I had a school system that my kids could go to, boy, I could sit in that ga-

rage and come up with all kind of cool stuff.

The fact is we've got to get back to this place where it's about the common good, it's about the common wealth, and not about just me for me and I don't care about anybody else. Greed essentially elevated to a political philosophy, we've got to get away from that. It has not served us well.

Mr. YARMUTH. Well, the gentleman makes a wonderful point, and I'm reminded in a very kind of maybe indirect way of a movie that came out back in the early seventies, and it was called "Rollerball." It was remade several years ago in a very different way. But the movie early in the 1970s was a science fiction movie, futuristic, looking to an era in which geopolitical boundaries had ceased to exist. And the world, instead of being divided into countries, was divided into economic entities.

So James Caan, who starred in that movie, played Rollerball, a futuristic game, for the Energy Corporation, and they played against the Communications Corporation. And then there was the Food Corporation, and that's the way the world was divided.

And sometimes when you see ExxonMobil with its volume of revenue and profits and some of these other enormous corporations, you say maybe we're not too far from that.

So we have to decide, as a Nation, it's one thing to say the world is flat, but that doesn't mean the world has lost its distinctions yet and its delineations into Nations that have souls and have people who believe in their commonness, their common mission, their common ambitions. And that's something that I think every American wants to retain. We don't want to lose that.

And I think when we essentially wash our hands in Washington and say corporate America, corporate world just go at it, do what you want to do and we'll take whatever you give us, we're not too far from that unfortunate scenario in "Rollerball."

Mr. KAGEN. Let me make a comment about that if I may, and many people would like to say, well, why can't government run itself like a business. And in one sense, we can because in business there are three questions you have to ask yourself: Will it work? Will it be profitable? And the third most important question is, is it the right thing to do?

These are the three questions we can ask ourselves as well here as we begin to fashion legislation. Will it really work? Is it going to have the outcomes that we hoped that it would, whether it's health care or a housing bill or a farm bill? Will it work?

Secondly, is it going to be profitable? Will it be something for generations to come? Seven generations forward will feel that was a good investment of your time and your natural and national resources?

And finally, is it the right thing to do? Is it the ethical thing to be doing?

These are the three questions that apply to business. These are the three questions I think apply to our government, and I'm happy to say what we've been working on here in the 110th Congress, all three of these questions have been asked and answered, and we're doing the right thing for America. We're really moving it in a very positive direction.

Mr. ELLISON. I would say, and we have about maybe 5 or 6 more minutes to go tonight. I just want to say it's always a pleasure to be on the floor with the difference makers, the majority makers. It's an honor to be able to stand in front of the American people and to project a progressive vision that includes us all, that allows us to share in a common good and a common wealth together and also allows us to, you know, embrace the fact that we are an economy, that our society embraces the free market as well, that we look at these two things as complementary and not one superior to the other, that we see them as something that enhances our life together.

□ 2215

And I just want to say, as you mentioned, Mr. YARMUTH, that I don't think Americans want to be under a corporatocracy. I think we like our national identity.

And I'll say that you should know that before the 1870s, the corporate entity was nothing close to what it is today. As a matter of fact, you couldn't even own one unless the charter was issued by the State, the same as it is today. That's the thing; we think of these things as somehow natural or inevitable, but corporations are creatures of the State. Without a State charter, they don't exist. And we should say that corporations should ask, does it work, does it make money, and is it the right thing to do? That is a perfectly legitimate question. And I look forward to the day when that question is asked by all of us.

So with that, I again thank you two gentlemen, and also salute the majority makers. And I look forward to a day when we have a cooperative and productive relationship with the executive.

Mr. YARMUTH. That will be a nice day. And, you know, just following up a little bit on that thought, the image that I get in my mind when I look out over the economic landscape sometimes is that we have a lot of very wealthy, very powerful people who are just playing Monopoly with America, that this is just a game for them. And there are the little houses and the little trains and all the little pieces that are on the Monopoly board, and it's funny money. Unfortunately, it's funny money that many people are being deprived of because of the great concentrations of wealth in this country.

And I don't want to sound like somebody who's saying, oh, we've got to redistribute the wealth, we've got to make sure everybody has the same

thing. That's not what any of us are talking about. But as Mr. ELLISON pointed out before, we have seen the greatest separation of wealth, disparity in wealth in this country than we've seen in almost 100 years. And we've let the pendulum swing much too far to one side so that we've allowed the very wealthiest people to become incredibly wealthy, and almost everybody else has been treading water.

As we said, we have not been floating everybody's boat; in fact, we've been drowning a lot of people. And we've got to make sure that everybody has a boat. And I think that's one of the things that this Congress is committed to.

So I would like to yield to my friend, Dr. KAGEN, for some closing remarks as we wind down this version of the majority makers.

Mr. KAGEN. Well, I would close by thanking you for the opportunity. It's been a long day, another 15-hour day for both of us. And I want to thank the American people for tuning in tonight. And you can guarantee one thing, that we're working hard for you. We're on your side. We're going to protect our country. We're going to grow our economy, expand the middle class, and defend our planet against global climate change. And on that positive note, I yield back my time.

Mr. YARMUTH. Thank you, Dr. KAGEN. It's wonderful to be here with you tonight, and also with Mr. ELLISON.

And one of the things, I guess if I could capsule what we've said tonight and what the majority makers feel more than anything else, that in this country every person matters. Every individual matters, and every individual deserves our attention, our concern, and our action. And that's what we've been doing for 16 months and pledge to be doing for the rest of our tenure in office.

So with that, once again, thank you for joining me tonight.

MAN-MADE GLOBAL WARMING

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SPACE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRABACHER) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, I preface my remarks with a personal statement that, while I am opposed to the advocates of man-made global warming theories, I am committed to a clean and healthy environment, to purifying our air, our water, and our soil; all of this for the sake of the people of this planet, including my three children, Anika, Tristan and Christian. I do this not because of some paranoid theory that humans are changing the climate of the world, but instead, I am very concerned about the health of the people of the world and, thus, committed to clean air, clean soil, and clean water.

Thus, we have, today, to take a look at the issues of global warming and

pollution that confront our society because there are enormous implications to this whole discussion of what has been called "man-made global warming."

Only 18 months ago the refrain "Case closed: Global warming is real," was repeated as if the mantra from some religious zealots. It was pounded into the public consciousness over the airwaves, in print, and even at congressional hearings, "Case closed." Well, this was obviously a brazen attempt to end open discussion and to silence differing views by dismissing the need for seriously contrary arguments and seriously listening to both sides of an argument. And rather than hearing both sides of the argument, this was an attempt to dismiss arguments even though the person making the arguments might have a very impressive credential or might be a very educated scientist or someone else who should be listened to.

And yes, there are dozens, if not hundreds, of prominent scientists and meteorologists, the heads of science departments at major universities, and others, who are highly critical of the man-made global warming theory. There is Dr. Richard Lindzen of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has been adamant in his opposition, as has a Bjarne Andresen of the University of Copenhagen, Adreas Prokoph, a professor of earth sciences at the University of Ottawa, Dr. William Gray, a famous hurricane expert and former President of the American Meteorological Association, and Dr. Kevin Trenberth, the head of the Climate Analysis Section at the National Center of Atmospheric Research. All of these are respected scholars, all skeptical of the unwarranted alarmism that we are being pressured to accept.

But their views and those of so many more prominent scholars and scientists don't matter. The debate is over. Al Gore has his Nobel Prize, and the film, "An Inconvenient Truth," its Academy Award. So shut up and get your mind in lockstep with the politically correct prevailing wisdom, or at least what the media tells us is the prevailing wisdom. And no questions, please, the case is closed. We heard that dozens and dozens of times.

So what is this theory that now is so accepted that no more debate is needed or even tolerated? The man-made global warming theory may be presented as scientific truism, but it is not. It is a disturbing theory that the Earth began a warming cycle 150 years ago that differed greatly from all the other warming and cooling cycles in the Earth's past. This warming cycle of 150 years ago, we keep being told, is tied directly to mankind's use of fossil fuels, basically oil and coal, which, of course, oil and coal and these fuels, these so-called fossil fuels, have powered our industries and made modern civilization possible.

Fossil fuels, we are told, puts an ever-increasing so-called level of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, and