

We have those who talk about green collar jobs. I'm for green collar jobs. But let me tell you, if we don't bring affordable energy to America, the blue collar jobs won't be here. They'll be gone, and we don't know how many of the green collar jobs. We need them both.

I'm for plants to build windmills. I'm for plants to build solar. And when we learn how to store wind and solar so that we can make it during the night when we don't need it and use it in the daytime when we need it, then it will work. But until we do that, it's on the margins. If we double wind and solar in 5 years, it will be less than 1 percent of our energy. I hope we can do that, but that's still not very much energy.

But the American public have been led to believe that we are holding renewables back, that we're not for these energy-efficient cars. There are incentives, folks, of thousands of dollars to buy energy-efficient cars. There are incentives to do wind and solar. Unfortunately, they're not long term. Those who are investing are gambling because we just renewed them a little bit at a time. We just renewed them for a year. Folks, we need to renew them for 5 to 10 years. We need to have it out there, and then if it isn't working, we stop doing that.

But, folks, there are those who say we need to conserve, and we do, and we will at these prices. But let me tell you that in a later speech sometime I'm going to show you the American people are using far less energy in America per capita today than we did a few years ago. We've done more than people give us credit for. We have more efficient appliances and more efficient engines and things than we had many years ago. We have done better than any other country in overall energy conservation. Folks, we haven't done enough, but I want to tell you \$4 gasoline or \$5 gasoline and \$14 gas to heat our homes are going to force us to do a lot of things.

But America doesn't have to be in this situation. Yes, we need the new kind of fuels, renewable fuels. But until they are ready, we can't decide, as a Congress and a White House, that we're not going to produce.

Let me just tell you who some of the perpetrators are. The environmental groups of America own this Congress. Sierra Club rails against shale oil production. Over a trillion barrels of shale oil in the West. We can't do that.

Green Peace says we must phase out fossil fuels. Folks, how do we do that? Ninety-six percent of our energy is fossil fuels. How do we stop that? That's what we're doing. We're phasing them out before we have the replacement.

The Environmental Defense Fund: "Power plants and smokestacks are our public health enemy number one, and we must do away with them." That's our jobs, our factories, folks.

□ 2230

League of Conservation Voters; coal to liquids, wrong direction. Well,

should we do coal to liquids or should we do more foreign dependence on the Mid East? That is our choice.

Defenders of Wilderness; every coastal State is in harm's way when an oil rig goes up. Folks, that is not true. We haven't had an oil spill since 1969. We have never had a gas spill. When a gas well lets gas out, it goes in the air. Dispersates. Natural Resource Defense Council; coal mining destroys land. Coal plant emissions cripple and kill. We have clean coal technologies with much cleaner emissions than we have ever had, but we are turning them down and not building them. We are using old dirty coal plants because they can't build the new ones. That's our environmental policy.

Center for Biological Diversity; oil and gas drilling on public land has a devastating impact. Does it have to? It can be done right. Friends of the Earth; liquid coal is dirty and costly. Liquid coal doesn't have to be dirty and costly. We have ways of doing it.

North Africa, or South Africa, I guess, is leading the way with liquid coal. That is making gasoline and diesel out of coal. And we have lots of it. We need to be working at it and learning how to do it cleanly so we are not dependent. Folks, we are 66 percent dependent on foreign unstable countries. We have no control over prices. A storm in the gulf and we have another major spurt in energy prices.

One of our sending countries, and here's who we get our energy from. We produce 33.7 percent of our own oil, we import 66.3 percent of our oil. Canada provides 12 percent of our oil; Mexico, 9.3; non-OPEC nations, 8.9; Ecuador, 1.3; Saudi Arabia, 9.6 percent; Venezuela, 7.5. Our friend, Venezuela, 7.5 percent of our oil comes from there. Nigeria, a stable country, questionable, 7.2; Angola 3.3 percent; Iraq 3.2; Algeria, 3.1; Kuwait, 1.2; other OPEC is .06. That is our oil. That's where we get our oil from.

Folks, we don't have to be dependent on it. America is rich in resources. Natural gas should be our bridge. Clean vehicles on natural gas. Natural gas should be the fuel of the future, and our industries shouldn't have to pay the highest price in the world for natural gas so they are forced to leave here. Americans shouldn't be forced to live in homes that are cold in the wintertime because they can't afford to heat them. People should be able to afford to drive to work.

Folks, it's a crisis in America. It should be a crisis in this Congress. Today, the White House again spoke about we need to produce more energy. Tomorrow I am going to write the President a letter. You know, if he means that, he needs to lift the Outer Continental Shelf moratorium, because we don't have one moratorium, we have a legislative one by Congress for 27 years and we have had a Presidential one for 27 years, and he can lift it in a moment. That is how it was put there.

Bush I put it there for 5 years until we assessed the Outer Continental

Shelf, what was there. We have never assessed that. We have never allowed seismographic out there. Then Clinton came in and extended it to 2012, and also vetoed the Alaskan bill, ANWR, which would be producing major oil for us today. He vetoed that. Bush II has ignored it and refused to talk about the OCS.

Folks, we have three Presidents and a Congress with a 27-year history of not producing affordable available energy in America, and we are the only country in the world to lock up the Outer Continental Shelf, we are the only country in the world that has locked up most of our internal resources.

Congress and Presidents have been our problem. Congress needs to get the message that it's time to stop being our problem, and we need to have a President that leads us to energy, affordable available energy for America.

PROGRESS IN PASSING LEGISLATION

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. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honor to be before the House once again, and I think it's important that we get a chance to come to the floor and not only share with the Members the 30-Something Working Group, some of the issues that we have worked on in the past, but those issues that we will continue to focus on in the future.

With this being the "political season" for those Presidential candidates, there's still a lot of work to be done here in the Nation's Capital on policy issues that are facing real consideration before this House and before the Senate. One may focus on what is happening in the campaign trail. But I want to share with the Members tonight, Mr. Speaker, on what has taken place here in the Democratic House of Representatives, majority, and also how this House has worked with a number of our Republican colleagues on the other side in passing major legislation that has made it to the floor that would allow Republicans and all Members of the House to work together on issues that the American people are hoping that we can come together on.

This House has made progress in passing some 177 pieces of key legislation, more than 70 percent with a significant bipartisan vote. As it relates to the recent past of the last three terms that I have been here, we have never seen those kind of numbers before. It's important that Members on both sides of the aisle are able to come together on legislation that all of our constituents can agree on and that we can illustrate to those that are out there that are saying, Well, you know, can Democrats and Republicans work together, can Democrats put forth legislation that Republicans can vote for,

can Republicans vote for measures that Democrats bring to the floor, and I think through the leadership of the Speaker and the majority leader and also the majority whip and Democratic caucus and the vice chair and the rest of our leadership, the proof is in the pudding.

I want to say that the 177 measures that have gone through this House and the 70 percent that have passed with a significant bipartisan vote is what the American people called for, what they wanted. So many Members of the House ran on, I am going to Washington, DC to represent you, I am going to Washington, DC to make sure that you pass sensible legislation, and I am not necessarily running to be a part of the Democratic caucus or to be a part of the Republican caucus or carry a special-interest interest.

I think that when we looked at the new direction that the American people were looking for back in the 2006 elections in November, they got it. Measures that would have never made it to the House floor have made it to the House floor.

I have to speak of a number of my colleagues that were on the floor prior to our new Democratic majority back in the Republican-led Congress that said, If you give us the opportunity to lead, we will lead in a way that you will be proud and that you would feel good about the leadership that you have in the House of Representatives. We were not only—I mean we weren't speaking to just independents, we weren't even speaking to just Democrats. We were speaking to all Americans, including Republicans and those that could not even vote yet, that they would have a voice on this floor, that they would have an opportunity to see a majority that would allow legislation to come to the floor that would change their lives.

I also would like to say out of the 177 key measures that were passed, 125 of those measures had the support of more than 50 Republicans in this House.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you're a part of our new majority makers that are here. I think that it's important that we reflect on the past so we can see what the future is going to be about. I see a bright future in this House, you see a bright future in this Congress, and I think if the American people engage themselves as Americans and not as Democrats or Republicans or independents or Green party, or what have you, saying that they are looking for a House that would provide the kind of opportunities that they deserve for a Congress, for a government, provide the opportunity that they deserve, and they can find faith in what the 30-Something Working Group will share with you tonight.

These bipartisan votes that have been signed by the President include the Economic Stimulus Act, College Cost Reduction and Access Act, the 9/11 Commission Recommendations. For in-

stance, let me put a pin right there. The 9/11 Commission recommendations was supported and was a bipartisan commission that brought about these recommendations under a Republican President, a Republican Congress, that the Republican Congress would not endorse and would not pass and the President did not support. But once this Democratic Congress allowed that legislation to come to the floor as part of our Six in 06 measure, we were able to get bipartisan support for that measure, and the President signed. So it goes to show that being in the majority does help.

Also, the Innovation Agenda bill, the Lobbying and Ethics Reform, minimum wage, a bill for improving and expanding Head Start, and historic energy independence and security bill that reduced dependency on foreign oil, I think it's very, very important that we focus on those issues.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that we look at the future because we have so many issues that are before us even before we finish this 110th Congress. We have to start to focus not only on how we are going to find ourselves bringing our men and women home, and there was a vote last week that was very historic. Never before since I have been here in this House that the House has voted in the majority to not continue to fund the failed policies of the Bush administration as relates to the war in Iraq.

I also think that it's important that as we continue to consider how we are going to approach on an emergency supplemental, approach the emergency supplemental that the President has asked for to continue to fund the war in Iraq, that if I could put it this way on Navy terms, If we shoot a shot over the bow of those individuals that are in Iraq, what I may call the Iraqi parliament, and let them know that the United States of America will not continue to give a blank check to the fact that they have not made the political reforms that they need to make so that the U.S. taxpayer dollar will be spent in an appropriate way to enable the Iraqi government to stand up on their own feet so that we are able to provide the necessary resources to our constituents here in our country and here in our districts.

I also think that it's important, Mr. Speaker, as we start to look at these issues, we look at the largest increase in veteran funding in the history of the Veterans Affairs Department, preparing for our men and women to come back so they can receive the kind of assistance that they deserve because they allow us to salute one flag.

I think it's also important, Mr. Speaker, and also for the Members who realize that even though we may disagree on a number of issues, and they are a number of issues that we disagree on, we can, if you ever heard this, agree to disagree.

□ 2245

But when it comes down to the votes here on this House floor for our folks back home, I think it is important that we hold their hopes and their dreams paramount in that debate. And because of the kind of leadership that we have within our caucus, some 177 key votes, 125 of those votes receiving over 50 percent Republican support, it goes to show you or show the American people and also Members of Congress how we can come together on behalf of the greater good.

I know that Mr. MURPHY has joined us, and I want to yield some time to him so that he can share as not only a new Majority Maker, but also as a member of the majority, as we look at the future, as we look at bipartisanship that we speak so highly of, that we should reflect on what Mr. RYAN and I said when we first started working on 30-Something some 6 years ago, that bipartisanship can only happen when the majority allows it to happen.

I think the evidence, the evidence of not only the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, but the evidence of our words that we have laid on the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD over the years, is that we hold paramount bipartisanship, that we hold opportunity, that we hold inclusion. So if it is someone, an American somewhere in a super-Republican district saying do I have a voice in Congress, will the Democratic majority allow my voice to be heard, will the values of my community be heard in Congress and will it be allowed to pass the House of Representatives and the Senate, I think the proof is in the pudding.

I am hoping on the 30-Something website we can have this information placed on that website, so that Americans can go and check the record for themselves.

One thing I take great pride in personally, Members, is that the 30-Something Working Group, we go through a lot of research and the members of our group believe in fact versus fiction. We bring fact to the House floor. We do not bring fiction. That is what the American people are calling for.

Mr. MURPHY.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Thank you very much, Mr. MEEK. The honor is also to be part of the 30-Something Working Group and to get to spend the precious moments on the floor with you and Mr. RYAN, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and Mr. ALTMIRE and others who can't be here this evening.

As you noted, I am a new Member of Congress. I came from the Connecticut State legislature. I came here with some degree of trepidation, because coming from the Connecticut State legislature, a place in which partisanship has its day, but certainly is not the rule, the reputation of this place, at least under the last 12 years of Republican rule, struck fear into the hearts of a lot of new Members, because we came from experiences, at least those of us who came from experiences in the State legislature, where

the rule was that we reached out and worked across the aisle. The rule was that to get anything done, you needed to have Republican and Democratic support.

The reason that in Connecticut the State legislature enjoys a level of support and approval that the United States Congress has not traditionally had is in part because on the most important stuff, in Connecticut we found a way to do that.

I was the chair of the Public Health Committee for several years in the Connecticut legislature and we passed the Nation's first stem cell investment law. We did it with a Republican Governor. We did it on a bill that was introduced by a Republican senator and a Republican member of the House, even though Democrats had near veto-proof majorities in both chambers. We did it with Republicans and Democrats. Frankly, it didn't matter what the letter was after your name, R or D. It was the right thing to do. So I came down here as a member of the new Democratic majority wondering whether there was going to be a chance for that same type of cooperation.

As you pointed out, Mr. MEEK, we saw it immediately in those first 100 hours. In the agenda we put forth on energy, on the minimum wage, on student loans, on ethics, we had Republicans and Democrats standing together.

Now, that hasn't happened every day here on the House floor, and the times it doesn't are the moments in which CNN and MSNBC and the talk show pundits jump on it. But, really, when you talk about the big things that have passed here, you have seen this House coming together. You saw it on the farm bill most recently, and you saw it today.

For anyone that was lucky enough to be here on the House floor, Mr. MEEK, maybe you mentioned it, to see the debate on the defense authorization bill, it was a pretty remarkable bipartisan affair. In fact, the bill is named after the Republican ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, Mr. HUNTER, probably something that average voters out there who hear about the conflict that happens in this House every day wouldn't have expected. But there is, I hope, a growing spirit here on the House floor that we can cross the aisle that literally exists here on the House floor in order to pass important things.

But we need more of it. We need more of it because the most important issues for our constituents can't happen unless we have the votes here all too often to overcome the President's veto. We did that today with an incredibly important farm bill that begins the process of transferring unjustifiable subsidies for American farmers and turns them around to funding for conservation programs and nutrition programs. We are going to stand up to the President when it comes to sensible farm policy. But we need more of that.

When it comes to the GI Bill, which is this Congress' landmark effort to once again recommit ourselves to a notion that this Nation stood upon in the wake of World War II, that every returning GI from the field of battle should have access to a quality education in a school of their choosing in their State, we have withdrawn from that commitment since World War II, and this House and our compatriots in the Senate are attempting to make that commitment once again.

The funding for returning GIs has withered to the point that that commitment no longer exists. If you want to come back and you can go to school, maybe you will get a little bit of help, but you are still going to have to pay a significant amount of money, and you are probably going to have to do it part-time, because there has been historically not enough money for living expenses for those GIs.

We think if we are going to ask you to be a full-time warrior for this country in Iraq or Afghanistan, we should allow you to be a full-time student when you come back to the United States. We should be able to pay your way to the most expensive State college in your State, but we should also give you a stipend in order to make that journey through college education full time. If we are asking men and women to fight and die for us, to sustain injuries that change their lives on the field of battle, we should support them when they come home by providing them with educational benefits.

But we don't have the votes here on the House floor today to override that presidential veto, Mr. MEEK. So we need more of that bipartisan cooperation that we have seen. Democrats are willing to stand up for returning veterans to give them a new GI Bill. We stood in lockstep as the majority party here last week to do that. We had 30 or 40-some odd of our Republican colleagues join us in that effort, but that is not enough to get past the threatened presidential veto.

I can't explain to you why the President doesn't think it is the right thing to do, to stand up for our GIs when they come back home. He has stretched our militarily to the breaking point, and he is not willing to sustain them when they come back to the United States.

We clearly believe that one of the most important things that we can do in this Congress between now and the adjournment is pass that GI Bill and recruit enough of our colleagues on the Republican side so that we can overturn that veto. We have shown that we can do it. We did it on the farm bill. We have done it before.

We have also shown that we can go out and make our case to the American public so that the President changes his mind. The President, if you remember, Mr. Speaker, first threatened he was going to veto the college affordability bill, which transferred subsidies for banks into subsidies for students,

lowering the student loan interest rate in half from 6.8 percent to 3.4 percent. The President said he was going to veto that. But when we went out there and made the case to the American public and asked them to make the case to the President that this was the right thing to do in a tough economy for millions of students and families out there that needed a little help, he changed his mind and signed that bill.

Just recently, after making a lot of noise in opposition to our efforts to suspend deposits into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and put that oil instead out on to the market to lower gas prices by anywhere, who knows, from 5 cents to 20 cents, a small but meaningful decrease through the suspension of deposits into the SPR, after making a lot of noise that the President was going to oppose or veto that legislation, he ended up signing it.

So when it comes to the GI Bill, we have got two tasks ahead of us. Let's try to build the bipartisan consensus that we have had here on many days in the House of Representatives. Let's try to push beyond the 30 or 40 Republican Members that have supported the bill so far so that we don't have to worry about a presidential veto. But let's go out and talk to veterans organizations, to talk to military families, to talk to our educational institutions.

Let's grow a coalition over the coming weeks and months so that the President has the opportunity to change his mind, so the President has the opportunity to stand with us on the side of returning service men and women for the educational benefits that they deserve. Just like our grandparents, our parents, got that benefit when they came back from World War II, let's do it again for the thousands upon thousands of GIs returning every month from the field of battle in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr. MEEK, you led off on the right note. There is an amazing amount of bipartisan cooperation happening here, but we have got to extend it to some of the most important measures that we can pass between now and the end of this historic legislative session.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. You know, Mr. MURPHY, I think it is important, and I think we can do a little back and forth here in the spirit of bipartisanship. I see one of our Republican colleagues who would like to share a few things a little later on, and we don't want to take all of the time, because we definitely want to hear from the Republican side this evening in the spirit of what we are doing here.

But I think it is important, Mr. Speaker and Mr. MURPHY, I think that as we look at what is happening now, we know that we have an historic presidential election that is taking place. And we are still in the primary mode, but it has a general election spirit that is there. There are slogans out there, "yes, we can," and "yes, we will," and "change that you deserve."

It is interesting, because the President is still trying to play a major role.

We know that he will be commander-in-chief until January, but I think it is important, especially for some of our friends on the Republican side, that they pay very close attention to the past to understand the future.

There was a day and time when the American people were not really paying close attention to what is going on here in Washington, DC. There was a time that young people who are concerned about tomorrow more than anyone else in this country were not paying attention to the likes of many of the individuals that are paying attention to politics now.

I remember one of the general demographics was 50-plus in the country. You have to make sure that you meet the needs of those individuals. But now that goes from 50-plus all the way down to 17½, where Americans can register, and then at 18 they will get their voter registration card. So we have a full kind of age range there of folks that are paying attention to what is happening here.

I remember in the early days with Mr. RYAN and I, and then when Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ got here, Mr. RYAN and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and myself, and now the Majority Makers such as yourself and others are now coming to the floor. But back in the early days we used to share with our friends on the Republican side, you have a choice to make. Either are you are going to be on the New Direction agenda and give the American people what they deserve versus the special interests, or, Mr. Speaker, those Members will be watching the Congress on C-SPAN and other television outlets that would allow them to view what we are doing here on the floor at home while we are here voting.

We are in the majority now. We have won three special elections in quote-unquote "Republican" districts that were seen as Republican districts. But what I believe in and what I have subscribed to is the American spirit over politics. I believe people are now looking at their families and looking at their children and looking at their grandparents and looking at themselves in the mirror and saying, am I using the power that I possess with my voter registration card towards the benefit of my family, my community, my State, my country? Am I using that to the full advantage that I have as an American citizen? Or am I voting a party, or a personality, or what is politically quote-unquote "correct"?

□ 2300

And I think that question has come back in many of these districts and throughout the country of saying, I have to vote what is best for my children, for my parents, for my grandparents, for myself, for the fact that the economic situation is bad, for the fact that I don't have health care for so many Americans.

I have traveled this country, Mr. Speaker, on Presidential election and I

have paid attention to what is going on. And every time the question is asked: How many people without health care? A super majority of the people put their hands up. Of course, I don't put my hands up because I am a Member of Congress and I have health care. But my constituents didn't say, hey, you know, KENDRICK, we are going to vote for you to be in Congress so that you can have a health care plan for you and your family. We love you that much. Don't worry about us. And they didn't vote for any of us for that reason. I don't think any Member of Congress ran for office saying, I am running to make sure that I can have health care, and then maybe you will have health care.

But for some reason, some of our friends on the other side of the aisle didn't get that message or they have forgotten the message. But I am hoping, as we start looking at these issues, that, Mr. MURPHY and Mr. Speaker and members, that more Republicans start understanding that this is not the Republican or executive committee back in their county or in their parish or whatever the case may be; that this is the U.S. Congress, and they may have been Federalized by the people in their district, Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, in a general election to come here, provide the kind of representation that they woke up early one Tuesday morning looking for.

I say all of that to say this: That if it was about politics, Mr. MURPHY, members, we would be home now. We would say nothing. We would allow the Republican minority to continue to get further and further and further in the minority. But the American spirit within our Democratic majority allows the 177 bipartisan votes, that we celebrate the 125 bipartisan votes, over 50 Republican members voting for Democratic measures that would never have made it to the floor on the Republican Congress.

The record speaks for itself. I am so happy and so glad that we have the kind of leadership, we have the kind of caucus that says, you know something? We are going to move in a new direction that the American people have called for, Mr. MURPHY. Some people call it change now. Change is the big word of this election, because people have had a taste of change already in this House and in the Senate. They want that change in the White House.

Now, I want us to kind of go back and forth here, but I just want to share a little bit of the record because some work has been done here. I think it is important that we look at the kind of fight that—and I am going to call some of the things out that you have identified.

We have the new GI bill that extends benefits to veterans, and it provides and restores the full 4-year college scholarships for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, and the President has threatened that he is going to veto that.

My question is, to the Republican minority, are you going to follow the

President with this whole veto issue? If he does, will you leader up and override his veto?

Because I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, if we have an override once a week, maybe, just maybe—because the President is not running for election again. I just want to let my Republican colleagues know, they are. Some of them are, those that are not retiring. That they may want to pay attention to what the American people are saying versus what may be coming from the White House, because it hasn't worked, because they are in the minority right now.

I think it is also important for the responsible timeline for redeployment that requires Iraqis to pay their fair share of the restoration and other Iraqi policy restrictions that was in H.R. 2642, which is the 2008 supplemental that the President has threatened to veto again. Will our Republican colleagues write the Republican and say, listen, we are already in bad shape as a Republican minority in the Congress, we can't follow you on this. We will join Democrats and override your veto.

That is the American spirit. That is not saying, well, I am going to be a good Republican. Because it is important that we understand that folks didn't elect us to be good Republicans or good Democrats saying, well, I am going to follow the President because the President says that it should happen. The first version of the 2007 supplemental, the President vetoed the bill on May 1. I think it is important that folks understand this and the opportunities that we have to continue to build on the bipartisanship.

The responsible timeline for redeployment of troops, another bill that passed, H.R. 4156, the President has threatened that he is going to veto that. Also, H.R. 2956, that carries some of the same language. I mean, we are putting these bills out there. That bill passed 223-201. The President is threatening he is going to veto that.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Let's just step back. There is no question when you are talking about where do American people stand on the redeployment of the troops out of Iraq. None of these bills suggest to do it tomorrow or the week after. This is the responsible redeployment of troops out of Iraq. Do it in a planful way that maintains the safety of those troops as they leave, and tries to do our best to try to maintain a stable government that we leave behind. There is no question where the American people stand on that. That is not just you and me listening to people when we go back home; that is also every poll that we have seen of the American public over the last 2 years.

There is no question, Mr. MEEK, where people stand on the GI bill. The numbers are off the charts when you ask folks if they think that this country should guarantee a college education to every returning warrior from Iraq and Afghanistan. There is no guesswork involved here.

Now, I don't know where the President gets his direction from on his veto threats. But for all of us that are sitting here deciding whether we vote for these things in the first place or override the President's veto when they come back, there is no research that has to be done in the public opinion. There are no guesses that have to be made. This is all just common sense, whether you are listening to it when you go back to the district or you are reading the public opinion polls, Mr. MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Public opinion polls and what the American people want are pretty much the same thing, but also common sense kicks in at some point. I mean, if I was very—hypothetically speaking, Mr. Speaker, and I do mean very hypothetically. If I was a Republican Member of Congress at this point, I would kind of think, hmm, let's see, am I willing to follow the President that is going to retire and have a pension and have all of the things being a past two-term President in this country? Or am I going to stand up on what is right and what is sound as it relates to policy?

Mr. MURPHY, again, another bill, and I am making sure that the Members understand, because I think here in the 30-Something Working Group, you know, in Congress there is always some mystery about, well, you know, I didn't quite know what was in that bill.

I am sorry, let me go back. We are about to celebrate Memorial Day for those and pay tribute to those that serve this country, those that have died to allow us to salute one flag, those that allow us to be here under the illumination of the lights here, to be in a free country, to be in a country that one can stand on the floor and speak freely, Republican or Democrat, what have you; for any American or any resident of this country to speak in opposition of its government and say, I disagree; or, this is the way I feel.

Many of us Members of Congress have traveled to countries where folks don't have that privilege or that opportunity, and we try to share that kind of democracy and that freedom of those that have fallen.

I tell a story, Mr. Speaker, of my kids and I, we rode our bikes on the mall here in Washington, DC, where we leave this building and pass the Washington monument and pass the World War II memorial, and all of those States are recognized on those pillars that are around that monument and that great fountain that they have there illuminated at night. And we go on and ride on and we go to the Lincoln memorial where so many Americans go to reflect on this great President who served our country. And we run into the Last Outpost, where our veterans from Vietnam are there selling patches and keeping that last outpost open for those that are missing in action. And then we take the opportunity to go by the Korean War memorial that is there

and the Vietnam wall of those that lost their lives. And so many Americans will travel to the capital city to celebrate that and to be able to recognize those individuals and celebrate their lives and their commitment to our country and on and on and on, and the number of monuments and great heroes and sheroes that are there, even women that have fought in conflicts.

I say all of that to say this: That with all of that history and all of that greatness and all of the spirit of this great country, that we have to take a step back sometimes and say, am I voting in the right direction? Am I doing the right thing? Am I listening to quote/unquote leaders that may be in our caucus or whatever the case may be? And especially on the Republican side, I think it is important because I think it is a very unique time in history and I think they need to be on the right side of history, because history has played a role in Members of Congress' reelection to Congress.

And so when I start looking at legislation that the President has decided that he is going to veto, Mr. MURPHY, I think it is important.

And I want to also on the record call out on 3159, it is again a responsible troop redeployment cycle that is based on Senator JIM WEBB's bill that enhances national security and supports our troops and families. And increasing troops are better at home in between deployment. The President has threatened that he is going to veto that.

Will our Republican colleagues, those that are not voting in a bipartisan way, will they follow the President in that veto, or will they write a letter to the President and say no way, will they write President Bush and say, on House Bill 1684, the fiscal year 2008 Homeland Security Authorization Act that the President has threatened that he is going to veto that will provide some \$139.8 billion to the Department of Homeland Security to be able to protect the homeland? Will they write a letter or will they send a message to the White House that they are willing to override that veto?

At the same time, again, time after time again the Coast Guard Authorization that passed the House, H.R. 2830, which is the Coast Guard Authorization, the President, this also passed—now, this is very interesting, Mr. MURPHY. This authorization has passed the House. I am smiling because it is almost laughable if it wasn't a serious moment.

The Coast Guard plays such an important role to homeland security, especially from a State like mine in Florida, and especially as we look at the East Coast and the West Coast. They play such a very important role, and they have been asked to play a role that they have never played before in protecting the homeland. This bill, this piece of legislation passed 395–7, with 165 Republicans voting “yea,” or yes, the President has threatened he is going to veto that.

So Mr. MURPHY, I think you get the picture. I don't mean to go on and on and on. On every page of pages to go on and on and on, two or three times the President has said we are going to veto that piece of legislation.

We have 170 major pieces of legislation that Republicans have voted for in a bipartisan way. We have 125 pieces of legislation that over 50 Republicans have vote in the affirmative. I think that some of our friends on the other side have to get the picture. And I can tell you, and I am going to yield to you and then I am going to say one more thing and then we are going to yield back, because I want our friend to be able to have an opportunity before 12:00 midnight so he can get in his points. I think I know why that we don't have more Republicans voting in a new direction or voting for change in Washington, DC on behalf of not only their very own constituents, but also on behalf of the American people.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. MEEK, the President is not running again. The President doesn't have anybody to answer to, so the President is free now to act on his own instincts, to act on his own set of advice. And that means, to the extent that this President was ever listening to the American public, he is not doing it now. He doesn't need to do it. And, as you said before, he is not up for reelection. But every Member of this House, with the exception of those people who are retiring, are.

□ 2315

And so people in the Republican Caucus, our friends on the other side of the aisle, have got to think about what's the motivations behind the President's threats here. Is it because of a political calculation where he wants to be on the right side of where the American people are, or is it because he has no one to answer to any longer?

And sometimes, you know, we get a little bit of frustration when we go back home, Mr. MEEK. People say, well, why hasn't more happened on the war coming to a close? Why haven't you done more to solve our health care problems?

Well, the answer is what happens just up Pennsylvania Avenue. We've put legislation on the President's desk to planfully exit Iraq. He vetoed it. We've put legislation on his desk twice to ensure 4 million more kids. Both times he vetoed it.

Over and over again, with the Republicans and Democrats standing together, we've put legislation on his desk, even under that threat of veto, and he has continued to stand against the American public, Mr. MEEK.

I think we can still have some victories from here to the end of the year. I still think we can have moments where this House comes together and overrides presidential veto.

I can't think of a better bill to exercise the will of the American people as expressed through this House than on

the GI Bill, giving educational benefits to troops. I have no idea why the President has decided to exercise his veto threat against that legislation. If there's anything that we should be able to come together on, it's on supporting our troops when they come back home.

I think we should have done it for those 4 million kids that should have gotten health care insurance. I think that we should have done it when it comes to the withdrawal of our troops from Iraq. But let's at least do it as one final salvo with this Democratic Congress and a Republican President when it comes to standing up for our GIs, Mr. MEEK. It would seem to be the one place, amidst a lot of the times that we disagree here. You named all the moments on which we have agreed. But the culmination of a remarkable amount of agreement, amidst a reputation of disagreement in this House, would be to pass that GI Bill with a veto-proof majority, put it on the President's desk, dare him to veto it, knowing that we're going to have the votes to override when it comes back.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. You know, Mr. MURPHY, it's very interesting. As I speak to fact versus fiction, I can't help but think of our colleague who already, quote-unquote, has the Republican nomination, one of our friends over in the Senate. And he coined something, I think, earlier this week or last week as the slogan for the forward campaign on the Republican side. Change that you Deserve.

Okay. Well, I would say to my Republican colleagues that have decided to follow the leadership, the elected leadership that they have now on the Republican side that are saying stay the course, follow the President, object, what have you. Change that you deserve, I think, is something that one should think about.

Case in point. I'm not a lawyer. I don't play one on television.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. I'm a lawyer, Mr. MEEK, so if you need some help I'll walk you through it.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. That's fine. My wife's a lawyer too, so I'm kind to lawyers. But let me just say, you remember the letter that the Republican leadership wrote to the Speaker?

I don't want you to pay attention over here, I just want you to pay attention over here. The Republican leadership wrote a letter saying, you said you were going to do something about gas prices. We're waiting you to do something about gas prices in America. And we're concerned about all of this, and you have not fulfilled your promise.

And I think that it's important. If we can, I want to put something here because I don't want to have that on the chart there.

Well, let me just for the case of keeping the 30-something piece together, because I don't want to get into names, I'm just going to do this because I don't like to like point out anything as it relates to an individual Member of Congress, even if they're leadership.

But I just want to say, as it relates to doing something about gas prices, these are all the measures that we've passed here in this House that the Republican leadership decided not to vote for. But they want to criticize, and they want to encourage their leaders, I mean, their caucus to vote against change and a new direction.

Now, even the Republican nominee on the Republican side has said change that you deserve. If things were going so well and the policy was so great, why do we have to talk about change that you deserve?

Why can't we say we'll keep doing the things that we've continued to do, and we'll continue to have the problems that we have now?

I'm just saying this to my Republican colleagues, because, not that, you know, many of them are friends of mine. But I'm saying, as it relates to the policy that we have to pass, that the American people need now—we're not here for political purposes. We're here because we want to move an agenda forward.

I think it's important when we look at OPEC price fixing. These are the Republican leaders, or down the leadership line, that voted against that. And when you look at the top individual, as it relates to influence within the caucus, voted no on every last measure that Democrats have put forth, price gouging, renewable energy, energy security.

Second person in charge voted for three of the four that we have put forth before this Congress. Signed the letter.

The third person in charge voted against price gouging and also renewable energy. Those are two votes of the four that have taken place.

The fourth person in charge voted for two measures, voted against it, renewable energy and also energy security, but I said it correctly, voted for two of the measures that we put forward.

The fifth person in charge voted no on every last measure. Signed the letter.

The sixth person in charge voted against every measure that we put forth to be able to give the American people a fighting chance in this whole issue of price gouging, this whole issue of no OPEC. And we call OPEC, these are oil producing companies for price fixing, countries for price fixing, renewable energy, energy security, voted against every last one of them.

On down to the bottom, voted three times against those measures and voted two times.

I said all of that to say that I think that some of these individuals that are influencing the minds of, or the vote of those individuals within the Republican caucus that don't want to be a part of the 177 bipartisan major votes, or don't want to be a part of the 125 votes that we've taken, plus 50 Republicans that have voted for it, I think that the argument, especially when we look at the individual that is, quote-unquote, running on the Republican

side for President of the United States, of saying change that you deserve, we speak fact in the 30-Something Working Group and we do not speak fiction.

If it was political, Mr. MURPHY, and I say this in closing, if it was political, we would be home right now, you know, relaxing past 11 o'clock at night.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Will the gentleman yield for 1 minute?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Absolutely. You have the last word.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Your point is this, is that we've seen in the last 2 or 3 weeks, both the Republican minority and our Republican Presidential candidate all of a sudden start to use the word "change." Well, to them it's just a word. To them it's just a part of their slogan.

To the Democratic majority in the House and the Senate, it's what we live by, it's why we're here, it's why we get up in the morning, it's why I gave up my entire life to run for the United States Congress; it's why you have given up 18 hours a day to do this job, because we're here to change the place. It happens to be in everything that we talk about because it's the definition of why we're Members of Congress.

For the Republicans here in the House and the Republican Presidential candidate, it's just a word. And that's what I think the American people are beginning to understand. That's why the American people are turning out in record numbers for our Presidential candidates on the Democratic side, and that's why we have won the last three competitive seats for special elections here in the House, because the voters out there, the American public, are figuring out that change is nothing if it's just a word coming out of your mouth. You've got to live it. You've got to breathe it, which is what we're doing here, Mr. MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. MURPHY, I want to thank you for your comments. I couldn't say it better.

Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of bipartisanship, we're going to yield back our hour earlier so my good friend from Texas will be able to share with the Members of the House what he would like to share.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, we yield back the balance of our time.

FOOD FOR FUEL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ALTMIRE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized from this moment until midnight.

Mr. BURGESS. I thank the Speaker, and I thank the Members on the Democratic side for yielding back their time early.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to do something a little different tonight. Normally I come down here to the floor of the House to talk about health care. But we've heard a lot recently about where this country is in regards to its