

dropped by \$1,200. These are sobering statistics. The middle class is simply getting squeezed in this country.

After 7½ years of the administration policies, it's not a surprise 99 percent are getting hurt and the top 1 percent are doing better than ever. And now JOHN MCCAIN is offering an economic plan to cut taxes to this top 1 percent by \$127,000.

It is time for a new direction.

□ 1015

EXELON

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

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, Exelon, an energy company which provides electricity to my district in Pennsylvania, recently announced a voluntary goal of reducing, offsetting, or displacing more than 15 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions per year by 2020. This is more than the company's current annual carbon emission total and is equivalent to taking nearly 3 million cars off American roads and highways.

The campaign, called Exelon 2020, will pursue three broad strategies: first, reduce or offset Exelon's carbon emissions by reducing energy consumption and operating to the highest environmental standards; secondly, help customers and the communities in which they serve to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency programs and a diverse portfolio of green products and services; and third, offer more low-carbon electricity in the marketplace.

The voluntary, market-driven strategies such as Exelon 2020 will help to strengthen our clean energy infrastructure, and they should be commended.

MIDDLE CLASS TAX FAIRNESS ACT

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

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, the gentleman on our side of the aisle who just spoke from Illinois laid out the exact situation that's happening in our economy. That's why today I'm proud to introduce the Middle Class Tax Fairness Act, which will allow the average taxpayer to keep more of their hard-earned dollars.

In this slow economy, it's unfair to put the load of taxation right on the backs of the middle class. Middle class Americans are being squeezed by high gas prices, high cost of groceries, high health care costs, high tuition costs, and their paychecks, as you heard, are not keeping up with the rising costs. And in fact, the speaker was right; they're actually \$1,000 less than they were 5 years ago.

Meanwhile, our tax code is full of government waste and unnecessary giveaways to the richest 1 percent.

Today, I am introducing legislation that will restore balance to our tax code and do something unusual: help reduce the national debt. My bill will be a jump-start to this slumping economy. It will double the standard deduction for the next 2 years, providing an annual savings of \$750 to 61 million Americans. It will expand access to the child tax credit and provide relief on property tax.

My legislation allows the middle class to keep their income and does so in a fiscally responsible manner, by fully being paid for.

Madam Speaker, it is easy to offer a tax cut. It's harder to pay for it. Join me.

LIFT THE AMERICAN OIL EMBARGO

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

Mr. CARTER. Madam Speaker, today we vote on a bill to draw down the Strategic Petroleum Reserve by 70 million barrels of oil. The U.S. consumes 21 to 23 million barrels of oil a day. So this is just over 3 days' supply.

The good news is that our Democrat colleagues have finally started to realize that supply is the problem. Seventy million barrels may help slightly the pain at the pump, but so would the billions of barrels of oil in ANWR, offshore, and in shale oil.

Increasing American energy supply is not an ideological issue like traditional marriage or abortion. It's a simple issue of do you support the American people or radical environmental groups.

Sixty-seven percent of the American people want safe, environmentally sound drilling for oil. This is what the American people want. This is what they should have. The only obstacle seems to be Speaker PELOSI and the Democrat Congress.

Americans are counting on Congress to work together and lift the American oil embargo. Americans stand ready to work with the Democrats, as do the Republicans.

POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS OF IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES

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

Mr. BACA. Madam Speaker, I speak on behalf of the 12 to 14 million immigrants in the United States.

Throughout history, America has been a Nation of immigrants. For decades, immigrants have contributed with their heart, sweat, and tears to have the American dream like the rest of us.

Immigrant families continue to pay property taxes in the form of rent, pay sales taxes on every purchase, and most importantly, contribute to Social Security without legally having any

claim to any of it. Yet, there are those who wish to downplay these positive contributions for political gain.

You don't see many local governments turning away taxes paid by undocumented immigrants. However, you do see local governments spending these tax dollars to create anti-immigration legislation that strip away families of basic services.

I urge my colleagues to get past the anti-immigrant myths and look at the facts about the true positive contributions of immigrants.

We must stand firm and pass comprehensive immigration reform.

HONORING CHARLES HOOKER—WINNER OF CHARACTER COUNTS CONTEST IN ELMHURST, ILLINOIS

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

Mr. ROSKAM. Madam Speaker, I don't know about you, but sitting here and listening to these speeches, I'm ready for some good news. And the good news is we are joined today by a constituent of mine named Charles Hooker, who is a young boy who wrote an essay. It's short, it's sweet, it's succinct, and I'm going to read it to you. It is a result of him winning the Character Counts Contest in Elmhurst, Illinois. This is what young Charles says to us.

"If I were Mayor of Elmhurst, I would be fair to everyone by treating everyone the way I would like to be treated. I would listen to the requests of the young and old equally, because they both matter. I would be honest, be fair, and most importantly give credit to anyone who helped make things possible. I would also make sure I communicated well to show I'm trustful and responsible in all things. I am a Christian, and I would represent God in anything I do."

Madam Speaker, as we listen to these challenges that have been outlined today, I think that's a good word for us all, and I offer great congratulations to young Charles.

WE MUST MAKE THE MINIMUM WAGE A LIVING WAGE

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

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Madam Speaker, today the minimum wage will increase to \$6.55 an hour. This is laudable. However, Madam Speaker, if the truth be told, the increase will be consumed because of inflation, higher gas prices, and higher food prices.

Madam Speaker, we must make the minimum wage a living wage. This is why I have introduced the Living American Wage Act, the LAW Act, such that we can have people who work full time always live above the poverty line.

We have people in the richest country in the world, a country where 1 out of every 33 persons is a millionaire, we have people living in poverty and working full time. No one should work full time and live below the poverty line.

We need to pass the Living American Wage Act, the LAW Act. The living wage should be the law.

WE CANNOT ALLOW OUR DOMESTIC ENERGY SOURCES TO WASTE AWAY

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

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam Speaker, today the House will consider legislation that makes clear that our major obstacle to lowering prices is a shortage of supply. Yet, this House will not act on any legislation that will actually increase our Nation's overall energy supply.

It's time for this Congress to get serious about both protecting consumers and taking action on real solutions that will ease the pain at the pump.

I hear from West Virginians on a regular basis who can no longer afford the price of gasoline. Just yesterday, I spoke to several West Virginia seniors. They're concerned. They're making tough decisions. And on fixed incomes, they're very troubled when they have to go to the gas station to fill up their cars.

West Virginians deserve a truly comprehensive, all-of-the-above approach to our energy challenges to become energy independent. We need legislation that leads to new refineries, new technology, and new energy exploration, not these weak attempts that are only wanting to change the topic.

With gas prices at more than \$4 a gallon, we simply cannot afford to deliberately allow our domestic energy resources to waste away.

AUTISM

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

Mr. DOYLE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to correct the misinformation about autism that shock jock Michael Savage spread on his syndicated radio show last week.

Mr. Savage claimed that many diagnosed cases of autism were fraudulent, and that, "In 99 percent of the cases, it's a brat who hasn't been told to cut out the act. They don't have a father around to tell them, 'Don't act like a moron.'"

Madam Speaker, I've known a number of families dealing with autism over the years, and I can tell you unequivocally that none of the children with autism I've met fit that deplorable description.

But don't take my word for it. There have been decades of peer-reviewed, scientific research on autism, and the

evidence is clear. Autism spectrum disorders are real, and they affect over 1 million Americans today.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest, if Mr. Savage wants to find someone acting like a moron, he should simply look in the mirror.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

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

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, in the past few weeks the focus of the energy crisis conversation has been about lifting the offshore ban on drilling to increase oil and gas supplies in the U.S., and offshore drilling is one solution that can help ease the energy crisis and lower gas prices at the pump.

However, there's also been talk about using alternative energy sources to solve our energy problems for the long term. The Department of Energy found that in the United States 103 nuclear units supply about 20 percent of the electricity produced here in the United States.

And in my home State of South Carolina, 52 percent of our State's power comes from nuclear power plants. For years, I've worked with organizations and companies within South Carolina to promote the benefits of nuclear power. Nuclear is clean, safe, and it's accessible in our country.

Nuclear energy is an alternative energy source that our country can use to create long-term energy solutions for generations to come. It's a real solution that, if we invest now, will help us bridge from a short-term solution to a long-term solution.

DEMOCRATS ARE PROVIDING SOLUTIONS TO AMERICA'S ENERGY CRISIS

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

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. Madam Speaker, two people are most responsible in this country for record-high gas prices: President Bush and Vice President CHENEY. When the oil barons came to Washington in 2001, the Vice President opened the doors of the White House and held top secret meetings with their executives to draft the administration's energy plan.

Then congressional Republicans helped them pass that plan into law in 2005, and now, here we are 3 years later, Big Oil is reaping billions in profits while the American consumer is left squeezed at the pump. And now, President Bush and Republicans in Congress have the audacity to blame this Democratic Congress for record-high gas prices. For shame.

Since day one, we've rejected the failed policies of the past, and instead, as Democrats, we're providing real solutions to America's energy crisis. We've repealed subsidies to Big Oil,

cracked down on price gouging, and invested in clean and renewable energy.

We also forced President Bush to stop filling the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, and it's time now for the President to release that oil to consumers from the reserve.

We're not done. As Democrats, we're going to tie our energy policy to economic development by making green jobs good jobs, especially for vulnerable communities.

THE ENERGY PROBLEM IS ONE WE CAN SOLVE

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

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam Speaker, the President lifted the executive ban on offshore oil and natural gas exploration last week, and now Congress, this Democrat-led Congress, is what stands in the way of increased domestic supply and lower prices.

Well, instead of taking steps toward a solution, the House Democrat leadership has said "no" to the American people: go buy a hybrid, take a subway to work. Well, in my Seventh District of Tennessee, that doesn't work, because mass transit is not there.

Congress should open up ANWR, the Outer Continental Shelf, and should promote the construction of oil refineries and nuclear power plants. We need a short-, a mid-range and long-term solution. We should provide tax incentives for American families to purchase more fuel-efficient vehicles and to promote energy innovation and efficiency.

Republicans have offered a bill that includes all of the above, promoting American-made energy in the short-, mid-, and long-range plan.

Let's solve this problem, Madam Speaker. It requires action now.

MINIMUM WAGE

(Mrs. MALONEY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Madam Speaker, today, millions of workers will be getting a much-deserved raise.

In the first 100 days of this New Direction Congress, we voted to raise the wage floor for workers nationwide. Today, the Federal minimum wage goes to \$6.55 per hour. This raise was long overdue.

Prior to passage of this legislation, the minimum wage had sunk to its lowest point in over half a century. Most minimum wage workers are adults, many of whom are the sole breadwinners for their families.

Families are being squeezed by the rising costs for basic necessities and wages that are failing to keep pace. I call this economy the stag-gas-food-inflation economy; stagnant wages, many workers have lost up to \$1,200 since this administration took office; rising gas and food prices; and now inflation.