

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address an issue that has reached crisis levels in many Native American communities: the Federal funding shortfalls crippling tribal law enforcement and justice systems.

Native American families, like all families, deserve safe and secure communities. Tragically, there is a pervasive sense of lawlessness in too many areas of Indian country. As the at-large Member of Congress for South Dakota, I am proud to represent nine sovereign native nations.

The Federal Government has a unique relationship with the 562 federally recognized tribes. This government-to-government relationship is established in the U.S. Constitution, is recognized through treaties and is reaffirmed through executive orders, judicial decisions and congressional action.

Law enforcement is one of the Federal Government's trust obligations to tribes. Yet, on many counts, we are failing to meet that obligation. Less than 3,000 law enforcement officers patrol more than 56 million acres of Indian country. Let me repeat: 3,000 officers for 56 million acres. That reflects less than one half of the law enforcement presence in comparable rural communities.

A recent master plan for justice services in Indian country found that crime is increasing. The report notes that drug cartels deliberately base their operations in Indian country because of the lack of law enforcement. Once drug producers gain a foothold in reservations, they can sell drugs throughout the United States. Drug trafficking demonstrates that weak tribal law enforcement systems are not just a problem for Indian country; they affect us all.

In addition to drug activity, the rates of crime against women are staggering. In June 2007, Amnesty International released their report, entitled "Maze of Injustice," which documents what native women have long known before and have fought against. The figures suggest that 34 percent of native women will be raped in their lifetimes. Even more women will be victims of domestic violence. When tribal law enforcement departments are understaffed, there are delays in responding to victims and to collecting evidence.

At a 2007 Natural Resources Committee field hearing, we heard from Georgia Little Shield, director of the Pretty Bird Woman House on the Standing Rock Reservation, which was named in honor of a Lakota woman who was brutally raped and murdered in that community.

Ms. Little Shield told of a woman who was beaten by her partner and who had called her for help in filing a police report. They called the police and were told, when an officer becomes available, he would take her statement. After 2 hours of waiting, they called again. The one officer on duty had been

sent to the scene of a traffic accident. After waiting 2 more hours, they called yet again. In the end, the police officer never came to take her statement.

Large land-based reservations are hit especially hard by insufficient funding. For example, the Cheyenne River Sioux tribal chairman has testified that his tribe has only three officers per shift to cover an area almost the size of Connecticut. These situations and statistics show that the extent of these problems far exceed the level of appropriations.

I applaud the interior appropriations subcommittee Chairman NORMAN DICKS and the entire Appropriations Committee for increasing tribal law enforcement and justice funding by \$28.7 million from fiscal year 2007 to fiscal year 2008. However, we have much more to do.

In 2004, the Interior Department Inspector General reported on the deteriorating conditions of tribal detention facilities. Four years later, not much has changed.

Last month, the BIA jail in Pine Ridge, South Dakota was closed for safety reasons after years of insufficient maintenance by the Federal Government. It's estimated that the tribal detention system alone will require \$8.4 billion to address our current deficiencies.

In conclusion, fully funding tribal law enforcement will not fix every problem such as the lack of transparency and accountability at the BIA. That is why I am proud to sponsor the Tribal Law and Order Act. This act was written by Senator DORGAN, chairman of the Indian Affairs Committee in the Senate. I look forward to working with him to ensure the bill becomes law.

The immediate challenge facing tribes is the insufficient Federal funds that leads to too few officers, to jails too unsafe for inmates and staff and to tribal courts nearly overwhelmed with caseloads.

Let me say again: Native American families, like all families, deserve to raise their children and to live their lives with a basic sense of security and safety. Congress must meet our trust responsibilities by fully funding tribal law enforcement and justice systems.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CUMMINGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WOOLSEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. FOXX addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PAYNE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GARRETT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HOLT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FLAKE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. HONDA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HONDA addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ENERGY

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

Mr. GINGREY. I thank the Speaker for his recognition, and I thank the minority leader for yielding the time for me to speak on such an important issue this evening.

Of course, that is the ongoing problem with the crisis as to our price of energy, as to the price of gasoline at the pump, as to the price of heating oil, particularly as we get into the winter months approaching in the northeast, and people are continuing to struggle.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important in any discussion about energy to let the American people know this through the Members of this great body on both sides of the aisle, at the end of this 45 minutes to 1-hour period of discussion on the issue, who hopefully will be able to go back home and in a very frank, honest way discuss with their constituents what exactly we've been doing up here in the people's House over the last couple of months. I'll tell you, from my perspective—and I think it would be hard for anybody to disagree—the answer is not very much, not very much, indeed.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, in the first week in August, we left Washington for that traditional August recess, which actually was more than a month. It was actually 5 weeks when you included the Labor Day weekend. So we were going to be out of here for 5 weeks. At the time, people were paying \$4, more in some places, a little less in some places, but on average, it was \$4 a gallon for regular gasoline; for diesel fuel, it was even higher than that. People certainly couldn't afford to take a vacation.

□ 1815

We didn't see nearly as many people here in the Nation's Capital during month of August because of this.

The Republican minority party had introduced a bill actually a month before that, and it was called, as you recall, Mr. Speaker, the American Energy Act, or the all-of-the-above act, which included certainly as a cornerstone drilling, and a lot of people picked up different mottos like "drill, baby, drill," "drill here, drill now," "save money."

The point of all that was to try to emphasize the fact that we do, even though we have this tremendous dependency for our fossil fuel needs, particularly petroleum and natural gas from other countries, 60 percent of what we use, our daily utilization is being imported from other countries, and they don't all like us very much, unfortunately, and that gives them sort of a stranglehold on our economy.

So this bill does have a strong component of going after our own natural resources, be they natural gas or petroleum products, or converting other things, unconventional things like shale rock or coal-to-liquid petroleum or to natural gas.

We kept asking and saying to the leadership, the Democratic leadership, look, let's don't go home on August 1st. This August recess is a 5-week period of time. Members certainly want to get back in their districts, and all of us really are up for reelection. Some have tough reelections, both Democrats and Re-

publicans, and we all understand the need to get back and be in the community. But if we are not doing their work, if we are not solving their problems, if we are not making sure that when the school doors open the day after Labor Day, or in fact mid-August in most places, that the kids are going to be able to go to school five days a week and not four, that they are going to be able to ride the school buses and they are not going to be shut down at the school barn because there is no gasoline or diesel fuel to put in them, so let's stay here another week if it takes it, three days, whatever, we are smart people, and let's get this done. Then we can go home.

It is kind of like you don't want to leave campus until you have passed your last exam. How can you go home for, say, Thanksgiving or Christmas and relax, knowing that when you get back you have still got your work to do? It just made no sense. But, anyway, as you know, Mr. Speaker, the Democratic majority made the decision and moved for adjournment basically that day, that Thursday or Friday afternoon, cut off all debate.

So what the Republican minority decided to do, it was kind of a spontaneous thing, really, it wasn't planned ahead, we said, well, we are not going home. We are not going to take recess until we have done our homework.

So there were, I don't know, 40 or 50 Members just kind of mulling around. And, lo and behold, the lights got turned off, the microphones got turned off, the C-SPAN cameras weren't showing no video. But these brave men and women, all on the Republican side, but we kept asking for our colleagues on the Democratic side, Mr. Speaker, to join us, because we know, we know full well that there is like-mindedness on this issue on both sides of the aisle, but for the stranglehold that they have with their leadership.

So we came back. We would fly, go home, go work a couple of days, jump on a plane, come back up there, stand right here. We would bring people in from the gallery. Not just this gallery, but out in Statuary Hall. People were taking tours through the Capitol. They marched in here in droves and sat in our seats and listened to us. And Members would speak 10 minutes, 15 minutes, a tag-team approach, trying not to be partisan, but just say, look, we have a job to do and we are not doing it. And when you go back home, particularly if you are a Democrat from the Midwest or the Northeast or you are a Republican from the Southeast or the Far West, or just an independent voter, let your Congressmen and Congresswomen know, let your Senators know that you want something done about this, that you are suffering, your grocery prices are through the roof.

So this is how it all got started. We kept thinking, I kept thinking that any day people would ask, how long are you Republicans going to keep this up now? How long can you go? Is it going

to be 5 weeks? I said, well, I sure hope not. I hope that Ms. PELOSI is listening, Mr. HOYER is listening. They are intelligent people, no question about it. They wouldn't be in these positions of leadership if they are not.

I thought, well, the force of public opinion, these polls taken all across this country, Mr. Speaker, are saying that 85-88 percent of the American people want us to do this. They don't want us to be dependent on Venezuela and Iran and Russia. They don't mind us importing a little oil from Canada and a little oil from Mexico, but they fully agree that if we have got this product, this natural resource right here in River City, why wouldn't we use our own? So if you believe in the law of supply and demand, you increase that supply from anywhere in the world, in fact, and you will help balance some of that demand and bring down prices. But even better, if you increase your own domestic supply, then you are a player. Then you are a player. So that is what we were all about.

Well, as we came to the end of the August recess, we began to hear little tidbits of sound bites from Ms. PELOSI, and it sounded like maybe that she finally was getting the message, either from the Republicans in Washington or maybe some individual late-night phone calls from her own conference, particularly the Blue Dog Members who I felt may have wanted to come up here and join us and speak. So Ms. PELOSI said, well, we will maybe look at drilling when we get back.

Lo and behold, we get back now, we had three weeks, three weeks, we thought 15 days, but as it turns out it is only going to be at the most 13, because they cut us short Friday of last week, they are cutting us short Friday of this week, and maybe we will go 5 days next week. But 13 days working out of five months, from August 1st. There are no plans that I know of for any kind of session after we end here next Friday. We won't come back to this body, Mr. Speaker, until after the new President, the new administrative team is sworn in.

So to think we are working full time for the taxpayer, and that by definition is what we do and we are not really permitted to go back home and have another job, and here we are working 13 days in five months, there is something wrong with that math, something very wrong with that math.

So I cannot tell you in strong enough terms, Mr. Speaker, how disappointed I was when I got back and looked at this bill, this none-of-the-above energy bill, not all-of-the-above, but none-of-the-above, that none-of-the-above, the acronym is NOTA, NOTA energy bill that was presented to us on this floor that we voted on this week, and it does very, very little in regard to drilling.

I tell you, I feel blessed tonight to have with me one of my colleagues from Tennessee, a Member that has been here probably twice as long as have. He is twice as young as I am. He

is not nearly as good looking. But he is a very good member of the Energy and Commerce Committee and he knows this subject inside out and backwards.

I am happy at this point to yield to my friend from Tennessee, ZACH WAMP. Then we will kind of do a colloquy and further discuss this issue.

ZACH, take it away.

Mr. WAMP. Well, I thank the gentleman for yielding. I even come over to the Democratic side to begin my commentary tonight, because in my 14 years here, I have developed extraordinary relationships across the aisle.

I actually grew up a Democrat. Ronald Reagan made me and many people in my family members of the Republican Party. And I constantly say here that I don't think either party has an exclusive on integrity or either party has an exclusive on ideas, and at different times both parties have really let the American people down. But I think it is important right now to analyze where we are and what the important issues are that are not adequately being addressed here in the United States Congress at a real critical time for a whole lot of people.

This is not just talk. This is a fair assessment and analysis about where we are. As a matter of fact, National Public Radio interviewed me today and asked for my honest analysis about this new Democratic Congress that took over 2 years ago, because I was very blunt and candid and critical about the Republican majority of which I was a part over the last few years of our majority, because I felt like, and I stated it, that we were more interested in protecting ourselves for a period of time than the fundamental principles that brought us into a majority in 1994, and I knew we were sinking and I knew, frankly, we were going in the wrong direction.

Sure enough, we lost. The voters really didn't vote for the new Democratic majority as much as they voted against us. So I gave a fair assessment today of this new Democratic Congress that we have been under now for almost 2 years.

The success formula in life is sometimes defined as preparation and opportunity meeting each other. You hear a lot of other definitions of what success is. One definition of success in politics and public service might be to under-promise and over-deliver. And I have to tell you that what I really have seen here in the last 2 years is over-promising and under-delivery.

This new majority, and I am not a critic, I am rarely critical, and I am not a blamer, I rarely blame, but I have to tell you, it is unbelievable how bad things have gotten here in the Congress in the last several months.

The tradition of bringing the appropriations bills to the floor, taking them through the committee, having an opportunity to amend them, has basically just been thrown out the window. They came in ballyhoing that they were going to have the most eth-

ical Congress in the history of the country; that no earmarks would ever be dropped in straight on the floor that weren't properly vetted and gone through the committee; that nothing would come to the floor straight from the Rules Committee under a closed rule that is not an open process where the people who are rightly elected would have access to offering substitutes; that they wouldn't strong-arm their own Members to vote against things that they had actually cosponsored.

I have to tell you, all of those things that I just said they had promised were violated, not just in the last 2 years, but this week. Every single thing that I just mentioned was violated by the majority this week, and it was an ugly week here in Congress when we finally got to the most important issue of the year, which is energy.

I want to tell a couple of stories. Three years ago, after Katrina hit, I was on two appropriations subcommittees that had jurisdiction to the aftermath of Katrina, the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee and the Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee.

When Rita was bearing down, the second hurricane, on Galveston, they called an emergency meeting of our two subcommittees and called us into a room and they said, if Hurricane Rita continues on the track it is on and it hits Galveston head-on, we need to inform the committees that by next week we will not have gasoline across the eastern seaboard in some places. And it was an emergency crisis kind of a call.

I have to tell you that after Ike last week, in a small way, but in a very meaningful and unfortunate way, that happened in Tennessee. Prices spiked to \$4.99 a gallon. In some stations there was no gas whatsoever. And that was from Ike, that did less damage than was feared, and it just proves how vulnerable we are as a nation because of energy.

This issue is now bringing us to our knees economically. So many people on fixed income are hurting so bad. And even the markets. You wonder about Wall Street and what has happened and the mortgage industry.

Listen, credit has been overextended, and those people ought to be held accountable and the government shouldn't come in and bail out the private sector. But I can tell you one reason why the credit is not being honored and the bills are not being paid, is because the cost of energy for American consumers has soared so much that they can't meet their obligations and people are being foreclosed on, credit is not being paid on time. And these big institutions like AIG and Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers, they have all consolidated and they have over-extended credit. But it is a huge problem, and most all of it is driven by energy. And if we don't diversify our supply, if we don't increase our domestic

production, if we don't throw the ball deep on energy, we are going to continue to come to our knees economically.

Now, you might ask, why would the refineries not be able to give the output if one or two of them are down or if there is a hurricane that comes in? Let me just say that all of the new permit applications to explore for oil and gas or bring on new refineries face litigation from these extreme groups that are lined up with lawyers 10 deep to stop new oil and gas production in this country.

□ 1830

That's the truth. That's the truth. That is a special interest that has a foothold in the Congress with this new majority. That's the truth. They score their votes, they rate them, and this week they pressured them to vote against a new capacity bill that was bipartisan, created by dozens of Members from both parties and, frankly, they voted against the bill that they actually wrote.

Now, how can you get Members to do that unless those special interests, the radical environmental groups that file suit over all this new oil and gas supply that we have access to, but we have locked it up, and we want to unleash it, this is the critical issue of our time. Our way of life is at stake.

This is that important, and you are seeing a sinking of our economy, a loss of our competitiveness. Without natural gas resources, our manufacturing base is leaving this country, without the ability of our people to move around and make a living. Let me tell you, Dixie Produce, Lee Pittman, a small businessman and an excellent entrepreneur, pays his bills on time, works hard. He can't make a go of it because gasoline is too high for him to make a profit. He has nowhere to turn.

I feel for these people. I want this Congress to respond. I want us to throw the ball deep on energy.

Now the Democrats typically say all you all want to do is drill, and we want renewables. Listen, I am the cochairman of the Renewable Energy Caucus. I have been for 8 years. I have promoted more than anybody on our side, maybe ROSCOE BARTLETT and I, the expansion of tax credits and incentives for renewable investments, but they are not quite ready for the marketplace.

The total percentage of all energy is only 6 percent, and you can't increase it to 20 overnight. I would ask the new majority, if they really believe that much, why have they not extended the renewable tax energy credits and incentives all year long. We are still waiting for that. It's supposed to come up next week, they say.

Now today we hear they want to adjourn next Friday and put that off until after the election too. They are also talking about a new economic stimulus, which they say means unemployment compensation and other social-type programs. I know we have got

to help people that need relief, but the most important economic stimulus we can do is pass the American Energy Act, creating thousands and thousands of new production jobs in manufacturing and energy technologies for the whole world, for our country and the world. That's throwing it deep and going after it for all the right reasons.

Listen, this place is broken down to where for months now, this Democratic majority has been in retreat over this issue of energy because the radicals, the extremists, have basically convinced them that the higher the price of gas goes, the better off we are. People will quit driving and quit using fossil fuels if the prices go that high.

We don't believe that's in America's best interests. We believe we have got to build a bridge to the future by bringing on some new oil and gas supplies, diversifying our supply, go after the renewals in hydrogen and the new advancements and build nuclear plants, but we believe you have got to do it all.

This week they watered down a bill so bad that it has very, very little, if any, oil in it, even if you could do it. They passed it so the Members could go home and say we voted to drill. Please re-elect us and keep us there.

That's not really what the American people deserve or expect. I am not saying that Republicans are smart and Democrats are dumb, or we are good and they are bad. I am saying that they are not doing a good job representing what our country needs. They are not bringing the legislation to the floor, and they are playing politics with this thing, and we have got to have a bill soon to the President, because we can't put this off for any longer time.

Mr. GINGREY. I thank the gentleman for his remarks.

You know, Representative WAMP made one statement, there are actually people, I know this is hard to believe, I know it is, in these trying economic times, that want the price of gasoline to be high, that want to make it so high that we eliminate all fossil fuel. Look at this quote from Carl Pope, the executive director of the Sierra Club, a strong environmental club. "We're better off without cheap gas."

I mean, it's not just him. Ms. PELOSI herself has said many times that any bill that includes drilling is a hoax, and that she is more concerned with saving the planet. That is a direct quote on the national news network, my passion is to save the planet.

Then HARRY REID, the majority leader of the Senate says, and this is almost a verbatim quote, fossil fuel is poison. Fossil fuel is poison, and it needs to be eliminated completely by the year 2020. That's the kind of thing that Representative WAMP was talking about, and the nonsense that we are hearing from the other side.

Before I yield to one of my other colleagues, I just want to make this comment. When the 110th Congress began in January of 2007, I happened to sit on the Science Committee as well as the

Armed Services Committee. But our first Science Committee hearing of the year, our witness was—and this is pretty unusual, I have been up here 6 years, I have never seen this happen before, that the Speaker of the House would be a witness, or the sole witness before a standing committee—Ms. PELOSI.

It was all about global warming, and it was all about her plan to save the planet from carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases. She told us about the fact that she was going to create a commission of Congress, a bipartisan commission, I think. Ultimately she did, and Mr. MARKEY assumed chairmanship of that committee, even over the objection of the most venerable, distinguished long-serving member of this body, JOHN DINGELL from Michigan, who chairs the Energy and Commerce Committee.

But that was the kind of focus that Madam Speaker had at the time, when, of course, the price of gasoline was about \$2.33 a gallon.

A couple of weeks later, our second hearing in the Science Committee, who did we have again, a single witness. Guess who it was, former Vice President Al Gore just after he had gotten his Oscar award for that documentary film, "An Inconvenient Truth," about global warming. That's all they wanted to talk about was Kyoto Protocol and cap and trade and how we were going to eliminate the carbon footprint from this country.

It's a little hard, I mean, as we sit here tonight, talking, we are expelling, we are breathing out carbon dioxide. There are greenhouse gases all over the environment that are not necessarily created by what human beings do.

But, again, I think that certain people had drank all of the Kool-Aid in regard to global warming. Maybe when gasoline prices are low and \$2 a gallon, you can afford to do that. Do you remember the old expression, I can't be worrying about draining the swamp when I am up to my elbows in alligators?

Well, I think that's kind of the analogy of where we are right now. They are still worrying about draining the swamp, and we are up to our elbows in alligators with these prices that are literally killing the American people. They can certainly starve to death a whole lot quicker than they can choke to death from greenhouse gases over the next 100 years. I think it's important that we put that into perspective.

At this time, I see I have been joined by a couple more of my colleagues that do such a great job on the floor, one of our newest Members, but you would never know it by hearing him speak and the level of participation that he engages in, and that's my good friend from Ohio. I yield to BOB LATTA, Congressman BOB LATTA.

Mr. LATTA. Well, I thank my friend from Georgia for hosting this tonight because, once again, energy is the number-one topic on everyone's mind in this country. It has been a number-one

topic since I have gotten here, and I think it's going to be topic for years to come. It's really important for me.

My district, as a lot of you already know, I represent the number-one agriculture district in the State of Ohio, and I also represent one of the top 10 manufacturing districts in Congress. If we don't have energy in my district, we are not going to survive. If we don't have energy for those farmers, they can't get out there and plant those crops.

To tell you a couple of examples that have been going on, I have had meetings across my 16 counties, talking with farmers all over the entire district. Right now I have talked to many a farmer that when they go out with their tractor in the morning, and by the time they get back at night, they have put \$800 to \$1,000 of diesel fuel through their equipment in 1 day.

They talk about their fertilizer, they talk about the chemicals that they have to put on that land and make that land productive. They are coming back, and they are saying, you know, we are paying two and a half to three times more than we did 2 years ago for the same product.

The question is, well, these farmers are all getting rich right now. No, they are not, because they are out there having to pay all these high prices for diesel. They have to pay all these high prices when it comes to fertilizer. They have to pay all these high prices when it comes to chemicals, and they can't afford it.

What is happening, of course, is when people go to the store, and they buy that loaf of bread, when they buy that gallon of milk, they are saying, gee, why are prices going up? I can tell you why prices are going up, because these energy prices are out of control in this country. These energy prices are out of control because this Congress, this Democrat-controlled Congress, is not acting today to make sure that we can put food on the table and keep this price cheap for Americans.

We were able a few years ago, and up to this year, say that most people within 42 to 43 days were able to pay for all of their food in those first 42 to 43 days of the year. That's what we need to do in this country, because if we don't, it's the same thing that is going to happen on manufacturing side, we are in that same situation where right now the United States is the number one manufacturing country in the world.

Well, guess what, next year we drop to number two, and we all know who number one will be, and that will be China. They have been out there making sure they have that supply, but also they have that supply of energy that they have for the future.

So it's very, very important for not only the Fifth Congressional District of Ohio, but it's also important for this country of ours, this great country, to make sure that we can meet the energy needs of the future. I know that one of

our Members not too long ago told us a story about a trucker, a long-haul trucker in his district. He said he got a load to go from Texas to California and back.

He was paid \$1,700 for the entire load. Well, it cost him \$1,500 in fuel, so by the time you figure the cost of insurance, buying that truck and everything else, it would have been cheaper for him to let that truck stay at home and just leave the keys in it. Now, I have had truckers call me, independent truckers, saying you know what, Bob, we have got real problems out here. We are actually turning our keys back over to the finance company because we can't afford to even run our trucks anymore. We can't afford to do our job.

In Ohio, when we have 80 percent of all products being delivered by truck, how are we going to get things to the consumer, how are we going to get the product to market? So that's what we have got, massive problems right here, not only in Ohio, but across this country.

As has been mentioned a little bit by the gentleman before from Tennessee, we are talking about renewables. I am 100 percent behind renewables, because it is kind of interesting in my district, we already have one solar manufacturing plant in business right now. We have another one that's going to be on-line next year.

We also have a company working on a hydrogen engine, we have the only four wind turbines. I can see from them from the backyard of my house in Bowling Green. We also have two ethanol plants in my district.

The one thing is a lot of people like to think on the other side of the aisle, and some of the environmentalists, all this is going to happen overnight. It's not.

I was privileged to be one of the Members that went up to ANWR not too long ago, but we stopped in Colorado first at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory. When we were there, it was interesting, because I was fascinated because everything I just mentioned from solar to wind to hydrogen to ethanol, that's what they are doing out there right now.

Every time that we talked about something, they showed us something, for instance, we were talking about on the hydrogen side. They said this is what we would like to do on the hydrogen. It was kind of fascinating, because, well, we could create the hydrogen, because we could take a wind turbine and break down that electricity, break them into hydrogen, and we could run it down to like a hydrogen filling station so you could fill your car up right there.

But the same question I always asked every time we got through a subject is how long and how far are we? They said, we are not there yet. We are not there yet. We are off for quite a ways. It's just like the electric cars, they showed us electric cars.

A lot of us in northwest Ohio, and I know across this great country of ours,

a lot of people have to drive more than 50 miles one way to work. Well these cars, you can only go 60 miles before you have got to plug them back in. Well, that's a real problem.

You can't just go 60 miles in my district because you would never get home that night. If you are driving 100 miles one way, you have got a problem there. You know, but those are things we are working on for the future. As my friend from Tennessee mentioned earlier, these things are down the road, we are not there yet.

It's the same way when we talk about the wind side. You know, we have seen a lot of commercials on TV, from T. Boone Pickens and how much we would like to have, in the near future, by wind power. Well, the problem with that is it's going to take maybe 150,000 to 200,000 wind turbines to get us to that point. We are not there, next year or the year after, or the year after that. We are talking maybe 2020 or 2030.

We have got to have energy now. If we are not going to have energy now, we are not going to be able to manufacture. We are not going to have farmers in the field. This winter we have people telling me right now that we are not going to have the fuel to put in their tanks at home to make it through the entire winter when it comes to home heating oil.

We have a lot of work we have got to get done, and we have got to get it done now. When we went to ANWR, it was really fascinating in that when we were up there we flew up by Fairbanks into Prudhoe Bay. When Prudhoe Bay first came on line, they were talking about it might only produce around 9 to 10 billion barrels of oil. Now they have revised that, it could be up to 13 to 15 billion barrels.

The pipeline up there, you know, it's 800 miles long. That brings that lifeline down to the lower 48 to make sure that we have fuel. At its peak it was bringing down about 2.1 million barrels a day. Today it's only bringing down 700,000 barrels a day.

□ 1845

The thing that really concerns me when I hear that, when that number gets down to 300,000 barrels a day, and we are losing about 15 percent capacity every year up there, when it gets down to 300,000 barrels a day, that pipeline won't be able to flow any more. If there is oil in the pipeline, it will clog it up and they won't be able to go back in there and clean out the pipeline. That means that the pipeline is finished. When we are importing 70 percent of our oil every day into this country, we can't afford to shut that pipeline off.

It has also been demonstrated why we need diversification from where we get our oil in this country. When you have a hurricane and you have to shut down oil rigs in the gulf, and the refineries are out there, we have a problem. We have to diversify. We have to be up in Alaska. We know there is a known source of about 10.3 billion barrels.

So we have to drill and make sure that we have that oil for the future. Just real briefly in summation, when we are talking about what we want to do up there, we are talking about ANWR which is 19 million acres, the size of South Carolina. Section 10.02 land is about 1.5 million acres, and we need 2,000 acres to get this oil out. We have to make sure that we can get this done so we have a future for this country.

I applaud my friend for having this all-important special order tonight to bring up this subject about why we need energy for this country.

Mr. GINGREY. I thank my friend from Ohio. As Representative LATTA described, he and a number of Members did go up to Alaska in August and had an opportunity to meet the governor of Alaska, Governor Palin, and see what she had done in regard to getting that natural gas pipeline and that natural gas flowing down to the lower 48.

I feel refreshed and energized, not to use a pun, to think that Senator MCCAIN and Governor Palin understand this issue very well and have the wisdom and the strength of character and the force of leadership to deal with big oil, to deal with the environmentalists and to help us solve this problem as we go forward. So my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that hope is on the way.

Before I turn to my good friend and colleague from Louisiana, I want to say one other thing about this bill that Speaker PELOSI finally brought to us when we got back from this August recess, and certainly not by the regular process, not by going through the Energy and Commerce Committee and listening to the wisdom of JOHN DINGELL and JOE BARTON and others who have worked so well in a bipartisan manner to come up with a bill that we could all be satisfied with and that was good for nobodies' politics, or maybe everybody's politics, but more importantly, good for the American people.

It wasn't done that way. Unfortunately, the bill was drawn strictly by the Democratic leadership behind closed doors. If any of my colleagues can remember the song "The Green Door," behind the green door, and it was a 290-page bill and no Republican had any input. Indeed, no committee of jurisdiction.

But the ironic thing about that was that Ms. PELOSI, when she was trying to lead her troops to the majority, to the promised land back in the fall of 2006, she made some rather outstanding quotes, very attractive quotes like "bills should generally come to the floor under a procedure that allows open, full and fair debate consisting of a full amendment process that grants the minority," that would be us Republicans, we Republicans, "the right to offer its alternatives, including a substitute." This is Speaker PELOSI, a new direction for America.

How quickly we forget.

Another quote from Madam Speaker, "Members should have at least 24 hours

to examine a bill and a conference report text prior to floor consideration. Rules governing floor debate must be reported before 10 p.m. for a bill to be considered the following day." A quote from Ms. PELOSI back in 2006.

We have far more important things to talk about than process, so I yield to a physician colleague of mine from the great State of Louisiana. And if anybody knows about energy and refineries and what goes on in hurricane alley, Congressman CHARLES BOUSTANY does. And he probably spent a lot of time in his home in St. Charles after Ida and Gustav and the destruction and probably working in one of the Red Cross shelters trying to help victims of the hurricanes. But he did not lose sight of the ball in regard to energy. It only strengthened his resolve, and I yield to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BOUSTANY).

Mr. BOUSTANY. I thank my friend and colleague from Georgia. A little bit about my district. My district is the 7th Congressional District of Louisiana. It is southwest Louisiana. So I am on the border with Texas. I am on the gulf coast, and we have been a long time leader in the oil and gas industry.

We have about 3,800 drilling platforms out in the Gulf of Mexico. Most of those are located off the coast of my district. I have one of the Strategic Petroleum Reserves in my district, and it accounts for one-fourth of the oil that we hold. I also have a confluence of pipelines called the Henry Hub which is the pricing point for natural gas for the entire country.

We have a number of refineries along the Calcasieu ship channel located throughout southwest Louisiana, so we have a significant amount of the refining capacity that supplies refined products to this country.

The oil and gas industry is about jobs. Every time I fly back and forth to my home in Lafayette, Louisiana, I run into four or five gentlemen typically who work in the oil and gas industry, and when I ask them where they are working, they are telling me that they are coming from or going to countries all over the globe, Angola in Africa, Equatorial Guinea, Thailand, Vietnam, and countries throughout the Middle East.

I ask them why is that? Why are you out there?

They tell me I used to work in the oil and gas industry off the gulf coast, and after the imposition of the windfall profits tax in the 1980s which devastated the oil and gas industry, they lost their jobs in the gulf coast area and they ended up going off and working all over the globe.

We have expertise all over the world in the oil and gas industry, and every one of these gentlemen when I talk to them wishes they could come back home and work in the United States, to be close to their families, to work in an area that they are comfortable with rather than being off in foreign countries and having to do all of that travel

that oftentimes takes 2 or 3 days of their time, often at their own expense.

So getting a comprehensive energy policy is about good, high-paying American jobs. It is about keeping jobs in the United States. It is about growing new jobs. It is not just about the oil and gas industry.

What we have been advocating is a comprehensive, all-of-the-above energy approach, an energy approach that looks at oil and gas because we are dependent on oil and gas for most of our transportation needs, much of our electricity, and really for a good part of all of our energy needs. Oil and gas are a critical part, but at the same time we also have to look at good, tried and true methods of conservation. And we have to look at alternative fuels and renewable energy and nuclear power and clean coal technology. All of the ideas that are out there, we should be unleashing individual American genius because that is what has made this country great and has helped to solve problems of the past, and is what will help us pull out of this energy crisis that we are seeing. Families and seniors and small businesses and our schools, our local governments are struggling with the high cost of energy.

I talked to a senior not long ago who told me it was getting difficult for her to afford gas and make the usual runs to the grocery store. And she was paying high food prices on top of that, so she teamed up with folks in her neighborhood and they are still struggling with the cost of gas. This is just unacceptable. In a country that has the brilliance that the American people have and the entrepreneurship, we shouldn't be struggling with this. The sad thing is that the only thing blocking it is good policy, and this Congress has it within itself to move forward on a good, comprehensive energy policy. It distresses me it has been blocked. We have not had an opportunity to bring a comprehensive energy bill to the floor of the House.

This country has had one energy shock after another. There have been about six of them since the end of the Second World War. A number have caused significant price spikes, when you talk about 1973 with the Arab oil embargo, 1979 when the Iranian problem came up, the 1990 gulf crisis, the windfall profits tax thrown on top of the oil industry in the 1980s, and of course recently what we have seen with real high price spikes.

Mr. GINGREY. Dr. BOUSTANY, please address the issue in regard to the refineries and the run up in prices just because of the recent hurricanes, and what a problem it is to have all of those refineries located in one area.

Mr. BOUSTANY. I am glad you brought that up. Clearly, having a whole lot of refineries concentrated on the gulf coast, in Texas or on the coast of Louisiana, we have a very soft underbelly. We have a true vulnerability with key energy infrastructure. Many

refineries, while they were not damaged, they had to be shut down for a period of time. We don't have large inventories of gasoline in this country. We don't have it. So when you shut refineries down, particularly a large number of them, you end up with shortages of gasoline and this country has had to start importing gasoline to a much greater extent than we used to.

Mr. GINGREY. So the refined products?

Mr. BOUSTANY. Diesel as well, and other refined products. So this a significant problem. If we had true destruction of those refineries, which could have easily happened, we are talking about a real vulnerability, real price shocks at the pump, and a long time before we can get this infrastructure back up and running.

The point is with a comprehensive energy policy, we are going to diversify our sources of energy. We need to expand refining capacity and build out in other areas of the country. We need to invest in the alternative fuels that will give us alternatives to gasoline, but it takes time for those investments. Clearly, it is important that we start the process.

In my district, a large oil company has just recently put a significant investment into an alternative fuel company that is going to be making cellulosic ethanol. It is the first cellulosic ethanol facility in the entire country. They are ramping up and there is a lot of excitement about it, and it offers great possibilities, but we have to develop this and we have to develop the infrastructure. That is going to take time. So what we have to do is strategically manage our dependence on fossil fuels right now as we transition to the next energy economy which will involve alternatives and renewables.

Mr. GINGREY. That is exactly right. I think you used the key word, and that is "transition." We are talking about transition. It is just that some people want to transition just a little too quickly.

I wish you would speak a little bit and reference this slide that I am showing right now in regard to the revenue-sharing issue. This goes back to the Energy Security Act of 2006 regarding the gulf coast States and the energy sharing. And I know that you have talked with me and other Members of the conference about what Louisiana does with that revenue sharing and how important it is to the State.

As I close out, I will talk about this "NOTA" energy bill. I like to call it a "nota," none-of-the-above act that we passed this week, and one of the key problems was the lack of any revenue sharing for the States on the east and west coast. If you don't mind addressing that, I appreciate it.

Mr. BOUSTANY. First of all, as we try to transition, we still need oil and gas, and we should be investing in this country and in the United States, looking at our own natural resources. A large part of the oil and gas that is

available is off our Outer Continental Shelf, in the gulf coast area, as we have seen off the coast of Louisiana and Texas, Alabama, Mississippi, but also east coast and west coast. We ought to be taking advantage and using those resources as we transition.

One of the key features that we fought for, I say "we," the Louisiana delegation, for 50 years we fought to get revenue sharing whereby the tax revenue that comes to the Federal Government, some of it is shared with the States.

For instance, in Louisiana now with new production, we have the opportunity to share in 37.5 percent of revenue that will go to the State to help the State do environmental repair along the gulf coast. It will help us invest in infrastructure, and it also provides an opportunity to invest in alternatives fuels. That provision was enacted in the Energy Security Act of 2006, something we fought very hard for and it is a very good bill.

It is critically important that States along the coast have that revenue-sharing option available to them. That is the incentive for them to allow drilling off their coast.

□ 1900

And that helps them build their infrastructure. The Democrat bill earlier this week didn't allow that. And that's one of the reasons why I think this was a sham approach. It was saying, we'll give a little lip service to drilling in the Outer Continental Shelf, but we're going to restrict certain areas of the Outer Continental Shelf, and we're not going to allow revenue sharing, which is something the States all want. And that's the essence of federalism. That's a great way to do it.

Mr. GINGREY. Reclaiming my time for a second, that's what I've depicted on this slide on the bottom, this new bill that we just passed this week. Everyone else, nada, again, zero, nothing, no revenue sharing. So where is the incentive for one of these States, Georgia, we've got 130 miles of shore line on the Atlantic Ocean. California, I mean, there's just not going to be the incentive to do it.

Mr. BOUSTANY. And I would say for folks back home in Louisiana who may be listening to this, our 37.5 percent revenue sharing was also jeopardized by this Democratic bill. So after 50 years of fighting to get revenue sharing for Louisiana in the 8.3 million acres that were opened up in the eastern Gulf of Mexico, we could suddenly lose that if that bill were to go all the way through the Senate and the President signed it. Fortunately, the President says he's going to veto it, but our own Democratic Senator, MARY LANDRIEU, has said this bill is dead on arrival.

Mr. GINGREY. Well, I'll reclaim just for a second. Let me make sure I understand this now. You're saying that currently, under this Energy Security Act of 2006, as I point to this slide, again, GOMESA, that Alabama, Mis-

issippi, Louisiana, you've said you fought hard for it many years, Texas, you get 37 percent revenue sharing, 37.5 percent.

But are you telling me now that in that area in the Gulf of Mexico, when the oil companies go out and build new rigs and purchase new leases, then, according to this no energy bill that was passed this week, you wouldn't get any revenue on those new sites?

Mr. BOUSTANY. It is my understanding that that revenue sharing is at risk.

Mr. GINGREY. Well, that's what I'm thinking too. And I'm not glad to hear you say that, but I think you're right. I think that's absolutely right.

Mr. BOUSTANY. There is no assurance that that revenue would be retained. And that's a very important incentive to get the States to play ball with this. And let's take advantage and use those natural resources that we're so fortunate to have. We're at a time right now where oil reserves are being depleted around the world, and oil infrastructure is really in a state of decay in many of these countries. It's the free market companies, the big companies that are around the world that have the kinds of technology that we need to get in there and do this. But with everything else in decline, we need to be taking advantage of using our own resources while we transition, and increase investment in alternative forms of energy, alternative fuels, whether it's biofuels, because there's a whole host of new generation biofuels that we're on the cusp of working with. We need to invest in that, but it's not going to happen overnight. So that's why it's critically important right now to make strategically good decisions about how we use our resources.

We owe that to the American people. This Congress will be irresponsible. Our Democratic friends will be irresponsible if they don't allow a comprehensive energy reform package to come to the floor of the House.

Mr. GINGREY. Well, I just want to thank my colleague. And of course, we're both physicians, Dr. BOUSTANY, a cardiothoracic surgeon, myself, an OB/GYN doctor for many years before we had the distinct honor of getting elected to the Congress and working in the people's House and representing the folks we represent.

And I, again, CHARLES, I think about this a lot of times, when I started the hour talking about how our leadership, Ms. PELOSI, Speaker PELOSI, Representative, I mean Senator HARRY REID, Majority Leader HARRY REID, former Vice President Al Gore and others were so focused on saving the planet and global warming and climate change. And I understand there's some concerns there, and I'm not oblivious, although all scientists don't agree with that. But, you know, it does really become a matter of priority. And you and I, as physicians understand that people literally without a job, without a home, without a warm set of clothing,

they can starve to death. They can die a lot quicker from that than they can over maybe a 75- to 100-year period time from inhaling a little bit of an environment that's not healthy for their lungs.

So we care about it. We care about childhood asthma. We care about chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and emphysema and lung cancer and all those things.

But it becomes, really, a matter for leadership of the Congress to make these decisions and place priorities on things. We don't want the planet to increase 1½ degrees Fahrenheit over the next 75 years because there may be a scintilla rise in the level of the water and some remote island may get flooded and 50 people lose their lives.

Now, I understand all that science. But right now what I really understand, and I think you do too, is the job loss, the unemployment rate, the economy, these wild gyrations that are occurring in the stock market, the food prices, the oil prices. This is the crisis of the day, the crisis du jour, and I think real leadership should recognize that, don't you, Dr. BOUSTANY?

Mr. BOUSTANY. I fully agree with you. And we in Louisiana know that good energy policy can march hand in hand with environmental policy that's sensible, and it's also good for the economy and it grows jobs. We have seen that. We've seen what happens when bad policy affects an industry like the oil and gas industry and you lose jobs. We've seen that kind of cycle. And there's no reason for that. Those are policy decisions made by those who are truly uninformed.

What the American public has already very clearly stated is that they want a comprehensive energy policy. And we have it within ourselves to do that. This is not rocket science.

Mr. GINGREY. Well, I think, and I want to thank you for your contribution tonight because I think you said the key word when you said transition. And we are going to transition. And I think that, you know, 50, 75, 100 years from now we may not be burning much fossil fuel. But you can't do that overnight. You can't, all of a sudden say we're going to, by 2020 we're not going to burn any fossil fuel. Coal is fossil fuel. Petroleum products, diesel fuel, gasoline. We would have no transportation and we have no electricity. We'd be back using kerosene lanterns and bicycles and skateboards, I guess, to get around in this country.

Well, Dr. BOUSTANY, thank you so much. I had a few more remarks to make as we concluded. I think we have, Mr. Speaker, do we have about 10 minutes left?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 6 minutes remaining.

Mr. GINGREY. Six minutes. Well, I would rather yield to my friend from Texas than to use any concluding remarks, because I'll tell you, this gentleman from east Texas, again, knows of what he talks about. The Strategic

Petroleum Reserve is located in Congressman BOUSTANY's State of Louisiana and Congressman GOHMERT's State of Texas. So he's been working very hard on this issue. And I want to yield at least 5 minutes to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. GOHMERT. I thank my dear friend from Georgia for yielding.

This has been a really difficult week. Having spent the weekend with my constituents that were hit by a hurricane in east Texas, and then coming here to Congress and figuring, surely we can put party issues aside because, frankly, when I was in the district, it was around, I don't know, the wee hours, and one sheriff that was helping said, now, you know I'm a Democrat. I said, you know I don't care. It doesn't matter. And then I get back to Washington and that's all it's about. You know, the Democrats have the majority and they were determined to shut out any ideas from the Republicans.

There was a wonderful bipartisan bill, as you pointed out, the Abercrombie/Peterson bill had 38 Democratic cosponsors that understand the importance of energy. Twenty-four of them voted against their own bill when that was made as a substitute.

And it's just incredible how something is being rammed down on the Nation when we can't afford it. People need gasoline. They need diesel. Some of those guys pointed out, they've lost power. There are no hybrid generators, and that's what's keeping about a third of my district going.

Mr. GINGREY. I'll reclaim my time, Representative GOHMERT, just for a second and yield right back to you, because what the gentleman from Texas is talking about, of course, is this, the bill that was passed by the Democratic majority. And I have a little poster up here comparing the Republican bill, the American Energy Act, to the bill that was actually passed. And I just want to quickly run through this before I yield back to my two colleagues.

In the American Energy Act, real offshore exploration, yes. Democratic energy plan, no. Renewables, without tax hikes, our bill, yes. Their bill, no. Real oil shale exploration. I won't get into details of that, but our bill, yes. Their bill, no. Arctic coastal plain, the ANWR. Our bill, go after that petroleum. Their bill, nada. Emission-free nuclear, our bill, yes, their bill, no, no, no, can't have nuclear. Clean coal technology, coal-to-liquid or coal-to-gas. Yes in our bill. No in their bill. New refinery capacity, Dr. BOUSTANY and I talked about that. Our bill, yes. Their bill, no. No energy tax hikes, yes for Republicans, no for Democrats. No electricity price spikes. Yes for Republicans, no for Democrats. Lawsuit reform, yes in the Republican bill. No in the Democratic bill.

So what Representative GOHMERT and Representative BOUSTANY are probably going to talk about now is when we had one, we had no amendments. We had a motion to recommit with in-

structions with a bill. And they've just referred to it, the Abercrombie, Democrat from Hawaii, Peterson, Republican from Pennsylvania that had 39 Democrats cosponsoring the bill. And when we offered that as a substitute, which we felt that each one of them, they had already signed on to the bill, surely they were going to vote for it. And I'd like for my colleagues to tell the rest of us what happened.

Mr. BOUSTANY. I thank the gentleman for yielding. I just want to mention to my friend from Texas that we're with you on this. My State got hit by four hurricanes, two really devastating hurricanes in 2005, Rita and Katrina, and now Gustav and Ike. And folks are suffering back home on top of the suffering that they've had as a result of high prices at the pump. And I have to say, it frustrates the heck out of me to come up here to try to get something done to help folks back home and around the country suffering with these high gas prices, and we can't get it done. We're playing political games up here because of the leadership on the other side. It's very frustrating because folks in Texas, my friend's State, my home State of Louisiana, are really suffering doubly because we have born the burden of providing energy for this country in Louisiana and in Texas. And yet, folks back home are saying, what's wrong with the rest of the country? What's wrong with the Democratic leadership? Why won't they give us an energy policy.

Give us a vote. We've got the bills. We've got the answers. Give us a vote. That's all we're asking. And I yield back to my friend from Texas.

Mr. GINGREY. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. GOHMERT. Thank you. I know we're running out of time. But one of the comments that was made about Ike, making it so scary, it was a hurricane that was coming in the middle of the night. And when it comes in the middle of the night, it is scarier. And that's exactly what happened with this Democratic energy bill. It was filed at nearly 10:00, and it was a hurricane disaster for this country.

Mr. GINGREY. And it indeed is scary. And with that, Mr. Speaker, we'll yield back. We don't have any time to yield back. We'll just shut up. Thank you very much, and we'll say good night from this side.

IMPROVING OUR HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

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

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, and Members of the Congress, I am delighted to come here this evening to have listened to two doctors and a judge talking about a subject that is of

great interest to me as well. And the reason that I mentioned their names is that the subject matter that brings me to the well tonight with other colleagues is how we improve the health care system.

□ 1915

And when I hear Judge LOUIE GOHMERT, who serves with distinction on the Judiciary Committee, I always love to try to involve him in what we're doing. And of course we have great respect for Representative GINGREY, the gentleman from Georgia, who is a physician, a medical doctor; Dr. BOUSTANY of Louisiana. All of these are gentlemen whose attention I would like to draw and invite to join us in this and future discussions about the state of health care in the country. I will be making every attempt to communicate with them on it.

We happen to have a doctor here on our side, Dr. DONNA CHRISTENSEN from the Virgin Islands, a medical doctor as well. And so just think of the exciting exchange of views that might have otherwise occurred.

But this is nevertheless an opportunity to take special orders to review, Mr. Speaker, that over 45 million Americans are currently without any form of health insurance whatsoever. More than eight out of ten of these Americans are members of working families, of all things. And then another 50 million Americans are underinsured and face possible financial ruin due to an unexpected medical bill for hospitalization or other emergencies that might occur.

And so for many Americans, the cost of health care, the cost of insurance, the insecurity of employer-based coverage—because many companies are downsizing or moving out of the country entirely—and these factors limit their most important choices in life: staying well and staying healthy, their decisions to work, to raise a family, to return to school, to have children, to retire early or not, to change careers. And the fact of the matter is that health care is the number one subject for nearly everyone in this country.

And so it is truly odd that some of my colleagues seem to believe that health care for all is somehow divorced from what they perceive to be the "American Dream." Indeed, the American Dream is posited on the notion that you would be healthy. Before you would become educated, prosperous, rich, accomplished, you have to have good health. Physical and mental as well.

And so I begin our discussion underscoring the fact that the American Dream assumes that we're in good health and that good health, continued good health is available to all.

One of the Presidents of the United States once stated that Americans already have universal health care because the emergency rooms cannot legally refuse to treat patients. That is the sitting President of the United