

Mr. Speaker, we cannot afford for premiums to climb 50 percent above the national poverty rate for a family of four. We cannot afford for more employers to pull the plug on providing health care coverage for their employees. We cannot afford to put even more families in the position of struggling to pay for basic needs like health care.

We must deliver reform that will make health care affordable and accessible; cap out-of-pocket expenses; stop the practice of cherry-picking based on preexisting conditions; and protect our small businesses from crippling costs.

We must deliver reform that will once again instill confidence in our Nation's health care system—and that is what we will do here in the House of Representatives this fall.

AMERICA NEEDS MORE JOBS, NOT MORE GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few days ago, the Labor Department released its monthly unemployment report. It was another month of bad news for unemployed Americans looking for work. In September, we lost 263,000 jobs and the unemployment rate rose to 9.8, a 26-year high. And, according to the Labor Department, the number of unemployed people now stands at 15.1 million.

This is an American tragedy. There are millions of breadwinners desperate for an opportunity to get back to work. But for far too many, these opportunities seem inaccessible. And Washington doesn't seem to get it.

Instead, it's business as usual here in Washington. Borrow and spend is Washington's prescription for our ailing economy. But Americans know that we cannot borrow and spend our way into prosperity. We've tried that already—and it didn't work.

Nevertheless, my Democrat colleagues insisted that passing a stimulus bill that borrowed another trillion dollars would create jobs "immediately" and unemployment would not rise above 8 percent. The facts tell another, more discouraging story.

More than 2.7 million jobs have been lost since the so-called stimulus was signed by President Obama. And the Labor Department keeps churning out these gloomy monthly unemployment reports. Today, there are about 12 million workers who would like to work full time but can't find a full-time job. U.S. auto sales plummeted in September and factory orders tumbled by the largest amount in 5 months.

The American people know that a true economic recovery starts with tax relief for American families and small businesses and fiscal discipline in Washington. After all, if American families have to buckle down and trim their budgets, Washington should, too. We can't keep running \$1.5 trillion defi-

cits and expect economic growth as a result.

House Republicans agree with the American people. Washington needs to rein in the runaway spending. For example, this week Congress is poised to pass an agriculture spending bill which includes a 14 percent increase in discretionary spending. There's plenty of good to be said about some of the spending in this bill, but its unrestrained increase in spending is emblematic of Washington's intractable, profligate habits.

We can find a way to live within our means and create real incentives for employers to create jobs and get people back to work. How about using what remains of the stimulus money to create a jobs tax credit for employers who take risks and put Americans back to work?

Such a tax credit could spur new job creation and help reinvigorate our battered economy. Plus, it keeps taxpayer money out of wasteful government programs and politicians' pet projects.

Until we start to consider such real solutions to our jobs deficit, I will continue to oppose the Democrats' job-killing tax-and-spend policies and support real solutions to get the American people back to work.

ON THE DALAI LAMA'S VISIT THIS WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WOLF. The front page of the Washington Post yesterday featured a story about the Dalai Lama's visit to Washington this week—a trip which will be marked by what doesn't take place. For the first time since 1991, this spiritual leader, a Nobel Peace Prize recipient, will not be afforded a meeting with the President of the United States. This is a mistake which has far-reaching consequences.

China has initiated a global effort to stop heads of state from hosting the Dalai Lama. As the Wall Street Journal editorial page pointed out yesterday, "China routinely assails countries whose leaders meet with the Dalai Lama, targeting France and Germany in recent years by cutting off diplomatic exchanges and canceling conferences and the like."

The Dalai Lama is set to travel to New Zealand and Australia later this year and, as the Post reported, "he has yet to secure a commitment from their leaders to meet." Will these countries follow our lead?

I've been to Tibet. I've seen the Buddhist monks and nuns in Drapchi prison. I've met frightened Tibetans who quietly showed me their forbidden photo of the Dalai Lama. I wonder if their plight received even passing mention during internal White House deliberations about whether to meet with the Dalai Lama before the President's November trip to China. Or, were they simply a nuisance in the context of a larger bilateral relationship?

An unnamed administration official in the Post story justified the decision by saying "this President is not interested in symbolism or photo ops but in deliverables." I, too, am interested in deliverables, as is the human rights community, but I'm interested in symbols. And the President should be, too. Symbolism is powerful. If we surrender to this Chinese government, we have surrendered something far greater than the President may realize.

The Tiananmen Square demonstrators of 20 years ago understood that symbols speak volumes. They carried papier-mache models of the Statue of Liberty. Ronald Reagan, too, understood symbols. He understood there was something symbolically stirring about him standing at the Brandenburg Gate and calling on the then-Soviet leader to tear down that wall that divided the people of East and West Berlin.

Ronald Reagan understood there was something symbolically powerful about invoking the name of Solzhenitsyn when he spoke at the Danilov Monastery in Russia—the very same dissident who more than a decade earlier, reminiscent of this week's events, was denied a visit with President Ford who was worried about upsetting the Russians prior to a summit.

This administration may not be interested in symbolism, but that will come as devastating, devastating news to millions around the world who yearn for freedom, who cry out for basic human rights, and who expect America, our country, to be their champion when their own voices have been silenced.

What about the Coptic Christians in Egypt? The Baha'is in Iran? What about the oppressed citizens of Burma and North Korea and Vietnam? They should rightly be alarmed by the treatment of the Dalai Lama, as this is just one more example of a growing pattern in this administration of sidelining human rights.

It's not too late. I call on the President to invite the Dalai Lama to the White House; to reclaim the moral high ground and not kowtow to the Chinese government that brutally oppresses its people.

I call on the President to stand side by side with his holiness—a man of peace—and align America once again with the oppressed, not with the oppressors.

MOJAVE DESERT VETERANS MEMORIAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS) for 2 minutes.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, the United States Supreme Court will soon hear arguments in the case of *Salazar v. Buono*, which may determine the future of memorials all across the country that honor those who fought and died for our Nation. The center of this case is a memorial in my

district known as the Mojave Desert Cross, which has stood proudly for over 75 years. It was erected by veterans of World War I and maintained by generations of veterans since 1934.

It was attacked 10 years ago by the ACLU, which convinced a judge to declare the memorial to World War I veterans unconstitutional. Clearly, they want to erase anything from public property that might be seen as religious in some way.

The monument was not established by government or maintained by the government, but it now stands in the Mojave National Preserve. It is a tribute to those who protected America and freedom, not a promotion of religion. If the critics of this memorial are successful, it could open the door to attacks on memorials and historic sites in all of our national parks, including Arlington National Cemetery and Gettysburg National Military Park.

I am proud to say that the Congress has understood the value of these materials and has voted overwhelmingly on numerous occasions to preserve the Mojave Desert Cross in honor of those who have defended our Nation. The will of Congress is to keep the cross in tribute to all veterans—and I sincerely hope the Justices will see the wisdom of that intent.

FEDERAL REGULATORS MISLED DURING BAILOUT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to address my concerns as a result of the Special Inspector General for the Troubled Asset Relief Program's audit of the capital injections provided to Bank of America and other major banks through the taxpayer-funded TARP program.

Neil Barofsky, the Special Inspector General for the TARP, revealed yesterday in his official report that high-ranking Federal officials, including former Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson and current Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke, misled the American people about the true financial state of Bank of America and eight other initial TARP recipients that received over \$125 billion in this bailout.

We were told last October that the Treasury Department needed over \$700 billion, along with unprecedented and vast new authority, in order to stave off a total collapse of our financial system. They were going to buy the so-called toxic loans. Ten days later, after the bill passed, they changed their strategy and decided to give TARP funds to financial institutions.

We were told last October that this \$700 billion would enable the Secretary of Treasury to go and restore liquidity and stability and to our financial system through a series of capital injections into these financial institutions. And, most importantly, we were told last October that the Federal Govern-

ment was going to inject this money into "healthy" financial institutions under the rationale that propping up these "healthy" banks would enable them to lend money and unfreeze the credit market so that none of the other major banks and private financial institutions would collapse. Almost exactly a year later, we have found out that the American people were not given the full truth.

The nine initial TARP recipients, which received \$125 billion in TARP funds, were actually not the stable, healthy institutions that Mr. PAULSON and Mr. Bernanke claimed they were. And, as we all well know today, none of these institutions were able to increase their lending activities.

□ 1245

Bank of America and Citigroup, in particular, actually ended up needing billions more in bailout money than they were initially given. Meanwhile, struggling financial institutions such as Merrill Lynch, which was on the verge of collapse months before the enactment of TARP, were largely ignored until the now infamous and coerced acquisition of Merrill Lynch by the not-so-healthy Bank of America.

Neil Barofsky's audit blankly states that "By stating expressly that the 'healthy' institutions would be able to increase overall lending, Treasury may have created unrealistic expectations about the institutions' condition and their ability to increase lending." The Federal Reserve, along with the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, also described the nine original TARP recipients as "healthy." Privately, however, other Federal regulators and government officials were concerned that some of these institutions were actually in a state of near financial collapse, bankruptcy. These institutions collectively held more than \$11 trillion in banking assets, or about 75 percent of total U.S. bank assets, as of mid 2008.

Special Inspector General Neil Barofsky's audit concludes that "government officials should be particularly careful, even in a time of crisis, of describing their actions in an accurate manner" and that "inaccurate statements could have unintended long-term consequences that could damage the trust that the American people have in their government." Unfortunately, the real damage has already been done. The American people continually put their trust in high-ranking Federal officials to do what is best for the good of the people in our country. However, the reality is that most Americans, including the majority of my constituents in the Sixth Congressional District of Florida, were already and still continue to be outraged by the \$700 billion bailout of Wall Street.

Finding out that they were also misled about the rationale and the criteria in which the Treasury Department, the Federal Reserve and other Federal reg-

ulators selected Bank of America and eight other institutions to be the first recipients of taxpayer-funded TARP money does nothing to lessen the concern or infuse confidence into the future decision surrounding financial regulatory reform. Many Americans these days feel like Washington is the problem, not the solution. This is an unfortunate perception that must be changed. Trust in our Federal regulators must be restored in the American people's minds for, as Thomas Jefferson once said, "Follow truth as the only safe guide and eschew error, which bewilders us in one false consequence after another."

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 48 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. RICHARDSON) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

Pastor Greg Schanep, Faith Fellowship, Fort Hood, Texas, offered the following prayer:

As a Christian pastor, it is an honor to be here to pray for you in the name of my Lord, Jesus Christ.

President Abraham Lincoln said, "I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for that day."

Dear God, we pray for our President today and for his wisdom and for the wisdom of those about him. May they know Your grace is sufficient for this day.

We pray for the Members of the House of Representatives, their staffs and their families.

We ask that they be men and women of strong character with sound morality, and people of principle who share a strong vision of a godly Nation with a bright future.

We pray that our leaders will lead with compassion and love, and be forever aware of their huge responsibility to the people of this Nation and of their greater responsibility to You.

We ask Your watchful care over our men and women in uniform—especially those in harm's way and their families.

And, please God, Bless America.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the