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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2009, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

ENERGY LEGISLATION: THE SENATE MUST JOIN THE HOUSE IN ACTING SWIFTLY

The SPEAKER. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, despite rabid partisanship, this House of Representatives has successfully pursued a productive legislative agenda this year. Among many important bills, such as the expansion of children's health insurance and passage of economic recovery legislation, we passed the American Clean Energy and Security Act just this past June.

This bill would reduce greenhouse gas pollution, create market incentives for investment in clean energy jobs, invest in green job training for workers, create incentives for farmers to sequester carbon, reduce our dependence on foreign oil, and protect trade-sensitive industries from highly polluting foreign competition.

According to prominent economists, it would spur investments in technology that would further stimulate the economy right now.

Since we passed this bill, a growing number of businesses such as Apple Computer, Exelon, Pacific Gas and Electric, Johnson & Johnson, Timberland, Nike, Dominion Virginia Power and so many others from diverse sectors of the economy have called on the United States Senate to act. Many of these businesses believe climate

change legislation is so important to address for American business that they actually have withdrawn their membership or suspended their membership from various committees in the United States Chamber of Commerce to protest its policy of opposition to this legislation.

Now that the House has passed this bill, the Senate too must act quickly to pass it so that the United States can take its rightful place as a leading voice in the effort to reduce greenhouse gas pollution.

Despite widespread business support for the bill, some partisan interest groups vigorously opposed its passage, and I applaud my colleagues, especially those from the other side of the aisle who had the courage to support it, for overcoming the shrill dissent of powerful special interests. Because those same interest groups are preparing a campaign blitz focused on the U.S. Senate, it is an apt time to recall the discredited arguments that they will employ once again when attempting to defeat this bill.

For example, the Republican leadership claims this bill will cost the American family \$3,100 per year. Not true. The Republican leadership cited an MIT study when first releasing that cost estimate. In response, the MIT professor who wrote the study wrote the minority leader here in the House pointing out that his figure vastly overestimated costs by 1,000 percent.

Moreover, the Republicans ignore a central feature of the bill to protect consumers. The American Clean Energy and Security Act distributes carbon allowances to the companies or co-operatives from which Americans buy electricity. And by law, the bill says that they have to use those allowances to protect consumers from any price increases.

Our Republican colleagues also ignore the impact new efficiencies will have on electric bills. The House En-

ergy bill will improve building codes by 30 percent, establish new efficiency standards for appliances and invest billions of dollars in home weatherization and efficiency programs. As a result, consumers will see a reduction in their electric bills as they consume less electricity. According to the nonpartisan American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, those savings will average \$750 per household when the bill is fully implemented.

Another common refrain from the opposition is that a cap-and-trade system is new, complicated and unworkable. As my colleagues will recall, it was a cap-and-trade system that allowed us to successfully stop the expansion of the ozone hole by reducing CFC pollution, and we cut acid rain and smog pollution by reducing emissions from coal-fired power plants with a cap-and-trade program in the 1990s. At the time, those same voices claiming that this would kill the economy said the same thing. And yet in the 1990s, we saw some of the most rapid expansion of economic growth in U.S. history.

Madam Speaker, scientists are observing more rapid climate change than their models anticipated. We do not have the luxury of inaction or delay. Moreover, the welfare of our economy demands that America lead in the clean energy revolution. We cannot allow China, Spain and other nations to profit from the construction of wind turbines, solar, advanced batteries and the like while Americans lose their jobs. Now is the time for the U.S. Senate to join us here in the House in passing a vibrant, clean energy bill to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, jumpstart our economy and lessen our reliance on foreign oil.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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THE AIG BONUS DEBACLE: THE HEADACHES KEEP COMING

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

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, the Special Inspector General for the Troubled Asset Relief Program, Neil Barofsky, recently released an alarming audit which revealed Secretary of the Treasury Tim Geithner's complete lack of oversight and total mismanagement of American International Group's (AIG) distribution of millions in bonus payments following the company's \$180 billion taxpayer bailout.

Just think about this: U.S. taxpayers own 80 percent of AIG, and AIG is using taxpayer money to pay themselves huge bonuses. Let's examine Mr. Geithner's role as Secretary of the Treasury and his role with AIG.

Mr. Geithner, as we will recall, was President of the Federal Reserve of New York prior to becoming Secretary of the Treasury in January of this year. Interestingly enough, on September 29, 2008, during Mr. Geithner's time as president, AIG officials briefed a senior vice president at the New York Fed about the details of AIG's deferred compensation plan, bonuses, and retention payments for its Financial Products group. AIG even e-mailed the New York Fed official copies of its compensation plans. Mr. Geithner was president of the New York Fed at the time the bank knew about the bonuses, and yet he maintains that he was "not apprised of the specifics."

Please, Mr. Secretary, just admit you knew about the bonuses and you were just trying to protect your friends on Wall Street at taxpayers' expense.

Now let's fast forward to March of this year. Mr. Geithner is now Secretary of the Treasury, and the news breaks to the American people about AIG—the company that is "too big to fail," and in need of \$180 billion in taxpayer bailout—would be distributing \$165 million in retention payments to employees of its financial products subsidiary. Now, this unit, I will remind everybody, of course, is the same entity responsible for writing the credit default swap policies that contributed directly to the company's near collapse. Yet again, we have Secretary Geithner claiming that he only found out about the AIG bonuses on March 10, 2009, just 3 days before they were paid.

Please, Mr. Secretary, if a company is in bankruptcy, you don't give out bonuses.

Given that sources at the Federal Reserve have stated that "Treasury staff was informed that the March 15 bonus payment date was upcoming," surely Mr. Secretary, as head of the U.S. Department of the Treasury, you must have known about the payments. It is even harder to believe in light of the Special Inspector General's report which notes "Federal Reserve Board of New York officials e-mailed the Treas-

ury's internal counsel, legal counsel, the amounts and timing of the AIG financial products retention award" plan.

So even his legal counsel knew about it.

Madam Speaker, everybody at the Federal Reserve knew about the AIG bonus issue, and officials at the Treasury surely knew. Yet somehow, the head of our Treasury Department and former head of the New York Fed at the time of the AIG bailout, said he was completely in the dark.

Please, Mr. Secretary, just admit you knew all the about the bonuses.

Mr. Barofsky's audit concludes that "This, coupled with Treasury's subsequent limited communications with the Federal Reserve Board of New York with respect to executive compensation, has meant that the Secretary of the Treasury invested \$40 billion of taxpayers' funds in AIG, designed AIG's contractual executive compensation restrictions and helped manage the government's majority stake in AIG for several months, all without having any detailed information about the scope of AIG's very substantial, and very controversial, executive compensation obligations."

Please, Mr. Secretary.

It should also be noted that former Secretary Paulson was also complicit in the AIG bonus mismanagement. It was under Mr. Paulson's watch, after all, that the government acquired this huge stake in AIG in the first place. And it was Mr. Paulson's decision to bail out AIG, which happened to owe billions to Goldman Sachs, while subsequently letting Goldman Sachs' main competitor, Lehman Brothers, fail.

The American people were rightly outraged when they found out that AIG would be paying out millions in bonuses despite needing a \$180 million taxpayer bailout. But it doesn't stop there. The audit also revealed that even kitchen assistants and elevator operators got bonuses over \$7,000. So clearly, not all of the AIG bonuses were contractually obligated as the company's executives claim. The headaches just keep coming.

This is what happens when high-ranking government officials such as Mr. Paulson and Mr. Geithner have clear conflicts of interest and are trusted to manage billions in taxpayers' money. Mr. Paulson and Mr. Geithner's close ties to Wall Street are just too close for comfort for the American people and their tax dollars.

□ 1245

CONDEMNING ILLEGAL LOGGING

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The irreplaceable role of healthy forests as havens for biodiversity, carbon

sinks and renewable resources demands that we reverse a global legacy of environmental pillaging. Illegal logging and resource extraction is not just about environmental decimation, with watershed pollution, biodiversity loss and increased carbon emissions, it's about the human loss as well: the local communities left with a culture of violence and corruption devastated without resources for survival, and beyond, to everybody on the planet.

We all benefit from the medicines, carbon capture and species diversity these forests provide. For years, I've worked to eliminate the illegal logging trade. To make sure the United States can lead by example and stop our own use of illegally logged lumber, I authored the Legal Timber Protection Act whose provisions were signed into law last year. The U.S. Government is now empowered to determine where imported wood and plants actually come from to promote legal harvest. Yet the illegal trade continues.

Last Thursday, with Chairmen PAYNE and FALCONEVAEGA, I introduced a resolution to condemn the illegal logging and extraction of Madagascar's unique and invaluable natural resources. Madagascar hosts some of this planet's greatest diversity. Larger than the State of California, this island nation broke off from the African mainland about 160 million years ago, spawning a biological laboratory with over 150,000 plants and animals found nowhere else in the world: massive moths, towering trees, and a hundred different lemur species. The majority of Madagascar's people live on less than \$2 a day, and protection of these incredible and unique resources, only 10 percent of which remain, could be key to a sustainable and economically secure future. Yet political turmoil is putting the honest livelihoods of many, as well as one of our planet's greatest treasures, in extreme peril.

In March, the democratically elected President was ousted by a political rival with the backing of the military, a move which has been condemned by the United States, the African Union and others as a military coup d'etat. That ushered in a collapse of security for these precious treasures as political instability bred further corruption and mismanagement. Twenty years of partnership with the United States and nongovernmental organizations that has resulted in more effective local management and preservation is being undone in a matter of months. The de facto government uses the nation's endangered resources to boost its regime and has issued sweeping decrees allowing the harvest and export of wood from protected forests and World Heritage Sites.

Reports from Madagascar are dire, detailing rampant illegal logging, mining, and resource degradation as detailed in an excellent report in last Friday's Washington Post. Traffickers smuggle record numbers of one of the