

with The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) regarding infrastructure investment. They identified 120 ready-to-go highway projects in California worth \$4.012 billion. Investment in our highways will put people back to work immediately, and improve transit in the San Joaquin Valley.

In addition, a renewed focus on high-speed rail would greatly impact the local economy in the San Joaquin Valley. Top economists have indicated that direct investment in infrastructure projects is the best way to create jobs and stimulate the economy. The short-term and long-term economic impacts of a high-speed rail system would be tremendous for California's economy. Construction of the system is estimated to generate almost 300,000 jobs, and following construction, the system will provide 450,000 permanent jobs in California. These jobs will have a huge ripple effect into other areas of California's economy such as the service and manufacturing industries. Overall, for every dollar spent on this system, we will see two dollars in return. I urge you and Secretary LaHood to approve California's Track 2 application for federal high-speed rail funds, and would be happy to join you when this funding is announced next year.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests, and I look forward to continue working with your administration to bring jobs and long-term economic growth to California's San Joaquin Valley.

Sincerely,

JIM COSTA,
Member of Congress.

□ 1645

THE "TREAT TERRORISTS NICE GANG" AND THE NAVY SEALS

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Madam Speaker, Navy SEALs were in court yesterday accused of punching a terrorist. The SEALs are Matthew McCabe, Jonathan Keefe, and Julio Huertas. In a nighttime raid last September, they were part of SEAL Team 10 that captured the most wanted terrorist in Iraq.

Ahmed Hashim Abed planned the barbaric ambush of four Blackwater security guards in 2004. Madam Speaker, the Americans were murdered. They were drug through the streets, mutilated, burned, and hung from a bridge in Fallujah. During the public executions, our enemies cheered in front of news cameras. Abed didn't say he was allegedly assaulted until he was turned over to Iraqi authorities, however. The al Qaeda manual tells members when captured to complain of torture and mistreatment; it doesn't matter if it's true or not. And besides killing, these folks lie. Now SEALs are being court-martialed on the word of a braggadocios murderer.

Al Qaeda has learned to play the "Treat Terrorists Nice Gang" like useful misfits. One word from a killer and the accusers become the accused. The military should try the terrorist for murder and give the SEALs medals for capturing him.

And that's just the way it is.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. FUDGE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

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.)

IT'S TIME FOR A NEW ATTITUDE DOWNTOWN

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Madam Speaker, America's infrastructure is in an extraordinarily sad state of disrepair, in fact, endangering and killing Americans. We need a new attitude in terms of rebuilding our infrastructure and bringing it up to a state of good repair at the White House.

There seems to be some reluctance. The President said after his jobs summit that he just had to admit that shovel ready wasn't always shovel ready, and he seemed to be referring to infrastructure. But actually, the infrastructure money is already 60 percent spent and underway and the other 40 percent will be obligated before spring to begin to catch up with that deficit.

Now, the Department of Energy has already spent about 8 percent of their money; HUD, I don't know if they've spent any of it. There are all sorts of fantasy programs out there that were in the stimulus where money hasn't been expended, but in transportation and infrastructure it has been invested and it is going to save lives and it is going to get people to work with less congestion and less damage to their vehicles by bringing the infrastructure up to date.

I would like to try and bring this home to the White House because they just don't seem to be listening. This was—or is—a lag bolt; it's about 60 years old. You can see it's kind of missing the bottom. Well, this lag bolt was involved in an accident on the Chicago Transit Authority. This is what holds down the metal plates that hold down the rail. They have a life span of about 40 years. There are thousands of them on the system waiting to fail.

Now, when the Chicago Transit Authority got \$250 million—that's a lot of money—under the stimulus bill, they spent the money in 30 days. Thirty days. These aren't just your old public works construction jobs; these are, first off, almost all private sector jobs bid out on contract. Secondly, much of it was invested in sophisticated equipment and manufactured goods. So that \$250 million produced a huge multiplier

effect. They were buying new buses because their buses are decrepit. People who build buses were getting good wages. The people who build things to go on buses—tires, brakes, all that because of "Made in America"—they were getting jobs, too. So actually, the shovel-ready stuff was ready and is underway when it comes to transit and highway infrastructure.

Like this failed bolt in Chicago, the Chicago Transit Authority could spend another \$6.5 billion just to bring their system up to a state of good repair, and they can spend that money very quickly with a huge multiplier effect. Why can't the economic team at the White House understand that? Their pointy-head theories about, oh, infrastructure takes so long and it doesn't have a good multiplier, unlike giving people a little bit of money in withholding—or green grid, whatever that is, where a penny hasn't been spent. Somehow this is just too old school for them, fixing up our country, putting people to work, manufacturing and construction jobs.

We have 160,000 bridges on the Federal system that should be posted. The American people should see a big sign saying, "Danger, the bridge over which you are about to drive is either weight limited, structurally deficient, or functionally obsolete." One hundred sixty thousand bridges. Now, if we began a program to replace those, it doesn't take long, look how quickly we replaced the bridge in Minnesota. It doesn't require lengthy environmental impact statements or planning, it's replace and fix the bridges, it's concrete, it's steel, it's workers, it's aggregate, it's made in America. You can't export those jobs.

But somehow the people on the President's economic team don't get that, or maybe from the back seat of their limousines they can't see that the bridges and the infrastructure are deteriorated, and they sure as heck aren't on the creaky public transit systems that are falling apart and here in D.C. killing people because the infrastructure is so outmoded and so substandard.

It is embarrassing for the greatest nation on Earth to be devolving toward a fourth-world infrastructure—we're not even third world. We are investing less of our GDP in our infrastructure than are many third-world countries. We are formerly first world, formerly world leader. Now we are watching our competitors around the world vault ahead of us with high-speed rail, with modern transit, with beautiful new highways, with safe bridges that are designed to current standards. But no, we can't afford it. And even if we could afford it, like taking some of that unspent TARP money or maybe some of the other unspent stimulus money, they don't want to do it downtown.

It's time for a new attitude downtown. Don't jeopardize the people of America with this kind of outmoded infrastructure anymore. Get it, guys. This means jobs, and it's something the American people believe in.

THE COST OF WAR IN
AFGHANISTAN

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. Madam Speaker, I follow the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) and I do share his frustration as well. Mine is a little different, though. It is the cost of war in Afghanistan. My concern is, as the President has decided to send 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan, I join my colleagues in both parties, and BARBARA LEE from California, in saying that we should debate this policy on the floor of the House.

I am one that is very upset that this Nation, since World War II, we never declare war anymore, we just pass resolutions on the floor and we give the President, whether it be a Republican or Democrat, the authority to make decisions to go ahead and send troops into certain areas.

I do agree with Mr. Obama, the war should have always been Afghanistan and we should not have gone into Iraq, but that is history now. The problem is we are 9 years after we went into Afghanistan and now we are trying to catch up for the 8 years we spent in Iraq.

Down in Camp Lejeune, which is in my district, the Third District of North Carolina, the day that Mr. Obama made the announcement that we would send 30,000 more troops to combat in Afghanistan, I want to read, Madam Speaker, just a few comments that were in the Jacksonville paper—again, that is the home paper for Jacksonville, North Carolina and, again, the home of Camp Lejeune Marine Base.

“With White House officials saying that President Obama will order about 30,000 more troops, including a brigade of marines from Camp Lejeune, into combat in Afghanistan, local military are reacting to the news with skepticism and concern.”

Further down in the article, it says: Marine Sergeant Doug Copeland, who is scheduled to deploy with his 1st Battalion, 8th Marines in October, said he approved of the troop surge as a means to assist troops already on the ground, but believed a date for leaving the country was coming too late. “We should have dealt with Afghanistan in the first place,” Copeland said. “We’ve already been in this war for 7 or 8 years. We’ve got to call it quits. Our country needs to focus on our country now.”

That is exactly what Mr. DEFAZIO was saying. This country is in bad financial shape, we are losing jobs every day, and what we need to do is concentrate on this country itself.

I will read just another comment, Madam Speaker:

“HM2 Cagney Noland, a corpsman currently with Combat Logistics Regiment 27, said he doubted the proposed timeline would see troops out of Afghanistan.”

Madam Speaker, the number of our troops with PTSD, with TBI, and with mental depression and anxiety is growing each and every day. Again, I have gotten to know many of the marines down at Camp Lejeune, from privates all the way up to generals. They will go and fight for this country, they want to do everything they can to defend this country and they will give their life, but we need to take into consideration the stress that we are putting on these troops.

There is another article I want to make brief reference to that was in the New York Times on December 3 by Nicholas Kristof. It’s called, “Johnson, Gorbachev, Obama.” It is about the Vietnam War, it is about the Russians involved in Afghanistan, and now Mr. Obama’s decision.

I am not trying to second-guess the President. He’s got a very difficult job, and I wish him well. In fact, I was one of the few Republicans that thanked him for taking his time before he decided what the solution should be or what the strategy should be for Afghanistan. But Madam Speaker, I think that we as a Congress should debate the policy.

I said this just a moment ago, and I would like to say it again, I joined BARBARA LEE in a letter to the Speaker of the House asking the Speaker of the House to please let us debate the policy of what we should be doing in Afghanistan before we pass any type of supplemental to financially support the troops. So, therefore, it is my hope that maybe in January or February of 2010 we will be granted a debate on the floor, whether it be for sending more troops to Afghanistan or fewer troops to Afghanistan, and we will come closer to meeting our constitutional responsibility than we have done, truthfully, since World War II.

Madam Speaker, I would like to close as I always do. I have signed over 8,000 letters to families and extended families in this country because I regret that I ever voted to give President Bush the authority to send troops to Iraq. That is my pain that I’ve lived with, and writing the letters and signing the letters to the families is my way of saying I’m sorry that I did not meet my constitutional responsibility and vote my conscience on the floor of this House.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would like to close these brief comments by asking God to please bless our men and women in uniform, ask God to please bless the families of our men and women in uniform, and ask God to please, in his loving arms, hold the families who have given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. I would like to ask God to please give the House and Senate strength to do what is right for the next generation. I would like to ask God to give strength and wisdom and courage to the President of the United States. And I close by asking three times, God please, God please, God please continue to bless America.

RETURN TO JOB GROWTH

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

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, in our ongoing efforts to stabilize the economy and ensure a return to prosperity, our focus must remain fixed on the saving and creation of American jobs. The actions of this administration and this Congress have shown progress. Job losses fell dramatically, and the unemployment rate dropped in November from 10.2 percent to 10 percent.

The recession began in 2007 and has been the worst since World War II. Unemployment hit a 26-year high, consumer confidence plummeted, the gross domestic product contracted at near unprecedented levels, the stock market plunged, home prices tumbled and foreclosures skyrocketed, and millions of Americans found themselves out of work.

Monthly job losses continued to worsen each month. In September of 2008, the monthly losses were more than 300,000. By December of 2008 and January of 2009, in the waning days of the Bush administration, job losses exceeded 700,000. And it wasn’t just 2008. Under the Clinton administration, from 1993 to 2000 the average monthly private job growth was 217,000, one of the most robust job growths in American history. During the Bush 8 years, that average monthly job creation was just 2,000.

□ 1700

As this Congress and the Obama administration took office in January, we were facing a job market in free fall. We immediately took action on a number of fronts.

The Recovery Act provided critically important investments, saving or creating 1.6 million jobs so far. States and localities faced with growing budget deficits would have been forced to lay off hundreds of thousands of teachers, police and fire fighters, but the Recovery Act saved those jobs, including, in my district, 404 teachers in Fairfax County and 304 in Prince William County. The Recovery Act created thousands of additional jobs in road construction, clean energy, and medical research. Businesses in my district received at least 205 contracts, grants, and loans, totaling almost \$200 million, thanks to the Recovery Act. They have had a noticeable impact.

The employment rate in my district began to fall in advance of the national rate, declining in October from 5.3 to 5.2 percent in Prince William County, and from 4.7 to 4.5 percent in Fairfax, half the national average.

The House of Representatives reauthorized the COPS program, which will add 50,000 police officers nationwide. The 21st Century Green Schools Act and the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act invested billions of more dollars to modernize public