

partisan resolution. It mentions no individual Member of Congress. It mentions no political party.

Over the past few years, we have seen outside investigations lead to indictments and convictions related to earmarks, yet we have done little to change our practices.

Today we will consider an omnibus spending bill containing nearly 9,000 earmarks, many of which are no-bid contracts to private companies, companies whose executives have, in addition to their lobbyists, contributed millions of dollars to Members who secured those earmarks. This simply isn't right.

Mr. Speaker, we owe this institution far more than we are giving it. Let's vote for this privileged resolution and give it the respect and dignity it deserves.

THE PEOPLE'S CHALLENGE

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

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, last night President Obama issued a call to action to the American people, and the American people are responding with a resounding "Yes, we can."

The problems that we face are many and enormous, and yet this is our challenge, it is our responsibility, and there is no better place than the people's House to do the people's business. Whether it's restoring confidence in our faltering financial markets, propping up a credit market that is non-existent, focusing on the incredible housing problems we face in this country, and at the same time committing investments in our educational system, investments in our health care reform and making sure that we have an energy policy that takes our dependence away from foreign oil and redirects it to renewable energy here in the United States.

This is still the government of the people, by the people and for the people, and this is the people's challenge. The President cannot solve these problems on his own. We are all in this together. It's time for the American people to make a renewed commitment to this country, reinvest in the future of America and inspire us to the new level of responsibility in the world community.

GO TEXAN

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this weekend over 4,000 trail riders will be arriving in Houston, Texas, and parade through downtown to kick off the world's largest rodeo and livestock show. These cowboys have been on the trail for days riding from towns all around Texas. With their horses, chuck wagons and barbecue, these riders are a

mixture of lawyers, executives, doctors, refinery workers, teachers and kids. There are also some real cowboys.

The Houston Rodeo and Livestock Show started in 1931 when seven men decided over lunch at the Texas State Hotel that this event was needed. The Rodeo and Livestock Show uses 20,000 volunteers and raises over \$11 million for scholarships for FFA students from all over Texas. The rodeo has featured such notable entertainers as Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, Elvis, George Strait and every major country singer in the world.

For 15 nights, 50,000 Houstonians "Go Texan" and "Cowboy Up" for not only the world's largest rodeo, but the world's largest barbecue cook-off. All of these events center around Texas Independence Day, March 2. But it is the trail riders that relive the past of the Old West by spending days on the trail that are the ones that start this excitement.

And that's just the way it is.

MEET OUR INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

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

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, I like to think that government is the way that we organize our responsibilities to each other.

Last night, President Obama gave a clear path to explain how this government can help us meet our responsibilities to each other. He mentioned government and laid a groundwork for government, not as a substitute for private initiative and private enterprise, but as a catalyst for private initiative and private enterprise.

As a facilitator and enabler he showed the way that this government can help people realize their ambitions and rebuild America in a much stronger position.

As we move forward in considering the agenda that President Obama has laid out, I hope that we will remember that not only do we call on individual Americans to meet their responsibilities to each other, but that we as Members of Congress meet our individual responsibilities to them and to make this government one that truly stands united in favor of the American people.

This was truly an inspirational charge that we were given last night, and I hope we all listen carefully.

NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR TAX HIKES

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

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, after just passing a \$1 trillion spending plan, the Democrats in Congress claim they will tax and spend our way out of this economic gloom. I be-

lieve we should root out government waste before we add new government spending, and we don't want to increase taxes when folks are already feeling pinched by this tough economy.

In the Texas State House, the Speaker threatened to kick me off Ways and Means if I didn't vote to raise taxes. I just said "no." When I didn't vote to raise taxes, they booted me off the committee. What can I say—there were no new taxes in Texas. How about America?

This Congress must approve a Federal spending freeze before we can consider tax hikes during these uncertain economic times. The last thing we need to do is push consumer confidence even lower. Let's take tax hikes off the table.

A CALL FOR ACTION FROM THIS NATION

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

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, last night President Obama issued a call for action from this Nation. He clearly laid out the economic situation that we are in right now, but, more importantly, he laid out a plan for growth, a plan that started a week ago with the passage of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act.

What it did was it staunched the bleeding of jobs that we were losing at a rate of 600,000 in January, but it made a much more important investment in the future. President Obama laid out his priorities for the next budget, an investment in education, an investment in energy security and an investment in reining in the cost of health care.

I represent the southern Minnesota district that includes the Mayo Clinic. I also represent a district that is a leader in wind production and biofuels, not just nationwide but internationally.

I also had a guest last night, Chuck Ehler, the superintendent of a small school, Rushford-Peterson, in my district. That community was devastated by flooding that had a Federal disaster in 2007. It's a 103-year-old building.

The people and the citizens who will fuel our economic recovery are those citizens trying to learn in a building that will not work. We must invest in the future. That's how we repair our economy.

WE STAND READY TO WORK

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, House Republicans remain ready to tackle the tough challenges facing our Nation. Getting our economy back on track, providing affordable quality education and health care, and protecting American families are

of concern to every American and every Member of this body.

But there are differences. On the issue of raising taxes, House Republicans are concerned that this would destroy jobs in an already troubled economy. We oppose plans that will continue to borrow and spend. We believe the American people should keep more of their own money and government should limit its own budget.

Fiscal responsibility must mean we limit spending, not just raise taxes in order to build more government. We stand ready to work with our colleagues to make these tough decisions.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th.

GIVE OUR TROOPS THE BEST POSSIBLE CHANCE FOR SUCCESS

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

Mr. BRIGHT. Mr. Speaker, last week I visited Iraq and Afghanistan for the first time as a Member of Congress.

The six-member bipartisan delegation met with soldiers, commanders, Iraqi and Afghanistan leaders and ordinary citizens. Though it was a truly eye-opening experience, it only strengthened my deep respect and gratitude for the men and women who serve in our military. They have always performed bravely and done everything we have asked them to do.

As we were in the Middle East, the President announced that an additional 17,000 troops would be sent to Afghanistan. Based on my observations in Afghanistan, a strengthened American presence is badly needed, along with a strong coalition. However, there should be a clear sense of mission with measurable goals in order to give our troops the best possible chance for success.

I look forward to working on the Armed Services Committee to ensure that we meet these goals and that our troops are always given the resources they need.

MONKEY BITE BILL

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

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this House we passed a monkey bite bill, and whether one agrees with me that we spent millions of dollars to create a bureaucracy that does not solve the problem is insignificant.

What is significant is one considers the time we spent last year and this year. It is arguably the case that we have spent more time on this floor talking about monkey bites than we have in talking about a \$400 billion spending package.

The President was exactly right last night when he said Americans will work their way through the situation,

but history will judge whether the actions of this House have hindered or helped Americans in that quest to work their way through this situation and, indeed, the verdict may be mixed. But history will not forgive us if we abdicate our responsibility to be representatives of the people and know the details of the bills that come to the floor.

History will not forgive us if we simply declare an emergency and then wave our hands as billions and billions of American tax dollars just simply pass us by. Shame on us.

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HONESTY CONCERNING THE BUDGET

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

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, when I listen to some of the comments from my colleagues on the Republican side, I am surprised by the remarks they make about tax increases. If you look at the economic recovery package, it actually has one of the biggest tax cuts in this Nation's history. For most people, unless they are at \$200,000 or above for a couple, something like that, they will actually be seeing a tax decrease or a tax cut as a result of the economic recovery package.

The President is being very honest about the budget. If you listened to him for the first time now, if you compare him to the previous administration, the budget is going to increase the actual cost of the Iraq war and the actual cost of Medicare reimbursements. A lot of those things were previously hidden.

In addition to that, most importantly, he talked about the need for deficit reduction. Yes, in fact we are spending money as part of the economic recovery package. We are giving tax cuts, and that does increase the deficit. But over the long term, over the 4 years, the goal is to cut the deficit in half.

It is a very responsible message that he gave last night; short-term efforts to achieve economic recovery, long-term efforts to reduce the deficit.

LESS GOVERNMENT AND REAL SPENDING REFORM NEEDED

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

Mr. FLEMING. Mr. Speaker, last night we heard the President in this very Chamber make the call for Congress to rise above the politics and to work together for the benefit of the American people, even though this side of the aisle has been shut out of virtually all related legislation.

The President called for fiscal responsibility, and I couldn't agree more. But I am perplexed that he would make this call sandwiched between the big-

gest wasteful bills that the liberals in Congress have ever submitted. We need to stop the runaway spending to fund programs that don't immediately put this country back on track for economic stability and which create even more deficits in years to come.

It is very foolish to spend heavily on an unprecedented number of earmarks, only to attempt to balance the budget on the backs of small businesses and those who work and save. Governor Jindal pointed out in his response how effective less government, less spending, and real government reform can be in my home State of Louisiana.

I say that instead of increasing dependence on government to run our daily lives, I strongly suggest that we let the entrepreneurial spirit and the work ethic of Americans with real leadership from Congress create the pathway out of our economic problems.

CONGRESS IS INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

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

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address our current economic crisis and the critical need for a budget that offers hope and confidence to the American people.

My colleagues and our citizens understand our Nation's dire fiscal crisis. Our Gross Domestic Product continues to shrink; auto sales are the worst in decades; personal incomes are declining and job losses continue to alarm us daily. In my own district, one of the Nation's most affluent, demand for food stamps has grown 73 percent over the last year, and local officials say the need is much greater and many simply do not apply.

Home values, the largest source of wealth in my district, have declined by as much 32 percent. These are staggering declines. Through September of 2008, there were thousands of foreclosures in Prince William and Fairfax Counties. Stock in Washington metropolitan businesses has declined 41 percent in 2008, a tremendous decrease in value.

However, there is hope. President Obama outlined a vision last night for long-term financial stability. The significant investment in infrastructure, the expansion of the green economy, the call to bring fiscal sanity back to health care embodied in the President's message bodes well for the future. I support his economic endeavor.

THE BEST SOLUTIONS COME FROM MAIN STREET, NOT PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE

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

Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS. Mr. Speaker, last night the Chamber was