

(Mr. DEFAZIO 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 Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

WE HAVE SEVERE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

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

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, we have got severe economic problems. People are losing their homes. People who are staying in their homes are having a very difficult time making their payments, and we really need to do everything we can to help them.

Now, the Obama administration has a budget that they proposed, and I wish everybody in America was paying attention. I can't talk to them directly, but if they were paying attention, I would like to tell them that President Obama's budget cuts their mortgage interest deduction. It reduces their mortgage interest deduction.

So if you have a house, Madam Speaker, and you are paying your mortgage, the interest on that mortgage is tax deductible, and he is going to reduce, get this, he is going to reduce the tax deductibility of part of your mortgage interest.

I am sure that's going to really stimulate the purchase of homes and help the economy. This is not what he promised. It's going to be, in effect, a tax increase. And we have got charitable institutions around this country, churches, the Salvation Army, all kinds of charitable institutions that do so much good for this country. And we really, we really admire them for that, and we give money to them, and we deduct that money from our taxes because it's a charitable contribution.

And, you know, President Obama's budget is going to reduce the amount that you can deduct from your taxes for charitable contributions. Now, I don't know, I don't know what the purpose of that is. I guess he is trying to raise more money in taxes.

But the fact of the matter is those charitable institutions are going to get less money because you can't deduct all of that money from your taxes, as you have in the past. They are reducing it dramatically.

And so where are the people going to go who depend on those charitable institutions if they don't have the money to help them? Well, you guessed it, the government. We will just raise your taxes and spend more money on bailouts and everything else to help those who are in need.

But right now, if a charity wants to help somebody, we can give them money and we could deduct it from our taxes. I wish everybody in America realized this. We were promised so much, we were promised everything was going to be better, that taxes were going to be lowered, that everybody is going to be living better, and everything has been going south.

We are spending money like it's going out of style, trillions and trillions of dollars, so much money that people can't even comprehend it and our kids and our grandkids are going to be paying for it with higher taxes and very high inflation. And, folks, let me just tell you, my colleagues, that inflation ain't too far off, because as fast as they are printing money, it's going to happen pretty fast.

So let me just say to my colleagues and everybody, we really need to take a hard look at that budget, and we should not allow charitable deductions and the taxes on it to be reduced, the tax deductibility reduced. And mortgage interest, we should not allow there to be a reduction in the tax deductibility of mortgage interest. It will hurt the economy.

I hope President Obama is listening.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR 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. HOLT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

REVENUE NEUTRAL CARBON TAX

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

Mr. INGLIS. Madam Speaker, the last couple of weeks I have been discussing opportunity and the danger that we confront with our energy insecurity. There is this enormous danger that was talked about over the last couple of weeks. There is also this incredible opportunity to create new jobs.

And to give you an idea of what that means in a district, the Fourth District of South Carolina, one of the six in South Carolina, has the wonderful fortune of having General Electric make gas turbines and wind turbines there. They have somewhere around 1,500 engineers and somewhere around 1,500 production employees, and at that facility they make wind turbines. They tell me that 1 percent of the world's electricity right now is made by the wind.

If it goes to 2 percent, it's \$100 billion in sales. I am pretty excited about that because, presumably, a lot of that money would be attributed to the Greenville facility and jobs would be created there.

So the question is how do you get from here to there? By the way, Madam Speaker, the Department of Energy says that we can, in the United States, get to 20 percent of our electricity being made by the wind, and we consume 25 percent of the world's electricity. So it's a tremendous business opportunity.

So how do we get from here, the intention of having fuels of the future, to the reality of fuels of the future? Well, I think it's all about economics. It's all about whether there is a price signal and an internalizing of the externals associated with fossil fuels—and that's what I talked about last week here on the floor—is the need to internalize externals associated with some of our fossil fuels, especially coal in the case electricity; and in the case of the national security risk we are running with petroleum, the externalities associated with what comes out of our tail pipes and the national security risk associated with what we put in the gas tank.

So if you start attaching those externals to the price of the product, then some good things start happening and we start moving toward this incredible opportunity. So the opportunity at hand for us in a place like Greenville, South Carolina, is to create jobs by having a price signal sent through the marketplace that coal, for example, is no longer going to get the freebie that it has gotten. Right now, it's free good in the air. You can belch and burn all you want without any accountability for what's going up there.

That's a pretty good deal if you are the one belching and burning. But if you are the guy across the street who has got a better technology, a cleaner technology, a technology of the future, rather than of the past, then you are not going to take out that incumbent technology until a price signal is sent that could be sent by attaching the externals associated with the production of electricity by something like coal.

So what I am here to suggest, Madam Speaker, is that what we should be looking at is a revenue neutral carbon tax, revenue neutral in that you start with a tax reduction, reduce payroll taxes. In fact, I would like to eliminate them, but reducing payroll taxes is a first step.

Second step, apply a transparent tax to carbon. The result would be that no additional taxation would be coming to the U.S. government. The burden would not be greater on the American citizen, but we would send a price signal that would cause companies like General Electric to be able to see their way clear to make those wind turbines and electricity generators to buy those gas turbines because the freebie, the

free good in the air, would no longer be going to the coal-fired plants.

So it's an incredible opportunity for us, Madam Speaker, that we begin this move towards fuels of the future. It starts with sound economics, conservative principles of accountability and of attaching externals to internalize the externals associated with some fossil fuels.

If we do that, Madam Speaker, the future is very bright in creating jobs in America. I am very excited about that and look forward to talking about it more with my colleagues as we go forward to figure out a way we can break this addiction to foreign oil and to power our lives in cleaner and job-producing ways.

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

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

INVESTIGATE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EARMARK AND CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS

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

Mr. FLAKE. Madam Speaker, last week I offered a privileged resolution which would have required the House Ethics Committee to investigate the relationship between earmarks and campaign contributions.

This resolution was prompted by the revelation that the Department of Justice is investigating a powerhouse lobbying firm, the PMA Group, for irregularities, including apparent strawman contributions to Members of Congress. Many Members of Congress receiving PMA contributions have gone on to secure earmarks for the firm's clients.

This is no small matter. The PMA Group had revenues of 18 million last year alone, made contributions to more than 100 Members of this body and secured some 300 million in earmarks for its clients in one bill alone, the 2008 Defense Appropriations bill. My resolution last week was tabled with a vote of 226-182 with 12 Members voting present.

Now during the course of last week I had numerous discussions with Members of this body who felt that the "resolved" clauses in the resolution were too broad, that the Ethics Committee did not have the time or resources to undertake such a task. Now, for the record, I disagree. I feel that with such a cloud as this over this House, we have an obligation to do whatever it takes to ensure that the dignity and the decorum of the House are maintained.

But with the failure of last week's privileged resolution, the cloud over

the House remains, a cloud that will stay as long as we fail to take action. I have therefore narrowed the resolution.

I offered last week to address only the PMA Group. The new privileged resolution simply states that the House Ethics Committee will investigate the earmark company made on behalf of clients of the PMA Group. There are some who may believe that the announcement by the PMA Group that it will dissolve at the end of the month absolves us of our responsibility to take action. I would remind them that the omnibus spending bill that will likely go to the President later this week contains more than a dozen earmarks for clients of the PMA Group.

Let me put it in plain language. The legislation we will send to the President later this week contains no-bid contracts for clients of the PMA Group, an organization that is currently under investigation by the Department of Justice.

Further, there are Members of Congress who secured these no-bid contracts and received campaign contributions from the PMA Group, an organization that is currently under investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice. If this doesn't warrant an investigation by the House Ethics Committee, Madam Speaker, what does?

Again, Madam Speaker, let's be clear. This is not a partisan resolution. No Member of this body is referenced in the resolution, nor is there reference to a political party. The cloud that hangs over this institution rains on Republicans and Democrats alike. It is our responsibility, all of us, to let the sun shine on this institution once more.

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

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

HONORING ARMY FIRST LIEUTENANT NICOLAS ESLINGER

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

Mr. OLSON. Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce my colleagues and the Nation to a constituent of the 22nd District and a true American hero.

His name is Army First Lieutenant Nicholas Eslinger, "Nick," from the great town of Missouri City, Texas, and his actions on the battlefield of Iraq are nothing short of extraordinary. While serving as a platoon leader during Operation Iraqi Freedom in Samarra during a dismounted patrol, First Lieutenant Eslinger and his men were attacked. When the enemy threw

a grenade at his men, Lieutenant Eslinger didn't dive for cover, he dove at the grenade, picked it up, and, like a Nolan Ryan fastball, threw it back at the enemy.

While his quick reaction saved the lives of his men, Lieutenant Eslinger wasn't finished. Like a true Texan, he took off after the enemy combatant, eventually leading to the enemy combatant's arrest and detention. For his quick thinking and courageous action, Lieutenant Eslinger was awarded our country's second highest combat award, the Silver Star.

This past Saturday I had the privilege and the opportunity to visit Nick, along with his mother Donna, his father Bruce, his brother Danny, and many neighbors and friends at their home in Missouri City. Before leaving, Lieutenant Eslinger gave me a unit medallion of the Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne, commonly referred to as "No Slack." It is something I am honored to have received and something I will carry with me with pride for the rest of my life.

Yesterday my State celebrated the 173rd anniversary of the Texas Declaration of Independence. Early in our fight for independence, at the Battle of Gonzalez, the Mexican army tried to seize the town's only cannon. The volunteers of Gonzalez, facing a much larger professional military force, might have been smart to hand over that cannon. Instead, they raised a flag that said "Come and Take It." In Lieutenant Eslinger's brave actions, I see the same spirit of defiance in the face of violence and the refusal to be intimidated that helped my State to achieve its independence.

Among thousands of other men and women who make sacrifices and perform courageous deeds for their country, perhaps some at this very moment, Lieutenant Eslinger's actions are worthy of special recognition, and I am proud to do so today.

Nick, thank you for the coin. Thank you for your service. God bless you and your family.

□ 1700

BENEFITS OF THE ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. DAHLKEMPER). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Let me thank the Speaker for her leadership and the opportunity to address my colleagues on what I think is a very important topic.

Of course, first I wish to wish my great State of Texas happy independence day, March 2, 2009, which was yesterday, and celebrate the courage of those fighters who declared their independence from Mexico. Texans are an independent bunch, but we are a patriotic bunch and we love this country,