

OIL AND GAS LEASE SALES

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

Mr. FLEMING. Mr. Speaker, the Interior Department is going forward with the oil and gas production lease sale in the central Gulf of Mexico. I welcome the Interior Secretary to my home State of Louisiana this March.

While visiting our great State, I would like to remind Secretary Salazar that although it is a positive gesture to move forward with this lease sale, the benefit of these leases will greatly be diminished under tax hikes—that is removal of exploratory incentives that are included in this administration's budget proposal.

This \$30 billion tax increase could devastate an industry that directly and indirectly employs over 300,000 Louisianans. This tax increase will wreak havoc on small independent producers and third-party services. It will also continue to perpetuate the cycle of high fuel prices and our addiction to foreign sources of energy who want to see our democracy fail.

In short, this proposed budget does nothing to solve our energy needs. If anything, it will lead to more cost and massive job loss for many Americans, especially in Louisiana, who are suffering in this economic recession.

ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE

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

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, we have had a change in America. We have gone from a previous President who for 8 years didn't believe in regulation and believed in tax cuts, which led us to the greatest economic crisis which we have faced in this country in 76 years, to a President who believes in regulation and believes in stimulating the economy.

There are two ways you can help get the economy moving. One is monetary policy and the other is fiscal. Right now the only way we can do it is fiscal because monetary has gone down to about zero. We have done all we can do with monetary. So the stimulus package, the Recovery Reinvestment Act, is what America needs. Some would suggest we haven't done enough. Mr. Krugman suggests that. I tend to agree with him. But the fact is we can only get three Republican votes in the Senate, one vote more than we needed for the bill in the Senate, so you get what you can get from the Senate.

I support my President because he has a policy and a program that will get us out of this recession and move America forward to being the great national and international leader that we need to be in the 21st century, and we can only do that by supporting our President with a stimulus package.

CARD CHECK

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, there is an effort underway in Washington to take away the right of the secret ballot vote from American workers.

Colleagues on the other side of the aisle will introduce today a bill misnamed Employee Free Choice Act, also called the Card Check bill.

This is a bill that would allow for the establishment of a union not by secret ballot vote, but simply if the majority of employees at a company sign a card lending their support. This process, called "card check," opens employees up to coercion and intimidation.

The secret ballot is a fundamental principle of American democracy. If individuals want to join a union, they are entitled to that right. They can show their support with their vote. But if workers do not want to pay union dollars to be used to advance a political agenda they disagree with, they should also be afforded the same right, to cast their vote free of coercion and intimidation in a secret ballot election.

Card check is an assault on the principles of our Nation and would be a job killer during a time when we cannot afford to lose more jobs.

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LIFTING THE BAN ON STEM CELL RESEARCH

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

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to applaud President Obama's executive order lifting the ban on Federal funding of embryonic stem cell research.

I join scientists across the country, especially researchers at the University of Louisville, who are excited about the opportunities that expanded research presents.

But as we all know, there is another dimension to this issue, and it involves moral questions about the use of discarded embryos for scientific purposes. I fully respect the views of those who raise moral objections to embryonic stem cell research; their convictions are just as valid and unassailable as the scientific arguments made about the potential of stem cell research. On the other side, however, are equally valid and, to my mind, unassailable moral arguments that support President Obama's decision this week. They are analogous to the arguments made in support of organ donation and transplantation. Here, human material that has the potential to save life is not being squandered.

Like those who raise moral objections to stem cell research, I would have problems with the production of embryos for scientific purposes, but to me, the destruction of embryos that can be used to advance science in the

service of life raises similar moral problems.

I congratulate President Obama on his action.

VETERANS PASS ACT

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

Mr. REHBERG. Here in Washington, D.C., we are always reminded that freedom isn't free. Whether it's the self-reflective Vietnam War Memorial or the solemn Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery, the freedom we Americans enjoy today was paid for by the blood and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform.

While our veterans have paid this price with their sacrifices, there is another price they must pay which we can now alleviate. I have introduced the Veterans Pass Act, which will provide veterans an annual National Parks and Federal Lands pass at a sharp discount of \$10, down from the normal cost of \$80. I encourage my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring this legislation.

The majestic beauty of our Nation's national parks are just as fitting a monument to the sacrifices of our soldiers as is a monument made of marble. We should make visiting these living monuments easier for our veterans. Please join me in cosponsoring the Veterans Pass Act.

HEALTH CARE

(Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, health care reform is an essential component to our Nation's economic recovery. The expansion and reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program that was passed by this Congress and signed into law by President Obama expands health insurance to an additional 4 million children, covering 11 million children in all, including dental coverage and mental health parity.

The \$20 billion investment that we have made in health information technology in our Recovery and Reinvestment Act will modernize the health care system, saving money, reducing medical errors, improving quality, and creating health care jobs across all sectors.

The recovery package's \$87 billion in funding to the State Medicaid programs is a significant boost to our State's economy in Maryland. It is a budget gap filler for our State.

And finally, the President's budget, with an over \$630 billion down payment, prioritizes health care reform. At long last, the nearly 50 million people without health care will finally get their health care for all, quality, affordable, accessible health care for all. And I thank the President and this Congress for their leadership on health care.

STOCK MARKET RECOVERY ACT

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

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, the stock market has rendered a bipartisan verdict on the policies of this Congress. From the year end to the inauguration, it fell 5 percent. From Secretary Geithner's speech to the budget, it fell 12 percent. From the budget to today, it fell another 11 percent.

We are now suffering from the fastest market decline ever, faster than even under Presidents Hoover or Roosevelt. The market has fallen in part because it has learned more about this Congress—record borrowing, rigged union elections, 9,000 earmarks, and nationalizing health care.

I think it's time to look at new policies to help stocks, like suspending the mark-to-market rule that triggers bank runs and restarting the uptick rule to undercut the short sellers.

Today, I will introduce the Stock Market Recovery Act with these two key reforms. We are digging an economic hole, and it's time to get out, and these reforms will help.

GIVE OUR TEACHERS A HEAD START ACT

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

Mr. WILSON of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Give Our Teachers a Head Start Act, a bill which makes strong investments in today's Head Start teachers and teachers' aides.

In this challenging economy, Head Start programs around the Nation are feeling the consequences. And when budget shortfalls hit these programs, it is the children who suffer. Many teachers and teachers' aides attempt to fill the gap and make personal financial sacrifices to provide their students with classroom supplies. The average Head Start teacher with a B.A. degree earns almost half of the average Kindergarten teacher, but is excluded from the current law permitting K-12 teachers an income tax deduction. This legislation would permit Head Start teachers and teachers' aides the ability to subtract from their gross income up to \$250 in expenses that would be associated with the purchase of classroom supplies.

When funding falls short and teachers sacrifice to fill the gap, it seems only fair that they should at least get a tax deduction. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TAKING LARGER PIECE OF TAXPAYERS' WALLETS

(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, it appears the latest definition of fiscal responsibility in Washington is just to raise taxes in order to raise spending. The Federal Government takes a larger and larger piece of taxpayers' wallets.

At a time when American families and small businesses across our country are making tough decisions, Washington is borrowing more money. Never mind that tax hikes during a recession would only prolong the downturn or reduce job creation made in a recovery. This is the taxpayers' money, it does not belong to the government.

Let's take a lesson from the American taxpayer and promote tough decisions here that will reduce spending and not mortgage our children's futures. This spending will mean a \$9,014 principal obligation, along with adjustable interest, beginning now for every person 21 years old or younger.

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

WORKING TO IMPROVE HEALTH CARE

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

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, one of the most serious challenges facing our Nation is the need for health care reform to ensure access to quality and affordable health care for all families.

It is shocking that nearly 46 million Americans in the United States have no health care coverage. Unless we act, estimates from the Congressional Budget Office warn that the number of Americans without health insurance will grow to about 54 million during the next 10 years.

In meeting with health care professionals and with my constituents in New Jersey, everyone agrees that changes in our current system are needed. Congress has already taken some important steps. Working with President Obama, we have enacted into law a much-needed expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program, SCHIP, to ensure that the 7 seven million children who currently participate in the program continue to receive coverage.

We also worked to provide \$20 billion in crucial funding in the economic recovery package to modernize our health care system through the adoption of health information technology.

Mr. Speaker, we want to see these moves continue.

AMERICANS MAKE SACRIFICES WHILE WASHINGTON CONTINUES TO SPEND

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

Mr. PENCE. After months of run-away spending at the Federal level on

bailouts, so-called stimulus bills, and big government spending in last year's budget, just last month President Obama unveiled his budget, a more than \$3 trillion blueprint for even more spending.

At a time when middle class families and small businesses are making sacrifices, Washington continues to spend trillions of dollars on bailouts and new government programs. One independent estimate suggests that the Federal Government will have to hire 250,000 new bureaucrats just to pass out all the money. And the President's plan includes the largest tax increase in history. The majority of his tax increases will hit small business owners. And the new national energy tax will cost every American household up to \$3,100 per year.

The chairman of the Budget Committee, the Democrat, JOHN SPRATT, said, "This is not an easy budget to market for sure. The reason? Well, the President's budget spends too much, taxes too much, and borrows too much, and the American people know it."

INVESTING IN AMERICA

(Ms. SHEA-PORTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting to me to watch people stand there and start talking about the spending of the Federal Government over the past few months because the party that was in charge for the previous decade—even longer—in Congress and in the White House ran up record deficits while the American middle class income stayed flat. And yet, I didn't hear them on the floor worried about the middle class until just very recently.

I'm not really sure what they're upset about, except I think they're upset that we have decided to invest in ourselves and our country. We're going to invest in jobs; we're going to invest in the middle class; we're going to invest in infrastructure; we're going to invest in education. President Obama said, "Those who out-teach us will out-compete us." So we're investing in this country. We're investing in health care for the children, and investing for the elderly as well.

We cut taxes for the middle class. Yes, times are very difficult, and unfortunately, we are going to have to spend to stimulate, and spend to support our people and support our country. But where were they for the past decade?

EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT

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

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Today, congressional Democrats are introducing the curiously named Employee Free Choice Act, which actually does the opposite of its title by taking away an employee's free choice to choose in secret whether or not to join a union.