

gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

CHARGING WOUNDED VETERANS FOR TREATMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, can you believe that President Obama wants to start charging wounded veterans for their treatment?

Our first Commander-in-Chief, George Washington, once said, "The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their country."

Taking care of those who have sacrificed for our Nation is, I believe, our sacred duty. It is a national promise that goes back to Presidents Washington and Lincoln. President Obama actually acknowledged this during his campaign when, on the floor of the Senate on April 10, 2007, he said these are soldiers who fought in World War II, Korea, Vietnam and Iraq. They made a commitment to their country when they chose to serve, and we must now keep our commitment to them.

I could not agree more with those words. But in the meantime, as we all know, he was elected. Yesterday, we learned that President Obama plans to move ahead, despite what he said on the floor of the Senate, and start to charge veterans private insurance for the treatment of combat-related injuries.

Let no one be mistaken that the President's plan breaches the moral responsibility the Commander-in-Chief owes to veterans wounded on the field of battle. It is a breach of our national promise, and we should not let this stand. The proposal is outrageous and beyond belief. The men and women he proposes to charge are those injured on the field of combat. These are people who sacrifice not only their sweat and tears, but their flesh and blood so the American dream can be protected.

□ 1715

Mr. Speaker, what must the average American think? Just recently, the criminals at AIG received hundreds of millions of dollars in bonuses paid by the taxpayers. Is the President now seriously considering balancing a \$1.7 trillion deficit on the backs of veterans? To do so would be a great insult to anyone who ever wore the uniform of this great country.

LEADING THIS COUNTRY OUT OF THE ABYSS

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

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to read that President Bush made his first address since he left the Office of President yesterday in Canada. President Bush said that he loved his country more than he loved his party, and he wished President Obama success. I thought that was really telling. President Bush, while I differed with him on many policies and many of his initiatives, I always felt he was a good and decent person. And I think what he said showed that in many ways he is.

I wish that the people on the other side of the aisle, rather than coming here and constantly bringing up false information about our current President, wishing him ill will—which of course Rush Limbaugh has done, the leader of the other side, and others, like former Vice President Cheney, who came out for television on Saturday and had some statements that were very inappropriate for a former Vice President to make this quickly after he has left office. There is a certain time when Presidents and Vice Presidents should go back to their private lives, maybe practice shooting, and learning how to shoot in a proper direction and not jeopardize their friends, and do other things, but not necessarily take shots at the new President of the United States and not claim that the American public is less safe, which is not in any way true. As my colleague here from Kentucky has well spoke in a 5 minute recently, the other side of the story and the full side of the story showed history that we are safer.

But the bottom line is, President Bush said he wished our country well, his country came before party. And it gets tiring to be here and hear the other side take shots and shots and shots and hoping they can win in 2012 and take back this House in 2010 rather than working for the American public and the American government.

We are at a very critical time, caused by years of lack of regulation and deficit spending, wars that we didn't need to be into, loss of life and monies, and lack of regulation that Mr. Paulson was responsible for in giving AIG this money, and in many other ways, without regulations and restrictions on benefits. And President Obama has had to deal with that.

I support our President. And I am proud to be a Member of this Congress trying to lead this country out of the abyss of which it seemed to be heading at the end of this last term.

I am also proud to join in a few minutes with my fellow sophomore Majority Makers, Mr. KLEIN of Florida and Mr. YARMUTH of Kentucky. We're called the Majority Makers because we did take this Congress in 2006 back, but

it was after 12 years of Republican control in the House and Senate, 1994 to 2006, and a Republican administration that caused the deficit problems, caused the budget problems, caused the economic crisis. We plan to bring it out.

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.)

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 California (Mr. SHERMAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SHERMAN 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 Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FLAKE 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 Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. TAYLOR 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 (Mr. ROONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. ROONEY 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 New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SMITH of New Jersey 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 Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GINGREY of Georgia 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 Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GOODLATTE 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 Washington (Mr. REICHERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

IMPROVING ACCESS TO CREDIT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

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

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, this week, we took important action to address a critical issue in south Florida and around the country, to improve access to credit for small business owners.

Small businesses generated more than 70 percent of the new jobs every year for the past decade, and even beyond that. And they will fuel our economic recovery, both where I live in south Florida, and nationwide.

I recently visited Uniweld Products, a family-owned business in Fort Lauderdale. This small business has been operating for 60 years, yet because of the frozen credit markets has been unable to secure vital loans and has been forced to lay off a quarter of its workforce in recent months. The plan announced by the administration this week will help businesses like Uniweld access the credit they need to keep their doors open and to thrive.

I strongly support this aggressive and immediate action and look forward to continuing to work with entrepreneurs and community leaders in south Florida to support our small businesses as they lead our way toward economic recovery.

AIG, SMALL BUSINESSES, AND THE BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. KLEIN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is, once again, an honor and a privilege, as a Member of Congress, to talk to the Members of this House and the American people about the kinds of things that are on their minds right now. And we are doing so with a group of us who were elected in 2006 and have the opportunity, from all parts of the United States, to represent our great country and work toward the solutions that are necessary to get our country back on track.

I am joined by Mr. YARMUTH from Kentucky, Mr. COHEN from Tennessee, and a number of others.

What we are going to talk about tonight are a couple of things; and these are the things that really are a great focus to all of us. One is AIG. Another one is, of course, the small business initiatives that I was just discussing a few minutes ago and will discuss them in greater detail. And the third is the budget. The budget, of course, is the framework by which we govern ourselves as a country, the kind of money we put into our government, and the kind of resources and commitments that we take out.

And particularly at this moment in time it is absolutely essential that we are not only thinking about the short term, but we have a unique opportunity to think about the long term, about how we are going to put ourselves in a very, very strong position so that when we recover, we will have the best workforce, the best technologies, the best businesses, the most competitive environment to prosper for generations to come.

I am just going to start, if I can, with the gentlemen that are with us tonight and the gentlewoman from Ohio that is going to join us about AIG.

I have to tell you, it is hard to even imagine the kind of thought process that the people at AIG came up with in allowing these decisions to be made to allow the \$165 million in bonuses to go forward.

Now, we understand that AIG is a large insurance company. They came to this government, under President Bush, and asked for a massive bailout. It was given to them once before, twice, and it is now at about \$180 billion.

One of the frustrations I've had—even before we get to the bonus issue—is the fact that AIG operates in 100 and some countries around the world. It is a very, very large insurance company. By the way, the insurance part of it—which is regulated in the United States by our State insurance commissioners, as I understand there was testimony before a committee today—is doing fine. Those people who have AIG policies, those are policies that will stand, and that's all good.

Unfortunately, some very creative people did a lot of things that they are now telling us they didn't even understand and put at risk a massive—I think it's \$1.3 trillion of resources and investments into what they are calling "exotic" investments. You have already heard the terms "credit defaults," "swaps," and a whole lot of other things. And it is just extraordinary that, when it comes to this—and we recognize this is a worldwide issue—United States taxpayers, they have already put a lot of money into this, but if this is such a calamitous risk—which it obviously is very serious—why is it that the hundred and some other countries that are also under this same calamitous risk if AIG

were to fall apart, why aren't they stepping forward and putting some money on the table? Why aren't they putting billions of dollars into AIG to make sure it survives if that is such a necessary thing?

Obviously, I think all of us—Democrats and Republicans, American taxpayers—feel very strongly that, if we are in it, we understand what the risks are, but at the same time, everyone needs to be in it. And the rest of the countries, Europe and Asia, that have played in this also need to put some money on the table.

But more particularly, what really got under people's skin, rightfully so—it has certainly gotten under my skin—is this idea that bonuses that were committed last year are all of a sudden something that had to be paid in this last number of weeks. I don't get it. And I hear them say the story is, well, they were committed, they're contractual. We're going to get sued. Well, I heard a very interesting story today. One of the members of our committee, when Mr. Liddy was testifying, asked a question, well, it's very interesting, insurance companies, by definition—and I will just stereotype for a minute—their tendency, when a claim is made, is to say no; that is just the sort of business as it is. And they like to fight over it. Obviously many companies pay legitimate claims, but a lot of the strategy is they hire lawyers, and lawyers say no, and you have to sue them before you can get the money. Well, that seems to be the typical way many insurance companies operate. Why is it, in this moment in time, we are told by the executives of AIG that, well, if we don't pay it, we're going to get sued? Since when is that such a defense when that is their strategy normally? I would have said don't pay it, they don't deserve it, the American taxpayers' money needs to be protected. And if somebody is so upset about it and they think they have a contractual right, let them sue.

But the reality is—and I will just make it real simple—the reality is, if this is a performance budget—and presumably it's performance based on a successful company that has profits at the end of the year—and if this company can't even survive on its own without our taxpayer money going into it, that seems to be a pretty strong case to say there is absolutely no basis for a payment of a bonus to a group within an organization that is failing or is really not in a profitable position.

As Americans, we understand success. We reward success, as President Obama says. If a company is successful, the shareholders, I think, are usually very comfortable with rewarding the management for good work—to a point. But when you are failing, I mean, I can't imagine any company in the United States feeling real strongly; and if they are doing it, if I am a shareholder, I am not supporting that kind of deal.