

government is taking actions to prevent the production of our own oil and natural gas. Importing 60 percent of our oil and sending \$700 billion to foreign, often unfriendly countries should dictate government policy that promotes the production of our own oil, not the opposite.

If the Allegheny Defense Project, which is run out of Portland, Oregon, more than 3,000 miles from the beautiful Pennsylvania ANF, continues to use the legal system and their environmental shield to stop the legitimate and environmentally safe harvesting of timber, natural gas and oil from the ANF, or any other forest, I ask that they consider the effect of such efforts on the communities, families and individuals who depend on the safe and sound harvesting of those commodities to keep their jobs and to pay their bills.

Oil and gas production is western Pennsylvania. It's part of our life. It's what we do. It's where Colonel Drake sunk the world's first commercial oil well 150 years ago this year. The safe and environmentally sound harvesting of our resources in the Allegheny National Forest has been going on for decades. There is no reason it should be delayed or stopped now, especially during a recession.

Mr. Speaker, it has been 63 days since the Forest Service has issued any permits for new oil and gas wells in the ANF. This is unacceptable.

I trust that the Forest Service and the Department of Agriculture will resolve this problem quickly so that our community can get back to work producing our own oil and natural gas. And, if not, I will return to this floor and continue to do all I can until it is resolved.

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

(Ms. FOX 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 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. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

BONUS MYSTERY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Indi-

ana (Mr. LATOURETTE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. LATOURETTE. I want to thank our leader for giving us an hour to talk about something that happened today, this week, that really has us befuddled.

Mr. Speaker, I like a good mystery. I just finished reading another Agatha Christie last night, "Black Coffee," and it wound up being the personal secretary to the manor and Lord, who poisoned him with cyanide.

□ 1615

But it took me until the last couple of pages until I figured it out that this Edward Raynor had in fact poisoned his boss.

Well, who would have thunk that we would have a real live mystery here on Capitol Hill. But we have one. And we're going to talk about a variety of things relative to AIG and the stimulus package and these bonuses that have been paid out that really have people's anger up, at least in Ohio—the phone calls I'm getting. We'll hear from other Members.

But here's what happened. A few weeks ago, the President of the United States indicated he wanted to put forward a stimulus bill and, unlike some commentators, I want President Obama to succeed. I think he's doing the best job that he can.

He entrusted the leadership of the House and Senate to write the bill. The bill was a little over 1,000 pages. I think it was 1,117 pages long. We were nervous because it was spending \$1 trillion. When I say my Republican colleagues and I were nervous, it proposed to spend \$1 trillion rather quickly. We asked early in the week before the vote, Do you think we could read the bill before you ask us to sign on to spending \$1 trillion?

So we had a little motion here on the floor and every Member of the House—every Republican, every Democrat—said: You will have 48 hours to read this bill before we ask you to decide whether it's a good piece of legislation or a bad piece of legislation.

Well, it left the House, it left the Senate, and it went to a conference committee which, Mr. Speaker, I know you know, but others may not know; that's where we send some guys and gals over from the House, they send some over from the Senate. They get together, they work out the final product and then they bring it back to the House and Senate for a vote.

Well, something happened on the way to the vote in that we weren't given 48 hours to read the bill. We were given 90 minutes to read the bill. We made the observation that that's 90 minutes to read 1,000 pages, and a lot of us read pretty quickly, but that was a big challenge. So could you please not ask us to do this, because when you do something that quickly, somebody's going to be embarrassed.

That leads us to our mystery. Today, we had some legislation where there

was a lot of gnashing at teeth and pulling of hair, saying that AIG are crooks, somebody called them traitors, so forth and so on, and they shouldn't have gotten these bonuses.

Well, when the bill left the Senate, there was an amendment in the bill offered by a Democratic Senator from Oregon, WYDEN, and a Republican Senator from Maine, OLYMPIA SNOWE, that said there were not going to be—if you took money for the bailout and you're an institution, you couldn't give these crazy bonuses to people. You couldn't give them \$18 million, \$20 million worth of bonuses. That seemed pretty reasonable.

Well, when it went into this meeting, all of a sudden that language came out and this language that I have put up on the easel here was inserted.

For those who want to read it, it's title 7, section 111, subparagraph 3, subparagraph iii.

Now, unlike the Wyden-Snowe language that said we weren't going to do it, this language specifically says that any bonuses, any executive compensation, any million-dollar golden parachute, any retention pay that was agreed to before February 11, 2009—guess what? It wasn't covered. So the bill specifically authorized the payment of these bonuses.

Well, as we warned, and we are not happy that our prediction came true, but there were some people this week that were embarrassed by that. So we passed a bill to tax these bonuses at 90 percent. Stupid idea. But we wouldn't even have had that discussion if somebody, somebody put this paragraph into the bill that specifically allowed the taxpayers of this country to go ahead and pay for these bonuses at AIG. So we do have a Who Dunit.

From our social studies we know that there are 435 Members of the House of Representatives and there are 100 Senators. I had a piece of paper with the breakdown, and I've misplaced it, but I think after the last election there are 178 Republicans in the Chamber and there are 247 Democratic Representatives. Over in the Senate, there are 41 Republican Senators, 58 Democratic Senators, and we can clear somebody of this mystery already because the Minnesota Senate race has not resolved so we know that Al Franken or Norm Coleman didn't put this paragraph into the bill.

During the debate today I asked the distinguished chairman of the Financial Services Committee, Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, if he did it. And he said no. So we're going to cross BARNEY FRANK off the mystery list. Now we are down to only—well, let me say this. I didn't do it. So we are down to 533.

I'm joined by other Members here today.

Mr. MCCOTTER. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. MCCOTTER of Michigan, did you put this into the bill?

Mr. MCCOTTER. Through the Chair to the gentleman from Ohio, I was not

in the room that inserted the pro-AIG language into the stimulus.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Thank you very much. Let me get to Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Did you write this?

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. No, sir, it was not me.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. COLE of Oklahoma, did you write this?

Mr. COLE. No, sir. But I do have some information that might help you as you move forward. I wouldn't say that this would be definitive. I think you should ask every individual, as you're doing.

But I do have a signed list of people that were in the room—that were principal negotiators in the room. I think they need to be able to answer for themselves, as one of them, Mr. FRANK, already has.

I do want to point out in defense of some of our colleagues, Mr. LEWIS' from California name is there, but it's scratched out because he wasn't allowed to be in the room. There's also Mr. CAMP from Michigan. His name is scratched out, too, because he also was not allowed to be in the room.

And then there's the distinguished Senator COCHRAN from Mississippi. His name is also crossed out because he wasn't allowed to be there. Then there's Senator GRASSLEY from Iowa. His name as well is scratched out.

So I don't know that that would prove that they did not do it, but I think that's a very strong indication they did not. Coincidentally, they're all Republicans. But I thought that might help you as you pursue your vision.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Thank you, Mr. COLE. I think, as Angela Lansbury in *Murder She Wrote*, or Agatha Christie in her books, we're going to call that a clue. I think we have a clue and we're moving in the right direction.

Are there any other Members that want to say anything? Sir, do you want to identify yourself and indicate whether you wrote this?

Mr. FLEMING. Before today, I've never seen that. So I would have liked to have been there, however. I can assure you of that.

Mr. LATOURETTE. You know what? We're getting someplace. So now, by my count, we only have about 525 people to go. I pledge to you, Mr. Speaker, that I will spend as long as it takes to identify who wrote the language.

We are making a little light of it, but it's not funny. Because what you have here on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue, you have a Senator from Connecticut, the chairman of the Banking Committee over there, and he says, Well, yeah, maybe I wrote it, but I only wrote it because somebody in the administration told me to write it.

Well, again, going from our social studies, we know for a fact that the administration can't write laws. This is the United States Congress. So somebody had to pick up a pen and scratch out the Wyden-Snowe amendment which would have prohibited these bo-

nuses and then written this new paragraph—it's only about 50 words long—and inserted this. And somebody needs to own up to this because you can't have all the drama that we had on the floor today where: I don't know; this is outrageous; they're crooks.

Well, the person that wrote this let this happen. And that's why we find ourselves in our situation today. We have a lot more that we are going to talk about.

Now it's my pleasure to yield to Mr. COLE of Oklahoma.

Mr. COLE. I thank the gentleman for yielding. I thank him for the way in which he framed the debate and did it in a way we can all understand. But this has been a troubling episode as well.

I think I guess what I'd call Bonusgate begins, I like to think, with three words. We've heard a lot of the three words recently. We've heard the word inherit, we've heard the word transparency, and we've heard the word accountability.

Well, this is not a situation that was inherited by this administration or by this majority. This was a situation that came into being on their watch. This is a situation where they have not been transparent. Quite the opposite. They have done everything they can to obscure what happened, when it happened, who's responsible.

Finally, it's certainly an incident where, at least to this point, nobody has been held accountable for anything. It's just something that somehow is unfortunate, but we are going to move collectively to try and correct before we have even identified who created the problem for us in the first place.

What do we know? Well, we do know a lot. We do know that Secretary Geithner has been involved in designing legislation around both the bailout and the stimulus literally since November—really, since September, when he was involved in his capacity as the Chairman of the Federal Reserve in New York.

We do know that, frankly, he was aware at some point late last year or probably early this year, at the minimum, there were going to be large bonuses paid. Certainly, the Fed had been informed that, and we would expect in his position there and as Secretary of the Treasury he would have been informed.

We do know that he had the means to stop this. He literally released \$30 billion at the beginning of this month to AIG. At that point, he could have said, Look, you do this; no money. You're bankrupt.

I suspect something could have happened where these bonuses wouldn't have been paid out.

We also know that he didn't bother to tell the President of the United States, for whom he works and to whom he is responsible, anything about this until the day before it happened. That's what the Secretary has said, that's what the President has said.

So we know that Mr. Geithner has been around this problem a lot and we know that he did not—or, it appears he did not inform the President.

The second thing we know relates to the stimulus bill. My friend, Mr. LATOURETTE, went through that pretty well. We had a bill that was rammed through, literally was put together in a hurry, where this body guaranteed its Members by unanimous bipartisan vote we would have time to read it. We weren't given the time that in this body we said we would give Members.

We know that the bill eventually ended up in a conference committee. We have a pretty good idea who the six people were there, one of whom we now presume had nothing to do with this. I would certainly take the chairman at his word.

And we know that that language was inserted in that conference. It was not something that was inherited from the last administration. It was not something, to be fair, that was even in the first version of the stimulus bill. It was something that was specifically put there.

And so, while we know that the majority didn't read the bill and we know that the minority didn't read the bill, and I doubt the President read the bill, somebody read the bill. Somebody read the bill well enough to know, Hey, there's language in here that's going to prevent the payment of bonuses—and we need to get that out and put something in. So somebody did indeed finally read the bill.

We also know that today, rather than confront those questions, we decided we'd do everything we could on the floor of this body to look like we were doing something. As a matter of fact, I would argue we made a lot of the same mistakes.

We presented a bill that hadn't gone through committee, that people hadn't seen, that hadn't been discussed, because we needed to show that we were going to act. And we presented a resolution which, thank goodness, did not make it through, which essentially would have exonerated the administration.

Now those are all things that we know. What should we do, is now the real question, it seems to me. The first thing we should do is do what the President did in the very first week of this administration and say: I made a mistake. I think the classic word was: I screwed up.

I think the President and the administration, certainly the majority, screwed up. I think admitting it would be helpful.

The second thing I would do if I were the President of the United States is fire the Secretary of the Treasury. I wouldn't wait for him to resign. I would make the point that if there's something this explosive and this important and this damaging and you know about it for months and you don't bother to tell me about it until the day before it happens, when I'm in

almost no position to do anything about it, I'm sorry, you're not really who I need to be the Secretary of the Treasury. Goodbye.

□ 1630

I think the President would score enormous points within his own party. Indeed, earlier this evening we actually heard essentially a Democratic Member of Congress calling in this floor for him to do exactly that, something he ought to do.

Finally, we need the people in that room to just simply fess up. One out of six of them did it; and, if they did it at somebody else's instructions at the White House, then they ought to tell us who that was. Who sent that language down? Or, "I drafted it," or whatever. But there is not that many people involved. I still retain faith that the truth is going to come out here and that people will step up and do the right thing.

The great British statesman Winston Churchill was often exasperated with our people and with the United States. He used to like to say, "You can always count on the American people to do the right thing, after they have exhausted every other possibility."

I would suggest that is what the administration has been doing, they have been exhausting possibilities. But in the end, they just simply need to do the right thing: Fire the Secretary, in my opinion, who certainly has not served this President well; admit, whoever put this language in there, that they did it, and tell us who instructed or asked them or requested that they do it; and, finally, just level with the American people instead of pass smokescreen, whitewash legislation, which, by the way, is dangerous in and of itself, as my friend from Ohio alluded. You don't use the Tax Code as a punitive weapon directed at people. It is pretty close to a bill of attainder. It is an extraordinarily bad and blunt instrument, and to do it only to provide cover is, I think, a dangerous thing. I don't think many of my colleagues who voted for this on the other side expect that this will become law. This was a political exercise on this floor put together at the last minute to give people cover when they went home.

So let's show Mr. Churchill for once that perhaps he is mistaken; perhaps we can do the right thing without exhausting every other possibility. I ask the administration to step forward and do that, provide the kind of leadership that the President promised that he would give us in the campaign, leadership that is transparent, leadership that is accountable.

I yield back to my friend from Ohio.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Thank you very much, Mr. COLE. And thank you not only for your comments but also for the clue.

I know that other Members may be wandering around the Capitol giving tours or taking care of constituents, and just in case they didn't hear, Mr.

Speaker, I will indicate that we are attempting to solve a mystery.

I have something called a Face Book, and the Face Book has a picture of every Member of Congress in the House and the Senate, and we are going to try to find out, if we can, and maybe others will be willing to help us, who put this paragraph in the stimulus bill that shielded the \$170 million of bonuses that AIG paid to their executives after they got another \$30 billion.

Parenthetically, I heard an argument, people have been beating up these executives as traitors and everything else. I have got to say, I kind of admire a bunch of folks that have bilked the taxpayers out of \$175 billion and—but, anyway.

So what we are doing is we are crossing people off, and I think we are down to about 525 left. Any Member that wants to come and have his or her picture crossed out so we know it is not them, we are happy to do that.

At this time, it is my pleasure to yield to the chairman of the Republican Policy Committee, Mr. MCCOTTER of Michigan.

Mr. MCCOTTER. I thank the gentleman.

Coming from the Great Lakes State, when I was younger I was always fascinated with the history of maritime travel in our beautiful homeland. And so when I was younger, I saw a book, it was called *The Phantom Freighter*, it was a Hardy Boys mystery, and I read it. I loved how they worked through to find the motivations and to finally unmask the culprit, and eventually I read the whole series. It has kind of rekindled in me today that sense of wonder at who and why something was done, and to work through the mystery to find out: Who could possibly be the hidden hand behind the mystery amendment?

I commend my colleague from Ohio for his search to cut through the fog of our times to find that hidden hand that wrote the mystery amendment, and I will do everything I can to help him with this search, as I trust members of the media will.

Look, in many ways, because this was in the stimulus bill, it has stimulated a lot of reportorial interest in who actually did this. I think that we can assume that if you can unmask the culprit, there may very well be a Pulitzer in it for someone for doing so. But when we look at this, in all seriousness, what we have seen is a classic example of a rush to judgment causing problems.

Now, as a matter of civics, since the subject was broached, when the stimulus bill came to this floor with this amendment inserted into it, it was voted upon by the Members of the House. Not one Republican voted for a stimulus bill with this amendment in it, which means that every Republican voted against approving and protecting AIG's bonuses.

On the Democratic side, every Democrat that voted for that stimulus bill

voted for that amendment that approved and protected AIG's bonuses. The President of the United States signed the stimulus bill that included the amendment that approved and protected AIG's bonuses into law. And now that the public is aware of the AIG bonuses, we have seen another rush to misjudgment where we turn the Tax Code into a penal code, where we shred the Constitution to use it as a political fig leaf, and set a heinous precedent in the future for other people who may be disliked or disfavored given the political mood of the moment.

In fact, one of the things, whether you agree with the Constitutional analysis or not, is this: This bill still allows the bonus recipients to keep 10 percent of their bonuses, and it doesn't do a thing to prevent the \$30 billion that has already been committed to AIG from being drawn upon. I think that if we were going to do anything today, it should have been to get 100 percent of those bonuses to the taxpayers and prevent another dime going to AIG in bailout money. That is just me and 90-some others of my colleagues.

When we look at where we are today with the resolution of inquiry that the gentleman from Ohio introduced, I think I can establish the motive behind the hidden hand that wrote the mystery amendment. I do not believe that this was a mistake. I do not believe that this was simply a matter of venality for a hometown constituency. I think this was an actual matter of economic policy by this administration. If I may explain.

We heard from Mr. Liddy of AIG yesterday that he was very much afraid of losing the people who had caused the problem at AIG before they had managed to fix it. He believed that if these individuals left, he would see a meltdown again of AIG, which he believes would help create economic chaos throughout America.

I believe that, in consultation with individuals from the United States Government and potentially the Federal Reserve Board, he made the determination that these bonuses, retention bonuses were necessary to keep those people at AIG, facilitating what he believes is an orderly unwinding of the mess.

When viewed in the light of having to keep the people who created the problem so they could fix it before they left, this amendment makes sense. This amendment makes sense as a matter of policy, because on January 28, CNN's Mary Snow reported that AIG was expected to receive hundreds of million dollars, at least, in bonuses. That is out in the public realm.

You see, the Senators put forward their amendment to preclude the very types of bonuses AIG received. If you are looking at this as a matter of economic policy, you say to yourself: The AIG bonuses that are coming down the pike are not public. You say to yourself: The politicians in Congress are

not going to allow this to happen because the public is going to be apoplectic.

You see the opportunity in the stimulus bill with \$1 trillion of spending being rushed through in the dead of night. You say to yourself, "Oh, oh, the Senators have already put forward an amendment to preclude such bonuses. We are going to have to remove it, and we are going to have to put something in its place to approve, protect, and grandfather the AIG bonuses so we do not lose the, quote/unquote talent that produced the problem and that has to fix it." It now makes perfect sense. But having established the motive, we have yet to establish the culprit.

The public is apoplectic, as I said earlier, because they do not believe that as a matter of economic policy this amendment is fair to them; that it is patently inequitable, and they do not want the people who caused the problem to benefit from being propped up courtesy of billions of dollars of taxpayer money.

Now, the response in Congress is not to look at the economic policy to make the determination that AIG is too big to fix, that it should be wound down immediately, that taxpayers should be protected. Instead, as I mentioned earlier, we saw a political fig leaf put forward.

The mood was also reminiscent of what I experienced as a young man watching a very important artsy film called *Animal House*. We all remember the scene where they are sitting around Delta House drinking beer, bemoaning their horrible grades at the midterm exams, and Dean Wormer walks in. Immediately the members of Delta House start to hide their beer under their seats and in the back, and the dean looks at them and says, "You know, drinking is illegal in fraternities here at Favor College."

When the public found out about this bonus to AIG executives, when they found out what this amendment allowed and was voted for by a majority of this Congress and signed into law by the President of the United States, you saw the political equivalent of Delta House hiding their beer so Dean Wormer would not be upset. In the event Dean Wormer was not fooled, and neither has been the American public, they want to see the situation resolved; they want all the money back in those bonuses; they want to prevent more money going to AIG; and, as the gentleman from Ohio has pointed out, they want to find out who the hidden hand behind the mystery amendment was.

We talk about transparency in government, we talk about accountability in government, and you are telling me that we can't even determine who put this amendment into a \$1 trillion spending bill that was approved by this Democratic Congress and signed into law by the President of the United States. I would hope that this inquiry becomes a bipartisan cause in the in-

terest of answering that question for the American people.

I yield back to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. LATOURETTE. I thank the gentleman from Michigan for his thoughtful remarks, and I thank him also because from Mr. COLE of Oklahoma we got a clue and now from the gentleman of Michigan we have a motive and, thankfully, also the name, "The Mystery of the Hidden Hand." I think that is what we are going to call this thing, The Mystery of the Hidden Hand.

And, Mr. Speaker, just in case you need your memory refreshed, what we are talking about here is the fact that in the \$1 trillion stimulus bill, which we were given 90 minutes to read and which we indicated maybe that could cause a problem, somebody might be embarrassed, language was removed by somebody, The Hidden Hand, that was put in over in the Senate that would have prohibited AIG from using taxpayers' money and paying out millions of dollars in bonuses to their executives.

Now, The Hidden Hand wasn't done with that, because that didn't accomplish his or her purpose—I think we have got to include women in this, too. It could have been a woman. The Hidden Hand then wrote this paragraph in this \$1 trillion bill that specifically protected and said, "Here is 30 more billion dollars of our taxpayers' money, AIG. And, you know what? This protects you. If you want to give out bonuses, \$1 million, you go right ahead." And today, this Mystery of the Hidden Hand, we don't know who did it. But we are going to work it out.

Mr. Speaker, it is now my pleasure to yield to a new member of the House, Mr. FLEMING of Louisiana. I have the Face Book, Mr. FLEMING, and I have crossed you out. You are not The Hidden Hand. And it is my pleasure to yield to you for your observations.

Mr. FLEMING. I thank the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. Speaker, just a few months ago, I was on the other side of C-SPAN. I was watching what was going on. I was only elected in December.

I come from North Louisiana, where people respect the institutions, and we are talking about two very big and very important institutions: AIG, which we know is too big to fail. That is the reason why we have been bailing AIG out. And then, of course, our Presidency and Congress itself.

I guess the rhetorical question I have after this embarrassment, which is, first of all, how did this screw-up happen? And, where is that person or persons who is willing to own up to the mistake that was made here?

But going back to the beginning. We remember that in the first TARP issue, money was of course dealt out very quickly, almost overnight, as a result of the need or perceived need for bailout, and we found that money was going to spas in California, and pheasant hunting in the U.K. That should

have at least given us some warning that this kind of abuse would happen.

Then, we fast forward. We released the money again, no strings attached, and we find out that some kind of deal was struck, only with Democrats in the room, that first put in and of course then took out in conference, we think, this very important clause that would have avoided bonuses, very rich bonuses, over \$1 million in some cases, to people who were part of the problem.

□ 1645

It really comes down to this: Is it incompetency, or is it dishonesty? I think that is the second question that we have to answer beyond who was involved in this. Certainly, we have the Secretary of the Treasury, who was approved under dubious conditions to begin with, having somehow forgotten to pay or perhaps incompetently did not pay his taxes. And then he was up to his hips in this whole situation with the bailout but somehow didn't realize that this clause would be put in and then somehow jerked out. Even the administration has more or less offered him up as a scapegoat by saying that they really didn't know really what was going on and that really happened on his watch. I certainly think first and foremost that Mr. Geithner should resign. I think he has done enough damage as it is.

Also today there was a disgrace in the House where we had rammed down our throats a stimulus bill which no Republican supported and which did not contain a protective measure that should have been in to avoid these disgraceful bonuses. It was released only hours before. And being, of course, over 1,000 pages, it was impossible for anyone on this side of the aisle to have any idea of what was in that bill, much less some small clause as this.

After all of that, hoping to gain that money back and perhaps some honor to this House, the Republican freshmen advanced a bill that would have put such strings attached to the \$30 billion left in the bailout that would make it impossible for them to receive it without paying this back 100 percent. Instead, that bill never made it to the floor, and we had upon suspension another bill that was, honestly, a horrible bill, although it was the best bill we have to date, which only took back, through taxes, 90 percent of the money that was paid out in bonuses.

Of course, the question is, is this even constitutional? Is it constitutional to pass a bill that has pointed at a very small segment of the society to punish them and to do it on a retroactive basis? I'm not a lawyer. I don't know. But it would be very interesting to see what comes to light. I would also like to know what part our Speaker had in this. It just seems like that once light is thrown into a situation like this, all the leadership who is behind it blow out like a covey of quail.

So I ask today that perhaps we have investigations, perhaps we find the

folks who were really behind this. In any event, we need to avoid this from happening again. So in closing, I would say, Mr. Speaker, that the question is, is it incompetency or dishonesty? I certainly hope it is not the latter. And if it is incompetency, I think we need to renew some leadership positions and get us back to a competent pathway.

And with that, I yield back.

Mr. LATOURETTE. I thank the gentleman from Louisiana for adding his thoughts to the mystery of the hidden hand.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask how much time of the hour remains?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Twenty-eight minutes.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the gentleman from Louisiana mentioned the freshman bill that attempted to get to the bottom of this, because sometimes the criticism, and I think it is legitimate criticism sometimes, is that the Republican party is the party of "no," that we don't have any solutions and that all we do is say "no" around here.

The freshman bill is an opportunity, and it is a positive idea. Mr. MCCOTTER and I and about 20 of our colleagues earlier this week introduced something known as a "resolution of inquiry." And Mr. Speaker, if any of your constituents are looking for a project, maybe they could contact the Congress and say, "support H. Res. 251" which simply says, let's get to the bottom of this. Let's have Secretary Geithner come to Capitol Hill with his papers and with his documents, and maybe he, as the Secretary of the Treasury, can shed some light on the mystery of the hidden hand, how good language was taken out of the \$1 trillion stimulus bill and bad language was inserted.

So that measure, H. Res. 251, has been referred to the House Committee on Financial Services. Under the rules of this House, they have 14 days to report it out to the House.

Sometimes when we engage in that type of legislative activity, we are told that we have got a lot of important things, we are very busy here in the House of Representatives, and we really don't have time to get to the bottom of the mystery of the hidden hand, even though that bill spent \$1 trillion of taxpayers' money.

I just want to move to a couple of other charts. I want to keep the paragraph up just in case anybody, any Member should be watching and he or she wants to exclude themselves as the hidden hand, I want them to know what it is we are talking about.

Last summer, many people remember, Mr. Speaker, when the cost of gasoline was going through the roof. Thankfully now that the international situation has died down, supply and demand has taken over and speculators have been driven out of the market, people now in my district are paying about \$1.89 for regular. But last year, when gas just kept going up—and again let me say this. I have consistently

said that this is the second Congress, the 111th Congress is the second Congress where there are more Democrats in the House than there are Republicans. They are the majority party. And quite frankly, in the last Congress, I thought they should have been the majority party because we screwed up as Republicans, and we deserved a little bit of a wake-up call. And we are very proud of the fact that Congress created the first woman Speaker of the House since the founding of our country, Ms. PELOSI of California. But we were consistently told that we couldn't talk about how are we going to solve this energy crisis last year because we were too busy. We had a lot of other important things to do.

I used this chart last year, and it is going to segue into what we are doing this year when the last Congress started and Speaker PELOSI was named the Speaker. Gasoline was \$2.22 a gallon. And so we weren't so worried about gasoline, obviously, but we had important work here, and we passed legislation, and I'm sure these folks and their parents are very proud, congratulating the University of California, Santa Barbara soccer team. We were too busy to do anything about gasoline.

Well, gas shot up to \$2.84. I began to get some phone calls in my office—Mr. MCCOTTER, I'll bet you did too—and so maybe we should begin to focus on gas prices. Well, no, we enacted, and we are very proud of this, National Passport Month. That is what they decided was the most important issue facing the country. Moving forward, gas goes up to \$3.03. And so I know we are going to talk about gasoline today. No. We commended the Houston Dynamo soccer team. I think that you have to get the "soccer mom" votes. I think we were well on our way in that last Congress.

Gas goes up to \$3.77, so I know we are going to talk about gas prices, how do we solve the pain at the pump. The most important issue of the day here in the Congress was National Train Day. I like trains. Gas goes up to \$3.84. Well, we honor great cats and rare canids. And I have to tell you, I didn't know what a canid was when the bill came to the floor, but it is a dog. So we honored cats and dogs on that day when our constituents were paying \$3.84. Gas goes up a little bit more to \$4.09. You know we are going to talk about gas prices, right? No. We declared the International Year of Sanitation.

Then, finally, when gas hits \$4.14, before it begins to come down, you know that we had to debate energy prices. We passed the Monkey Safety Act here in the United States Congress.

So you would think that we were chastened by that and perhaps in this Congress, when we have a financial meltdown and 16 Americans are losing their jobs every minute in this country, Mr. Speaker, people have had their 401(k)s wiped out, and so I know that maybe they didn't, you know, they were new in the majority, maybe they

couldn't get things rolling. Now that they have 2 years under their belt, you know that we are going to deal with this financial crisis in a serious way.

This Congress started on January 6 of this year. That was the opening of the 111th Congress. And so we have been at it since January 6. We are now into the middle of March. And the stock market on that day was 9015. And then, of course, because I want to be fair to the new President of the United States, we get to, the stock market drops, and so maybe Congress could have acted in here, but certainly President Obama doesn't bear any responsibility because the next January 20, of course, we all know, was the date of the inauguration. And millions of people came, we were all excited, and we continue to be excited. The stock market then fell down after Inauguration Day to 7936. And the most important thing for us was to support the goals and ideals of national teen dating. Now, I have got teen-agers. I like teen dating. But when the stock market is going down, people are losing their life savings, clearly, we must have something more important to talk about than teen dating.

Well, here is a big drop from 7888 to 7114. And on that day, we have commended Sam Bradford for winning the Heisman trophy. Now, I'm sure that Mr. Bradford is an outstanding football player. I wish him a lot of success as he moves forward through his professional career. But, again, as the stock market has dropped by this time 1,900 points, maybe we can do something about the economy.

Well, then, it continues to go down. And not to be outdone, we had to pass the Monkey Safety Act again because when we passed the Monkey Safety Act in the last Congress, the Senate didn't pass the Monkey Safety Act, so we had to bring the Monkey Safety Act back to pass it this time. I don't want to make light of what caused that. There was a horrible situation in Connecticut where a woman had her face bitten off by a chimpanzee, and luckily she has now gone to the Cleveland Clinic, and she has had the first successful transplant in the country. That is certainly a serious matter. I don't have a problem with making sure that we have a Monkey Safety Act in this country to take care of that situation and others. But clearly, when the stock market has dropped almost 2,000 points, maybe we could do something else.

We run it out to March 3, and do you know what? Rather than helping people with the economy, we passed the Shark Conservation Act on May 3 as the stock market hit 6726. And lastly, the run-out to March 9, this was personally one of my favorites, because I didn't remember, I wasn't the sharpest knife in the drawer when I was going to school. So when they said we are going to have Supporting Pi Day, I thought, yeah, I like French silk. I like all the pies. But it was mathematical pi, which we know is 3.1416. And as the

stock market goes down and approaches the mid 6,000s, the legislation, the most important thing that we could do here in the United States Congress was to celebrate and honor Pi Day.

Folks, listen, there is a reason we get the reputation back home sometimes that we can't walk and chew gum at the same time. I am not saying that all of these things aren't fine things. But when the economy is in the tank, when the stock market is dropping, when people are hurting, when 16 Americans are losing their jobs every minute, maybe, just maybe, we could do something rather than the Monkey Safety Act not once, but twice.

I would be happy to yield to my friend from Michigan.

Mr. MCCOTTER. Thank you. To the Chair, how much time is remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Seventeen minutes.

Mr. MCCOTTER. Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we want to make clear about the resolution of inquiry that was drafted and introduced by the gentleman from Ohio is that it is an attempt to get an answer for the American people, and what we want to do is be fair both in providing them the answer and in terms of the people who could be the mysterious hidden hand behind this amendment. We want to get to the bottom of it. We do not want to rush to judgment and cast aspersions on others. We believe that this would be very fair to all involved, especially someone like Secretary Geithner, who no one has said was in the room, who himself has not said whether he was or wasn't. We do not want to prejudice the situation. We would like and welcome Democratic support for this, because we believe that in many ways, the Democratic majority was as blindsided by this amendment as was anybody else.

□ 1700

Of course, we warned that it might take time to read the bill that you vote on, but in the end I truly don't believe that the majority of Democrats in this body supported and approved and wanted to protect the AIG bonuses. We have to be fair about that.

But what they do have the opportunity to participate in now is to get behind the resolution of inquiry so they can show their constituents that they want a fair, orderly process to get the answer to the question of who was the hidden hand behind the mystery amendment. We also would like to have the support of members of the general public who could participate in this and put forward their own theories of who was the hidden hand. If they chose to do so, they can e-mail me at Thaddeus at republicanhousepolicy.com with their theories on potential motives for this mystery amendment and who they believe could be the hidden hand.

As we have seen throughout this process, someone did this. Now I can

understand why no one is rushing up to accept the, quote, "credit" for this fine and noble amendment; but we need to know. Again, we welcome Democratic participation and public participation.

But we should not let this opportunity pass us by to get to the bottom of this because the worse thing to happen would be for this to recur. I don't think that is in the interest of the American people, and I don't think it is in the interest of anyone who was elected to serve them in this Chamber. We are sent here to vote on important matters of the day. We are sent here to make very important decisions as employees of the sovereign American people, and they deserve to know what we are voting on because they have to go home and account.

When they don't know what they are voting on, and in many ways get caught in an honest mistake supporting a larger issue while another issue festers beneath the surface, they will be called to account for something that they had no way of knowing. The vast majority of Members wanted to know what was in the bill, and they were not given the time to do so. That is unfortunate. But let's get to the bottom of the mystery of the hidden hand so Members will know what they are voting on when a bill comes to the floor.

One of the things that we have to take into account is the next problem can be avoided. That's why again we welcome Democratic participation and we welcome public participation in getting to the bottom of who was the hidden hand.

In voting today, we have also seen a spillover consequence of what happens when government reacts in a crisis. There is the old joke that is too unfortunately true, is that when in a crisis, government will throw your money at something and hope it goes away. We now have the corollary that when a political crisis happens that threaten politicians, they will rush to judgment and they will take money away as quickly as they can to solve it. We need to break that.

I come from Michigan. We have an 11.6 percent unemployment rate. My constituents cannot understand an economic policy that pays people to stay in their jobs, especially when those were the people who caused the problem that cost them their jobs in the first place by creating a global credit crisis that brought us to the precipice of a global depression. They cannot understand the sanity behind the logic of keeping people who were smart enough to break something, as if they were smart enough to fix it and rewarding them for it. They cannot understand how people who got rich causing the problem are now going to be overcompensated for fixing the problem that they caused.

What they want is for us to be responsible. What they want in a time of economic chaos is for their subservient government to help reestablish order

and equity to our economy. They want us to help build institutional trust again within the financial community.

This amendment in front of us today did more to undercut the attempts to restore public confidence in financial institutions than anything I can think of because when you go home, the reason people do not want to put their hard-earned money out there is for fear of losing their job and seeing their nest egg become smaller. They do not have faith in public and financial institutions that are proven no longer to be too big to fail, that appear to be too big to fix, and they are also very concerned that the economic chaos and institutional disorder that has affected them so direly in these past months is now being replicated by their Federal Government, a government that spends a trillion dollars in a rush to judgment, a government that talks about a \$3.6 trillion budget, that talks about trillion dollar tax increases. This is chaos to my constituents.

And now we add to that the fact that amidst all the talk of trillion dollars, trillion dollars borrowed, spent, trillion dollars taxed, they find out that no one in their government can tell them who wrote the amendment that let AIG executives receive bonuses. They deserve better than this. They deserve an answer because the first thing we have to do in the wake of this AIG bonus disaster is restore public confidence in the one institution they look to to help provide order and sanity and equity within their lives in times of chaos, and that is their Federal Government. Let us not fail them again.

I yield back to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. LATOURETTE. I thank my friend from Michigan.

The Speaker of the House spoke today very eloquently, and it is the whole issue of who gets Federal taxpayer dollars and what we require in return. The gentleman from Michigan has been one of the champions in the House relative to the auto industry. I happen to agree with you that we need to make cars in this country, just like we need to make steel in this country. But we told the auto manufacturers that if there was going to be Federal assistance, I didn't happen to agree with it, you did, but if there was going to be Federal assistance, they had to cram down the contracts of the people who worked in the auto plants. And I assume those are contracts. I assume they signed a contract they were going to make X dollars an hour, and the Congress and Democratic leadership and others said well, if you get some money from the taxpayers, you have to renegotiate those contracts.

About 3 weeks ago we had a piece of legislation on the floor that really baffled me, and it was called the Cram-Down Bill. Even though we tried to get an amendment that said that you couldn't participate if you lied to get a mortgage, that bill basically said if you went to your bank and you lied on

the application to get a \$100,000 mortgage, you weren't supposed to get it, you made up your income and you didn't talk about what you owed, the majority gave the judges of this country the ability to cram down that mortgage and say you don't owe \$100,000 any more, you only owe \$60,000.

So clearly if that is where we are going to go, if we are going to target people who make cars in this country and we are going to reward people who lie on their mortgage applications, it is obnoxious. Some people say what's the big deal, it is 50 words. What the big deal is we have said to the auto guys, cram down your wages. We have said to the mortgage holders, cram down your mortgage. But in the dead of night, the hidden hand inserted language that not only didn't prohibit the awarding of \$170 million in bonuses to people, it protected those bonuses; and today, they are shocked. It is a little bit like the man who is taking a bath and throws his clock radio in the bathtub and says, I'm shocked. That's what we have here.

Mr. MCCOTTER. On your line of thought regarding the sanctity of contracts, in many ways we heard that these contracts here could not be voided, that the sanctity of contracts prevailed.

The reality is this amendment was necessary because the sanctity of contract "ended" when a company that would have gone bankrupt but for taxpayer money being injected to save it occurred. That is why this amendment was necessary for precisely the reasons you talk about.

When you look at the disparate treatment of auto workers who have to give up hard-earned, negotiated contractual benefits in exchange to show viability for taxpayer bridge loans, when you talk about responsible lenders having to foot the bill for people who have even lied on their mortgage applications to be bailed out while mortgage contracts are crammed down and rewritten, they cannot abide a company that says we have a sanctity of contract when the reality is there would have been no bonus, no contract if they had gone into bankruptcy. Again, as you have pointed out, but for the Federal taxpayers, the American people's hard-earned savings going in to bail that company out, a company that has not been asked to restructure but to wind down, those contracts were no longer void.

And it also shows the point that had this Congress known, both Republicans and Democrats, I believe, would have demanded that any further bridge-loan assistance to a company, a financial institution, had to have as an attachment, as a precondition, the preclusion of any executive compensation in the terms of a bonus.

Again, we were not allowed that opportunity because in the dead of night, this mystery amendment was offered by a hidden hand.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, we have launched the mys-

tery of the hidden hand. Again, the mystery of the hidden hand is somebody, and we just want that person to identify themselves so we can move on to something else. Somebody took out a paragraph in the stimulus bill spending a trillion dollars of taxpayer money that said that AIG and others, anybody who got taxpayer money, could not hand out excessive executive bonuses. The hidden hand removed it and inserted this paragraph in section 7700 that permitted and protected the \$170 million of bonuses that people are now shocked AIG paid out.

We have established motive. We have identified a clue. Mr. COLE was kind enough to give us a clue, and we started with 535 suspects and we have winnowed it down to, well, we are down to about 524 now.

So I am going to bring the face book, Mr. Speaker, next week and every day to the floor, and I will seek out Members of this body and ask them if they are the hidden hand. If they didn't put this paragraph in, I am going to cross their face off. When I am done with the House, I am going to go over to the Senate, if they will let me over there, and I will ask the Senators: Are you the hidden hand? Did you foist this fraud upon the American taxpayer and then not have the courage to own up to it?

Mr. Speaker, we will be back. We will solve the mystery of the hidden hand. The taxpayers deserve no less.

PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS MESSAGE

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

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, I am here to talk about a very critical anniversary before us tonight, the Iraq anniversary. The Iraq war anniversary is tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, and it is critical that we give this moment due attention.

I am here as the person who leads our Progressive Special Order hour, the Progressive Message, and I want to just start off by thanking Mr. JARED POLIS of Colorado who is here with me tonight who is a member of the Progressive Caucus and who has some very clear remarks to share with me right now.

Congressman, let me yield to you and can you reflect on this auspicious occasion, the anniversary of the Iraq war.

Mr. POLIS. Thank you, Mr. ELLISON. I would like to read briefly from warnewstoday.blogspot.com.

Frequently in our mainstream media, it seems as if everything is wonderful in Iraq. That couldn't be further from the truth. Every day, Mr. Speaker, there are casualties and deaths of Iraqis. And yes, our American men and women continue to lose their lives overseas.

Today alone, Mr. Speaker, a leading politician from the Iraqi Islamic Party has been assassinated west of Baghdad.

Incident number two, a magnetic bomb targeted a police officer's car in the Shaab neighborhood of eastern Baghdad. It went off at 7:15 p.m. The officer was injured and taken to a hospital.

Incident number three, from today, Mr. Speaker, gunmen shot and wounded two Interior Ministry personnel when they attacked their vehicle in central Baghdad on Wednesday.

Incident number four from today in Kut, police forces found an unknown civilian body, as they do many days, hard to identify, happens often, on the outskirts of town.

In Kirkuk, gunmen killed a landlord and his wife when they stormed their house.

□ 1715

In Mosul, again, today, Mr. Speaker, an employee from the Displacement and Migration Department on Wednesday was shot by an unknown gunman in northern Mosul.

Also in Mosul, a gunman killed a civilian in a drive-by shooting 390 miles north of Baghdad. A roadside bomb killed two civilians when it struck a U.S. patrol in eastern Mosul. And again today, unknown gunman on Thursday killed the Mayor of Dober Dan Village. Again today in Iraq, police found the body of a man shot in the head and chest in a town near Mosul.

When I had the opportunity to go to Iraq last year, Mr. Speaker, and talk to people who served on town councils, mayors—these were in the city of Baghdad, autonomous zones, they had their own city council—it was a high-risk occupation. I was informed that nearly a quarter of the people that serve in those capacities on those local city councils have been assassinated, Mr. Speaker.

There are many who would have us believe that the situation in Iraq is rosy. While it might be pleasant to believe that, Mr. Speaker, today, on the sixth anniversary of the war, we need to face reality. This war will end when we choose for this war to end, Mr. Speaker.

Along with several of my colleagues, and yourself, Mr. Speaker, we signed the Responsible Plan to End the War in Iraq almost 2 years ago. Joined by our colleagues, Representative EDWARDS, Representative MASSA, Representative PINGREE, Representative PERRIELLO, and myself, as well as a number of retired military personnel, we put forth a plan not only to end the war, but to ensure that this sort of travesty never occurs in our country again, to restore our Constitution and our liberties.

Mr. ELLISON. Will the gentleman from Colorado yield for a moment?

Mr. POLIS. I will.

Mr. ELLISON. You are fresh off the campaign trail, Congressman. You have been knocking on doors, talking to folks, and you know what people are thinking. You haven't been around here long enough to get jaded, and so your level of enthusiasm for the work