

very enlightening and educated one. I hope that the people that are watching come to appreciate the value of travel on vacation, family travel, just a getaway for the two of you, or, more significantly, for the discussion tonight, business travel, which is so important to the economies of every State in the Union.

I don't know whether you knew this—I'm sure you do as chairman of the Tourism Caucus—but in 30 States tourism is the first, second, or third most important industry. For a city like ours and a State like ours, obviously it's number one. But for 30 other States we're talking first, second, or third. That is huge.

We want to invite everybody back. Do those business meetings. Stop canceling. Stop being foolish. Enjoy and do your business in Las Vegas, in Monterey, in Florida, Atlantic City, New York, Miami. We need you.

Mr. FARR. Be healthy. Explore more.

Ms. BERKLEY. That's perfect. And thank you all for sharing this hour with me. I've learned things from everybody that has participated. I appreciate everything that you have said. Thank you so much.

Mr. LOBIONDO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join with my colleague from Nevada, Ms. BERKLEY, and to thank her for holding this special order tonight. I agree that corporations who accept taxpayer funded bailouts should curb lavish expenses that do little to improve their profitability. However, legitimate business functions held at casino-hotels in Atlantic City, Las Vegas, and elsewhere should not be the subject of criticism by the media and government officials.

In my district, Atlantic City casinos are our region's single largest employer. Unfortunately, like most businesses, they are suffering in the current economic climate. Gaming revenue is down to its lowest point in more than a decade, thousands of employees have been laid off and construction projects have ground to a halt.

Corporate gatherings, conventions and other functions bring thousands of business travelers to Atlantic City, filling our retail outlets, restaurants and hotel rooms. The continuance of these legitimate business functions is critical if our region is going to pull out of this recession, put people back to work and expand our economy.

That is why I am outraged by the administration's latest salvo against our casino-hotels and the thousands of workers they employ. Forcing non profits and local governments who receive stimulus funds to abstain from holding legitimate events at casino-hotels is appalling. In my district, several nonprofits and government agencies hold important community outreach events at gaming properties in Atlantic City because these convenient venues are often the only ones able to accommodate large numbers of people. For instance, our local Workforce Investment Board regularly holds job fairs and workforce development seminars at casino-hotels in Atlantic City. Under the administration's new rules, these services would likely have to be curtailed at a time when they are critically needed and the economic recovery of our region's largest employer would be further delayed.

I call on the administration to back down from this flawed, unjust, and unwarranted policy and instead partner with us to get our travel based economy in Southern New Jersey, Las Vegas and other destinations back on track. I also urge the media to immediately cease their hyperbolic attacks on legitimate corporate travel in this country. I thank the gentle lady from Nevada who Co-Chairs the Congressional Gaming Caucus with me for her leadership and I look forward to working with her and all of our colleagues to get our economy moving again.

AIG BONUSES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POLIS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. LATOURETTE. I thank you for the recognition, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the minority leader for granting us this hour. I'm going to be joined by at least two other Members, Mr. TIBERI and Mr. AUSTRIA, also of Ohio.

We're going to talk a little bit about what occurred last week and the week before. I know the Speaker will remember that the Capitol was sort of roiled, and our constituents continue to be upset, as well they should, over the news that somehow, after getting billions of dollars of taxpayer funds, the insurance company, AIG, awarded \$170 million in bonuses.

A lot of people came to the floor last week and said they were shocked. As I said last week, I'm really shocked at the shock. Because I can't figure out how some people in this Chamber and at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue can be shocked when they approved the language that authorized the bonuses.

Just a little bit of history here, Mr. Speaker. When the economic recovery plan or the stimulus bill was making its way through the United States Congress, there was an amendment offered by two Senators, a Democratic Senator from Oregon, Senator WYDEN, and a Republican Senator from Maine, Senator SNOWE. That would have put a limitation on bonuses like in the AIG case and in other cases that basically said that if you're receiving billions of dollars in taxpayer funds to bail you out, perhaps you shouldn't be giving millions dollars away in bonuses at this moment in time. If you're not taking the taxpayer money, you run your business the way you see fit.

Well, that amendment by Senators SNOWE and WYDEN was adopted by a voice vote in the Senate and was included in the Senate version of the stimulus bill. So I read about it in the newspaper and I thought: Okay, the bill is in pretty good shape.

When the bill went into the conference committee—and, Mr. Speaker, I know you know this, but for those who may not be conversant with how things work here, we pass a bill over here, the Senate passes a bill over there, then each House appoints a few

Members and they meet in a room and they sort out the differences between the two bills and then we eventually get a conference report.

Now, in years past—this is my 15th year in the Congress—that conference committee always included Republicans and Democrats. We, being Republicans, were in the majority party for 12 years. The Democrats would come into the room, the Republicans would come into the room, the Representatives would come into the room, the Senators would come into the room, and we'd hash out the differences and then at the end of the process everybody who's on the conference committee would sign the report, and that's what you have.

Sadly, even though people have discussed this being the most transparent administration, the most transparent Congress in the history of the country, no Republicans were invited into the conference room. Clearly, what we have seen—sadly, what we have seen—is that this Congress is about as transparent as this envelope. We are not being included. You know what? We don't have to be included. We are in the minority, and clearly the majority party can write legislation as they see fit. But what they can't do is what happened last week.

So in this conference room all of a sudden somehow the Snowe-Wyden language is removed that would have stopped these bonuses from happening. And the words behind me—they're only about 50 words on the chart behind me—were inserted.

This language specifically authorized the payment of millions of dollars of bonuses to people at AIG and anywhere else. So anybody who voted—when it came to us back in the House for a vote, this language was included in the bill.

So the reason I said I was shocked at people's shock is that anybody that voted for the stimulus bill voted to give and authorize and protect the bonuses at AIG and any other company that has taken billion of dollars through the bailout program.

We don't know—and I know the Speaker will remember last week we were on the floor for about an hour trying to figure out how it did it happen. We started with I talked about the fact that there's a face book. There are 435 Members of Congress, 100 Senators. We began crossing them out. We got down to about 520 during the course of that hour. I indicated we would come back and report to the Speaker the progress of this search. I'm pleased to report to you that we have made significant progress. My friends and I are going to talk about that this evening.

First of all, we can remove all 178 Republicans because there were no Republican Representatives in the room. We can also remove all 41 Republican Senators because they were not in the room. And I mentioned that we also have this Senate race that is unresolved in Minnesota so we can cross off

Al Franken and Senator Coleman. They are not the culprits in this particular case.

So we got down to a smaller group that we are going to talk about. But then our group expanded because there are a couple of news reports out that there were people from the administration that were also participating in these negotiations. So we had to add a few suspects to figure it out.

What is disappointing is that in a transparent administration, in a transparent Congress, people make mistakes. Everybody makes a mistake. I probably made three before lunch today. But when you make a mistake, you should say: I made a mistake.

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What is not acceptable is to compound the mistake by pretending you didn't know about it; and then when you are caught, you come up with some goofy piece of legislation like we had on the floor last week to tax people at 90 percent.

And I have got to tell you, that was political theater. It never is going to become law. These people that are so outraged about AIG executive bonuses, they are going to get their bonuses because that bill is not going anywhere. My friend STEVE AUSTRIA is going to talk about that in just a second, but that is never going to become law. That was to provide cover for people who voted for the Economic Recovery Bill, because they found out, sadly, that they had authorized these 50 words that protected the AIG bonuses, and now they are shocked.

Now, on our side, I have to tell you that we were kind of saddened. Even though we don't need to be invited into the rooms, we don't have to be invited to negotiate, before the stimulus bill came to a vote in the House a motion was made, and the motion said that before any Member of Congress is asked to vote on the stimulus bill we are going to have 48 hours to read it. Every Member of this House, every Republican and every Democrat that was here voted to give the Members 48 hours to read the bill. And if you think about that, Mr. Speaker, that is probably a good idea, because the bill was over 1,000 pages long.

Well, sometime between Tuesday when every Member said we are going to get 48 hours, and Friday when we voted on the bill, people forgot that promise. And on our side, at least, we were given 90 minutes, 90 minutes to read 1,000 pages to determine whether or not we could be supportive of the President's most important domestic economic policy position.

I voted "no," and I don't have any problem with the fact that I voted "no." There were some good things in the stimulus bill, there were horrible things in the stimulus bill. But I couldn't go home to Cleveland and say to people, yeah, I voted for it, because I didn't read it. And I don't think any Member of this Chamber read the bill.

If they did, more power to them, but I doubt everybody read the thousand pages.

But what that leads to is an embarrassment, and the embarrassment is everybody that voted for the stimulus bill voted to give the bonuses to AIG. And then to cover their tracks, they come up with this, oh, let's tax at 90 percent.

Which, if you think about it, that is pretty silly, too, because let's say the guy at AIG got \$5 million in the bonus. Under that bill, he still gets to keep one-half million dollars. So if you are so outraged, why don't you take all of the money away from them? Forget about the Constitutional arguments and the bills of attainder and all that other business. It was political theater, and it makes you sad when that happens.

So we are going to spend the remainder of our time this evening attempting to sort of ferret out who was in the room. And I have good news, because the Secretary of the Treasury was at the Financial Services Committee today, Mr. Geithner, and the Secretary was asked if he was in the room when this happened and he said he was not. So we can cross off the Secretary of the Treasury; he was not in the room when this was done.

Last week, during the course of the debate on Ms. KILROY's resolution saying that the administration was doing everything that they could to stop these bonuses, we asked the chairman of the Financial Services Committee, Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. He said he wasn't in the room, so he is off the list as well. And the Speaker actually indicated the other day, Speaker PELOSI, that nobody from the House did it, and so we have to look elsewhere, I guess. And we are going to talk a little bit about that.

But first, to sort of set the table on this bill, this 90 percent tax bill that was political theater, that was a farce, that was a fig tree to cover people who had made a mistake, I want to yield for a minute to my friend STEVE AUSTRIA from Ohio just to talk about what we think the prognosis is for this tax bill.

Mr. AUSTRIA. I thank the gentleman from Ohio for yielding, I think next to the leader, our senior Member from Ohio. I thank you for yielding. And it is an important issue.

Being a new Member of Congress, having served less than 100 days in Congress, to be faced with what we are facing right now, the amount of spending, the amount of borrowing, the amount of debt that is accumulating. I didn't come to Congress—I have three sons at home—to pass this type of debt on to our children.

But specifically talking about the bailout, talking about AIG and what has happened, one of the first bills that I was asked to vote on was the second half of the TARP, the financial market bailout, the \$700 billion bailout, something that I felt when I was running for office looking from the outside in was

a bad idea, for government to get involved, to not have accountability, not have transparency, and not have a plan; have, as the gentleman from Ohio described, a plan that was brokered behind closed doors by a small group of individuals. As a Member of Congress, I have to tell you that my views haven't changed.

On that particular bill, when we voted on that bill I could not find answers on how the \$350 billion, the first half of the \$700 billion bailout, how that money was spent, could not find as far as any type of specific plan from the Department of the Treasury on how they were going to turn around the financial markets. There was no accountability, and I had a real problem with that with the TARP bill.

Now, as the gentleman from Ohio talked about with the stimulus bill, language that was inserted in a bill, and which Leader BOEHNER stood on this floor and held up 1,100 pages, approximately, that not one Member had the opportunity to read before we voted on, to me, that is a terrible reason to be passing a bill. We should have had an opportunity to read that bill and understand what was in it before we voted on it.

But when you have no accountability, when you have no transparency, when you have no specific plan on how you are going to use that money to turn the financial markets around, when you have no opportunity to read the stimulus or spending bill, what that equals is disaster. And that is what we saw last week. We saw outrage. We saw the American people beginning to understand for the first time what was happening here in D.C. when 160-some million dollars of bonuses were paid out to executives and employees, of their hard-earned money, \$170 billion of their hard-earned taxpayer money that was used to bail out the same company.

I do believe we had some opportunities to do better. In an effort to try to resolve this situation, one of the things that I did was stand up with 14 members of our freshman class and introduce a bill to try to get that money back; doing in a different way, rather than raising taxes at 90 percent, getting 100 percent of that money back, asking the Department of the Treasury to use every resource they had available to get that money back within 2 weeks; to ensure that any future contracts, that the Department of the Treasury would sign off on those contracts and know what we are using that bailout money for. After all, the government now owns, I believe it is, 80 percent of AIG.

Unfortunately, we haven't had any hearings on that bill, and it doesn't appear as though it is going to move. The opposite side decided they were going to come up with a different solution with a 90 percent tax, to try to move that forward.

But what is happening here, and I know many people are getting their

quarterly statements, their financial statements, they are beginning to see their accounts, their 401(k) and retirement accounts, their children's education funds, their savings accounts. They are down significantly. We have had calls into our office where people have lost 40 percent, 50 percent of their money, and they are very concerned as to what is happening with the financial market bailouts. And I think we have an opportunity and we have an obligation to turn things around, to ensure that the taxpayers' dollars, the \$700 billion that passed this body and is being used to bail out the financial markets, that there is accountability on the how that money is being spent, that there is transparency, so we know exactly what is happening, that there is a plan in place so that we can better understand.

What we are finding out is that some of the dollars that have been spent were bad investments. I am looking at testimony from Elizabeth Warren from the Congressional Oversight Panel to the Senate Banking Committee, that talks about how the Treasury invested about \$254 billion in assets that were worth only approximately \$176 billion, a shortfall of \$78 billion. We can do better than that.

When you talk about the \$165 million bonuses that were paid out to these employees—and I am looking at a news article, this is from the New York Post last week, “Fully, 73 executives got \$1 million or more each, of whom 22 were paid at least \$2 million, while seven got \$4 million, and one lucky duck pocketed a cool \$6.4 million.”

We can do better than that. The American people expect us to do better than that and deserve better than that. But what all this is doing is creating uncertainty in the market when you don't have a plan and there is no accountability for these dollars.

In my prior life before being a State legislator for 10 years and coming to Congress, I was a small business owner, I was a financial advisor. And one thing I can tell you that is certain is that our financial markets, our businesses, they don't like uncertainty. And we are seeing big fluctuations in the market right now, we are seeing a lot of downturn in the market right now I think because of that uncertainty.

I think because of public pressure, the American people stepping forward and saying enough is enough and being outraged about this, that we are finally starting to see a plan brought forward that we hope will help resolve some of this problem that has transpired as a result of this legislation.

I will yield back my time to the gentleman from Ohio. I thank you for the opportunity to speak on this, and thank you for bringing this issue forward. It is very important.

Mr. LATOURETTE. I want to thank my friend from Ohio (Mr. AUSTRIA). Your comments really bring out why that tax piece of legislation that was

political theater, that was a fraud was such a lousy piece of legislation.

If we take the fellow, or it might have been a woman, that you have just identified that got \$6.4 million worth of bonuses, the Democratic tax bill that used the Tax Code to punish people for the first time, at least in my memory, to that extent, that person still got to keep \$640,000. Why? Why? If they shouldn't have gotten any money, they shouldn't have gotten any money. So why do you give them just 10 percent?

I promised, Mr. Speaker, that we would attempt to move forward and try to solve this mystery. Now, it would be easier if somebody would just come forward and say “I did it.” You know, “I did it. I am Professor Plum; I am Colonel Mustard, and I did it.” But we don't have anybody that has been forthcoming on Capitol Hill or down at the White House or at the Department of the Treasury, except for Mr. Geithner and BARNEY FRANK and the people that I mentioned that were not in the room when this happened.

So with apologies to our friends from Hasbro, we have sort of put this in the form of the game of Clue, which a lot of us, Mr. Speaker, played as we were growing up, we play with our kids. And if you are not familiar with the game of Clue, Mr. Speaker, basically a crime is committed and the junior detectives have to try and solve the crime. And the successful person, the winner, identifies where it happened, who did it, and with what weapon.

Now, we start with a pretty good advantage here this evening because we know what the weapon is. We know that somebody took out the language that would have prohibited these bonuses that were paid out and put in the language that is over Mr. TIBERI's shoulder. And so we know it was done in writing, and the weapon at the bottom of this chart was a pen. So we are one-third of the way there, and now we just need to figure out where it took place and by whom.

And just to sort of go around with the whoms, we don't have Colonel Mustard, we don't have Ms. Scarlet, but what we do have are people who were either conferees or made observations or news accounts that we will get into in a minute indicate were in the room.

Beginning at the bottom on my right is CHARLES RANGEL of New York, who is the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee; he was a conferee, he signed the conference report.

Next is Rahm Emanuel, who is the President's Chief of Staff, used to serve with us here in the Congress representing a part of Illinois in the United States Congress.

At the top, the former president of Harvard University, Larry Summers, who is now an economic advisor to President Obama.

At the top is Senator DODD. Now, I have to say Senator DODD in a lot of early news accounts was blamed for it. I am feeling kind of bad for Senator DODD, because the last thing I saw him

say was that, “Somebody at Treasury said to put it in, and so my staff put it in.” But clearly Senator DODD is getting fingered for a lot of this. But if he did it, he should say so. If he didn't do so, he should say, “I didn't do it.”

Over in the upper left-hand corner is the Speaker of the House, Ms. PELOSI of California. Again, the news accounts kind of indicate that this took place in her office, but we are not going to get there yet.

HARRY REID, if you read, Mr. Speaker, yesterday's Roll Call, people have expressed concern as to the fact that he appointed himself as the majority leader in the Senate as a conferee, and that he may or may not have ties to AIG, and some questions are being raised.

And, at the bottom is DAVID OBEY, the very distinguished chairman of the Appropriations Committee who was also a conferee and in the room at least some of the time.

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But let's talk for just a minute, Mr. TIBERI. Can you shed any light based on what you know or what you have heard that may help us sort of narrow this thing down?

Mr. TIBERI. Thank you for your leadership. I would certainly like to thank you for bringing this matter to light this evening and last week. I know both of you have shared the same experience that I have shared back in my district. People are dying to know what happened and when? Who was responsible for this? As you said, the Senator from Connecticut has said that somebody from the administration or somebody from Treasury instructed them to put this language in the bill.

I think it is interesting to note the language behind me that you talked about earlier wouldn't have gotten in the bill if, if we had transparency from the beginning, something that the new President has talked about, talked about during the campaign, talked about repeatedly during the campaign. In fact, as both of you know, our Speaker of the House talked about transparency before she became Speaker and how this was going to be the most transparent House ever, the people's House, and the fact is, not only on this legislation, but this certainly demonstrates it, but on countless pieces of legislation, there has been anything but transparency. And transparency has led to what this chart is really all about, and that is finding out who knew what when?

People in my district are outraged that this language ended up in this stimulus bill without anybody knowing about it, anybody but apparently the author of the amendment, but most everyone else, allegedly, didn't know about this important wording that allowed AIG officials to receive millions of dollars in bonuses.

In fact, I don't know if the gentleman has an answer for this, as I digress a bit, there was a news report today that

over half of the bonuses that were paid to AIG went to non-Americans.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Taking 1 minute of my time. I have not seen that news report. The news report that I'm familiar with—and if that is true, that is kind of shocking—is that 11 people of the 73 didn't work for the company anymore. So you have 11 out of 73 who aren't even at AIG anymore, and so if they are retention bonuses, they didn't work so well, because they don't work for AIG anymore.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. TIBERI. We are getting more questions on the table than answers. And that is what happens when you don't have transparency. That is what happens when backroom deals are cut, backroom deals on this stimulus bill that was done back in February.

In fact, Mr. LATOURETTE, I will quote from a Los Angeles Times article back in February that in the first major piece of legislation pushed by the President, transparency was missing. In fact, the President has no constitutional authority to set rules for Congress. But he suggested he would use his influence to see that Congress doesn't conduct its work "in the dead of night and behind closed doors," which is exactly what happened in this process.

The Times article goes on to say, Mr. Speaker, maybe we can add a picture here to your graph, important negotiating sessions devoted to the stimulus took place in a congressional office outside public view, Representative HENRY A. WAXMAN (D) Beverly Hills said he was in the meeting about the stimulus plan Tuesday night in the office of House Speaker NANCY PELOSI (D) San Francisco. Among the participants was White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel.

So, one person who says he was in the meeting in negotiations was the chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee. But still, my question back to you would be, do you have to be in the meeting to instruct conferees in the dead of night in one of these offices to put something in this bill? Because you could still have the Treasury Secretary instruct everybody else that this is an important measure by telephone, couldn't you?

Mr. LATOURETTE. Well, you could. And taking back my time, I will tell you that there are telephones, but the gentleman is making our task much more difficult if you continue to widen the net and now we have to deal with Mr. WAXMAN and others. But sure, conceivably.

I would just say that today—I don't think it was under oath, but you're not supposed to lie to Congress—the Treasury Secretary did indicate that he only found out about it on March 10, which is pretty amazing, and that he understands that staff did it, but he really doesn't know a lot about it, and he knows he didn't do it. So, yeah, it could have been somebody outside the room.

Mr. TIBERI. If the gentleman will yield, certainly I think as we continue forward having a special investigation, an Inspector General report trying to get to the bottom of this, if someone doesn't come forward and say, yes, this is the language that I wanted, and this is the reason why, and X number of people that were paid were paid retention bonuses, and by the way, we weren't able to retain them, and by the way, over half the bonuses were paid to non-Americans, which is outrageous in the first place.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Taking back my time, I thank the gentleman for that. And I hope we don't need to have an investigation. I would hope that whoever screwed up would come forward and say, do you know what? I did it. And then tell us why he or she did it rather than hiding behind the skirts of staff and hiding behind this bogus tax bill that we did last week. I would really hope somebody would come forward and do it.

But the other thing I would tell my friend is we don't need to wait for an investigation. Tomorrow in the House Financial Services Committee chaired by the aforementioned Congressman FRANK of Massachusetts, a number of us have filed something known as a "resolution of inquiry." And the resolution of inquiry requests the Treasury Department to provide to the Congress, not to me, not to the Republicans, but to the Congress, all documents that they have in their possession that will help us identify—if the person won't come forward and say, "I did it," then this resolution of inquiry would direct them to give us the documents so we can figure it out and not add expense on top of the taxpayer in trying to ferret out who did this thing.

Again, I wish somebody, as I said last week, would just man up and say they did it.

Mr. TIBERI. Would the gentleman yield? And you're being far too modest because the resolution does much more than that. And in fact, in reading a poll today, over half of the American people believe that AIG should be broken up. And part of your resolution does just that, if you want to expand upon that.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Well, that's exactly right. The resolution not only asks for documents, but it indicates that the American public now own, as Mr. AUSTRIA has indicated, 80 percent of AIG. And quite frankly, I will say something bad about the Republican administration. I thought President Bush and his Secretary of the Treasury were wrong in asking for this \$700 billion. The mantra was that these institutions are too big to fail. Well, most Americans now recognize that they are too big period. And as a result, they should be broken into pieces, going back to Teddy Roosevelt and the trustbusters. Let's break these things apart.

So we do have legislation to divide this thing up. And I hope that it is favorably considered. And as you men-

tioned, about 60 percent of the American public think that is a good idea.

Mr. TIBERI. I know that you're pushing that legislation. You have many cosponsors. But some think we are too busy to deal with that important legislation. I think you have a chart that demonstrates maybe we are not.

Mr. LATOURETTE. We are not. And I do want to—well, let's do that now, and then we will come back to seeing if we can move along in the game of Clue. And maybe if the gentleman will help me.

Mr. TIBERI. The gentleman from Ohio has a chart that just shows an amazing—

Mr. LATOURETTE. And you could sort of be my Carol Marol. I would appreciate that.

Last year we used the chart that Mr. TIBERI is going to give me a hand with. And people may remember back home that gasoline prices started high and they ended up even higher. And for the entire month of August, we spent time on the floor arguing that perhaps we should have an energy policy in this country that considered everything, renewable energy, solar, wind, geothermal, nuclear in the mix, together with additional exploration for fossil fuels which we are going to need in the near term at least. But we were told we were too busy. We were very, very busy here in the United States Congress. And so we didn't have a chance to get things going.

As, Mr. Speaker, you will remember, the Republicans did such a bang-up job in the majority that they threw us out in the 2006 elections and installed the Democratic majority. And we are honored to have Speaker PELOSI being the first woman to serve in that position since the beginning of the country. So when Ms. PELOSI and her colleagues became the majority party, gas was about \$2.22, and the most important piece of legislation that folks thought we could discuss here on the floor was congratulating the University of California-Santa Barbara soccer team for winning something. Now I like soccer. And I'm sure that everybody's parents of that team are proud. And gas was only \$2.22. So, okay, let's congratulate people.

Then gas went up to \$2.84, and the most important thing that we had to do on the floor that day was to declare it—that was about September 6—declare it National Passport Month. And I began getting calls, I'm sure you guys got calls from people saying, Hey, it's really costing a lot of money to fill up my tank. Well, gas went up to \$3.03, and on that day, the new majority determined that the most important thing we could do was commend the Houston Dynamo soccer team for I suppose winning something as well. And we are told that as elected officials you really have to get the soccer moms. And I guess this was an attempt to really make sure we had the soccer moms squared away, because we passed two pieces of legislation dealing with soccer.

Then gas went to \$3.77. And so clearly, we are going to talk about gas prices now, right? No. We declared it National Train Day was what we did then. And then gas goes up a little more to \$3.84. And what did we do that day? Oh, we passed the Great Cats and Rare Canids Act. And I didn't know—talk about reading things, I know what a cat is. I didn't know what a canid is. It is a dog. And so we celebrated Dog and Cat Day when gas is \$3.84.

It goes up to \$4.09, and the most important thing to do is to declare the International Year of Sanitation. That's what we did around here. Then the price of gas goes up to \$4.14. My phones are ringing off the hook. So clearly, we are going to talk about gas prices then. No, we passed the Monkey Safety Act here in the United States Congress. So you would think that maybe people would be chastened by that when we are no longer talking about gas prices. And sadly I hope we don't go the way that we did in the 1970s. Now that gas is down to about \$1.89, I hope we don't forget about when it was \$4 a gallon and make those serious investments in renewables and get us off of carbon-based fuel and make us not dependent on countries around the world that don't like us.

Well, this year, as everybody knows that isn't living under a rock, we have a little bit of an economic crisis going on. And you would think that we would attempt to deal with that in a constructive way. On January 6 of this year, which was the first day of the 111th Congress, that is the opening day of this Congress, the stock market, the Dow Jones industrial, was at 9,015 points.

We get to January 20, and that is the day, of course, our new President, Barack Obama, became the 44th President of the United States. It was a very exciting day. All of us were pretty happy about it. But the stock market took a little dip. Now that is not President Obama's fault, because he was just getting sworn in that day. But the Congress, however, had a responsibility because we had already been in almost 1 month now by the time you get to February 2. The stock market goes down to 7,936, and the most important thing we can do on the House floor is to pass a resolution supporting the Goals and Ideals of National Teen Dating. That was a pretty important issue back in Ohio. I'm glad we took care of it.

The stock market dips a little bit further, and on that day, I guess because it didn't go down quite 100 points, and so we commended Sam Bradford for winning the Heisman trophy. Now, I'm sure that Mr. Bradford's family is proud of him. I'm proud of him. And anybody that wins the Heisman trophy is deserving of our congratulations. But when the stock market is in the tank and people are losing their 401(k)s, I don't know if that is the most important thing, but now it takes a precipitous dip down to

7,114, and, oh, son of a gun, 2 years in a row, we passed the Monkey Safety Act. And I don't want to make light of it this time because there was a horrible situation in Connecticut where a woman was attacked by a chimpanzee and suffered horrible injuries. And so clearly our thoughts and prayers with her, and that is a terrible event. However when the stock market is down to 7,114 and people have lost their life savings, clearly, the Monkey Safety Act was not the thing that was foremost on the mind of my constituents.

Actually, the interesting thing to show you how busy we were on that date of February 23, and it had only been 8 days before that the chimpanzee attacked the woman, and so we, as the greatest legislative body in the world, rushed in 8 days to pass the Monkey Safety Act. Then it went down a little bit further, and we, you know, like the soccer moms, we like animals, and so we passed the Shark Conservation Act on that particular day, not dealing with the economic crisis.

Then we sort of roll out to March 9. And this probably was my favorite resolution. We supported pi. And when I read the schedule that morning, I like pie, just look at me. And I thought what kind of "pie" is it going to be? Well, it is not p-i-e, it is p-i, which you know, Mr. Speaker, is 3.1416. And apparently we felt that when the stock market had lost 3,000 points in value in 2 months, rather than helping our constituents deal with that and using the full might of the United States Congress to get to the bottom of that, we recognized pi here in the United States Congress.

So I don't think—and this has been sort of tongue in cheek, but I don't think we are too busy.

Mr. AUSTRIA. And I appreciate you pointing this out, because while all this is happening, the three of us represent the State of Ohio, there are real families out there that are hurting right now that we are asking to make sacrifices.

□ 2000

There are over 900,000 businesses in the State of Ohio, and small businesses that make up 70 percent of our workforce out there across this country that are struggling to make payroll, they can't get financing. They can't get debt. And instead of dealing directly with their problem, I mean, you laid out what has been happening here in Congress. But in addition to that, we passed the \$700 billion TARP bailout with no accountability, in my opinion, not enough transparency. There was no specific plan by the Department of the Treasury. Then we passed the stimulus bill which contains the language that allows the bonuses to be paid out that you pointed out earlier; not an opportunity for any Member of this Congress to read that bill before we vote on it and pass it.

And then, you know, our constituents back home, hardworking Ameri-

cans across this country are getting their quarterly statements and they are seeing their account values down. They are struggling to make it right now. And they turn on the television and they see that these executives from AIG are getting \$100 million of bonuses of the \$170 billion bailout that we gave to them of hard working taxpayers' dollar. These are the same officials that, you know, and were probably involved in a lot of these risky investments that brought AIG down to begin with.

And so what does the House do? We then rush a bill through to try to regain some of that money for our mistakes by trying to pass a 90 percent tax on this money to try to get it back, 90 percent of it back.

And I am reading from The Hill today, seeing where the headline on the front page here is "House Bonus Bill Is Buried By the Senate." That despite the public outcry, despite the reaction that the House had in trying to get that money back, which I don't think we ever should have been in that position to begin with, that bill appears to be not moving in the Senate right now.

I yield back.

Mr. LATOURETTE. I thank the gentleman for his observations. And if the gentleman would go to the jump on Page 8, you will find a quote from the President of the United States, President Obama that I think sort of echoes at least my sentiments. And he said we shouldn't use the tax code to punish people and that is why he is not in favor of this bill, which is why that bill was a piece of political theater to give cover to people who are embarrassed because, by voting "aye" on the economic recovery package, they specifically authorized, with the amendment that is on the chart that we were talking about before—thank you Mr. TIBERI—that specifically authorized this paragraph, these 50 words. And when you voted for the economic recovery bill, you voted to give the people at AIG and everywhere else the bonuses. And then, you know, because nobody read it, we are shocked. And so now we are going to use the Tax Code to punish people.

But you know, the President has said that is wrong, and apparently the Senate majority leader has said it is wrong.

Before we go back to our exercise in Clue, however, as we want to narrow this thing down if we can, because we are going to come back every week until somebody has the—I promised my wife I would be really tactful this evening and not use words that people find offensive. So somebody has the courage to stand up and say I did it and here is why I did it and sort of, you know, be a grown up about it.

But you were here, you have been here now to four or five terms, Mr. TIBERI, and I am going to yield to you. I mean, is it your experience as a Member that we are just so busy that we don't have time to deal with gas prices?

Mr. TIBERI. I think the gentleman is right on target here. And as stocks tank, let me tell you, it impacts everybody. It impacts those police officers that protect our streets, firefighters, who are working in a courageous line of work, teachers in Ohio, as you know, who are part of a state teachers retirement system. As someone whose dad lost his pension and health care and job in high school, when someone sees their pension related to the stock market tank, sees their moms and dads seeing their children's college funds absolutely go into the ground, this is important. It impacts every single family out there as this market has tanked. And what are we doing? We are debating the Shark Conservation Act. In fact, the last several weeks, to your point, we have debated noncontroversial issues that have passed nearly unanimously, and not taken up the hard stuff like your resolution that could come to the floor.

In fact, let me just add one thing. Today the leader, JOHN BOEHNER, put together a working group with respect to savings, and I was part of that group. And we unveiled a blueprint that will help American families and American savers. And unfortunately, based upon past history, that piece of legislation will not see the light of day. And it is not like we are spending a lot of time around here passing substantive pieces of legislation. And when we do, we don't get to read it.

And what else was in that stimulus bill that was as controversial as this? We don't know. That may be another exercise for us to find out what other controversial measures, in addition to the game of Clue, I think we know it was the Speaker's Office, based on press reports, but maybe it was the Senate leader's office. Maybe it was on the other side of the Capitol.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Taking back my time. I want to get back to that, but before I do, the gentleman's point is right on the money. In the last 2½ years, the American public can rest assured that they will not go into a post office in this country that doesn't have a name on it because we spend a lot of our time naming Post Offices. But what they can't rest assured is who put those 50 words in the economic recovery bill that authorized the payments of bonuses to these AIG officials; and now they are horrified, shocked and everything else.

And just before we leave this, so that the three of us don't get a lot of e-mails and hate mail from animal lovers, all three of us want sharks to be conserved, and all three of us think that we should have safe monkeys in this country. But we don't, none of us think that it is the most important issue facing the country last year or this year.

Now, back to the Clue, and I think that Mr. TIBERI makes a pretty good point because we do have—when you play Clue you try to collect clues. And there have been some clues recently.

And I want to refer to one. On Anderson Cooper, a show on CNN, Dana Bash, who some of us see as a reporter that covers politics here in Washington, I have a transcript of her reporting on the night that this happened, that the crime happened. And I will submit it for the RECORD, Madam Speaker.

And Dana Bash says, "well, Anderson, as we speak, the White House Chief of Staff, Mr. Emanuel, and the President's Budget Director are inside Nancy Pelosi's office."

Mr. TIBERI. Not to interrupt, but should we add the Budget Director to the chart?

Mr. LATOURETTE. Well next time we come back we are going to put the Budget Director because he is up there too. And then she goes on to report, and, in fact, they have been coming up on 8 hours straight. Eight hours straight shuttling between the House Speaker's Office, and that is why we can't get quite to the Speaker's office yet because of this reporting. But maybe we will get there a little bit later. Shuttling between the Speaker's office and the Senate majority leader, HARRY REID's office urgently trying, attempting to broker a compromise between House Democrats and Senate Democrats. And you know what is interesting about that sentence is I didn't hear the word Republican in there. So this was Democrats negotiating with Democrats negotiating with Democrats. And we now know that we had the President's Budget Director was here for 8 hours shuttling back and forth, a little shuttle diplomacy, together with the President's Chief of Staff, Mr. Emanuel, who was also there. So I think we are getting closer.

And if it is all right with you gentlemen, I would like to exclude Mr. OBEY because I don't think his fingerprints are on this. And Mr. RANGEL, I do have an observation from Mr. RANGEL, who indicated that, Mr. RANGEL, in this same report, and actually this was in the Congressional Quarterly, House and Senate Democratic negotiators met in the Speaker's Office—and we are really getting close to the Speaker's Office here, Madam Speaker—with the White House Chief of Staff, Emanuel and White House Budget Director Peter Orzag into the evening Tuesday, breaking at 9 p.m. and then Chairman RANGEL is quoted in this reporting, "it is so difficult to talk with a body that is controlled by three people. You have no idea."

So I think that the distinguished chairman of the Ways and Means Committee is expressing frustration that three people, basically, figured out how to spend \$792 billion in an economic recovery package and okayed these 50 words that authorized the payment of bonuses to AIG and other people similarly situated. So I think we are getting a little closer.

Mr. TIBERI. I think what he is saying is three Members of the Senate. We have two Members of the Senate on the Clue board, so I keep, you know, I keep

wanting to take names off, but maybe we should add another picture there. We have got to figure out who the other Senator was that he is speaking about.

I do think we can take off the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, Mr. RANGEL. I feel pretty confident he wasn't the one.

I think we can take the chairman of the Appropriations Committee off. But I am thinking we need to add a couple too.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Well, I do too. And let me just get to that for a second. And there was another article that appeared on March 19, and the headline is that the "White House Staff Botched It". And this was, appeared in something called the Huffington Post, which is clearly not a conservative Republican organization. But I would submit this for the RECORD as well.

It quotes an AIG executive, well, the article says according to AIG, the payments were okayed by the White House last Thursday. Why? Because it appears that David Axelrod, now we have got to add somebody else, senior policy advisor to the Obama administration and Rahm Emanuel grossly underestimated how infuriating this would be.

The quote from the AIG executive is this: "We were not authorized until Thursday night," that, is to give out these millions of dollars in bonuses. "We were negotiating with the Treasury and the Federal Reserve. Treasury indicated that they needed it cleared by The White House as well. We hit the go for the payments on Friday," after they got the clearance from the White House.

Mr. TIBERI. I think again it is important to note, interrupting, and I apologize for interrupting, what Mr. AUSTRIA said earlier in which Americans are beginning to find out and are very troubled with, is that the American people own 80 percent of AIG. So somebody had to approve it with the Federal Government, and maybe that is the smoking gun.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Maybe. Well, the smoking pen. We have got the pen.

Mr. AUSTRIA. Point of clarification. I assume the pen has been eliminated, right?

Mr. LATOURETTE. We know it is the pen.

Mr. AUSTRIA. Well, somebody had to put that in there and write it in there. Somebody had to use the pen.

But no, I appreciate the point that the gentleman from Columbus made. Or is Columbus correct?

Mr. LATOURETTE. New Albany, I think.

Mr. AUSTRIA. I wanted to make sure I got that right for Central Ohio. But I think that is a very important point.

When the government owns 80 percent of a company and not knowing what is going on and we can't get an answer as to who put this language in. I mean, I appreciate the gentleman from Ohio with this game of Clue because I think that it is as good as any

other methodology that I know of trying to figure out who is responsible for putting that language in because we are not getting the clear answers. We are not getting a specific answer to that question.

Mr. LATOURETTE. I thank the gentleman. And I think we are making some progress because we have a weapon, it was the pen. We are getting down in the suspect list. And I am comfortable, if you gentlemen are comfortable saying that this crime was committed either in the Speaker's Office or in the Senate leaders office because all of the—

Mr. TIBERI. Or the conference room.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Well, the conference room was where the conferees met. Well, I'd say the conference room too. I think we know it didn't happen in the Appropriations Committee or the Ways and Means Committee. The Banking Committee is still out there. And the reason that the Senate Banking Committee is still out there is that the person that really came under the harshest scrutiny at the beginning was the Senator from Connecticut, Senator DODD. And I would just suggest, Madam Speaker, that he has a vested interest in finding this out just like we do, because when you don't know who did it, when you won't help us find out who did it and have people come clean, people begin to circulate ugly rumors. And I have heard, for instance, that the distinguished chairman of the Senate Banking Committee is one of the largest recipients of campaign contributions from AIG. Now people will say, oh, well, he must have done it because he got campaign cash. Well, I think that is unfair to the Senator, quite frankly, and I think that he should join with us and let's find out who did it.

Today, and Madam Speaker, I will submit an additional document from the Hartford Courant, if I may, into the RECORD. And today, this article starts with "No wonder Senator Dodd went wobbly last week when asked about his February amendment ratifying hundreds of millions of dollars in bonuses to executives at AIG. Dodd has been one of the company's favorite recipients," so an ugly rumor is out there. But it turns out that Senator DODD's wife also benefited, in that she was employed by an AIG subsidiary.

□ 2015

So, look. I don't know who did it, and I hope that the Senator from Connecticut didn't do it, but now people are throwing mud at him and are basically saying, you know, to the average Joe Sixpack at home, well, of course he did it. You know, he got a bunch of cash from him, and his wife used to work for one of their companies, so of course he did it. So the Senator should come out and identify—somebody knows who did it. That's the problem. So just tell us. Move on. They screwed up. Move on.

Madam Speaker, I'll ask how much time we have left.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 10 minutes remaining.

Mr. LATOURETTE. I thank the Speaker.

Mr. TIBERI. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. LATOURETTE. I'm happy to yield.

Mr. TIBERI. Clearly, to your point in this exercise, most would point the finger at the Senator from Connecticut—

Mr. LATOURETTE. Right.

Mr. TIBERI.—which probably means he didn't do it, which probably means it's somebody else, because he is the most obvious choice having played the game.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Well, taking back my time, I am a big fan of Agatha Christie's, and as you read through those books, you're sure it's the butler or somebody else, and it's never the butler. So, you know, I don't think we can exclude the Senator, but I'm with you. I think, you know, when everybody is shooting at the Senator from Connecticut, it's probably somebody else.

Mr. TIBERI. Well, yielding back to me again—and I appreciate that—I think what we found in his comments last week in that impromptu press conference is that, one day, he said he didn't know anything about it, and the next day, he said, "Well, yes, I did do it, but it was at the direction of somebody in the administration." Obviously, he doesn't want to throw somebody under the bus, but he has already been thrown under the bus, so I would hope that we could end this rather quickly with: Who is it?

Mr. LATOURETTE. Right.

In just taking back my time, what troubles me about this is, the last time I checked, the Constitution does not let anybody in the administration write a law. So somebody could have suggested it at Treasury, said the President wants it, the Secretary wants it, whatever the facts are, but the fact of the matter is that nobody at Treasury can write legislation. That is the job of the United States Senate and of the United States Congress.

Mr. TIBERI. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. LATOURETTE. Oh, I'm happy to.

Mr. TIBERI. To your point, I would like to submit this for the RECORD as well. It's a Los Angeles Times article from February.

[From the Los Angeles Times, Feb. 14, 2009]

PRIVATE TALKS FOR PUBLIC STIMULUS; OBAMA HAS SAID HE WANTS CONGRESS TO WORK IN THE OPEN. BUT HE ISN'T TROUBLED BY THE RECENT NEGOTIATIONS

(By Peter Nicholas)

WASHINGTON.—Upending Washington's entrenched ways of doing business is proving tougher than President Obama may have assumed.

The nearly \$800-billion stimulus bill served as a test case.

During the campaign, Obama released a position paper stating his commitment to open government. As president, he said, he would not only insist on transparency in his own administration, he would press Congress to revamp its practices as well.

Obama has no constitutional authority to set rules for Congress, but he suggested he would use his influence to see to it that Congress doesn't conduct its work "in the dead of night and behind closed doors."

In the first major piece of legislation pushed by Obama, transparency was missing.

Important negotiating sessions devoted to the stimulus took place in congressional offices, outside public view. Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-Beverly Hills) said he was in a meeting about the stimulus plan Tuesday night in the office of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco). Among the participants was White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel.

"We had to do some hard bargaining," Waxman said.

The abundance of private deliberations made for some comical moments.

Rep. Dave Camp (R-Mich.) was walking through the Capitol on Wednesday on his way to a public meeting in which Senators and House members were supposed to hash out differences over the stimulus. As he passed the Rotunda, Camp spotted Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) holding a news conference announcing that a deal had already been struck.

"This is the largest spending bill in the history of the United States, and I believe the public business should be done in public," said Camp, who had been appointed to the 10-member conference committee created to reconcile differences between the two chambers.

"President Obama made that commitment repeatedly in his campaign," he said.

Obama aides say that the president is still committed to transparency in government.

He reiterated the pledge during the transition, posting a promise on his website to "restore the American people's trust in their government by making government more open and transparent," and cited closed conference committee sessions as a practice ripe for overhaul.

But the White House isn't apologizing for how the stimulus bill was handled. Given the dismal economic climate, White House aides said, the country needed a stimulus bill—fast.

Press Secretary Robert Gibbs, asked about the private negotiations, said that Obama wasn't troubled.

"He's pleased with the process and the product that has come out," Gibbs said while briefing reporters Friday. "I think when the process is done, the American people will be proud of the product that we believe and we hope will begin to stimulate the economy."

Democratic leaders said the bill was handled according to procedures and customs that have been in place for years, including when Republicans controlled Congress.

Waxman said Congress' treatment of the bill was fairly standard. Could Congress have demanded that all negotiations play out in public? Waxman said that would have been impractical.

"There are too many moving parts in this bill," Waxman said. "We would be sitting in an open conference committee meeting for weeks, if not a whole month, to process all the amendments that would have been offered."

Again to your point, this says the President has no constitutional authority to set rules for Congress, "but he suggested he would use his influence to see to it that Congress doesn't conduct its work 'in the dead of night and behind closed doors,'" when in fact, in this particular exercise, as we know and as your chart indicates and as the Senator from Connecticut has indicated, these words came from the administration and were put into the

stimulus bill in the dead of night. We still don't know who in the administration. We don't know everybody who was in the room from the administration, so the administration can claim they have nothing to do with Congress.

Based upon the documents from the press that we have submitted tonight and that you have submitted tonight and based upon the shuttle diplomacy that occurred during the days before the stimulus vote, there were top administration officials involved, in the room, writing the bill in the dead of night, with no transparency, no Republicans, no press, no C-SPAN, with nobody witnessing what was being done. The product you have at the end of the process are these 50 words that nobody in America is taking credit for. Your resolution tomorrow will begin to get to the bottom of this, unfortunately, if someone does not come forward.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Well, taking back my time, I do hope that in the markup of the resolution of inquiry tomorrow that we do see transparency and bipartisanship. Both Republicans and Democrats on that committee want to answer the question as much as we do and as much as, I'm sure, Senator DODD would like to have this cloud lifted from his shoulders, and so I hope it moves in that direction.

I have to tell you I am not optimistic. I mean I will not be surprised when I get a telephone call tomorrow that the Financial Services Committee has somehow made it impossible for that to see the light of day, which it can by a majority vote—they have the votes—and we'll see what happens. But you know what? I'm a big fan of Chairman FRANK's, and he is a fair man, and I think he'll give it fair consideration tomorrow. I look forward to that telephone call.

Mr. AUSTRIA, is there anything you want to say before we leave here?

Mr. AUSTRIA. If you would yield for just a moment.

Mr. LATOURETTE. I would be happy to.

Mr. AUSTRIA. Let me just say, as a new Member up here from Ohio—I mean I served 10 years in the State legislature. I've been here less than 100 days. I'm just starting my third month. I have never seen this kind of process where bills are rolled out, where language is stuck in that we don't have the opportunity to read before we vote on it, and where language is put in and no one will take responsibility for that language.

I think the American people out there are looking at this, scratching their heads, saying: How can this be? How can it be that language is put in a bill, and nobody has an opportunity to read that bill, and nobody wants to take responsibility now for that language?

I appreciate the exercise that the gentleman from Ohio has gone through tonight to make the point, and I appreciate your offering that resolution. It shouldn't take 14 Republican freshmen

to stand up and say, "we want accountability for this dollar," and offer legislation that we would hope that the administration would stand behind, but it doesn't seem to be getting any traction. I hope your resolution moves tomorrow because, you know, the American people deserve answers. I think you've made some very good points tonight, and I appreciate the opportunity to participate with both gentlemen from Ohio.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Well, listen. I thank you.

Mr. TIBERI, would you like to close?

Mr. TIBERI. Let me just, again, thank you for your leadership on this. I would hope that we don't have to come back next week and add pictures and subtract rooms, but I am willing to do that if nothing occurs tomorrow. I certainly would not want to be in the majority—a Democrat in a competitive district—having to defend a "no" vote on your resolution tomorrow and a "yes" vote on a bill that allowed these 47 words to go forward and millions and millions of dollars to citizens and non-citizens of a failing company that should go into bankruptcy or should be split up into several different companies. This is an outrage. Americans are outraged. We will get to the bottom of this, and at the end of the day, I predict that we will find out who was responsible for that pen.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Well, I thank both gentlemen for participating.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for your courtesy.

To reinforce Mr. TIBERI's point, I think Senator DODD has a vested interest in helping us with this because, currently, it looks like "Senator DODD in the conference room with a pen." Now, I don't think that that is true, so I hope that whoever did this will tell us about it.

Dana, what is happening?

Dana Bash, CNN Senior Congressional Correspondent: Well, Anderson, as we speak, the White House chief of staff and the president's budget director are inside House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office.

And, in fact, they have been here coming up on eight hours straight—eight hours straight—shuttling between the House speaker's office and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's office, trying to urgently broker a compromise between House Democrats and Senate Democrats in order to get the president's stimulus package to—to his desk by this week.

And I just spoke to a Democratic source who says that, in these talks, they are narrowing their differences.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

Bash (voice-over): House Democrats are not happy that Senate Democrats cut some \$100 billion in spending from their stimulus package, tens of billions slashed from Democratic priorities, like education.

But House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is now signaling, they will likely have to live with it.

Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), Speaker of the House: As President Obama cautioned the nation, that we cannot allow the perfect to be the enemy of the effective and of the necessary. And we will not.

CQ—

Late into the Evening * House and Senate Democratic negotiators met in the Speaker's office with White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emmanuel and White House budget chief Peter Orszag late into the evening Tuesday, breaking at 9 p.m., working intensely to firm up an overall cap for the package and sort through differences.

"It's so difficult to talk with a body that is . . . controlled by three people. You have no idea," Ways and Means Committee Charles B. Rangel, D-N.Y., said as he left the meeting, noting that the health and spending portions of the bill were proving most difficult to reconcile.

"There's no obstacle that's come up that we cannot resolve with a lot of pain," he said.

As Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus, D-Mont., left the meeting, he said that \$800 billion was the "ballpark" limit for the conference report, and that the final figure might come in a little lower than that. Baucus said that getting a deal by the weekend was the goal understood by everyone involved.

[From www.theleftcoaster.com, Mar. 19, 2009]

WHITE HOUSE STAFF BOTCHED IT

Folks, Geithner, Bernanke, and the Bush Treasury Department knew about the AIG bonuses for months. According to AIG, the payments were OK'd by the White House last Thursday. Why? Because it appears that David Axelrod and Rahm Emanuel grossly underestimated how infuriating this would be.

"We weren't authorized until Thursday night," the AIG executive said. "We were negotiating with the Treasury and the Federal Reserve. Treasury indicated that they needed it cleared by the White House, as well. We hit the go button for the payments on Friday."

For the new administration, the bonuses were a distraction from what senior aides called the main focus: getting the economy working and people back to work. "People are not sitting around their kitchen tables thinking about AIG," Axelrod said. "They are thinking about their own jobs."

Bad decision Dave.

Their message to the president when the group assembled for their first extended conversation about AIG in the Roosevelt Room on Sunday was not optimistic: They told him they had "done and will do what we legally can," Axelrod said.

But Obama made clear at that meeting that he was unwilling to throw up his hands. He instructed Geithner and the others to seek legal ways that the government might recover the bonuses. And he made plans to tell the public what he thought the next day.

That decision ran counter to the belief among some in his inner circle that the bonus issue while an outrage was a small problem compared with the economic issues confronting his young presidency. "The first and most important job we have is to get this economy moving again," Axelrod said. "As galling as this is, it doesn't go to the main issue."

What you see is a fine example of poor decision making clouded by being inside the White House bubble. After spending two years out on the campaign trail ensuring that your message and actions mesh with what people are thinking, Axelrod is now inside the bubble and cannot see that the optics of this fiasco do matter to people, because he assumes naively that people will look beyond it due to an overriding fear of their own situations. He also assumes his boss can talk his way out of anything, when in fact Obama has surrounded himself with two tone deaf lops in Geithner and Summers.

DODD'S WIFE A FORMER DIRECTOR OF BERMUDA-BASED IPC HOLDINGS, AN AIG CONTROLLED COMPANY

(By Kevin Rennie)

No wonder Senator Christopher Dodd (D-Conn) went wobbly last week when asked about his February amendment ratifying hundreds of millions of dollars in bonuses to executives at insurance giant AIG. Dodd has been one of the company's favorite recipients of campaign contributions. But it turns out that Senator Dodd's wife has also benefited from past connections to AIG as well.

From 2001–2004, Jackie Clegg Dodd served as an "outside" director of IPC Holdings, Ltd., a Bermuda-based company controlled by AIG. IPC, which provides property casualty catastrophe insurance coverage, was formed in 1993 and currently has a market cap of \$1.4 billion and trades on the NASDAQ under the ticker symbol IPCR. In 2001, in addition to a public offering of 15 million shares of stock that raised \$380 million, IPC raised more than \$109 million through a simultaneous private placement sale of 5.6 million shares of stock to AIG—giving AIG a 20 percent stake in IPC. (AIG sold its

Clegg was compensated for her duties to the company, which was managed by a subsidiary of AIG. In 2003, according to a proxy statement, Clegg received \$12,000 per year and an additional \$1,000 for each Directors' and committee meeting she attended. Clegg served on the Audit and Investment committees during her final year on the board.

IPC paid millions each year to other AIG-related companies for administrative and other services. Clegg was a diligent director. In 2003, the proxy statement report, she attended more than 75 percent of board and committee meetings. This while she served as the managing partner of Clegg International Consultants, LLC, which she created in 2001, the year she joined the board of IPC. (See Dodd's public financial disclosure reports with the Senate from 2001–2004 here.)

Dodd is likely more familiar with the complicated workings of AIG than he was letting on last week. This week may provide him with another opportunity to refresh his recollections.

THE PRESIDENT'S CHALLENGE TO CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. DAHLKEMPER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to address the House this evening because tomorrow is going to be a very important day as we move forward with a markup in the Budget Committee to deal with priorities that are going to be facing this Congress.

Before I begin my presentation, I would like to recognize the gentlewoman from Houston, Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE), if I could yield to her for a 3-minute presentation. I know she has some information that she would like to share with the House, and I would recognize her at this time.

DR. DOROTHY HEIGHT'S 97TH BIRTHDAY

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Allow me to thank the distinguished gentleman from Oregon and to emphasize the point that he just made of the importance of the budget markup and

also of the very important issues that he comes to the floor to discuss this evening.

There is another important event that occurred today, and that was the 97th birthday of Dr. Dorothy Height. I don't think I have to remind my colleagues of how important a person Dr. Height is today and how important she has been over the years. She is now the chairman and president of the National Council of Negro Women, but she was the only woman present at the 1963 March on Washington. She has previously been an icon, working with Presidents as far back as Franklin Delano Roosevelt. A civil rights leader she is, but an empowerment of women is her calling. She has led the National Council of Negro Women now for decades.

Today, at that very building—really, at the only building owned by African Americans on Pennsylvania Avenue, women gathered from around the Nation to celebrate Dr. Height's birthday.

Dr. Height was a pillar in the civil rights movement, standing alongside of A. Philip Randolph and Martin Luther King and numbers of others. She has also been someone to encourage women to participate in the governmental process, to be educated, to stand strong. She is a spokesperson for the unempowered, and of course, she is a mentor to so many of us. She is a friend of the Congressional Black Caucus, of the NAACP and of the National Urban League. When there is an issue of concern, you have the need to call Dr. Height. She is also a recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal along with many, many other awards.

I am privileged today to be able to stand on the floor of the House to recognize an American icon, a patriot, a woman of valor and courage.

Madam Speaker, it is again my great pleasure to salute Dr. Dorothy Height for a happy, happy birthday, now some 97 years old, and to thank my friend and colleague for allowing us to share this with all of our colleagues and to celebrate, again, a life that has been worth living and is still worth living—a champion of the people.

Dr. Dorothy Height, happy birthday. I yield back to the gentleman.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you. I appreciate the gentlelady making that presentation.

Madam Speaker, the President of the United States has issued a challenge to this Congress and to the American people that is embodied in the budget that he outlined before us when he addressed this Chamber in his first joint session of Congress and has followed up with in his budget submission. He has given a challenge to us to deal with the great interrelated problems of the day.

He has suggested that we move forward to deal with health care in terms of fundamental reform for all Americans, for dealing with energy instability and global warming, to deal with the incredible budget deficit that he has inherited to try and stabilize the

fiscal situation of the United States, and to deal with investing in education in the future.

What I would like to do this evening is address the element of the budget that speaks to climate change, global warming, energy independence, and investing in our energy future.

It has been interesting listening to our Republican friends who have been told by Mr. BOEHNER, the Republican leader, that they are not to be legislators, that they are to be communicators, evidently deciding that dealing with the messy problems of government with energy, with the budget, with the nuts and bolts that the American people sent us here to address might be a little too risky. So, instead, they're talking about communicating some of their concerns.

We have heard the mantra about the President's budget—taxing too much, spending too much and borrowing too much. We have not heard constructive alternatives, and they certainly have not acknowledged that the policies of the Republican majority and the Republican President, when they were in charge for the last 8 years with the Bush administration and in charge for a dozen years in the House of Representatives, actually created these problems.

Spend too much? These are people who understand spending. They produced record budget increases, increasing spending faster than Bill Clinton, faster even than one of the favorite whipping boys they have—the Great Society of Lyndon Johnson.

Borrow too much? Well, these are people who, when President Bush took office, were faced with the daunting prospect of a \$5 trillion budget surplus. That was the official estimate. Remember, there were smart people concerned with what would happen if we paid off the national debt. What would be the instruments for insurance and pensions and other commercial transactions? Well, they solved that problem by turning a \$5 trillion surplus, with a pattern of reckless spending and ill-considered tax cuts, to a record deficit. It was a \$5 trillion surplus, and they added \$5 trillion to the national debt. They have given President Obama a record \$1.8 trillion deficit that he is struggling with now.

They know about spending too much. They know about borrowing too much because much of this was money borrowed from the Chinese, the Japanese and the Europeans. Under their watch, the current accounts and the balance of all of the goods and services and trade in and out of the United States increased from 3.6 percent to over 5 percent, a 40 percent increase—rather sobering—and it is contributing to the instability that we face.

Well, these people are, hopefully, going to stop communicating long enough tomorrow to maybe roll up their sleeves and help us deal with very specific opportunities as part of the