

me, over the Speaker's podium, there are two Americans—Thomas Jefferson to my right and George Mason to my left. The rest are ancient lawgivers—with Moses being over the center door in full face.

We honor Jefferson in this country. The Democrats supposedly honor Thomas Jefferson for his wisdom. But this is what he said—and they have certainly forgotten this—“I sincerely believe that the principle of spending money to be paid by posterity under the name of funding is but swindling futurity on a large scale.” Thomas Jefferson, 1816.

Our Founders understood this. They wanted a small Federal Government, not one that would oppress the people, not one that would give us huge tax increases and take money from the people. They can spend better than the government can spend it. That's what Thomas Jefferson believed in—and I believe in that—and I'm so sorry that the Democrats have forgotten the lessons he taught their party and taught our country.

Another thing in this budget is a new energy tax that will cost every household up to \$3,128 annually. The President promised tax cuts. There's going to be about \$600 in tax cuts given to the average family. But, in exchange for that, they're going to be \$3,128 more for energy. It doesn't sound like a good deal to me. It's also going to cost American jobs.

We know the cap-and-tax plan, in addition to all these taxes, are going to cost jobs, because the majority of the tax increases are going to fall on small businesses. They're not going to be able to keep being the engine of job creation that they have been.

There's going to be a new tax on charitable giving, which could cost American charities at least \$9 billion a year. The cynical attitude behind this is: We don't need the private sector doing all these things. We're going to take your money because government knows how to spend the money better.

In fact, it will destroy many charities in this country that are doing wonderfully good things. But it will hurt them and, in some cases, destroy them, all in the name of having the government run our country.

Some people have said that this sounds a lot like Animal Farm. I would say to people: If you haven't read 1984, if you haven't read Animal Farm in a long time, or, if you've never read them, get them out and read them and think about what's happening in this country as it compares to what was written in those books.

This will be the highest level of borrowing ever. It's going to be unchecked spending, which will result in borrowing hundreds of billions of dollars from China, the Middle East, and other nations that own our growing debt.

As I said earlier, for the first two centuries of this country, Americans have worked hard so their children could have better lives and better op-

portunities. Democrats want to reverse that order by having our children work hard so we don't have to make the hard choices now.

Let me show you another chart here. Again, you don't have to take my word for it. I can show it to you graphically.

This is going to be doubling the debt held by the public. Look how those numbers go up. This is what it was under Republican control of the Congress and a Republican administration. This is what it is under Democratic control.

According to the CBO, President Obama's budget would add \$9.3 trillion to the national debt. This will lead to unprecedented borrowing, with debt held by the public increasing from 41 percent of GDP in 2008 to 82 percent of GDP in 2019. We have never seen that kind of debt, even in wartime.

In 2010, the budget's going to spend \$172 billion on interest on the national debt. Just think about that—\$172 billion just on interest. It's going to be piling up more and more debt and less money to spend on real priorities.

This is not the way for America. Putting our children and grandchildren into debt is wrong.

After we had the bailout last fall, I went home and I was taking my grandchildren to school and they said to me, “What were you doing in Washington? We know you were up there, you came back, you went back.” I said to my 12-year-old grandson and 9½-year-old granddaughter—I said, “Well, what the Congress just did was put you, your children, and your grandchildren into debt for more money than you're ever going to be able to pay off.” And my 9½-year-old granddaughter Rana said to me, “Grandma, why do you want to put little children into debt? I said, “Rana, I don't. That's why I voted “no.” That's why most Republicans voted “no.”

We understand what's happening here. We don't want to do this. But what is about to occur here is even worse than what happened last fall, even worse than what happened with the stimulus. These people are going headlong in because they don't want to take the responsibility to do what needs to be done now—trim spending and make tough decisions.

Somebody said the other day that we're pretty soon going to be like Argentina, because the Federal Reserve is printing dollars trying to get the economy stimulated. The government's spending, spending, spending. We're pretty soon going to go into a situation where we're going to look like a third-world country.

I don't think that's what most Americans want. Most Americans love this country, they want us to continue to be the greatest country in the world, and they want us to continue to be successful in what we do. They want us to leave a country that is good and economically and fiscally healthy to our children and our grandchildren and to our posterity.

That's not the direction the Democrats are taking us. They cannot blame this on the Republicans because they have been in charge of the Congress since January 2007. They started the spending going that way.

The President, who's promised so many good things and led the American people to think that he would be a moderate person and who would bring good change to this country, is bringing change, all right—the kind of change that is going to lead us down a very, very dark path and create problems that will take a long, long time for us to fix.

So I want to say to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle that this is the wrong thing to be doing. You've been cramming things down our throats and down the throats of the American people for the past 2½ months. This is not the direction this country should be going in.

We need to be fiscally responsible. We need to remember our oath to the Constitution. We need to be looking after this country and the people who elected us here to do that.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back.

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

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

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to speak on behalf of the Congressional Progressive Caucus about the importance of the Employee Free Choice Act.

First, I want to thank Representatives LYNN WOOLSEY and RAÚL GRIJALVA for their leadership as co-chairs of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. Each week we come to the floor to speak to the American people about important progressive values that we share.

I want to thank also Chairman GEORGE MILLER for his strong leadership on the Employee Free Choice Act and for being a stalwart champion for working people throughout his impressive career. I feel fortunate to consider Chairman MILLER both a friend and a mentor, and especially when it comes to workers rights.

It's time for us to set the record straight about the Employee Free Choice Act. Due to the well-funded opposition campaign by corporate interests, a lot of misinformation about the Employee Free Choice Act has filled our airways, our newspapers, and public discourse. Well, it's time for that to stop. Let's set aside the myths and talk about reality.

First, to fully understand the importance of the Employee Free Choice Act, an appreciation of the history and context of organized labor in America is a prerequisite. In 1935, the Congress

passed the National Labor Relations Act. The purpose of the legislation, as stated in the text, was to protect “the exercise by workers of full freedom of association, self-organization, and designation of representatives of their own choosing for the purpose of negotiating the terms and conditions of their employment or other mutual aid or protection.”

Now I know a little bit, but not a lot, about organized labor. What I do know is that for my grandfather, for his father, for my mother, the importance of organized labor and the labor movement was actually to move people into the workforce, into good-paying jobs with great benefits and to be able to work into the middle class. This was important for my family and it’s important to families all across this country.

As a direct result of the act, many decades went by where workers successfully formed unions without interference by employers.

Now, to be sure, let’s celebrate the tremendous courage of workers across this country and throughout history who stood up for their rights—stood up for their rights to good benefits, stood up for their rights for good wage, stood up for their rights for working conditions that were safe in the work place.

Over the last decade, the National Labor Relations Board elections have fallen by 50 percent. For instance, in 2007, only 30,000 workers actually gained collective bargaining through the National Labor Relations Board certification. This precipitous decline is due to many companies fighting the National Labor Relations Act at every turn and the unfair labor practices of many businesses.

The instances of businesses taking or threatening to take punitive actions against employees who attempt to organize have, once again, Mr. Speaker, become all too common. In fact, in a recent survey report, 79 percent of workers were likely or very likely or at least somewhat likely to be fired for trying to organize a union. Fired for trying to organize a union. Fired for trying to organize collectively to fight for themselves and working families in this country.

In 25 percent of organizing drives, at least one worker is lawfully fired for a union activity. Can you believe it—in America you can be fired for trying to organize collectively for good benefits and strong wages and safe working conditions in your workplace? Yet, this is exactly what is happening to workers across this country right here in the United States.

As you can tell in the current business climate that is rife with fear and intimidation, workers are rightfully afraid to engage in union organizing—afraid to engage in working with their fellow employees to fight for their rights as workers.

Recently, over 150 historians wrote a letter to all of us in Congress expressing their support for the Employee

Free Choice Act. As they note—and I want to emphasize—the Employee Free Choice Act is necessary as a direct result of the erosion of good faith actions of employers against their employees organizing and forming a union. It is a public policy response to those who have been fought against in the workplace. It’s a public policy response on behalf of workers in support of their right to organize and form a union. This climate of fear hasn’t existed in our Nation for many years. Unfair labor practices were originally mitigated by the National Labor Relations Act.

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But, once again, our Nation’s workers need our help. We must pass the Employee Free Choice Act in order to break down the barriers to organizing created by far too many employers.

Now, not all employers are working against workers. In fact, there are many employers who are working with workers who are organizing collectively to bargain for their rights. But there are some really bad actors in the system, and the Employee Free Choice Act aims to clear up the bad actors.

Mr. Speaker, next I believe it is important to address the myths that have been perpetrated by businesses determined to deprive workers of fundamental rights, and there is a lot of mythology out there. The most widely repeated and factually inaccurate statement about the Employee Free Choice Act is that it would abolish the secret ballot election. You have heard it on the news, you have seen it in the television advertising, but it is nothing more than a public relations stunt to turn the American workforce against organized labor. So let’s clear it up.

The fallacy was actually originated by public relations campaigns financed by corporations determined to defeat the Employee Free Choice Act. And even more frustrating, it has been widely reported as the impetus behind former supporters flip-flopping on their Employee Free Choice Act position; that is, against workers. This myth is repeated daily by the media outlets, opponents, and former supporters, and it is just plain wrong.

The process these critics are referring to is the National Labor Relations Board Election. But the reality is, is that it is about the employees’ choice about what kind of election, what kind of choice they want to make. Under the Employee Free Choice Act, the election process is preserved. The mythology is wrong.

Under the Employee Free Choice Act, it would enable the workers simply to access a different method, an alternative method to form a union, through majorities signing up saying that they want a union and that they would prefer that kind of process. Under current law, workers can only use the majority signing up on a card process if the employer agrees.

Now, this is a fundamental worker’s right to choose what kind of election

they want. That is what the Employee Free Choice Act is; it is about freedom of choice on behalf of the workers to choose the kind of process they want to form a union or not. So it doesn’t destroy the ballot process. In fact, workers could elect still, under the Employee Free Choice Act, for a secret ballot, or they could elect to sign up with a majority signing up for a union. The difference is that they can’t be coerced by employers. So there are many myths that have permeated the recent dialogue. I want to take a moment to address each of these individually.

First, the first myth is that the secret ballot election protects workers’ democratic rights. The fact is that the National Labor Relations Board election process currently fails to satisfy the most basic standards for a free and fair election. In these processes, the employer has total access to the employee. The employer can coerce, can show videotape, can do all kinds of things to keep employees from signing up to form a union. The workers, on the other hand, have very little access to their fellow employees to help to organize them.

Secret ballots in themselves don’t guarantee fair elections. We have all seen that. There is nothing that is so sacred about that secret ballot process when it comes to a union election. So we want to create a process by which employees can choose how they want to form a union, employees can choose how they want to organize collectively for their own benefit.

So the standard procedure in the National Labor Relations Board—and I will just yield for a minute to my colleague who organizes our Progressive Hour. I will yield to my colleague from the great State of Minnesota to have some dialogue about the Employee Free Choice Act and about the benefits to organizing for workers.

Mr. ELLISON. Will the gentle lady yield?

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. Yes.

Mr. ELLISON. I have a question for you about the Employee Free Choice Act. Is this a proven idea? You know, this idea of a card check, of getting a majority of the workers to sign up and then have the union recognized, has this been tried anywhere before? I yield back.

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. Employees, actually, in a number of countries around the world that have unions that organize, workers who organize to form unions in fact use this process, and it would not be an anomaly to the United States to use a majority signup process. Indeed, here in this country workers have done that as well.

So what we are doing with the Employee Free Choice Act is we are actually codifying the ability of workers to decide how they want to organize.

Mr. ELLISON. In my own city of Minneapolis, the management of the city reached out to the workers and said, if you all want to have a card check in order to get your union recognized, that is the process we will go by.

I can list a number of employers who have voluntarily done card check, and it has not harmed these companies. In fact, as you pointed out, Congresswoman, there are a lot of American companies that have very good relationships with their workers that are humming along and making profit right now. So there is no reason to believe that if we make the Employee Free Choice Act law, that it would in any way undermine any productivity.

May I ask you another question, if I may?

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. Reclaiming my time, I would like to say to the gentleman from Minnesota that in fact if we study what has just happened recently with the auto industry—and many Americans have been looking at the business pages and the front pages about the trouble that American auto workers and the industry face right now. Those employees and employers sat down and bargained in an agreement about benefits, about wages, about working conditions. They came to an agreement. And it wasn't as though it wasn't a hard-fought agreement. Some of these are difficult-to-win agreements. But they did.

Then, when it came time that the auto industry was facing troubles, the auto industry and the union appeared together before the United States Congress, and workers sat down at a bargaining table again and were willing to make the kinds of concessions that you actually might not have gotten if you had to coerce them; but, in fact, they had to come together to work on an agreement that would help preserve the industry.

This is the benefit of collective bargaining. This is the benefit of having an equal voice for workers as we have for employers.

Mr. ELLISON. If the gentlelady would yield, I want to ask you a more fundamental question. Are unions good for America? I yield back.

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. You know, I come from a family of union workers. My grandfather and my great grandfather worked in the coal mines of West Virginia, where they didn't enjoy the greatest protections in that coal mine. My grandfather in fact ended up dying of a respiratory disease. And I think that today, the reason that our mine workers enjoy protection, the reason that our auto workers enjoy protection on those assembly lines, the reason that workers like my mother many years ago in a cannery in California enjoyed protection for safety considerations and for wages and benefits was precisely because they were enabled to organize as a union.

So companies that have unions that are organized in their workplace actually do enjoy profits, unlike others. There are incentives for employees to stay at a workplace and to develop loyalty to that employer precisely because they struck a deal.

So workers are not just a good benefit for organizing and unions aren't

just a good benefit for workers. As my colleague knows, organizing and unions are actually good for employers, they are good for economic growth, they are good for productivity. And that is why here in the United States over this last decade, as we have seen this really precipitous decline in union membership, we have also seen a real flat-lining of wages, a flat-lining of benefits. In fact, the American workers has lost so much in wages and benefits over this last decade that one might argue in fact that it is precisely because they are not organized together to form a union to lobby and negotiate on their own behalf for benefits that we have seen this decline. And I would yield to my colleague.

Mr. ELLISON. As I might point out, Congresswoman and Mr. Speaker, the fact is that having a union creates labor peace. We don't have costly strikes, lockouts. We have labor peace. We make an agreement, and everybody sort of—we have a refined orderly way to resolve conflict. And as you pointed out, sometimes these conflicts over a bargaining table are tough struggles. Nobody is expecting to just give anything away, but there is an orderly way to resolve issues. Turnover, which is a definite killer for productivity, is reduced when you have a union in place.

Unions tend to promote reliability. You have a place to go, you can go your shop steward if there is something you think isn't right. And it provides a way for real stability on the job. Also, I think it is important to say that a lot of unions have training programs of their own, which it shares the burden with the employer.

So unions have been good for many employers and have been good for America. Union workers earn 30 percent more than nonunion workers. And when it comes to African American unionized people, they earn 56 percent more than nonunion African Americans. Women benefit from being in the union. Upwards of 40, 50 percent of women who are unionized make that much more than women who are not. Pensions, medical benefits. It is good to have a union job. Everybody knows that. And unions have not contributed to economic demise of any community or our country. In fact, unions have brought labor peace, unions have benefited our country in a great way.

And I just might add, before I turn it back to the gentlelady from Maryland, Congresswoman, I will never forget the image of Walter Reuther, the great UAW leader and Martin Luther King walking down Woodward Avenue in Detroit. I will never forget that when Martin Luther King went to his reward on April 4, 1968, he was at a union. He was standing up for garbage strikers, sanitation workers who were on strike because they were paid poorly and in unsafe working conditions and were dealing with these issues. And it is important to remember that the union won that strike.

So unions have contributed to the life of America. Unions have done a

service for our great country. And so I think it is important that we point that out as we talk about the Employee Free Choice Act. And I yield back.

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. And to my colleague from Minnesota, first, thank you for your leadership and organizing this time when we can speak to the American people about important progressive values.

You know, in the days that exist currently, in the old days, these standard Union Labor Relations Board elections have included a lot of practices that really that are hard-felt and hit workers in a very unfair way.

For example, employees have no right to free speech in the process. Employees can't access media in the process. Employees don't have protection against intimidation and one-on-one interviews with their supervisors where they could believe that in choosing a union it would jeopardize their jobs. Workers are regularly forced to attend anti-union meetings. Well, the union doesn't and the workers trying to form a union don't get that same kind of access to employees. So it is really an unfair process that exists currently.

So what Chairman MILLER and all of us in Congress who really want to see employees with the free choice, the right to choose a union do so because we are interested in workers freely making their own choice about their workplace.

Mr. ELLISON. Would the gentlelady yield?

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. I will in just one minute. But we want to know that we want workers able to attend meetings where they can discuss the values and the value of organizing in a union, where they could discuss the prospects for them ahead in wages and benefits and working conditions. And this can only take place in a context where those trying to organize a union have as much access to workers as the employer does.

And I would yield to the gentleman.

Mr. ELLISON. I have heard this term, "captive audience," as I have discussed the Employee Free Choice Act, and heard stories about how, when the union drive was going on, that the employer can make it a condition of a worker's employment that they show up at a meeting where they give anti-union messages. Is this really true?

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Is this really true? I yield back. Does this happen in America?

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. Reclaiming my time, I would say to the gentleman that what happens in a workplace can sometimes be a little innocuous. And so it may not be a direct threat. But if your employer is sitting with you, next to you while you're reading a union flier about organizing a union in your workplace, that is a little intimidating. If a decision by the employer about handing out raises is coming along and you're one of the

workers trying to organize a union, you might believe that in doing that you may not get a raise, very intimidating, or that you may be under threat of losing your job entirely.

These are not stories that are made up. These are cases that came before the National Labor Relations Board every single day. They are stories that come from our organizers out in the field across the country who are trying to organize in work places. Indeed this last summer I had the real privilege of standing with the workers of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union trying to get a union at the Smithfield Tar Heel produce processing plant in North Carolina. And the intimidation that those workers described in their quest over many years to gain recognition in that work place was really tremendous.

It is unfair. That is the key. It is unfair. Workers ought to be able to freely decide with their colleagues and with their co-workers, do I want a union representing me or not? Which union do I want to represent me? And who is the leadership of that union representing me? These are choices that workers ought to be able to freely and independently make. And under the current process, that is not happening.

I would yield to my colleague.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, I'm going to commend you, Congresswoman, for going down to North Carolina and standing with those workers. It is not easy. I have been on many a picket line myself. I have been on many a union drive because I believe in it. I think it strengthens the working class.

You're right. There are subtle points of intimidation to prevent the union. But there are lots of places in this country where there is not-so-subtle intimidation to prevent the union. There are people fired for trying to organize a union. And even if you prove that it is an unfair labor practice that you were fired for organizing a union, generally even if you win, at the NLRB what happens? Well, a minor fine maybe, a posting up on the wall that says we were wrong for doing this. In fact, it is really not a real deterrent to some of the unfair labor practices that we have seen.

I think that having a union in place would definitely strengthen a worker's right to raise issues that are of concern to them at the workplace as you point out.

I hope the gentlelady doesn't mind me taking a little turn to make a few comments that I would like to make. And I also want to thank you for holding it down. It was your idea that we do the Employee Free Choice Act today, it was your organization that brought this session about, and this is critically important that we do this subject because we do need to help the public understand that a strong workforce that is organized and unionized gives voice not just only to unionized people but to the entire middle class.

And so I do want to thank you for organizing this today. All I want to do is

just take a little short detour for a moment and say that the Employee Free Choice Act, we also talk about card check, majority card check. As you pointed out, if you get 30 percent of the employees to sign a card, you can get an election for a union now. That is the present law. And nothing about that will be stripped away by the Employee Free Choice Act. But it is also important to say that even if you get, even if you get majority sign up and you get the union recognized or you get 30 percent which then provokes a union election and you get the union recognized that way, that is not the end of the Employee Free Choice Act.

The Employee Free Choice Act recognizes the fact that even after union recognition comes, a lot of employers fight and fight the contract, and you can have a union but no contract. And I would love to hear if you have any stories about that because it is important to talk about how workers have dealt with these things.

But the Employee Free Choice Act requires a period in which there is mediation on the contract, and then if that doesn't work, there is binding arbitration on the first contract so that there will be a first contract. And after there is one contract, then history tells us there will be another one. But there will be a first contract under the Employee Free Choice Act. So it is not just card check, but it is getting that first contract at the bargaining table.

So I will yield back to the gentlelady at this time because I just want to make sure that we frame what the bill says and what it doesn't say. And again I invite the gentlelady if she cares to talk about this effort to get the first contract which is so often a difficulty. Of course, I don't want to narrow what the gentlelady might comment on.

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. Reclaiming my time from the gentleman from Minnesota.

What I would like to say is that we have all heard, many of us across the country have heard the story and the plight of our air traffic controllers who after the de-establishment of their union have then re-established and have been trying to get a contract and are put off time and time and time again. And so that the process from the time one decides one wants a union, that workers decide they want a union, to the time they actually get a contract that they can work under can be sorely delayed under the current process. And so what we would like to say in the Employee Free Choice Act is, do you know what? Once workers have decided that they want to form a union, sit down at the bargaining table, come up with a negotiation, negotiate a contract that is fairly bargained with the employer on one side of the table and the workers on the other side of the table, come up with an agreement, and then get to work. And that is all the Employee Free Choice Act does. It is actually pretty simple, bargain one, come up with a contract, and get to work.

So I'm actually excited about the prospect both for workers and for their employers to have certainty in the workplace about what the rules are, about what the game plan is. And the Employee Free Choice Act gives the employees the freedom to choose to have a union, then to negotiate an agreement and then to get to work being productive both for the employer, but also for themselves and their families. To me that seems like a really fair deal.

There are a lot of myths surrounding the Employee Free Choice Act. And some of those have been played out, of course, on television, in the newspapers and in the back-and-forth dialogue. But I just want to talk about what is important for workers. It is important for workers to be protected against pressure. Now some people say, why can't workers form a union just like you get into the United States Congress? You go and cast your secret ballot, and then you're a Member of Congress. Well, the fact of the matter is that when I go and cast my ballot for President or for Congress, there is no employer standing next to me, there is no employer looking over my shoulder to see what I will do or potentially threatening my job. I can cast my ballot and do it in relative quiet and safety and under my own guidance.

This is not true for elections that take place in the workplace. This is why it is really important for workers to be able to organize, to go around and talk with their colleagues about the importance of forming a union and then to get their accord to do so.

Now it doesn't say that if employees decide that they want to have a secret ballot election that that can still take place. The point is, there is a choice. And it is not the employer's choice. It is not Congress' choice. It is the employees' choice about what they want to do. And so we have to really destroy this mythology.

Before we go on, I would like to talk about another myth because there are a lot of myths surrounding the Employee Free Choice Act.

Mr. ELLISON. If the gentlelady will yield just on that point.

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. Certainly.

Mr. ELLISON. I'm curious to get the gentlelady's views on this point.

Now, on that myth you just talked about right there, is it common, in your view, allowing for the fact that there are a lot of good employers who cooperate with their unions, but is it common in your view for some of these folks who are opposing the Employee Free Choice Act, some of these big CEOs who are opposing the Employee Free Choice Act, to spend a lot of time worrying about whether a worker has a private ballot or not? Is there any irony here that you have been able to detect?

I yield back.

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. Reclaiming my time from the gentleman.

This notion that somehow I think that these CEOs are looking out for the workers, they want to protect the workers, let's destroy that myth as well. And I would say, Mr. Speaker, that, in fact, what we have with the Employee Free Choice Act is a pretty simple and perhaps even old battle. You have employers who don't want a union because they know that union workers organized collectively will bargain for good wages, good benefits and safe working conditions. And on other hand, you have employees who want to form a union precisely because they don't have good wages, they don't have good benefits, and they don't have safe working conditions.

The reality is that it is cheaper not to provide good wages, it is cheaper not to provide good benefits, and it is cheaper not to have safe working conditions. And so employers can't both want to produce a product or a service and make a lot of profit on that at the expense of workers.

So, all we are asking, and it is a pretty simple prospect, we are asking simply for workers to be able to organize themselves, decide who represents them, and sit down as an equal bargaining partner at the bargaining table with their employer. And in the end, it is a win-win for employers and for workers.

And I would yield to the gentleman. Mr. ELLISON. And I would add to society at large.

Let me say that 79 percent of workers surveyed reported that workers are very, or at least somewhat, likely to be fired for trying to organize a union, an important fact I think we need to point out. And in about 25 percent of all organizing drives, at least one worker is unlawfully fired for union activity.

So again, this kind of protection, this stress-free way to either have a union recognized or not I think is a very, very good idea.

I believe the gentlelady was kind of going down myths that are out there. Let's bust a few more myths. I think that it is important to point out that this does not hurt small business. Small businesses would not be harmed by the Employee Free Choice Act. In fact, small business stand to gain from the Employee Free Choice Act. It is interesting to me that in a time when we talk about "too big to fail" and these huge, enormous businesses, some of them opposing the Employee Free Choice Act, it is the small business, again, that is often at the back end of the line on this stuff. But along that alone, let's just say that small business owners are supporting the bill and are beginning to speak out all over the country.

In fact, a Wisconsin company, Wisconsin Vision, owned by Darren Horndasch, says that having a union makes his employees more career oriented, more invested in his business and gives him a competitive edge. Jim O'Malley, owner of a print shop in Pittsburgh, says that he values the

union apprenticeship program for his employees. Again, sharing training expenses with the union is a benefit to this small business employer. Ruth Shep, a business owner in West Fargo, North Dakota, says "good jobs support families, they support the community." And she wants to see workers be able to form a union and to have a choice in our economy. Larry Thompson, owner of an Ohio firm, Thompson Electric, recently wrote an op-ed in which he wrote, "our union workers receive the most cutting-edge job training available, and it pays off through lower injury rates, increased productivity and strengthening the ability to serve the people of Ohio."

So I would agree with you. It is cheaper in the short term, this quarter, to try to shave a buck here a buck there. But if you want a successful business, you have to build over the long term. That means having a good, solid, well trained, reliable and productive workforce. And you can't do that on the cheap. And that is why we need the Employee Free Choice Act.

And I yield back to the gentlelady.

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. Reclaiming my time.

I would like to point out to the gentleman as well, and, Mr. Speaker, you know this, that, in fact, what has been good for unions and for union workers has been good for all workers. Now I have never been a member of a union. But I do know that when I was working in the low-wage workforce that precisely because union workers had gained benefits, increased wages and working standards, that there was a payoff for me as a worker who was not a union member. It meant that over time my wages went up because the union workers were the ones who fought the most for an increase in the minimum wage, not because union workers were receiving minimum wages, but because their fight and struggle for a good-paying union job was a fight and a struggle for ordinary workers, even those who were working at the minimum wage. So the payoff for the union worker and for the organized workforce is that there is a benefit, then, to all of us.

I remember when I was working, Mr. Speaker, as a waitress and scrubbing by on tips that it was precisely because union workers fought for an increase in wages that that benefited me as a non-union worker. And so there are great benefits.

We know that the fight for union wages that are good wages, good benefits and safe working conditions is a fight that pays off both here in the United States and around the world. After all, when employers are allowed to close down union factories here in this country, relocate them to another country where they pay depressed wages, that has a benefit around the world, and it has a direct benefit, a negative consequence to American workers.

□ 1445

And so the strength of being able to organize unions and to bargain collectively for benefits and wages and safe working conditions is one that pays off to all workers in this country, and indeed, pays off to workers around the world.

And let me just throw out another one of these myths, because some have said that if we implement the Employee Free Choice Act, then that's going to result in labor unions engaging in intimidating and harassing behavior towards employees. This seems rather ridiculous Mr. Speaker, that, in fact, when labor unions and workers want to organize, it is not in their interest to harass and intimidate workers. The goal is to bring workers along. And so this is a myth also that has to be destroyed and that indeed, in the present system, the coercion occurs in the other way, the coercion occurs from employers who don't want to see a union workplace.

And look what happens in communities. I happen to live in a district in Maryland in which we have one hotel on a project where the work force is organizing, where there will be good wages and benefits for the service employees at that hotel. And that's a good thing, and I fought for it too. But in the other hotels, that's not happening. And so you can imagine that if we actually lift up workers in one work site, that we have the possibility then of lifting up workers in another work site.

And as you've pointed out, the gentleman from Minnesota has pointed out that, in fact, Mr. Speaker, that means that all workers benefit from the ability to organize to form a union.

And I would yield to the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. ELLISON. I thank you, Congresswoman EDWARDS, for doing this again. So many myths you're busting tonight, so much good information, including the panels that are right next to you.

But I just want to say that, you know, as you're busting myths associated with the Employee Free Choice Act, and I thank you for that, let me just talk about a few other things that unions have done for me and you. Worker compensation. That's because workers fought for it. Social Security, that's a pretty good thing, right? Minimum wage, I'd say that's a thumbs up. The weekend. You want to thank somebody for the weekend, you can thank the union movement. The 8-hour day, prohibitions against child labor so we don't have 9-year-olds slaving away for 14 hours a day 7 days a week. Worker safety, used to be, Congresswoman EDWARDS, that if you lost your thumb at that punch press, they couldn't use you anymore, you just had to leave. Now we've got worker safety and requirements, OSHA. Setting a wage scale. As you pointed out, as a worker who was on the lower end of the wage scale, you could thank the union movement for setting a minimum wage and for setting a wage scale that other employers

had to meet, or they would lose workers because they would come to the higher wage area.

The union movement, as I pointed out a moment ago, contributed to the civil rights movement, for women, for people of color. And even today, so many struggles for union representation are caught up in struggles for empowerment, for people who are legal immigrants to our society, communities of color, women, people who are fighting for a chance in our society. The union movement has done a lot for us all.

I yield back.

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. And reclaiming my time from the gentleman, I would say this as well; that, you know, people ask me all the time, even as a Member of Congress, and certainly as a worker, why do you support workers' rights to organize? And it's a pretty simple answer. I support workers' rights to organize because I recognize the benefit that that pays to all of us in our communities. And you know, our small businesses out there want to be able to provide, for example, health care for their employees. And it's really tough for a small business to do that because health care costs have so skyrocketed, and it cuts deeply into even marginal profit lines.

On the other hand, the unions are out there fighting for health care for all of us, for a system that would actually provide health care at a lower cost, affordable and accessible for all of us. What does that mean for small business? It means it takes it off of your, you know, out of your pot. And so that's an important benefit from small business that will only come because we are working together with members of organized labor to fight for health care for all of us.

Let's talk about what it means to have workers in our community who are able to go out and purchase the services of our small businesses and the products produced by all of our businesses. Well, we certainly cannot do that on stagnant wages. And so, when the unions are out there able to organize workers to negotiate contracts with their employers, creating certainty in the workplace, then employers and businesses can work on productivity, can work on efficiency and can work on growth. And this benefits all of us, from those of us who want to go out into the consumer marketplace and purchase a television made by a worker, or those of us who want to go and get the services supported by union workers. And so it's, again, a win-win situation for all of us.

And I'd like to say, as well for our brothers and sisters in organized labor, Mr. Speaker, there are no harder workers than people who get up every day and do the tough jobs, some of them jobs that many of us don't want to do, but need to be done. And so, this notion that somehow we should deprive them of wages and benefits and safe working conditions really goes against our gut,

and goes against who we are as Americans, and because we know that from the beginnings of the last century, the hard-fought benefits that you pointed out, of Social Security, of the 8-hour work day, of the 40-hour work week, of setting a minimum scale for a standard for wages and for working conditions, ensuring protections if that thumb was cut off on the production line, these are all things that, because union workers stood on the line and fought the hard, tough, courageous battles for all of us, that whether you're a union worker or not, you get the benefit of that.

Even those of us who are Members of Congress have the benefit of workers having organized. The mere fact that we can put into a retirement system is about workers having organized and fought for those benefits in their workplace. And so the benefits are tremendous for all of us.

And that is why, in all of our communities, as we're talking about spending stimulus dollars to the billions of dollars throughout the States on transportation projects and water and sewer infrastructure and all of the energy infrastructure that we need for the 21st century, what we really need are skilled union workers getting highly paid, you know, wages and benefits and safe working conditions to rebuild our infrastructure for the 21st century. And you can only get that when workers are able to organize.

And so I would yield to the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. ELLISON. And I again want to thank the gentlelady from Maryland, Congresswoman EDWARDS. You're doing a great job here, a great service getting the word out. And I want to lend my voice and thank you. Again, reminding everybody that we are here on the progressive message. The Progressive Caucus has a vision for America that includes workers' rights, and we're talking about that today.

And I just want to say, as I begin to have to wind down, Congresswoman, that I just want to leave with this thought. You know, you and I know that this Congress has been abuzz over the last week, over the whole AIG thing, right? We've been talking about AIG, AIG. And what have we been talking about? These enormous bonuses these folks have been getting. \$165 million in retention bonuses to people who work in the unit of AIG that did all these fancy derivatives that kind of led to this tremendous risk to the American economy.

But this idea of work, executive pay, Congresswoman, is not a new one. In fact, it was 1991, when I was a brand new lawyer, just got out of law school in 1990, and I read a book called *In Search of Excess*. And in this book it talked about executive pay, exorbitant executive pay. 1991. I think I was 25 years old at the time.

What's my point?

My point is, that during the same period of time we've seen flat worker pay.

We've seen worker pay stay stagnant. We've seen people's unemployment rise recently, but we've seen the health care plans have higher co pays, more of a premium every month, and we've seen workers really struggling, and we've seen productivity going up. So we see flat worker pay, increasing productivity, meaning workers are making more stuff and doing more services within the same amount of time, and so the reality is, somebody's got to stand up for the American worker.

I think it's almost time for us to wrap up. I am going to leave that to you, the Congresswoman from Maryland, who's done such a good job in organizing this special order tonight for the Progressive Caucus.

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. And if I could make an inquiry of the Speaker how much time remains.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 14 minutes remain.

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You raise a good point. And I know that my colleague from Minnesota, a real leader in the Progressive Caucus, is set to depart. But I will just say this as you're leaving, that this fight for the Employee Free Choice Act is really a fight for justice for the American worker. And it's a fight to set the American worker back on course for productivity and for growth and for success. And so I think that it's time for those of us who believe in the capacity of the American worker to stand up for workers by supporting the Employee Free Choice Act. And you know, Mr. Speaker, the Employee Free Choice Act was just introduced into Congress just a week or so ago, and so it is time now for Members of Congress to really hear, Mr. Speaker, from constituents about their support of the Employee Free Choice Act, and to say to the United States Congress that it is time for workers to get a fair deal.

When I hear you describe, and we read across the papers the excesses of CEO executives in the financial industry, and that ordinary workers have to bear the burden of paying the cost for straightening this system out, it makes me cringe. And the reason that it does, Mr. Speaker, is because it's unfair to workers.

You know, when the auto industry came to the United States Congress and said, we're going to need help, otherwise the auto industry may not survive, you know, many Members of the United States Congress said to auto workers, well, you have to go back and renegotiate your contracts and your deal, talking to workers and telling workers that they to renegotiate their deals. But we haven't been willing really to say to CEOs, I'm sorry but you got quite a deal too. You need to go back and renegotiate that with the American public.

And so I think it's time for us to actually close that gap from CEO pay to worker pay, because it's the workers that prop up, that build this country.

And yet, year after year, decade after decade, workers are losing. And the Employee Free Choice Act is yet another tool that we have that we will provide to workers so that it enables them to organize, to bargain collectively and fairly, as partners at a table, with employers and to say to employers, once again, we don't have anything against your making money, making a profit, building your business. But you cannot do that at the expense of and on the backs of workers.

And I think it's a fairly simple proposition, and I think it is one, Mr. Speaker, that the American public feels very strongly about, that somehow, all of us who get up every day and go to work for a living ought to have good wages, good benefits and safe working conditions, just three simple things.

□ 1500

Because the American worker is not asking anyone, really, for a handout. The American worker is not asking for an easy deal or for a bonus. They are saying fair wages, good and safe working conditions and good benefits. I think that the American worker deserves the opportunity to sit at a bargaining table to decide: I want to have a union; I want to easily sign up and let my coworkers know that I want a union; I want the choice to be able to do that, and then I want to bargain fairly at the bargaining table with the employer. I think that that, Mr. Speaker, is a good deal for the American people.

So I am excited about the prospects. I think it is important for us to destroy the mythology that is taking place from some who don't really believe in the American worker, and I think it is important for us to destroy the mythology of those who believe that just because a worker gets a good wage and good benefits and good working conditions it means that that is the end of the American economy. It is not true. It never has been true, and it will not be true tomorrow.

So I thank the gentleman from Minnesota for joining me this evening to speak up on behalf of the American worker and to speak up and say that the Employee Free Choice Act is about choice. It is not my choice. It is not your choice. Mr. Speaker, it is not your choice. It is the choice of the American worker to choose a union, to bargain fairly, to get a good deal, and to go to work the next morning to take care of themselves and their families.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mrs. DAVIS of California (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today on account of funeral of very close friend.

Mr. GRIFFITH (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today on account of family medical emergency.

Mr. POE of Texas (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of official business in the district.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. KAPTUR) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. COHEN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SHERMAN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SCHIFF, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. BURTON of Indiana) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. GOHMERT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GUTHRIE, for 5 minutes, March 31.

Mr. CASSIDY, for 5 minutes, April 2.

Mr. POE of Texas, for 5 minutes, April 2.

Mr. JONES, for 5 minutes, April 2.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, April 2.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 3 o'clock and 1 minute p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until Monday, March 30, 2009, at 12:30 p.m., for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

1066. A letter from the Attorney, Office of Assistant General Counsel for Legislation and Regulatory Law, Department of Energy, transmitting the Department's final rule — Federal Procurement of Energy Efficient Products (RIN: 1904-AB68) received March 19, 2009, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1067. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Formaldehyde, Polymer with 2-Methyloxirane and 4-Nonylphenol; Tolerance Exemption [EPA-HQ-OPP-2008-0794; FRL-8399-5] received March 13, 2009, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1068. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting certification of a proposed manufacturing license agreement with Germany (Transmittal No. DDTTC 141-08), pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 39, section 36(c); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

1069. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary for Export Administration, Department of Commerce, transmitting the Department's final rule — Removal and Modification of Certain Entries from the Entity List: Persons Removed or Modified Based on

ERC Annual Review [Docket No.: 090223225-9275-01] (RIN: 0694-AE57) received March 19, 2009, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

1070. A letter from the Secretary, Judicial Conference of the United States, transmitting a legislative proposal to eliminate the divisions within the Judicial District of North Dakota, leaving unaffected North Dakota's configuration as one judicial district with four places of holding court; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

1071. A letter from the Director of Regulations Management, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting the Department's final rule — Termination of Phase-In Period for Full Concurrent Receipt of Military Retired Pay and Veterans Disability Compensation Based on a VA Determination of Individual Unemployability (RIN: 2900-AN19) received March 19, 2009, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

1072. A letter from the Director of Regulations Management, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting the Department's final rule — The Dr. James Allen Veteran Vision Equity Act of 2007 (RIN: 2900-AN03) received March 19, 2009, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

1073. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule — Tier I — Industry Director Directive on Domestic Production Deduction (DPD) #3 — Field Directive related to compensation Expenses currently deducted but attributable to prior periods. [LMSB-04-0209-004] received March 19, 2009, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

1074. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule — Applicable Federal Rates — April 2009 (Rev. Rul. 2009-10) received March 20, 2009, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

1075. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule — Tax Treatment of Losses from Criminally Fraudulent Investment Arrangements (Rev. Rul. 2009-9) received March 23, 2009, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

1076. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule — Safe Harbor Method for Determining Theft Loss Deductions from Criminally Fraudulent Investment Arrangements (Rev. Proc. 2009-20) received March 20, 2009, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

1077. A letter from the National Quality Forum, transmitting the Forum's report entitled, "Improving Healthcare Performance: Setting Priorities and Enhancing Measurement Capacity" in accordance with a provision in the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008; jointly to the Committees on Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows:

Mr. FILNER: Committee on Veterans' Affairs. H.R. 1171. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to reauthorize the