

we are making right here in Washington, D.C.

I stand here before you today in the House of Representatives suggesting that some of the economic indicators in Ohio are outpacing the national average. In Ohio, we have an unemployment rate of 9.7 percent, but yet in the counties that comprise the 16th Congressional District, Stark County outpaces by that nearly 1 percent more, at 10.7 percent, outpacing the national average. In Ashland County we are at nearly 13 percent unemployment, and in Wayne County we are almost at 10 percent unemployment.

The people of Northeast Ohio are demanding success stories, and Washington, D.C., has a part in playing a substantial role.

We visited the Heinz plant in Stark County. We also had the opportunity to visit another name brand factory in our district, the Smucker factory. The success stories that are there are clearly evidence that the entrepreneurial spirit of America is alive and strong.

What I heard as the common theme from these great individuals and great Americans was that America will recover and we will rebound, but we have to believe in our leadership, we have to believe in our process of dialogue, and respect that we have in the dialogue, that we have in debate, which will restore our economy, and they expect us to demand public policy that will make America stronger.

I was visiting the Defense Metals Technology Center and also meeting with the Blue Green Alliance on energy back home, and they suggested that we have the right tools with the right leadership in Washington to recover and restore jobs back in Ohio, and I talk to you with the respect and dignity that we should have in this chamber here.

We may differ on ideas. We may differ on opinions about how to move our States and our economy and our country forward. But at the end of the day we all want to see prosperity for our Nation. We all want to see Americans get back to work. And those Americans, like the ones at Alliance Castings that punched the time clock every day, played by the rules, brought a lunch pail to work and believed they were contributing to the future success of their family and their loved ones, are now going to be left on the streets with an unemployment check and a pink slip.

We have got to do our part here. We need a manufacturing policy in America, one that helps us embolden those small employers back home like the Heinz factory and Smuckers, two of the big names that we all recognize, but many more, like Sarah Plastics.

I visited with a CEO and a gentleman that has countless numbers of ideas, but he doesn't have the resources to bring his products to market. We have got to help him, and that is what this Congress is aiming to do with helping small businesses. A tax reduction for 95

percent of the Americans in this country. That is significant. The largest tax reduction with the economic stimulus package, the largest tax reduction in our Nation's history, for every American in this country and small businesses who help rebuild our economy day-to-day.

I also heard from Project Rebuild, folks who are giving opportunities and second chances to Americans, those students back home that maybe dropped out of school and are now finding success stories working to build a skill and trade that they can take back and use in this great and diverse economy to help build America and make America stronger.

I heard from Walsh University students, giving their speech for one of their business luncheons, the fact that we have young entrepreneurs in that audience who are looking to make America stronger by bringing their innovative ideas and working with the local businesses. I believe that is going to be the key to success in our education stories back home, is that we marry up our local economies to the industry and talent that we have at our local universities.

Leadership is about action, and that is what they expect in this Congress, that we will act on the ideas of public policy to make our country stronger.

REMEMBERING COLUMBINE

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

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, Sunday night a candlelight vigil was held at Columbine Memorial at Clement Park in Littleton, Colorado. Yesterday, April 20th, marks the 10-year anniversary of the shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. This senseless act of violence touched all Americans. As a community and Nation, we were in shock and disbelief that such a horrific incident could take place anywhere in the United States.

The volunteer members of the Columbine Memorial Foundation have dedicated themselves to preserving the memories of those who were lost on that terrible day. I am proud to recognize their tireless efforts in establishing the memorial.

The Columbine Memorial Foundation gives a description of the events that occurred immediately following the shootings at Columbine on April 20, 1999, that eventually led to the establishment of the memorial:

"At first, there was an outpouring of flowers, notes, poems, ribbons, stuffed animals, pictures and other objects that were brought to Clement Park to pay tribute to those who had died, were injured or traumatized. From the initial outpouring of emotions and disbelief came the concept of establishing a permanent public memorial near the high school. This memorial should

serve to honor those innocent victims, but also provide an historic record of this tragedy and to deliver a message of hope for many generations to come. This memorial is dedicated to honor and remember the victims of the April 20th, 1999, shootings at Columbine High School.

"The Columbine Memorial consists of an inner ring of Remembrance with unique personal remembrances submitted from the families of those who were murdered. The outer ring of Healing is for all those who were injured on April 20th, 1999, and for the larger community who was touched by the tragic events at Columbine. A variety of general text gathered from interviews of students, teachers, the injured and their families and other community members tell diverse stories of healing, changes in the community and hopes of the future.

"There are overlooks along and on top of Rebel Hill providing panoramic views of the Rocky Mountains, the eastern plains and the Columbine community."

The candlelight vigil was a moving tribute to the memories of the students and the teacher who had fallen and to their families and to the members of this community who have suffered so much from their loss.

We will never be able to thank the members of the Columbine Memorial Foundation enough for their leadership in making the memorial a reality. Through their extraordinary personal contributions to preserve the memories of the lives lost that day, we will never forget the tragic events of April 20th, 1999, at Columbine High School.

THE SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS WAS AN EMBARRASSMENT FOR THE HEMISPHERE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the Summit of the Americas held this last weekend in Trinidad and Tobago constituted an embarrassment for this hemisphere. Fidel Castro in Cuba is a psychopath and a serial killer, but he has long had a plan. His long-term goal has been to have the United States apologize to him and for the United States to bankroll his oppressive totalitarian apparatus before he dies. He wants the United States to apologize for having kept the U.S. market and its millions of tourists and billions of dollars in financing from him and for having denied him full diplomatic relations for decades.

In order to achieve his goal, Fidel Castro has been recruiting advocates for years. The ideological and psychological fascination and dependency that Hugo Chavez has on Fidel Castro has allowed Castro to utilize Chavez's billions of petrodollars to purchase many important advocates.

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It is part of the public record that a suitcase of Chavez-cash heading to Mrs. Kirchner in Argentina was accidentally intercepted by authorities before reaching its intended destination.

Castro has purchased advocates through the years via the always present threat of blackmail after trips to totalitarian Cuba where the regime tapes visitors in "compromising" situations, as confirmed by Interior Ministry defector Roberto Hernandez del Llano and Cuban Counter-Intelligence defector Major Roberto Ortega.

Castro also serves as a "banker" for illicit money possessed by those who seek to avoid detection by the anti-laundering mechanisms set up by the international community. It matters not if the money's source is political corruption or narco-trafficking.

Hugo Chavez's absolute dependency on Fidel Castro for every major decision, even for his phrases and gestures in international forums, is unprecedented. While the Soviet Union used to send Castro economic aid and also orders and instructions, Chavez sends Castro billions of dollars and receives orders from him.

What the world witnessed at this last weekend's Summit of the Americas was a culmination of years of preparation in the purchase and cultivation of advocates by Fidel Castro. The goal of the advocates: mass American tourism with its billions of dollars a year and U.S. trade financing, so that the U.S. taxpayer ultimately bails out and bankrolls Fidel Castro.

Castro's advocates know very well that article III of the Charter of the Organization of American States requires the existence of representative democracy in all the countries of our hemisphere, and that the Inter-American Democratic Charter of 2001 even spells out the collective steps to be taken when an American republic's democracy is usurped.

They know that Cuba, under Castro, was the only country in our hemisphere where free elections have not been held in over 50 years, and where dungeons are full of nonviolent political prisoners. They know that under Castro, Cuba is a personal island-estate, a ranch, a personal land holding or homestead, a totalitarian fiefdom, owned by one man, with a brother who enjoys the title of head of state and carefully carries out his brother's orders.

Any goods the people on the island purchase must be purchased in the island fiefdom's "company stores" and with worthless "vouchers" called "convertible pesos" sold by the regime. Castro takes 30 percent of all hard currency "off the top" at the time island residents purchase the "vouchers," and all hard currency must be spent with purchased "vouchers" in his "company stores."

The inducement for child prostitution on the island-fiefdom is unparalleled in the world, because no matter

how hard island residents work, only foreign "hard" currency allows them to purchase the "vouchers," the "convertible pesos," for use in the stores that sell everything, from food to clothes to soap to toothpaste.

Equally, only foreign "hard" currency allows residents to purchase medicines. The shelves in the old stores and pharmacies where residents used to be able to purchase Soviet-bloc supplies with their ration cards are simply empty since there is no money to be made there by the dictator.

The Castro advocates at the weekend "Summit" knew all this, like when Mrs. Kirchner called for the U.S. to make amends with "our sister republic, Cuba." Or when Mr. Ortega condemned the U.S. for organizing the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. Somehow they knew that President Obama would refer to Castro's totalitarian fiefdom as "Cuba." Somehow they knew that President Obama would not respond to Mr. Ortega that at the Bay of Pigs, Cubans bravely fought to spare their country half a century of totalitarian oppression. President Obama said, "I'm grateful President Ortega did not blame me for things that happened when I was 3 months old." Somehow they knew President Obama would not make clear that, as per U.S. law, the U.S. embargo will go away when all of Castro's political prisoners are freed and when there is freedom of expression and multi-party elections scheduled in Cuba. Of course they knew. President Obama had just unilaterally granted the fiefdom's owner hundreds of millions of dollars a year, in exchange for nothing.

A LITTLE BIT OF OPTIMISM ABOUT OUR ECONOMY

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

Mr. INGLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to report on a telephone conversation that I had and actually then an in-person conversation I had with a fellow who was talking to me about his great concern about the economy. And of course, I started the conversation by saying, yes, I share that concern. But he could tell that I had a little bit of optimism about where we are. And he asked why? How could you be optimistic? And I told him two reasons to be optimistic that are immediately apparent with the economy, I think. One is, you know, crisis creates opportunity to fix things. And it could be that we can use this current financial problem that we've got and the incredible spending that we're doing here in Washington, to finally focus on change to the crucial programs like Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. Until we're talking those programs, we're not talking balancing the budget.

But in the midst of the crisis created by our wild spending, perhaps we can bring our attention to the underlying

problem, the problem that's not new, that's been going on in Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. So that's one reason for optimism.

Another, I told him, is that really we've got an incredible opportunity to grow our way out of this current problem by solving the energy challenge. If we address the energy security question, we can grow out of this problem.

You know, I was here in the Congress during the nineties and served on the Budget Committee. Part of our balancing act in getting to balance in 1999 and 2000 was fiscal restraint, and that's because of Republicans taking control of the House and having some fiscal restraint.

But it's also true that what was really happening is there was a massive expansion of the economy because of the tech boom. Because of the advances in PCs and the Internet, the productivity that came with those, and, therefore, growth without inflation, we were able to expand our economy. That economy threw off revenue to the Federal Government and, as a result, we reached balance.

Now we have an opportunity to do the same thing, just energy being the next step up in a plateau of economic development. We climbed up onto the plateau of the tech boom. Now we've got the opportunity to climb up onto another high plateau of energy security. If we do that successfully, I believe that we can generate economic growth that will, in turn, generate revenues for this Federal Government. And the result is that we will, once again, balance the budget if we pursue fiscal restraint in coming out of this crisis, together with economic growth that will come from addressing our energy security challenge.

Mr. Speaker, in the weeks and months to come, I hope to speak more about a very specific proposal that can do just that, with an elegant price signal sent throughout our economy about new energy technologies; and with that price signal, I think we can get about solving this fiscal problem by economic growth and, of course, also addressing the underlying problem of out-of-control entitlement spending that needs to be brought under control.

So, Mr. Speaker, tough times; but it's also true there's every reason to be optimistic.

PRAYER CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mrs. BACHMANN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BACHMANN. Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last few weeks, President Obama made the statement while in a foreign country that we are not a Christian Nation, that we are not a Jewish Nation or a Muslim Nation. He said we are citizens with shared values.

Upon President Obama's return to the United States, he went to Georgetown University, a great Catholic