

Speaker, but I think it's also the kind of chicanery that we're seeing going on right now.

When you buy somebody's vote with \$300 million in Louisiana and you buy somebody's vote in Nebraska, and then when the unions start squealing because they think they're going to be paying too much for health insurance, you give them a \$60 billion tax break, break on their premiums, people across the country start saying, Hey, what's going on? Is anybody up there honest? You're buying votes with taxpayers' money. That \$60 billion break that the unions are going to get is going to be made up in part from a new tax or an additional tax on prosthetic devices and wheelchairs. The people who really need help are going to have to pay higher taxes for those things because you're giving a \$60 billion break to the unions.

So, Madam Speaker, I'm not going to talk for the whole 5 minutes tonight. I just want to make this point very, very clear, and I hope my colleagues back in their offices are listening as well. There is a message being sent to Members of Congress. There is a message being sent to the Senators across the Capitol, and it is that people want honest, fair government. They don't want a socialist government. They don't want the Congress controlling their lives. They don't want to have a bureaucrat between themselves and the doctors that they go see on a regular basis. In short, they don't want that health care bill, and they certainly don't want more taxes, and they certainly don't want Members of the Senate and the House being bought off by bribes that are being given to them by the leadership in order to get their vote on this health care bill.

Regardless of what happens in, now, 6 minutes, I think that the people of this country have got the message. They don't want socialized medicine. They don't want more government control over their lives. So I hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, who may not be here right now, that they will take a hard look at the polling results and what happens tonight. Win, lose, or draw, it's going to show very clearly that an awful lot of Democrats, an awful lot of Independents as well as Republicans are very concerned about what's going on here in Washington.

I hope that down the road my colleagues who have political goals in mind will take all this to heart when they start casting their vote on this health care bill when it comes back from the Senate.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the Senate or its Members.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, I beg to differ. I think that as

long as I am speaking in a generic term, it's not something that's not allowed. We talk about the Senate all the time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members may not engage in unparliamentary remarks toward the Senate collectively or its Members.

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

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING PRIVATE FIRST CLASS GEOFFREY A. WHITSITT

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

Mr. INGLIS. Madam Speaker, I rise to remember Private First Class Geoffrey A. Whitsitt, a 21-year-old of Travelers Rest, South Carolina, Army Airborne, serving in Afghanistan, headed for Special Forces training and hoping to become an Army Ranger.

Geoff was 2 weeks shy of his 22nd birthday when, on January 13, an improvised explosive device was detonated near the Humvee he was driving, killing Geoff, his sergeant, and seriously wounding their gunner. Some Taliban or al Qaeda operative out there might be thinking that they killed an infidel. They didn't. They failed at three levels.

First, Geoff was no infidel. He was a believer. He was a believer in America and a believer in the King of all creation, a citizen of the freest, most blessed land in the world, and a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. Geoff wanted that kingdom to come. He prayed for that kingdom to come. He worked for that kingdom to come. He served for that kingdom to come. In the end, he went there before the invisible became visible here.

Those who detonated that IED failed at another level. They think they frightened Geoff's family, his friends and his countrymen. They're wrong. My wife and I visited the Whitsitts last night. Their faith in America, their faith in the author of our salvation, the Prince of Peace, the King of Kings is undiminished. They know that other Geoff's will run the hills and woods that Geoff loved to run in the northern part of our county. They know that another Geoff will come in last in his first cross-country meet and finish 16th in the State by the end of the season.

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They know that another Geoff will take what he learned of love and books and faith in his home school and at Greenville Tech Charter High School and volunteer to serve his Nation.

They know that another dad will take another Geoff to the banks of the

Middle Saluda River for fishing and for talks about the essence of life. Those who detonated that IED failed at a third and higher level. They think that Geoff is dead. He isn't. He lives. He lives in our hearts and minds because he is one of our heroes.

He lives in the heart of his older brother, Steven, serving with steely determination in the United States Navy.

He will always live in the hearts of his mom and dad. They loved him, led him, admired him, and gave him up for the rest of us.

Their gift reminds us of the gift of all gifts—a father who had sovereign control over all aspects of His Son's substitutionary death, and who gave Him up for us all. Geoff lives in the nail-pierced hands of that Savior, and no one can snatch him out of those hands.

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

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

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

(Mrs. SCHMIDT addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

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

ISSUES OF THE DAY

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

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, it is an honor again to be here on the floor of the House of Representatives to talk about the issues of the day and talk about changes that have happened in our country over the course of the last year due to the leadership of President Obama and the Democratic Congress.

I know in today's world, in today's media-driven world where we like to talk about and have fights about different issues and let those fights kind of permeate society, sometimes it is very difficult for us as leaders in the country to talk directly to our constituents and to the American people about some of the changes that have been put in place.

If we look at just a little over a year ago, in the fall of last year, October of 2008, the difficulties facing our country, on the economic side, the collapse

of the stock market, the collapse of the job market, Wall Street run amuck, no regulations, no rules, fancy packaging of different accounting schemes and creative financial packages that ultimately led our country to one of the greatest crises we have had since the Great Depression. And were it not for the programs that were started during the Great Depression, it would have been the Great Depression. And if it weren't for extraordinary acts on behalf of the Federal Government to support the banking industry, and I remember getting calls from local businesses, local banks, community banks, saying we need to do something, things are collapsing, we had a vote here on the floor to pass billions of dollars worth of aid to the banks and the vote failed and the stock market dropped 800 to 900 points. Subsequently we came back and passed it and took a lot of political heat for it.

Months later, under the leadership of President Obama after he was sworn in, we passed the stimulus package. In January of last year, we had 700,000-plus jobs that were lost in January of last year. And every economist was saying, Presidential candidate MCCAIN's top economist was saying, the top Democratic economist, were all saying there was a \$2 trillion to \$3 trillion hole in the economy, and we have to fill that hole. And the only entity left to put some money into the economy is the Federal Government. Thus, the stimulus package—which quite frankly I didn't think was big enough. We put the stimulus package in place.

Now let's fast forward a year. Nobody is happy, of course. I represent Youngstown and Warren, Ohio, and they have the worst unemployment rates in the entire State. A lot of that has to do with the manufacturing base and losing manufacturing jobs. But the bottom line is this: in November, we lost thousands of jobs as opposed to 750,000 jobs. And I think in December, the numbers are not completely official, but 70,000 or 80,000 jobs were lost in December. So from 750,000 in the month of January to only losing 80,000 in December—nobody is happy with that, but we are clearly moving in the right direction.

When you look at the fact that the stock market is up 55 to 60 percent since it bottomed out, we are clearly moving in the right direction.

Now, a lot more has to be done, and I think we have got to make some tremendous investments, but one of the things that is strangling the economy right now is health care costs on businesses and health care costs on families. And so the health care reform proposal is here to say that even if you don't morally believe that we should cover every American, we can all make those arguments from a religious perspective or values arguments or ethical arguments that we maybe need to do that, let's set that aside and let's talk economics and let's talk about the fact that if we do nothing, health care costs

will continue to strangle small businesses in the United States, will continue to further increase their grip around the throats of families in the United States, and all we hear when we go back to our districts is about the cost of health care.

This is President Obama's attempt and the attempt of the Democrats to try to fix this problem. By doing absolutely nothing, we are going to see an \$1,800 a year increase in the average family of four's health care costs next year, and then another \$1,800 the following year and another \$2,000, and it will just keep escalating to the point where it eats up the whole family budget and you are paying more and getting less in coverage, really. So it is eating up the whole family budget. There is less money to spend on tuition or go on vacation or increase your family's quality of life, maybe move into a better neighborhood, a better school district. All of these things are not available to families because of the increased cost of health care.

So doing nothing allows that to continue because we are afraid to make tough political decisions. We didn't get elected to come to this body, Madam Speaker, to make the easy decisions. We didn't run just to make sure that we got elected in 2 more years. We got hired by the American people to solve very difficult, very complex problems. And we are attacking those problems because that's the mission that they gave us. We set out to do it with energy, and we set out to do it now with health care reform.

Let me just say finally before I kick it to my friend, who people all across the country now know of because of his heroic works in Haiti, if we do nothing in 10 years, \$1 of every \$5 in the United States of America will be spent on health care. And in 30 years, \$1 of every \$3 will be spent on health care in the United States of America. That is unsustainable. That is an unsustainable road for us to go down. People will look 10 years from now and 20 years from now and 30 years from now and they will ask, Who was representing western Pennsylvania when they had a chance to tackle health care reform? Who was representing Connecticut and who was representing northeast Ohio when the bell rang to step up and make these changes?

I yield to my friend from western Pennsylvania.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I thank the gentleman and I thank him for his kind words as well. He hit the nail right on the head, Madam Speaker, I think it is appropriate today to take a look at what was happening 1 year ago today. A year ago today, the budget deficit was forecast by the Congressional Budget Office for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2009, to be \$1.8 trillion. The jobs that were lost in the month of January were more than 700,000 jobs 1 year ago in January. The stock market was trending straight down, and it bottomed out in March at 6,500. We had

just had a loss of 6 percentage points for the quarter in GDP, one of the largest in recent memory drops in gross domestic product. That is what we were facing 1 year ago today.

As the gentleman from Ohio said, this Congress was elected to make difficult decisions. This Congress was elected to work together and do give and take. Look, every bill that you pass is going to have some things that you like and some things that you don't like, but when the country is staring into the abyss, literally facing economic calamity if we fail to act, 1 year ago moving into the spring of 2009, this Congress did act. In fact, February of 2009.

What has happened since then compared to 1 year ago today? I talked about how the budget forecast was expected to be \$1.8 trillion in deficit. Well, we ended at about \$1.2 trillion in deficit. Now I am not going to have a big party here, because that is the largest deficit that we have ever faced because of some of the circumstances that the gentleman described that were beyond control and unforeseen because of the economic catastrophe, but we saved \$600 billion from the deficit because the economy was starting to rebound in a way that the Congressional Budget Office did not foresee.

The gross domestic product, instead of losing 6.5 percentage points in a quarter like a year ago, we are on the verge of announcing back-to-back quarters of positive growth in GDP, and we expect a very strong number for the last half of 2009.

We talked about all of these factors relating to our economy, and things are starting to improve. We are certainly not out of the woods yet. But it was the actions of this Congress, instead of sitting on our hands and saying, Well, let's just let everything solve itself. That is how we got here in the first place. That is how we found ourselves in the hole that we are in the process of digging our way out of.

What I would say to the gentleman is, you cannot solve our long-term budget circumstance, our deficit, as the gentleman eloquently said, without addressing the cost of health care. Health care affects everybody in this country, every business, every family, every level of government—Federal, State, and municipal. We are at a competitive disadvantage to all of the nations that we have to do business with. The gentleman represents a district similar to mine. He is in the Youngstown area; I have southwestern Pennsylvania, very hard-hit by losses in manufacturing. A lot of that has to do with health care costs. A lot of the competitive disadvantage that America has with foreign nations is because of the cost of health care. But businesses every day struggle to make that decision: Are they going to be able to continue to offer coverage to their employees for one more year facing another 20 percent rate increase?

Senior citizens in my district on average saw a 45 percent increase in their

Medicare Advantage plans. A 45 percent 1-year increase. That is simply unsustainable, and the government certainly is never going to balance its budget without addressing the cost of health care.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I would like to say that this just didn't happen. We didn't just end up here a couple of Octobers ago and all of a sudden things just happened. Our government was controlled by a conservative, neoconservative ideology for most of the first decade in this century. From 2000 to 2008 they controlled the White House, and 2000 to 2006 they controlled the Congress. They implemented their economic philosophy, hook, line, and sinker. It got implemented. They controlled all of the levers of government. They passed their supply-side economics. They cut taxes for the wealthiest, saying that will stimulate the economy and everything will take care of itself. Deregulate Wall Street; everyone will be honest with each other, no one would possibly do anything wrong if we are not watching them, and they will behave themselves. They forgot to factor in that people get greedy when you don't watch them, and that is what happened on Wall Street.

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So my point on top of what the gentleman just said is this didn't just happen. We had leaders in Washington, D.C., who implemented an extreme ideology. That ideology got implemented here in the United States Congress. It was their ideology that was governing or not governing Wall Street. It was the lack of investments in jobs, education, health care that needed to be made.

And all of a sudden fast forward a few years, the Ponzi scheme ends, the house of cards collapses, and it is not just Wall Street that has problems, it ripples throughout the economy, and now we have in some cities 15, 20 percent unemployment. We have health care costs zooming out of control, energy costs zooming out of control, we continue to be dependent on foreign sources for our energy, which is a national security issue, because these problems weren't addressed.

And the initiatives that we have put forth over the last year have begun to shift the trends at least away from losing hundreds of thousands of jobs a month to only losing 80,000, from 700,000 to 80,000. From the stock market ending up at 6,500 a year ago now up to over 10,000, up 55 percent. So things aren't perfect, but they certainly are moving in the right direction.

And if we can get the health care plan implemented, start reducing costs for businesses that they have money to free up to invest into their small businesses, into their capital, into their machinery, into their workforce, into their technology, then I think we can begin to really drive the economy forward and put the middle class back front and center where they belong.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Thank you, Mr. RYAN, Mr. ALTMIRE. And let's just talk about health care during that 6-year period in which the Republicans controlled every piece of the apparatus down here in Washington. By allowing them to set a health care agenda for this country which made a really good deal with the insurance companies and the drug companies and a lot of the for-profit health care entities, what we saw over that decade of time, where the Republicans were driving the agenda here in Washington, was for businesses in my district and in your district, 120 percent increase in the amount of money that they were paying for health care.

Now, it would have been nice if revenues for those same companies were going up by the same percentage, but they weren't. Revenues couldn't keep pace with the health care inflation that businesses, many of them small mom and pop shops, manufacturers that maybe employed only 10 or 20 people, it couldn't keep up with the rising costs of health care. And so businesses went under. We lost manufacturing and industrial capacity to countries overseas that spend half as much as we do on health care, and approach it in a very different way. Workers during that same period of time saw their wages remain largely flat because every bit of extra money that the company that they worked for made went straight into health care costs.

For small businesses it was even worse. During that same time, as insurance companies gathered and gathered more power by virtue of the I think very, very bad decisions made here in Washington, small businesses ended up paying about 20 percent more than large businesses did, forcing more of them to go out of business. Our health care system got worse and worse and worse, and it contributed in a bigger and bigger way to the recession that we find ourselves in today.

We have got to wake up to the fact that when you hand a health care system over to the insurance companies and the drug companies, when you write a Medicare drug benefit bill that essentially guarantees lifetime profits for the insurance and drug companies, while passing down the bill to regular Americans, while you ignore the festering problems in Medicare so that you push more and more of the problem back ultimately onto businesses who are going to have to front the cost for an increased Medicare budget, you are crippling our economy.

The Republican health care agenda here in this House over the course of the last decade, and what continues to be their agenda, is part and parcel of what got us into this economic mess, Mr. RYAN. We can tell the story from the handing of the reins of economic power by the Republicans over to the banks and to the Wall Street lending community. We can tell the story with regard to our energy prices that are

also crippling our economy, as we handed over the power of our energy policy to the big oil companies. But you can absolutely tell the story of where we are today with respect to our economy through the lens of the health care policy that the Republicans perpetrated on this Congress and on this country for almost a decade, and would like to bring us back to if they were ever to get control of this place again. That is part of the story.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. There is no question about it. No question about it. And I think one of the important issues that we need to talk about as a country too, along with the health care and along with a lot of the decisions that our friends on the other side made that put us here, we need to remember this in context not only of the last year, but I think of the last couple of decades. Because the arguments we are hearing today about socialism, and here comes big government and all these other things were the same arguments that they made against President Clinton in his initial budget that he passed in 1993 when he first got in. It was the same claims. And I think they passed it without any Republican votes in the House, and Democrats had to carry the water.

And look what happened in the nineties. And that is what I say even to my Republican friends who we like to tease each other back home in the district. I said how is your 401(k) doing now since President Obama has been in? Is it doing a little better than it was when President Bush was in? I think it was. So you take that number that Bush had, the same thing with President Clinton, 20 million new jobs created in the 1990s because of the Democratic economic proposals. You had the bottom 20 percent of people, their wages grow for the first time in a long, long time prior to that. You saw budget deficits turn into budget surpluses.

What we are trying to say here is there is always going to be a neoconservative Republican extreme faction that is going to say whatever we are doing is somehow going to make the sky fall. But the reality is these are sound economic principles, these are sound investments, sound reforms on health care, energy, and the like.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. ALTMIRE. The gentleman talks about the impact that policies have. And exactly right on the point of job creation. We are in a brand new decade here. Look at the decade past. It was the first decade since they started keeping the statistic on job growth over the course of a 10-year period. The first time we went through an entire decade and did not have a statistically relevant increase in jobs. Went an entire decade basically flat line. Well, that is not helping anybody.

When we talk about the Clinton budget in 1993, sometimes when I am researching different Members' positions on issues, I will go back and look at some of the things that were said on

this floor back in 1993, saying that if we passed the Clinton plan to balance the budget that we were going to cause the greatest recession in American history and collapse the economy. And some of the arguments that were made, I think it is fair to say, were proven false when the last 4 years of the Clinton administration we had four consecutive budget surpluses, the last four budget surpluses that we have had in this country.

Now, I don't want to go back and battle old battles or rehash old fights, but the point is past is prologue. And you can look at the fights that we are having today, and the same people who were predicting disaster if we passed those policies are the same people who are trying to prevent this Congress from addressing the systemic issues that we face right now.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. ALTMIRE. I yield to the gentleman from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. We could have ideological differences over an issue like health care or energy policy, but what maybe was the most remarkable to me over the course of the last year was to see that divide between Republicans and Democrats happen on the issue of financial regulatory reform. I mean when I am back in my district, you know I certainly got people who are on both sides of the energy debate, and on both sides of the health care debate, but boy, almost everybody I run into, with maybe the exception of a few people who are commuting back and forth to high-priced jobs in New York, say you got to step up to the plate and stop these Wall Street investment banks from going back and doing the same things that they did to us regular, average everyday Joes over the course of the last decade.

You got to go in and fix the problem of derivatives. You have to go in and stop these institutions from becoming so highly leveraged that they cause catastrophic failure of themselves and the entire system. Go back and fix this for us.

When I got sworn in maybe I was a little bit naive this year. I thought, yeah, we are going to have some knock down, drag them out fights on a couple of issues, but I bet you this Congress is going to come together and rein in the abuses and the excesses on Wall Street. Well, we are even fighting over that. The Republicans don't want to join us and try to curb the real abuses on Wall Street. And if they do, they kind of want to do it with a little patch here and a little Band-Aid here when President Obama said step up and listen, to the extent we are sending money to these banks to try to keep the economy afloat, well then we should ask them to help pay it back with a fee on the big banks. Republicans ran out and opposed that as well.

I mean, listen, we represent very similar districts. We have got a lot of Republicans, a lot of Democrats, a lot

of liberals, conservatives. I get that they are going to fight on things, but there has got to be some fundamental issues to how we institute some fairness back in our economy and stick up for the little guy against these big Wall Street banks that have caused so much of this trouble. There has got to be places that we can agree on.

And I guess as you talk about past is prologue, you know, I think we are in for a lot of fights when it comes to sticking up for the little guy because it seems like there is only one group here, Mr. ALTMIRE, that is fighting those fights.

Mr. ALTMIRE. That is right. And as we have continued to talk about the key issues to balancing our budget have to be paying for any increase in expenditures or decrease in revenue. And the gentleman talks about his surprise to hear that people would oppose taking a look at the way Wall Street firms do business and taking a look at the way things have been run over the last several years and what that led to a year-and-a-half ago.

I was just as surprised as the gentleman to learn that there was opposition to the concept that we should have to pay for things that we pass in this House. Because I mentioned the four straight budget surpluses that President Clinton had in the last 4 years of his administration. That was due largely to pay-as-you-go budget scoring, which to give credit where credit is due, was instituted by President Bush's father in 1990. It was in effect throughout the 1990s. Wildly successful time in our economy. And as I said, four straight budget surpluses.

So this Congress, before myself and Mr. RYAN became Members, allowed it to expire, allowed pay-as-you-go budget scoring to expire. And now what have we had? Instead of having four straight budget surpluses, we are approaching 10 straight budget deficits. Deficits extended as far as the eye can see.

So in this House we had a debate on whether or not to require any piece of legislation that comes through this House that raises revenue or that raises expenditures or decreases revenue, very simple concept, you would have to have an offset for that. Find somewhere else in the budget to make a cut. Find somewhere else in the budget to come up with the money to pay for whatever the policy idea is that you are putting forward.

It is what every family and every business has to do every day in this country. If you want to spend more money on one side of the ledger, you have to find it on the other side of the ledger. Well, this Congress over the past 10 years has not operated under that commonsense accounting rule, and it has led to these enormous deficits, and in the long term the incredible astronomical debt facing this country.

So I was surprised to hear some of my colleagues on the other side oppose

the concept—pretty simple—pay for what you want to spend. Pay for revenue decreases. We don't even find agreement on that in this Congress. It doesn't bode well for having a debate, an informed debate on how to solve these key problems of our economy at this important time.

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Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We've got to make the investments that we have to make as a country. Our infrastructure around the country needs a huge shot in the arm. Trillions of dollars need to be invested in roads and bridges, high-speed rail all across the United States, airports. This all needs to be done. Our ports, waterways, those kinds of investments have been neglected for years and years and years, and we need to continue to make those investments here as well.

We have to ask those people who end up making tremendous profits from those enterprises to step up and help, who have been very successful over the course of the last few years. And I don't think we should run from the fact that we need to ask them. There has been a shift towards the middle class paying more and more of the share of revenue that's coming into the Federal Government. We need to reduce that for the middle class and ask those who are benefiting in a very big way.

I want to make one final point as we begin to close here and have a few minutes left on the issue of energy. I think it is important, as we talk about health care and health care costs, we need to also address the issue of how we are going to produce and generate energy here in the United States. This is our number one national security issue that we have in this country. We send \$1 billion a day out of this country through our gas pumps into foreign countries, oil-producing countries who don't like us all that much and cause us tremendous geopolitical strife day in and day out and distract us from what we need to be doing.

We need to make sure that we create an energy system in the United States that takes that money and keeps it here in the United States of America to refurbish our homes, our businesses, our commercial buildings here in the United States, to make sure that we pump that money into battery technology, smart cars, smart grids, energy-efficient homes, energy management systems. This is the future of the United States of America.

Last week, we had a conference here where we met with several CEOs in these energy management systems now working for Wal-Mart, Home Depot, Costco, saving them 20 to 25 percent on their energy costs. Those are savings that companies like those can reinvest back into their business. But if you ask the CIA, you talk to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, this is a national security issue. Why would we want to depend on foreign sources of energy to supply our

own military here in the United States? We address our national security issue, we create jobs here in the United States, and we help to address the carbon issue here causing global climate change.

These are the issues that we need to tackle as a country, and we can't be afraid to do it. We can't be afraid, Madam Speaker, to make the tough decisions, to push the tough policies, to make sure that 10, 20, 30 years from now when people look back and say, What did they do in 2010, 2009 in the United States Congress to try to address some of these problems, we can say we answered the call, we made the tough decisions, and the country was better off for it.

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

UNCONSTITUTIONALITY OF HEALTH CARE LEGISLATION

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

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. I can tell by looking at the proverbial clock on the wall at 8:30 that an important election that was just held today with the voting booths now closed just one half hour ago and the ballots all being collected in their boxes and brought to the appropriate places for counting, and we will see—potentially during the course of the next 60 minutes—just how that election should turn out.

Just as an aside, for those who are with us here this evening taking part in this discussion on the constitutionality, or the lack thereof, the unconstitutionality of the health care legislation that's about to come before this House again, we will be interspersing some of the election results so we can keep everyone apprised of just how those elections are turning out.

I mentioned the fact that the election was held today, and I'm sure there will be pundits on the air tonight talking about exactly what do the election results mean up in the State of Massachusetts, not just for the State of Massachusetts, but for the country as a whole; and a number of them will be saying what I have said before, that it's not so much just looking at those two individual candidates, but what their respective parties stand for, and more specifically, what the President of the United States and this administration has stood for over these last 12 months and what his seminal program, his major issue, has been, and that of course is this health care, so-called "reform," the imposition of new mandates and taxes and totally changing the health care configuration and how the delivery of it is done in this country.

Some would make the case that what the election that just closed now 32 minutes ago in Massachusetts is about

is whether or not the American public agrees with what the Obama administration has put forth as their major proposal is changing the health care delivery system in the United States or not. We will see the results, if not in the next 60 minutes, at least sometime tonight.

More importantly, though, than what the outcome of that one election will be is what will Congress be doing with that legislation here in the House and in the Senate this week or next week or whenever they decide to bring back that issue for a vote, and we anticipate that they will.

The fundamental issue, though—this is the one that we'll be discussing in here—is not some of the minutia of that health care legislation, not some of the small language that is buried within—first in the thousand pages that came before this House that I would hazard a guess that probably just about no one on the other side of the aisle read thoroughly and had a complete comprehension of what they were voting on when they voted "yes," nor clearly in the 2,000 pages that came forth in the Senate variation and version of that health care bill.

It's not some of the minutia, not some of the small language, and not so much the details that should be the first question that any Member of Congress should be asking themselves when they're about to vote on that bill; but it's rather the fundamental issue of whether that piece of legislation is constitutional at all.

In my pocket here is my wallet, and in my wallet is my voting card—actually, I have it over here because we just finished voting a little while ago. And as you know, Madam Speaker, every time we vote, we put it in one of these little slots here before we vote red, green, or yellow.

I always suggest to my colleagues that before they vote on whatever the legislation is, they should be asking themselves one fundamental question: Is the bill that they're about to vote on constitutional or not? Does the Constitution of the United States give us, as Members of this body, the authority to pass that law that we're about to vote on?

We are all required, when we become new Congresspeople every 2-year terms, to raise our hands and to say that we support and defend the Constitution of the United States. As a matter of fact, I was just in New Jersey earlier today where now-Governor Chris Christie did the same thing, raised his hand and said that he is supporting and defending not only the Constitution of New Jersey, but also the Constitution of the United States as well. We, as Members of this body, of the House of Representatives, do that every 2 years when we have the honor and privilege of being elected by our constituents at home; we come to Washington and say we will support and defend the Constitution.

As an aside, there is one member of our delegation from Texas who has sug-

gested that it should be a requirement that every Member of Congress and their staffs should read the Constitution at least once each term. Well, I'm not going to say that we have to mandate that; I think it would not be a bad thing for each Member to do it each term. I go through the Constitution on a regular basis, and I hope that other Members would as well. But we have all held up our hands and said that we are going to uphold it, so that is why I suggest to each Member that before they vote on any bill, that they ask themselves is that bill constitutional.

Now, the health care bill that we're talking about here is far more sweeping than just about any other piece of legislation that I have ever dealt with in my short term here in Congress. And I think it is far more devastating and sweeping than any other legislation that we have seen in generations. It would impact upwards of one-sixth of our economic activity of this country. But far more important than that, it would impact our very fundamental liberties that our Founding Fathers intended that our Constitution was designed to protect.

And so that is what our discussion is going to be tonight. And we will eagerly await the outcome of the election in the State of Massachusetts to see what the voters of that State would like to have their voices come in on. But I think the voices of that State will say, whether they support the nature or some aspects of this health care bill or not, I think all of those citizens of Massachusetts, as with the citizens of the great State of New Jersey would also agree with me, that whatever we do on health care in this country should at the very least be constitutional.

Now, one of the primary aspects of this bill that I would suggest has a flaw in it with regard to the constitutionality of it is the health care mandate. And what is that? In the bill, for the first time ever, I would suggest, in the history of the United States, Congress is going to suggest that we are not going to try to be regulating activity, but we are going to try to regulate inactivity.

For a long time now—well, basically, you can go back to the 1930s and the New Deal courts and FDR and the like—Congress has grown in its authority and had the Federal Government grow in its size as far as its reach of regulation and taxation of economic activity in this country. And so now you can see just about every aspect of your life in one way, shape or form having a little bit of a reach of the Federal Government into it as the Federal Government tries to regulate in one way, shape or form.

But that is always in the area of activity. If you're in interstate commerce some how or other, if you're a trucking firm, the Federal Government is going to reach out and regulate your activity. If you're selling some sort of product either in your State or outside of