

for the cost of one soldier. I think that's a far better way to win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people and defeat violent terrorism.

Mr. Mortenson is really on to something. I think we should all listen to what he has to say. There has to be a smarter way.

THE AMERICANS WHO DRIVE TRUCKS

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, freedom and liberty have always been the American ideal. Core American values have not changed over the centuries. Take a look at the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, and America's values are written down for us. The Declaration acknowledges that our rights come from God, not from government. Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are manifested in the Constitution, not granted by the Constitution.

The government doesn't give us our rights, and they can't take them away. Government has no rights. People have rights. Government has power. Government gets power when we give up our rights to government. The American people have made it plain they don't want the government taking over health care. That's not compatible with liberty. America does believe in freedom, that includes freedom of religion and the freedom to exercise our religion. They believe in freedom of the press and the right to peaceably assemble and speak their minds to a government that is not allowed to stop them, especially if the government doesn't like what the people are saying. Americans believe in the God-given right to defend themselves, their families, their homes and their property. We have a right to be free from illegal search and seizure. And the American people believe in fair trials, fair courts and fair play. These are all core American values. They are in the Constitution. Most Americans believe these rights don't change with time. And most of the Americans I represent in Texas believe all these values are fairly well set in stone.

Now, some of these Americans drive trucks, or pickups as we call them. Recently, there have been some derogatory, disrespectful statements made by those who arrogantly dismiss truck owners. However, there are a lot of vocal truck owners in America. The Ford F-150 pickup is the most popular vehicle sold in the United States for the last 28 years; 25 percent of all vehicles sold in America are pickups. And if you add SUVs to the mix, 40 percent of all truck sales, including pickups, are sold to women. Over 40 percent consider their truck more important than their home. As one truck owner told me, "You can sleep in your truck, but you can't drive your house."

Not surprisingly, Texas is America's biggest pickup market, and you don't see too many Volvo station wagons where I come from. These Americans who drive trucks, in my opinion, are fiercely independent, outspoken and will tell you they don't belong to a party but they vote for the person. These drivers are of every race and age, and 64 percent say their truck is a manifestation of their character, their personality and their politics.

Truck owners are one voice in America that government would do well to listen to. Contrary to current Washington wisdom, the Americans I know and represent, like truck drivers and others, do not look forward to a day when government, in the name of progressive politics, makes all our decisions for us. This is not a country of weak, timid souls who think government is the answer to every problem and has a better solution than the individuals it rules over. This is not a people of sheep who are afraid to control their own lives and believe government knows best. This is a country of high-spirited individuals that want to be left alone.

Many people I represent believe government is a wolf seeking what liberties it can devour from the people. Americans don't believe our health should be turned over to the Federal Government and made a budget item. We don't want some government bureaucrat deciding we can't have the pacemaker surgery, just take pain killers. That will not work for America. After all, we're not some nanny state, European-style.

Truck owners and other Americans believe in transparent government, not smoky back-room deals that have an odor of corruption, payoffs, and paybacks. The Americans I know believe in hard work and a private economy that rewards hard work with jobs open to every citizen. They believe in enjoying the fruits of their own labor, and they know how better to spend their money than Big Government. Americans believe in giving people a helping hand when they need it, but don't believe in creating a dependent class of people.

Truck owners don't believe in an elite ruling class of D.C. insiders making decisions for the rest of us. Mr. Speaker, I think most Americans believe in the American Dream which is simply this: freedom. This Nation was founded on freedom, and we don't want the government micromanaging our lives. The Americans I know, especially those that drive trucks, want government to remember the beginning of the Constitution, which says, "We, the people." After all, it doesn't say, we the subjects. And as one bumper sticker on a pickup stated, "I love America. It's government I continue to worry about."

And that's just the way it is.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

UNDERSTANDING THE ECONOMY

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

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, the Joint Economic Committee, which I chair, has just released a report entitled "Understanding the Economy, State by State." The report provides quick and easy access to the major economic indicators for all 50 States in the areas of jobs, unemployment, personal earnings, and housing. It paints a by-the-numbers picture of the current economic reality in each of our 50 States. Every picture tells a story that is at once both informative and sobering.

The report captures the enormity of the economic damage caused by the Great Recession that began in December of 2007, while making clear that the United States economy has improved and begun to grow since the Bush administration left office. And this shows that the last month the Bush administration was in office this country lost over 750,000 jobs. Nationally, there has been a substantial decrease in the rate of job losses. The economy started losing jobs in January of 2008, increasing at a rapid rate throughout the year. The average quarterly job loss has now declined from a staggering 691,000 jobs lost per month in the first quarter of 2009 to 69,000 jobs in the most recent quarter, yet even that number is unacceptable.

And as you delve into the report, it provides a more localized and precise picture for each State. A chart like this is available for all 50 States. This chart, for example, is for my home State of New York. It shows at a glance the monthly change in private payrolls from January of 2008 to December of 2009. You can see that the unemployment rate in New York was 9 percent in December of 2009. That's up 4.4 percentage points from December of 2007. It has been a bumpy road, but you can see clearly that the trend is now in the right direction.

A scatter chart is also included in the report, and for New York State it reveals at a glance that the unemployment rate is below the national rate, and that total job losses have been smaller than U.S. averages. The economies of the States vary enormously. New York's economy depends heavily on information technology and financial services. Some States that are more dependent on construction and manufacturing have been hit much harder by job losses.

An economic overview and outlook accompanies each State chart. The one for New York provides an estimate from the President's Council of Economic Advisers that employment in

New York was boosted by a total of 141,000 jobs through the fourth quarter of 2009 by the investments we made through the Recovery Act. It also shows that real per capita personal income in New York was 43,000 in the third quarter of 2009, down from 45,000 in the third quarter of 2007.

There is also useful information on housing for each State, and it too varies enormously. For instance, the median price for single family homes in New York was \$290,000 in 2008, compared to \$250,000 nationwide. And in New York in November, housing starts increased by 52 percent over October to a total of 18,000 units at a seasonally adjusted annual rate.

You can review the report online at www.jec.senate.gov. The majority staff will continue to update the data throughout the year in order to track the progress our economy will be making month by month. But from this first edition, it is abundantly clear why this Congress is so focused on job growth. Americans are demanding, and rightly so, that we must do all we can to grow the economy and help create new private sector jobs. The hard facts and real-life consequences of the economic policies of the prior administration don't make for a very pretty picture right now.

Mr. Speaker, stay tuned. The American spirit of innovation is on the way and individual resilience are ready and raring to go.

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DON'T LET DEBT DEFEAT A GREAT NATION

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

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, soon the Congress will be asked to raise the debt limit of this Nation. This actually happened under the previous administration, and now it's happening under the new administration.

I have not voted, from the time I have been in Congress, to raise this debt ceiling because all this really does is permit our government to borrow more money from foreign governments. I think we all know that we are what is called a debtor nation. We don't pay our bills anymore. We have to go to the Japanese, the Chinese, the UAE, and to many other countries to buy our debt so we can spend more. That is the reason I wanted to come to the floor tonight.

Before we broke for Christmas, FRANK WOLF had sent out to each Member of the House a little pamphlet that says, "Don't Let Debt Defeat a Great Nation." He and JIM COOPER, in a bipartisan way—FRANK WOLF being a Republican; JIM COOPER a Democrat—have introduced H.R. 1557, the SAFE Commission Act, and I want to talk about that in the little bit of time I have.

And I am reading from his publication, Mr. WOLF's publication. "We have amassed massive unfunded 'promises' to guarantee future entitlement benefits that when added with liabilities like the debt, total nearly \$57 trillion. That means every man, woman and child in America owes \$184,000."

I have used this back in my district, and I like to say it this way, Mr. Speaker. When that beautiful baby is born, the first cry out of his or her mouth is a cry of, "Do I owe \$184,000?" Yes, baby, you do owe \$184,000. Every American does.

This could, according to the information from FRANK WOLF, skyrocket to \$21 trillion by the year 2020. How do FRANK WOLF and JIM COOPER, in a bipartisan effort, try to deal with this out-of-control spending? They have introduced, again, H.R. 1557, the SAFE Commission Act. And the actual title on it is the Securing America's Future Economy—SAFE Act.

How does this function? This would create a SAFE Commission. This would be made up of 16 bipartisan appointed people to be on this SAFE Commission Act, and it would be their responsibility to go through how government spends its money, from the entitlements to the spending on education, transportation, health care, national defense, tax policy, and other items. This commission would come back to Congress, if this should become the law, and then Congress would be required to vote up or down on the panels's proposal.

Now, how this panel would come up with this proposal is they would go around this country and they would hold hearings and listen to the American people—something we have not been doing, either party, quite frankly. We are not listening to the American people. Yes, we are now, and after what happened in Massachusetts a couple weeks ago, the American people are being heard and they've been heard by many of us when we go back home and do our own town meetings. But this commission would have the authority, should this become the law, to say to the Congress, You can't duck these votes. You're going to have to vote up or down. I think this is critical.

I would love to hear the President tomorrow night—I hope somebody has made him aware of this bipartisan effort known as the SAFE Commission, and I hope he would say tomorrow night that he would endorse this legislation and encourage the Democratic leadership in the House and the Republican leadership in the House to get behind this bill.

At this present time, Mr. Speaker, we have 109 Members of Congress who have cosponsored this legislation. I hope my other colleagues will look seriously at what Mr. COOPER and Mr. WOLF have done to try to bring to the American people hope that we can meet our obligations based on the Constitution and deal with this out-of-control spending here in Washington, D.C. that both parties are responsible for.

With that, Mr. Speaker, before I leave, as I do every night on the floor, I ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform, to please bless their families, and I ask God to hold in his arms the families who've given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq.

And, Mr. Speaker, three times, I ask God to please, please God, please God, please God, continue to bless America.

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

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

CONGRESSIONAL JOBS NOW CAUCUS

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, the single most important concern for Americans throughout our Nation is the vast and growing rate of joblessness. This is not difficult to understand. Bob Herbert asked in a recent New York Times column, "How loud do alarm bells have to ring?"

More than 15 million Americans—more than 1 in 10 people—are out of work. Another 15 million people are underemployed or have quit looking. That means that over 30 million Americans want to work but cannot find the job they want. More people join their ranks every single day. Worse, 4 in 10 unemployed workers have been jobless for 27 weeks or longer.

Yes, we have a jobs crisis in our country, and it's everybody's number one issue. That's why I joined with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to form the Congressional Jobs Now Caucus, to keep the focus where it needs to be. That's why I sponsored bills to create jobs in America to stem our rising trade deficits and to bring justice to Wall Street, which has shut down normal lending across this country, contributing to the jobs crisis.

Job creation is not a Republican issue or a Democratic issue. We are all in this together. Last month, Toledo, a city I represent, lost an additional 1,200 jobs. Added to the yearly tally, more than 38,600 individuals, or 11.8 percent of the city's population, are without work.

The unemployment rate in the adjoining rural Ottawa County, also in our district, is now over 17 percent. Again, these are official numbers which did not include those who have part-time jobs and need more hours or those who have simply given up because there are no jobs to be had.

Job creation is not just an urban issue. The damage has spread to the suburbs of our country, and no one is safe from the jobs hemorrhage. In fact,