

Over to William McKinley, 1897:

"In remembrance of God's goodness to us during the past year, which has been so abundant," and then he quotes from Scripture, "let us offer unto him our thanksgiving and pay our vows unto the most high. Under His watchful providence, industry has prospered, the conditions of labor have been improved, the rewards of the husbandman have been increased and the comforts of our home multiplied. His mighty hand has preserved peace and protected the Nation. Respect for law and order has been strengthened, love of free institutions cherished, and all sections of our beloved country brought into closer bonds of fraternal regard and generous cooperation

"For these great benefits, it is our duty to praise the Lord in a spirit of humility and gratitude and to offer up to Him our most earnest supplications that we may acknowledge our obligation as a people to Him who has so graciously granted us the blessings of free government and material prosperity."

Theodore Roosevelt, October of 1903:

"The season is at hand when, according to the custom of our people, it falls upon the President to appoint a day of praise and thanksgiving to God. During the last year, the Lord has dealt bountifully with us, giving us peace at home and abroad, and the chance for our citizens to work for their welfare unhindered by war, famine, and plague. Therefore, in thanking God for the mercies extended to us in the past, we beseech Him that he may not withhold them in the future."

William Howard Taft, the only President to have also been elected to Congress and to have been on the Supreme Court, actually as Chief Justice:

"A God-fearing Nation like ours owes it to its inborn and sincere sense of the moral duty to testify its devout gratitude to the All-Giver for the countless benefits it has enjoyed. For many years, it has been customary at the close of the year for the national executive to call upon his fellow countrymen to offer praise and thanks to God for the manifold blessings vouchsafed to them."

Woodrow Wilson says, in part, 1913:

"The season is at hand in which it has long been our respected custom as a people to turn in praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God for His manifold mercies and blessings to us as a Nation. The year that has just passed has been marked in a peculiar degree by manifestations of His gracious and beneficent providence."

John F. Kennedy, October of 1961:

"The Pilgrims, after a year of hardship and peril, humbly and reverently set aside a special day upon which to give thanks to God. I ask the head of each family to recount to his children the story of the first New England Thanksgiving, thus to impress upon future generations the heritage of this Nation born in toil, in danger, in purpose, and in the conviction that right and justice and freedom can, through

man's efforts, persevere and come to fruition with the blessing of God."

Mr. KING of Iowa. I thank the gentleman from Texas for his presentation here and setting the tone right for Thanksgiving as we are departing this city and going back to spend time with our families again. We are a grateful Nation, and I know that we will have a lot to be thankful for in the King household, as does America have a lot to be thankful for.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your attention, being recognized, and all of our service here to the American people.

PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

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

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, my name is KEITH ELLISON, and I am proud to come before the House today to address you and the American people regarding our Nation and regarding the state of affairs facing our people. This is an hour I claim on behalf of the Progressive Caucus.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus is that group of Members of Congress who believe that, yes, it's true, we all must be included in the great American Dream. The Progressive Caucus is that group of Congresspeople who believe that peace and diplomacy and development are far, far away preferable to war and fighting and strife.

The Progressive Caucus, we are the ones who say, yes, we should have child nutrition; yes, we should have food stamps for people in need; yes, we should have real commitments to small business and small farmers, not big business and the farming agricultural industry.

The Progressive Caucus is that body of Members in this Congress who come together around peace, around economic justice, around the issue of civil rights. We are the ones who say Don't Ask, Don't Tell must be repealed. We are the ones who say, as a Congress, that the American people are one people and need to be included in this great American Dream; that the arms of America are broad enough for all of us. This is what the Progressive Caucus is. This is what we believe.

We are not the ones who say that some Americans are not okay based on who they love or what their religion is; and we are not the ones who say that economic prosperity should only be for the wealthiest among us; and we are not the ones who urge war. We are the ones who urge peace. We are the ones who urge economic justice. We are the ones who believe that the poor must be within our thoughts, particularly at this time of year.

We are the ones who argue that we must extend unemployment insurance benefits, which, sadly, went down on the floor of this House earlier today.

This is the Progressive Caucus, and this hour we claim on behalf of the Progressive Caucus to talk to Americans about the importance of having a progressive vision for America. Even in this time after the elections were so difficult for so many, the fact is that we remain vigilant. We remain on the job projecting a progressive vision for this great Nation.

And this hour we speak on behalf of the Progressive Caucus, and this is the progressive message, three progressive messages today for everybody, three messages we want to hit.

The first message is the unemployment extension. I want to talk about that. The other one is the Bush tax cuts extension. And the third point is the absolute deluge of dirty money which totally swept through this last election cycle, corrupted our politics, all to the tune of about \$75 million, some of it from sources no one knows where they came from, and the absolute urgent need for transparency and to get corporate money out of American politics. Those are my three topics tonight.

Let me start by talking about unemployment benefits. Today, we had a vote to extend unemployment benefits which will expire at the end of this month, in November. This comes at a time when Americans are looking forward to what their Thanksgiving dinner is going to be like. This comes at a time when many Americans are looking at Christmas, Hanukkah, holidays, time to be together. But 2 million Americans, if we don't find a way to somehow get unemployment insurance benefits extended, which again failed on the House floor today because of Republican opposition, will have a very grim holiday.

□ 1600

This is a national shame. This is a travesty. This is something that is too, too bad.

Today on the House floor, unemployment extension benefits were up on the House floor, and we had to pass them by two-thirds vote because they were on the suspension calendar. It's necessary to put things on the suspension calendar because if we go through regular order, we can bet that there will be a Republican motion to recommit which will cause all kinds of damage and mischief. So the unemployment insurance extension was put up that is expiring in a few days. And you would think that something like extending unemployment benefits would be very easy because we have 9.6 percent unemployment, so many people are facing no opportunity to have any income if these benefits are allowed to expire at the end of this month, of course compassionate Congress would step right up. You wonder why we wouldn't get 100 percent of all these Members to vote for extension of unemployment benefits. But 150 of our colleagues on the Republican side voted "no" to extension of unemployment insurance

benefits, and because of that, we didn't pass it.

So now many of us who stay up at night worrying about what Americans are going to do, put food on the table for their families, have some more nights to worry, because the truth is we are not able to pass the extension of unemployment on the House floor. An overwhelming number of Democrats voted for it, and even some Republicans voted for it, to their credit. But we didn't get enough of that caucus, and so we ended up seeing that bill fail.

Obviously, the unemployment extension is hitting snags in the Senate. But if we could have passed it here, it would send a very important signal to the Senate that they must take up this measure, they must pass it through for the sake of the people, of the Americans, 2 million of them, who are seeing unemployment benefits expire even by the end of this year.

I want those Americans to know, nearly 2 million Americans to know that there are people in this House of Representatives who care desperately about them and their children. We put the measure on the floor and voted for it, needed two-thirds vote, couldn't get the support of our colleagues, and it didn't go. And sadly, I want to say that I hope those 150 Members who voted "no" think about you in the weeks to come. It is difficult, it is desperate, and I think that Americans, Mr. Speaker, need to raise their voices and look at the vote count to see who voted with them and who didn't.

Nearly 2 million Americans will lose unemployment benefits by the end of the holidays if Congress doesn't find a way to act. At this point, we may well have to act even if under a good, best case scenario after the extension of the benefits, after the benefits lapse. We have done it before. We may need to do it again. But the fact is that that is the situation.

According to the Department of Labor, 1.98 million workers, that is nearly 2 million workers, nationwide will lose benefits by the first of this year, January 1. By the end of February 2011, in only a few months, over 4.4 million workers will lose benefits.

Now it has devastating effects for individual families, no doubt about it, mom, dad, perhaps both, perhaps single-parent families not having any unemployment, in this tough economy not able to find a job. But it also has a devastating effect for our whole economy, because when people have unemployment insurance benefits to go buy groceries and pay rent, they can pay their landlord, they can pay the grocery store. And if you can pay the grocery store, then the grocery store has made a sale. And if the grocery store has made a sale of groceries, then they can keep those folks who work for the grocery store. And if the folks who work for the grocery store can keep their job, then they can buy some groceries. And if those folks can buy some groceries, then other people can. And

maybe they can pay their rent, and maybe that will mean that the landlords who perhaps rent to them will be able to maintain their building and be able to pay the utilities associated with running that apartment building that they might live in.

But if they can't, then the person doesn't get their unemployment benefits, they're not shopping as much, their shopping goes down, then the people who work there lose their jobs, then they can't pay their rent, now the landlord is not getting their rents in, now the landlord is looking at the building going into foreclosure because they can't even keep the mortgage up on that.

Now let's talk about housing. Let's talk about we have seen about 2.8 million foreclosures in 2009, about a similar number this year, on pace for that if not more. Those people who are counting on that unemployment check are counting on using that money to pay that mortgage. More foreclosures. This was incredibly irresponsible to not pass unemployment insurance benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that Americans saw what happened today and demand that Congress pass unemployment insurance benefits. Unemployment insurance benefits is good economics. It will cost our country more than it would have to spend to extend these benefits. It will cost our country more in terms of lost jobs, lost revenue to State, local, and Federal Government because of people who are not working anymore who now may become an expense. It will cost more money. It is incredibly shortsighted. It's bad economics. And when it comes to the individual effect on the family, it's just heartless. I have sympathy for people that heartless. I think you should be more compassionate than that, Mr. Speaker.

February 2011. We're halfway through November, we have December, then we have January. February 2011, 4.4 million workers will lose their unemployment benefits with devastating effect to their family and our entire economy.

Economists agree that ending emergency unemployment insurance benefits programs now hurts the economy. Even economists say it. This is not simply Keith Ellison on the House floor saying this. Economists who study this stuff every day say, do you know what? The effect of ending these programs is going to hurt our recovery and hurt our economy. The Department of Labor analysis by Wayne Vroman, who is an economist, well trained economist, found that unemployment insurance benefits boost economic activity by \$2 for every dollar spent in 2009. So if we do extend unemployment insurance benefits in the year 2009, that would mean that there would be \$2 in economic activity. Now that's a pretty good deal. That is what you call a multiplier effect, which is very beneficial.

Reducing unemployment insurance benefits will reduce our gross domestic

product. It will hurt our economy in the same way I just explained a moment ago. For people just tuning in, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say what will happen is that if people don't get the unemployment insurance benefits, they cannot spend, and the local retailers cannot maintain their staff, who then will end up laying people off. This will extend and increase unemployment. It's already 9.96 percent. How much more do the people who voted "no" want it to go?

Goldman Sachs has estimated that if the extension were allowed to expire, it would reduce economic growth by half a percentage point. Now, half a percentage point of economic growth, that just sounds like some statistic. But what that means is fewer refrigerators bought, fewer cars bought, fewer loaves of bread bought, fewer eggs bought, fewer people hired, fewer people who are going to be able to run the risk to start the small business that they've been thinking about. This means this is a bad thing for our economy. It means real pain to real people. That's what it means to see gross domestic product fall and economic growth slip by half a percentage point.

Another noted economic organization that does economic analysis has estimated that allowing the extensions to expire would reduce gross domestic product by about \$14.1 billion. Again, almost half a percentage point. This is a consensus of people who are economic experts.

Now, let me just tell you this. Some people who voted "no" are operating under a very false belief system. They think that unemployment insurance benefits are somehow living really high and you just got all kinds of money and basically you got so much money you don't even want to look for a job.

□ 1610

Basically, they're saying paying people unemployment insurance benefits, a little help from your fellow Americans when you're in a bind, somehow stifles the incentive to work. Somehow government subsidies—there's never an argument against those companies that get tax breaks to do offshore drilling. They're never something that's a disincentive for people who are well-heeled, high, mighty, and well-to-do. But whenever it comes to us who work really hard, anything the government gives us might make us want to work less. Absurd.

But the average weekly unemployment benefits—about \$303—are barely 70 percent of the poverty line for a family of four and, on average, replace less than 50 percent of a worker's prior earnings. I am going to repeat that because there's numbers in there and I don't want anybody to not get it. The average weekly unemployment insurance benefit—about \$300, a little more than that, about \$303—is barely 70 percent of the poverty line for a family of four. So if you've got mom, dad, and two kids, and you're getting unemployment insurance benefits, you're not

making the poverty line by about 30 percent. That's about 70 percent of the poverty line for a family of four and, on average, replaces less than half of the worker's prior earnings.

So people on unemployment insurance are not getting over on anyone. These are people who pay in while they're working. This is a benefit they worked for. This is a benefit all of us come together, all of us put in a pot, and say, you know what, if any one of us loses our job, we're going to use this to help you maintain while you're in that situation. This is a good program. This is something that every industrialized, civilized country, unless you're just an impoverished nation, any decent country would do this. And yet here we are saying "no" to these people.

And here's another thing. Some folks will say, Well, you know, if we cut them off, maybe they'll work harder now. Maybe they'll look for a job. They're looking for a job. You can't get unemployment insurance benefits unless you're looking for a job. That's one of the rules of the program. But with every five job seekers for one opening, with five job seekers for every one opening, workers are unemployed because there's simply not enough jobs yet. Even though in the last several months we've been adding private sector jobs, about a millions jobs we've created since the recovery began, there's still not enough jobs.

You see, during the Bush era they just did that much damage to the economy. They lost about 800,000 jobs in the very month that Barack Obama took office as President of the United States. So we're just climbing out of this very deep hole that the Republican Congress and George Bush put us in. But even though jobs are increasing, there's still about five people looking for every one opening for a job. In other words, even if every job opening were filled by an unemployed worker, over 11 million workers would still be looking for a job, because even though we have been doing a good job, the damage is so severe that we've got a long way to go.

Now it's important to understand that even nonpartisan organizations who look at these questions have a lot to tell us about it. The independent Congressional Budget Office—they don't work for the Republicans, don't work for the Democrats. They just work for you, the American people, to try to give us the best information they can. The independent Congressional Budget Office found that research suggests that the effect of recent extensions in unemployment insurance benefits on the duration of unemployment for recipients was rather small, meaning the people don't stay on unemployment long. They use it while they need it, and then they get another job. The duration for unemployment—people just need it to get by. Sometimes it goes longer than expected, particularly in an economy like

this where we have so much foreclosure crisis, so many hits to our economy.

But, you know what? People are looking for work. They're trying. They're doing everything they can. They're doing the best that they can. And this government of ours, which represents our people—of, by, and for the people—should be there to extend unemployment benefits on an emergency basis when we have a job crisis like the one we have right now. And it's a shame and a national disgrace that this Congress could not get two-thirds of the vote of this Congress to pass unemployment insurance benefits; 150 people voted "no." One hundred fifty Members of Congress voted "no." And because they refused to step up to the plate and do what was right for the American people, about 2 million of our fellow Americans by January 1 are going to be going without. They're going to have a very grim set of holidays. And my heart aches for them. But, by February, 4.4 million will be in extremely dire straits.

And so I just want people to know, Mr. Speaker, that the people don't have to take it. They can call, they can write, Mr. Speaker. As you know, we live in a democracy. It's a free and open society and people can let their voices be heard to their government that this kind of behavior in Congress is not okay. Mr. Speaker, they can do that. And if they did, I think it would be a good thing.

Mr. Speaker, Congress has never terminated federally funded jobless benefits when the unemployment rate was as high as it is today. Let me say that again: Congress has never terminated federally funded jobless benefits when the unemployment rate was as high as it is now, 9.6. Since the unemployment insurance system was founded 75 years ago, Mr. Speaker, Congress has never terminated an emergency unemployment program when the unemployment rate was even above 7.5 percent, let alone 9.6 percent. Because it's irresponsible to the individual family and because it's devastating to our economy at large.

Even following the 2001 Bush recession, the Republican-controlled Congress maintained temporary Federal unemployment insurance programs until the unemployment rate went down to 5.8. What is the difference between our Republicans of today and those of even just a few years ago? Maybe some people think, Mr. Speaker, I don't know, maybe they think their political chances are better the more pain poor people have to face.

If the current temporary program would be allowed to expire by the end of November, which it is set for, it would be shorter than temporary programs enacted in numerous years of recessions. This year, if we let this program expire, we would have cut the emergency program shorter than we did in 1990, in 2000, in the 1973 recessions. Why are we so stingy now, Mr. Speaker? I don't know. I don't know.

But I bet you if the American people exercise their First Amendment rights, some people would listen, because sometimes politicians can't see the light until they feel the heat.

Unemployment insurance benefits have dramatically decreased poverty, Mr. Speaker. And we're at a time when we have record poverty. But because of unemployment insurance benefits, we fought back that poverty and provided economic security to millions of middle-income American families. Unemployment insurance benefits kept an estimated 3.3 million Americans out of poverty in 2009. Let me repeat that, Mr. Speaker, because that's another one people really need to be focusing on: unemployment insurance benefits kept an estimated 3.3 million Americans out of poverty in 2009. This is a good thing. And now we're looking at ending the program by the end of this month. That's wrong. Without these benefits, the increase in poverty from 2008 to 2009 would have been nearly 6.9 million rather than 3.6 million. So poverty would have been twice what it was without our acting in the earlier times that we did. Because we acted already, we were able to cut poverty to half the rate that it would have been. But now we're letting it expire.

Now I also want to say almost a million children were kept out of poverty in 2009 because of unemployment insurance benefits. Almost a million children. We're talking about little ones that are trying to go to school, trying to learn, developing brains. And because they were able to get the basic decency from their government in unemployment insurance benefits, they were able to stay out of poverty. But a million children, a million little ones going into winter, going into the cold months, going into the holidays are going to have to face that poverty because our Congress would not act.

□ 1620

I just want to say that that's wrong. The American children deserve better from their government than they got today on this House floor.

I want to move on to tax cuts, Mr. Speaker, but before I do, I want to repeat some of the more salient points because maybe some folks just got on C-SPAN. I just want to say 2 million Americans stand to lose benefits during the holiday season because Congress failed to extend unemployment insurance benefits—2 million. Mr. Speaker, 2 million Americans stand to lose unemployment insurance benefits this holiday season, and 2 million more could lose them by February 2011. These Americans buy goods and services, stimulating our economy, which keeps people employed, which keeps rents being paid, which keeps mortgages being paid, and which keeps our economy moving toward recovery. Because we're not acting the way we should, we are putting this recovery in

jeopardy. Is electoral success so important that you're willing to put 2 million more people into poverty? It's a shame.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to juxtapose this question of our refusal to pass unemployment insurance benefits with what seems to be the thing that everybody feels like talking about around Washington, which is whether or not we are going to extend tax cuts, tax breaks, for the richest Americans. Right now, the debate is:

Shall we extend the Bush tax cuts up to \$250,000, which means that people who make more than that will be able to have their tax breaks extended for the amount below that, or will we just extend them for all, up to the top 2 percent, which would mean extending them for everyone?

If we extended them for everyone, that would cost us an extra \$700 billion. The people who are most adamant and who scream the loudest about deficits, debt, and spending are the first ones who want to make sure that the richest Americans get their tax cuts to the tune of \$700 billion. Mr. Speaker, we don't have the \$700 billion, so where are we going to get the \$700 billion? We're going to borrow it. Our Republican colleagues want us to borrow \$700 billion and give it to the richest Americans. So we wonder, Who are we going to borrow it from? Probably from the Chinese. I don't know. We don't have it.

Also, according to their pledge to America, they want us to cut education by about 20 percent. Is this a recipe for a competitive America? Those people will say, Oh, we want America to be competitive. They say that they want America to compete, so we're going to add to the debt to the tune of \$700 billion. We're going to borrow the money, and we're going to cut education. The richest Americans can—I don't know—buy more boats, stay in more luxury hotels, buy big, fat cigars, and buy bottles of Cristal. I don't know what they do. I'm not one of them. The point of the matter is it's wrong, and we ought to be embarrassed to talk about it.

Now, some of our friends say, Oh, yeah, we've got to give the top 2 percent a tax break, too—they'll say—because it's going to help boost jobs.

Wait a minute. Didn't we have these tax cuts back in 2001 and 2003? Don't we have massive unemployment? Their program has failed. The evidence is on the wall. It's there. Their program has failed. If tax cuts are so great, why did we lose 800,000 jobs in the last month that George Bush was the President of the United States? No. Forgive me. 841,000 jobs. Can't leave out those 41,000 jobs, because there were 41,000 people in those jobs. Why did we lose about 4 million jobs during the last 6 months of the Bush Presidency if cutting taxes were such a great idea and a panacea for everything?

I'm going to say, Mr. Speaker, that cutting taxes is not a bad thing at all. It depends on who you cut them for.

Cutting middle-income taxes might actually help people. Cutting taxes for the richest Americans is damaging to this economy and is unfair to the rest of us, and there are a lot of wealthy people who agree with me. Because you know what? They know that the economic ladder has got to stay in place. You can't live in this great country and make all the money that living here has given you the opportunity to make and then pull that ladder up behind you once you've made it all. It's wrong to do.

You know, we Democrats/Progressives don't have any problem with people coming up with a great idea and marketing it. People like it, so they buy it. They make a lot of money. Okay. That's fine. The question is, once you have used our roads to move your products around, once you have used our public schools to educate your workforce, once you have relied on our military to protect you, once you have used our police force to protect your firms and all your assets and property, once you have used our emergency medical services if, heaven forbid, you get a heart attack from all that work and you need that service, once you use all of these government services, once you drink the water which some government worker has inspected to make sure is safe, once you eat the meat which some government worker has inspected to make sure is safe and you benefit from all of that and then you say, "Oh, I don't want to pay any taxes. I don't want to pay any taxes. I want to keep it all just for me," there is a word for that—and it is "greed." There is no other word for it. I shudder when greed has been elevated to a political philosophy.

We're not talking about a complete government takeover, which some people are so happy to try to accuse us of. We're talking about a mixed economy where the public and the private sectors are in reasonable balance. That's all we're talking about. We cannot borrow \$700 billion, give it to the richest 2 percent of Americans and then cut our educational system and say that we are that balanced, reasonable, mixed public-private sector economy. We can't do it.

So I say that this middle-income tax cut—again, if you do make lots of money, if you are the top 2 percent, your tax cut will be extended from zero to \$250,000. That's the thing. Everybody is going to still have an extension, but you won't get it if you're above that. So that's what we mean by a middle class or a middle-income tax cut. It's very important to understand this. This is not something that's against the rich folks. Hey, look. You know, there are a lot of good rich people. The fact is many of them understand that the ladder of opportunity must be there for everybody else, but there are some who figure, I've got money. Skip you.

That's wrong. We need people who understand that this great country has

allowed them to make the money that they made and that the ladder of opportunity needs to stay where it is.

I was talking to one fellow who said, Oh, we should have a tax cut for everybody, not just for the 98 percent and down. We well-to-do people do so much for the economy.

I said, Well, wait a minute. Didn't the rest of us do so much for you? Didn't you brag to me about how you went to college on the GI Bill? Who did that for you? That was the public. That was the American people. Didn't you go to State University of "Whatever"? Didn't you tell me you were a member of the State patrol for a while before you went into your business?

This is a real conversation I had with somebody who benefited so much from the public but then didn't want to hand anything back.

Right now, I'm joined by one of my very favorite Members of Congress, the Congressman from the great State of California.

Congressman, what do you say tonight?

Mr. GARAMENDI. Well, Mr. ELLISON, I was in my office. Of course this floor is constantly on the TV screen, so I looked up, and I said, Hey, there's my man. There's the guy who is from the great upper Midwest, who has seen the incredible downturn of the American economy. I know that you've worked hard for your district to try to bring in those jobs and to try to create the legislation that would bring the jobs into that district. As you were talking, I said, I'm going to go over and say just a couple of things in support of the message that you're giving today, a message that over the last 2 years has been one of a consistent effort by the Democratic House to stabilize the American economy. We did that with the Wall Street bank bailout, which a lot of people didn't like.

□ 1630

I had problems with it, too. I think those Wall Street barons should have paid a heavy price, but the price that they could not pay and should not pay is the total collapse of the financial industry of the world because we would wind up, mom and pop at home, whether you have a 401(k), which unfortunately became a 201(k), whatever, we did that and it worked.

Then you came right back, the Democrats in this House and the President came back with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, 3 million jobs out of that, stabilizing once again the situation where the jobs were in free-fall the last months actually of the Bush administration in 2008, 800,000 jobs lost. But that began to turn around, and so in 2009 we began to see a turnaround, a lessening of the lost jobs. They continued to lose jobs, but nonetheless, each month that went by there was fewer and fewer jobs lost, and then in 2010 we've actually seen the growth of jobs in America once again, not only as a result of those two

pieces of legislation, but dozens and dozens of other bills that I was fortunate enough to work on when I came here just over a year ago in a special election.

It's been hard work. We've not had much help, and this is one of the things that I find so disappointing having come here just a year ago, and on all of those bills, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the stimulus bill, the HIRE act that gave incentives to employers to go hire people, the saving of the American automobile industry. The Republicans voted against these bills.

On unemployment insurance, the Republicans voted against it. I mean it's easy enough I suppose if you have a job not to worry about the uninsured, but if you don't have a job, what are you going to do? How do you keep a roof over your family's head? How do you provide the food? Well, you do it by getting an unemployment insurance check, which, actually—workers in America and employers in America have paid into an insurance program year after year after year and that uninsurance program provides the insurance when a person loses their job.

I couldn't believe it today on the floor. We have more than 2 million Americans whose unemployment check is going to run out during these holidays. Between the end of Thanksgiving and New Year's, 2 million Americans will lose their unemployment check. Now, the economy not's running the way we want it to run, and hopefully you and I will have a chance to talk about making it in America, making this economy once again, but today, on this floor, not more than 3 hours ago, we were unable to muster a two-thirds vote to pass an uninsurance check extension so that people would have food, shelter, clothing, maybe even a small gift for their children at Christmas-time.

What are we doing here? If we are such—we, not we, the Democrats voted en masse for this, but 143 Republicans, more than the one-third to block, voted against this. We're talking about the ultimate Scrooge. This would make Charles Dickens right up there on top with Scrooge on Christmas, on the holiday season, when we ought to be generous. 143 Republicans this day voted to deny 2 million Americans enough money to buy a gift for their child, to put a holiday meal on the table.

Okay, fine, I understand where they're coming from—no, I don't understand where they're coming from. I don't get it but we need to move forward. We need to move forward. I know you have been talking about that. And we can do it. We can rebuild the American manufacturing industry. It's there for us to do it if we use wise public policy, and I know you have been talking about this, and I'd love to engage in a dialogue with you and see if we can share some thoughts here.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, you know, Congressman, I just want to thank you for

joining me down here for the progressive message. It's really always a joy to be with you. I was spending a little bit of time talking about how this denial of the unemployment insurance benefits extension absolutely has a devastating effect to the individual family. It also has a devastating effect to the economy because consumer demand is bolstered by people having some income, even when they're unemployed.

Mr. GARAMENDI. It is a local store. If you have no money, you are not going to do one thing for this economy except be an additional burden to it. And so if you have an unemployment check—and let's keep in mind, that's something that the workers and employers have paid into so that when you lose your job, you have a continuation of income and you use that money to go down and buy some clothing for your kid, stimulate the economy, give the retailer—you buy bread, you buy food, you're able to pay your rent, you're not going to have to face that foreclosure and help drive down the prices of homes in your neighborhood. It's all there. It makes so much sense on the economic level.

But on the human, moral level, about where we are as Americans, it's not the fault of that worker out there that lost his job that he doesn't have a job. Many, many reasons for it. Wall Street, greed on Wall Street, all of those things. We can talk about that later, but it's not that worker's fault. It's not his kid's fault. Can't we just muster enough compassion to give those families an opportunity during this holiday season and on into the new year enough money to stay in their home?

What are they are going to do, go out and live in their car? They can't afford to buy the gas, I guess they can become the homeless. 143 Republicans this day said go homeless, go live in your car, don't worry about the holiday gifts, don't worry about your children because they will have no food, they'll have no place to live. What are they thinking in this House? 143 Republicans said "no." They blocked, 7 days before Thanksgiving, they blocked an opportunity for 2 million American families to have enough money to put a holiday meal on their table, to put shelter over their family.

Mr. ELLISON. Congressman, thank you for pointing those things out. One of things that continues to stay on my mind is how some of the rationale for this "no" position that was taken by so many of our colleagues in the Republican caucus is that with, well, you know, if you give people unemployment insurance benefits, maybe that will dissuade them from looking for a job. Do you have any views on that particular mode of thinking?

Mr. GARAMENDI. Well, apparently those people that say that haven't been looking for a job.

Mr. ELLISON. It's easy to say when it's not you.

Mr. GARAMENDI. It's easy enough to say, but when you're out hunting for a job, you know these are difficult times. And we're going to make efforts to turn that around, and we've talked about that a little already, but the jobs are not there. We need to move this economy forward, and then as we do so, those jobs will come back. And let's understand, this is not a bunch of welfare. A lot of people are against welfare. We understand that, but these are middle class Americans—

Mr. ELLISON. That is right.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Who had a good paying job 2 years ago, a year and a half ago, 6 months ago. These are men and women who over the years have been the backbone of this Nation, middle class America, and yet 143 of our colleagues on the Republican side didn't see it that way. I guess they thought, well, if they don't have any money they will go to work.

I would ask any one of those 143 to leave here today and go out and see if they could find a job, and if I were an employer and somebody had that amount of compassion, I know where I would send them. I'd send them out the door and good-bye.

Mr. ELLISON. Now, Congressman, you're not talking about one of those big lobbyist jobs. You mean a real job that makes you put your back into it, right, that so many Americans have to turn to, to be able to meet their daily needs.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Go out, let's see if you can pay the building—let's see if you can go out and run a backhoe, dig a ditch, or operate a bus or train or whatever. No, no, no, and when they lose their job here, as they should for this vote alone—they should for this vote alone lose their job here—no, they will go down to K Street, and they will get one of those high-powered office building jobs and they'll come back and lobby us and try to tell us what we should do. I will tell them what they should do—they should take a hike right out of this building because they're the super Scrooges of this session.

Mr. ELLISON. Congressman, thank you for making those points.

I just want to see if I can also get your views because as we're talking about denying families basic money right before Thanksgiving, right before New Year's, right before Christmas, right before Hanukkah, right before so many American holidays, we are also really talking about whether we should extend tax cuts to the top 2 percent to the tune of about \$700 billion for us which we don't have and we'll have to borrow. I wonder if you have any thoughts on this.

□ 1640

Mr. GARAMENDI. Well, this is another issue that's going to be before the Congress in the next couple of weeks, and that is, what are we going to do about the 2001, 2003 tax reductions that expire on December 31?

Those tax reductions were pushed forward by George W. Bush and the Republicans, who then controlled both this House and the Senate. And they wrote the tax law so that the middle-income got a little bit. It was worthwhile. It was a good reduction. But the real reduction went to those with the big bucks, those who had more than \$250,000, \$500,000, \$1 million, \$1 billion annual incomes. They got the big bucks.

And what happened was, we saw, once again, the widening of the gap between the working men and women of the middle class and the high and the mighty, the top 1 percent of this Nation who now control 70, 80 percent of all the wealth of the Nation. They certainly have the big salaries. And do they need a tax break at the expense of an unemployed worker from a factory in your district, an unemployed worker from a factory or from a school in my district? I don't think so.

Let's talk about what it is. For those making \$1 million a year, the tax cut is worth \$83,000 a year. Now, you tell me how many out there in middle America are making \$83,000 a year. Well, we know that there are 2 million that are unemployed that certainly aren't. But if you took that money, that \$83,000 for all those millionaires, you could create 3 million jobs that would pay \$30,000 a year. Not a great deal, but a living wage for 3 million Americans.

So we've got choices here. We've got choices. You are going to give the wealthy even more, \$83,000 a year—that's just for millionaires. And there are billionaires out there who will make even more out of this tax cut. What are they going to do with it? Well, I guess they could buy a Mercedes-Benz E-Class which does cost about \$82,000. Maybe we would like to think of them with a nice big, fat cigar. They could buy 2,000 of those cigars every year for the next decade, and they could light each one of those cigars with a \$100 bill. Now that's a worthy way to do it. Or would you rather have 3 million Americans earning \$30,000 a year or, in this case, even an unemployment insurance check?

And one of the things, Mr. ELLISON, some days I want to stand up here on the floor and just scream and say, What are you guys thinking? Deficit reduction. Oh, my goodness, we just finished an election. And deficit reduction was on every advertisement. We have got to deal with the deficit. We have got to deal with the deficit. Well, what the Republicans are proposing is a tax break for those who earn more than \$250,000 a year.

Let me back up here. Every American taxpayer, every American taxpayer will receive a tax reduction up to \$250,000. If they are making more than that, the tax break that they have had for the last decade would end.

Now, my Republican colleagues want to extend that tax cut for the wealthy. What it means is an additional \$700 billion of deficit over the next decade,

\$700 billion. So you can't talk out of both sides of your mouth here. Either you are a deficit hawk and you vote against a tax cut for the wealthy, or you are a hypocrite and you vote for a tax cut for the wealthy and increase the deficit by \$700 billion.

Mr. ELLISON. Now, Congressman, another thought I wanted to get your views on here, it's been puzzling me. These folks say it with such conviction that they must believe it. They say, Well, if we cut these taxes, this will lead to an economic boom. But that is trouble because, why did we end up in such an economic malaise, because we've had these tax cuts in place since 2001 and 2003; and this decade has been the decade of the slowest economic growth since World War II? So if tax cuts are the answer for everything, why didn't we have great economic growth, and why do we have such an economic recession now since we've had these tax cuts in place?

Mr. GARAMENDI. Well, because tax cuts, particularly at the upper income levels, don't equate to economic growth. You are quite correct, the George W. Bush tax cuts in 2001 and 2003 helped create the extraordinary deficit that we currently have. There were a couple of other things, two wars, Iraq and Afghanistan, that were not paid for by American money but rather by borrowed Chinese money and the tax cuts and the ultimate near collapse of the economy in 2007 and 2008. Those all added to the huge deficit.

But it's also, just as you have pointed out, clear by the employment statistics that following the tax cuts in 2001 and 2003 that the number of people employed actually reduced by nearly 600,000 people over the period of the next 5 years. So, you know, it doesn't equate.

Now, we need to provide the current tax cuts for those in the middle class that are earning less than \$250,000. And, really, for every American earning \$250,000 or less—if they make more, they're going to pay a little more—it's very, very clear that if we continue to provide the tax cuts for the very wealthy, it's not going to create more jobs. For those who need the money, they're going to pay their mortgage, they're going to make that car payment, they're going to buy food, they're going to buy clothing, they're going to invest that tax money into the economy, stimulating the economy. For those that are wealthy, I guess they will go buy another Mercedes-Benz, which I think is manufactured overseas.

Mr. ELLISON. I think you're right. Congressman, let's now turn to our good friend from the great State of Tennessee. Congratulations on your reelection, my friend. Congressman, we've been talking about economic justice, the denial of the unemployment insurance extension, the Bush tax cuts. What are your thoughts tonight?

Mr. COHEN. Well, I thank you for having this hour and for letting me join you, each of you.

These are the issues that are important to the American people. And I tried to address some of them in 1 minute. You can't discuss them in 1 minute. One of the issues we heard about was the deficit. The deficit was created by the Congress that was begun in the beginning of this century. The Congress in 1994, when President Clinton was President, a Democratic Congress with all Democratic votes passed a balanced budget bill that balanced the budget by the year 2000, and that balanced budget with a surplus was squandered with Bush tax cuts that cost tremendous amounts of money and a trillion-dollar war in Iraq without weapons of mass destruction and without a well-defined purpose and without the truth behind the purpose, I believe, of that war. And then an additional war in Afghanistan that was made the secondary war. This has created the great deficit that we have now, and you've got to correct that through income or through cuts.

What has been recommended by the bipartisan panel the President set up bears looking at as a beginning. It's going to take some tough decisions, but we also need revenue; and the revenue can't be across-the-board extensions for the Bush tax cuts. And to the upper 2 percent, as Mr. GARAMENDI was talking, they don't spend that money. My friends all drive Chryslers, I must make amends; dear Lord get me a Mercedes-Benz. That's an old sixties song. That's what they buy, is a Mercedes-Benz or maybe something from Cartier, which doesn't really stimulate the economy. It might tickle the fancy of somebody, but it doesn't stimulate the economy.

We've got to make some difficult decisions and earmarks aren't the issue. Earmarks don't take away from the deficit. It just means that rather than your Congressman from your district who knows your needs, it will be somebody in Washington spending that money. The earmarks need to be done in a transparent manner, and this Congress has seen that they are published. The people have to say that they are theirs, they have no financial interest, they don't have a personal stake, and they can't be for a for-profit company.

Earmarks in and of themselves are not bad. They just need to be cleaned up, and this Congress has cleaned them up. But the fact is, we need to make some difficult decisions. I'm prepared to make those difficult decisions on some long-term economic policies that will help clean up the deficit, which we need to do. I don't agree with much of what was put in the bipartisan proposal that was just recently announced by Mr. Bowles and Mr. SIMPSON, but it's a starting point; and it should not be summarily dismissed as it was by some from my party. On the other hand, the issue of earmarks is a subterfuge or just an issue to be thrown out there which has nothing to do with the deficit.

□ 1650

It's going to take some tough decisions, and the Department of Defense can't be off the table. Some say, Oh, you can't deal with the Department of Defense. There's a lot of money in the defense budgets that's there because of who manufactures the weapons and not the purpose of the weapons, and there's a lot of waste in the Department of Defense, and we need to look there as well. And we're going to have to make some large cuts, and that's where most of the money is.

So I join with you. I appreciate, Mr. ELLISON, your work. I appreciate Mr. Stein's quoting you in Time Magazine when you cited me as part of your team, and I'm going to be part of your team. And, Mr. GARAMENDI, I appreciate what you've done from California and in your leading these discussions. And I just want to be a part of the ending of this Congress that does some economic justice and that we try to see that economic justice is not forgotten in the 112th.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, I'm going to leave the last word to Congressman GARAMENDI, but I just want to say before we close out, because we are getting close to the end of the hour, this Democratic Caucus is resolute. In this last election, you know, okay, we got our nose bloodied a little bit. But you know what? We are focused on the best benefit and the welfare of the American people. We will not bend. We will not bow. We will stay here talking about Making It In America, talking about jobs, talking about renewable energy, talking about manufacturing, talking about infrastructure, fighting back these unjust economic policies which skew our economy so that we pull up the ladder of economic opportunity. We're not going to allow it.

I'm going to let Congressman GARAMENDI give the last word. And I want to thank you, Congressman COHEN. You are a joy to work with, a pleasure, and your wit, your charm, and your knowledge are always a benefit.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. ELLISON, thank you so very, very much. And I really want to congratulate you on the success of your reelection. And I know why you were reelected—because you have a heart. You've got a moral center that's focused clearly upon the needs of the men and women in your district who struggle every day to put food on their table, to take care of their children, make sure they have a good upbringing, the clothes, the education, and a roof over their head. I mean, that's really where we ought to be going. That should be our moral compass, and it certainly is yours, and I know it is yours also, Mr. COHEN. Because of that, you're back here.

But there's some real serious issues that divide us here in this Congress. We saw one today—the issue of the unemployment insurance. You know, 143 of our Republican colleagues blocked that payment that would give men and

women an opportunity to have enough money to take care of the holidays that are ahead of us, put food on the table, maybe buy a few gifts.

There is another thing that we need to do, and we've been working at that for more than 2 years, in almost every case without any help whatsoever from our Republican colleagues, and that is to get America back to work. The Recovery Act, 3 million jobs, no Republican votes. The HIRE Act, another few couple of hundred thousand jobs, no Republican votes.

Even when it came down to putting teachers in schools, to keep them there—in my own State, 16,600 teachers are in the classroom because we put some more money on the table to help the States and local communities—police and firemen the same, not one Republican vote.

Talk about the deficit forever. Yeah, you can talk about the deficit, but it comes down to a point, are you willing to take action to deal with the deficit, and our Republican colleagues have said a resounding “no” thus far. They want a \$700 billion increase in the deficit to finance a tax break for the wealthiest part of America's society. This is hypocritical. This is wrong.

And it's time for us to go. Mr. ELLISON, thank you so very much. Mr. COHEN, delighted to have the opportunity to talk to you about these fundamental American issues.

Mr. COHEN.

Mr. COHEN. I would just like to make one statement, Mr. ROHR-ABACHER, if you would permit before.

You know, I think it was Wavy Gravy that said, if you remember the sixties you weren't part of the sixties. Well, when you get into your sixties, sometimes you forget things. It was, I believe, Janis Joplin, and it was: My friends all have Porsches. I must make amends. Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes-Benz.

MADE IN CHINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HIMES). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHR-ABACHER) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to address my colleagues about the greatest threat over the horizon, “Made in China.”

Mr. Speaker, while focused on the deadly threat posed to our immediate safety by the forces of radical Islam, many Americans seem oblivious to the storm clouds just over the horizon.

I come to the floor with a grave warning to the American people. We face a threat to our national security with complexity and global scope such as we have never experienced in this Nation's history. This threat is pervasive. It challenges our economic, political, and financial structure, as well as the security of our homeland.

I have come to the floor to plead: We can no longer look at the dynamic shift

in power that is taking place and console ourselves with wishful thinking. We must quit fooling ourselves that there are offsetting elements at play, that the glass can be viewed as half full or half empty. It is clear that a powerful adversary is unabashedly out to grab that glass and drain it, consume it at the expense of the American people, and leave Americans of the future in thirst of the prosperity and security which we now take for granted.

And it is not only our children's future at stake. What we do as a people, as was the case of Americans before us, will determine which diametrically opposed system of governance—freedom or tyranny—will shape the world and human events for generations to come.

Today, radical Islam can be, must be, and will be thwarted. Yes, it is a threat that is now upon us. Radical Islamists, however, are not only butchering Christians and Jews, but a multitude of Muslims as well. And yes, forces of modernity within the Muslim world who are themselves threatened with extermination will help us defeat this evil plague of radical Islam.

Today, if we remain vigilant and if we remain engaged, we can be confident of this outcome. Yet, as I say, a greater threat is just over the horizon. I am referring to China, a dragon of immense power and insatiable appetite. This challenge will far outshadow the current battle with radical Islam.

China is already engaged, already manipulating, already doing damage, already making serious moves to catapult itself into a position of preeminent power on the Earth. To them, that would simply be moving the center of the Earth back to China where it once was and rightfully should be, from their ethnocentric perception.

Right off, let me assert my intention is not to be a China basher. Surprise, surprise, because I am not a China basher.

China is not the regime that controls that territory, but the people who reside there. They are a people with a magnificent history and culture. Today, over 1 billion Chinese men, women, and children survive in abject poverty. They are in servitude to a small clique, a small, heavy-handed clique, a cadre. Yes. You might say a band of cronies which represents only about 2 percent of the Chinese population. That clique is kept in power by the brutality of their hacks and thugs and the deployment of technology which all too often can be traced back to Western benefactors. With modern Western-developed technologies, they have created a high-tech police state that mirrors the imagination of George Orwell in his prescient novel, “1984.”

The Chinese regime that holds power in Beijing is a hostile force to the freedom of its own people and a threat to us. The hardworking, long-suffering, yet dignified and proud people of China, they are our allies in waiting. Our sympathy and loyalty should focus on them, the Chinese people. Their