

off the price of American goods produced in America by American companies and they will be able to compete worldwide.

Madam Speaker, thank you for the time. I hope we will eliminate the 35 percent American tariff on American goods.

STOP THE POLITICAL POSTURING

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

Mr. DEUTCH. Madam Speaker, the holiday time is upon us when Americans from all walks of life rejoice in our shared values of generosity, good will, family, and thankfulness. Yet, this cherished holiday spirit is absent here tonight as Congress once again finds itself in partisan gridlock. This is doing absolutely nothing to ease the worry felt by families across America during these difficult times.

Tonight the clock is ticking for 2 million Americans unable to find work and on the verge of losing their unemployment insurance. They worry, and they worry greatly, how they will meet their next mortgage payment, how they will put food on the table, or how they just may be able to afford a gift or two for their children this year at this season.

Likewise, tonight millions of workers across America wonder if a tax increase is headed their way. They have been suffering from stagnant wages and fewer hours for years, but without these tax cuts they know times will get even harder. They are not asking for much, just a few extra hundred dollars in their paychecks next year, yet they are holding their breath tonight because those on the other side of the aisle are holding middle class tax relief hostage in favor of tax cuts for millionaires, holding off providing tax relief to the middle class at a time when it is so desperately needed.

Tonight, the retirees in my district and all across America worry that their needs are going unnoticed by Congress. Already just today in the United States Senate Democratic efforts to provide some measure of benefit to seniors who have now gone 2 years in a row without a cost of living adjustment to their Social Security even as their costs go up every single year, efforts to provide them with just a payment to help them through these difficult times were cut off as a result of this partisanship.

Come January, if the Republicans have their way, health care reform will be repealed and the donut hole will be reopened, saddling seniors with massive prescription drug bills. In short, political posturing is threatening to reverse the progress that this Congress has made, and more importantly, at this difficult time it is political posturing that threatens to hold up the

middle class tax cuts, that threatens to hold up an extension of unemployment benefits even as 2 million Americans are starting to see their benefits end, and it is indeed this posturing that will make things exceedingly more difficult for our seniors.

So instead of giving middle class Americans some peace of mind this holiday season—which is what we absolutely ought to be doing—the Republicans in Congress are demanding another \$700 billion for those who don't need that tax cut right now. At least if there is to be a debate, a further debate on the merits of that tax cut, let's do what everyone wants, what everyone knows is necessary, and provide that tax relief to the middle class, and let's do it now.

Now nothing drove home some of these misplaced priorities—placing profits all too often ahead of people, and more importantly and obviously these past few days, putting partisan gain ahead of old-fashioned compromise, compromise that Americans want us to make—nothing drove that home for me more than a recent letter I received from a dear friend, a mother with a child who needed some medical care. I would like to read this letter on the floor of the House of Representatives today because I would like to give voice to the millions of mothers and fathers across America who have felt the anxiety and the powerlessness that comes when a child is sick and a health insurance company denies a claim.

The letter reads as follows by my friend Amy. She said, "Losing control was a luxury that I didn't have. And yet my hands were shaking uncontrollably as I held the letter from the insurance company about my 6½ year old son's third open heart surgery. 'Patient. Date of birth. Description of surgery: Replacement of aortic valve. Elective.'"

"Elective? Oh, that's right, we were electing to save my little boy's life. I felt myself about to explode, literally explode. Blood and guts and that second bowl of pasta that I should never have eaten anyway would be splattered all over the over-priced Turkish rug on our bedroom floor. Three, two, one, and then I held it in because I am a mommy, and I had to keep it together for my three young, beautiful, willful boys, one a kindergartner with congenital heart disease whose heart happened to be failing again, and who just the other day asked, 'Mommy, if I have to go to heaven early, will you go with me?'"

"I glanced up from the letter at my husband who had handed it to me moments ago, my sweet, it-will-all-work-out husband who right now looks so small and tired and helpless, and I said with all the conviction of a mother who's got nothing to lose and everything to fight for, 'I'm going to bomb them.' He burst out laughing. 'No, seriously. I'm going to the store to buy vinegar and dish soap and pop rocks—or whatever you're supposed to mix together.'"

□ 1930

"More uproarious laughter that quickly trailed off when he realized I wasn't laughing, too. 'You are joking, right?'"

"And that's when I understood them: those crazy people on the news who sometimes just snap. I got how someone could wake up one day and just lose it and how that someone could be me. I defiantly told my increasingly worried looking husband that the insurance companies should not mess with the mommy species. When I told one friend about my violent thought, she offered, 'I'll come light the fuse.' Another said if I was sent to prison, she would go with me in solidarity. Plus, I could stand to go on a bread and water diet if I'm ever going to fit into my jeans.

"Truth is," my friend writes, "there's not a single mommy I know who wouldn't go to jail to protect her kids. Certain things in life just are not a choice. They are a given. Like," she wrote, "my son's upcoming surgery. I looked down at the letter and felt another wave of anger overtake me," she writes. "I mean, I had my issues with our Nation's health care, but even I didn't think it had gone that far astray. And yet, how dare they, them in that office building so far removed from anything our family was going through, call our son's being hooked up to that damn heart-lung machine for 7 hours . . . elective?"

"Here are some of the only things that I deem elective about fixing my son's heart:

"After his last open-heart surgery, when he started slipping into a coma, I elected to kick the nurses and doctors in the Cardio-Thoracic Intensive Care Unit out of his room and screamed at my son—yes, I literally yelled at the poor beautiful boy lying there with breathing and chest tubes and other grotesque wires spilling out of him. 'This is your mommy talking, you hear? Wake up, dammit. Don't you even think about leaving me. You're just a kid—you don't even know how to swim.'"

"Twenty minutes later he miraculously woke up, and we're still working on the swimming."

"Recently, soon after we had to quarantine our son so that he would be germ-free for this latest operation, I elected to have Botox injected over my eyebrows," she writes. "I wanted to make myself look perkier so no one would think that I was worse for the wear from this ordeal and, God forbid, feel sorry for me."

"When a child died somewhere in the Midwest, his parents elected to sign the organ donor form so that my son could have his valve to save his own life. There are not enough benefits in the world assigned to that kind of heroism."

"But what of the insurance letter in my hand? 'I'll call them tomorrow,' my husband said. 'We'll straighten it out.' And then more uproarious laughter."

This time it wasn't my husband laughing, but our three willful boys who just that second ran into our room shooting one another with Nerf guns.

"I got Evan on the butt," Noah screamed, exhilarated. "So what? That tickled." Evan recoiled on the floor with laughter, but not before he nailed Benjamin with three foam darts in the back of his head.

"Yes, technically the family rule is not to shoot at a person, but who were we were to interfere with this kind of unbridled frivolity? That was something that we would never elect to do."

I would like to thank my friend, Amy, for allowing me to share her story tonight.

It was horror stories like these that propelled this Congress to move forward on health care reform, to reform a system so that no family is put into a situation where life-saving surgery can be deemed elective.

And as we stand here at this holiday season, the Members of this Congress, the Members of this House of Representatives, all 435 of them, the Members of the United States Senate, all 100 of them, all 535 of us who are employed, who have the benefit of working for the citizens of the United States, have a duty to those citizens, at this time of year in particular, to ensure that those who don't have jobs don't see their benefits cut off so that they're not cast aside at this holiday season unable to pay their mortgage, unable to afford a gift for their children.

We spend a lot of time on the floor of this House debating the grand issues of the day, and I look forward to coming back here in January in the new Congress and having great debates about the future of our education system, about the war in Afghanistan, about the best ways to reduce our deficit, about how we reduce our dependence on foreign oil. These are important debates that we need to have. But how can we let partisan gridlock, let the obstructionism that we've seen these past few days, how can we see that stand in the way of extending unemployment benefits to those who desperately need it, stand in the way of middle class tax cuts for those whose wages have been stagnant for so long, and stand in the way of providing just a little bit for the seniors who are struggling as well in this terribly difficult economic time?

I heard a lot about what people expect we should learn from the outcome of this election. And the one thing that's perfectly clear to me, and should be clear to all of us, is that the American people want a Congress that works for them, that does their business, and that puts the Americans' interests ahead of the political interests of those of us who are privileged to serve here.

When we come back next week, let us resolve to do what needs to be done at this difficult moment to ensure that those who don't have work can get by, that those who have been getting by can get the benefit of a tax break, and

that those seniors who have given so much for so long can receive the benefit of a payment in lieu of two straight years without a cost of living adjustment.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to coming back to perform that work. I look forward to casting those votes, and I look forward to having those debates. The days in this 111th Congress are short, but the people want us to get this done. It is time that we remember why it is that we have been sent here. Working together, we have to provide what everyone knows needs to be provided and to take those first steps as soon as we can upon our return.

Madam Speaker, that's what's at stake right now. Let us not get so caught up in this holiday season to think that the joy that so many of us feel is felt all around the country—not when things are so difficult for so many. Let us be thankful for what we all have, but let us work to ensure that everyone has at least a bit of joy this holiday season.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I yield back the balance of my time.

HONORING IKE SKELTON

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

Mr. LANGEVIN. Madam Speaker, I rise tonight with a heavy heart to pay tribute to someone who has been a valued adviser and a dear friend to me in my 10 years in this House.

Congressman IKE SKELTON has served the Fourth District of Missouri and the Nation with honor and integrity for 34 years. And let me just say that his presence will certainly be missed by me and by so many others.

As a freshman member of the House Armed Services Committee in 2001, I looked to IKE, then our ranking member, as a mentor and a guide on so many critical and complex issues facing the committee. Later, as the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, his commitment to our troops and our security truly set the standard for all of us on the committee. And the example he set helped to bridge the partisan, geographical, and personal differences that have too often plagued us and stood in the way of progress.

□ 1940

IKE SKELTON has truly made a profound difference in advocating for and leading on behalf of our men and women in uniform to make sure that they always had the tools and the resources that they needed to do their job, do it well, and to come home safe.

Of course, as much as I have admired him as a leader on national security, let me just say that I have also felt a very separate and even more personal connection to IKE as well. IKE SKELTON, like me, has for many years lived his life with his own disability. And from those experiences, both of us have

learned at a young age that life often takes a very unexpected path. That path has led us both to a career that neither of us could have ever imagined or expected, lying in a hospital bed all those years ago and contemplating what the future might hold for us.

But clearly, IKE SKELTON overcame his own physical challenges and made a difference for others. And now, as his long and inspiring career in Congress nears its end, I wanted to offer Chairman IKE SKELTON my deepest and most profound gratitude for his leadership, his wisdom, and for his friendship.

IKE, it has been a true honor to serve with you. I thank you for the decades that you have dedicated to this House. I thank you for the difference that you have made in fighting on behalf of our soldiers, our men and women in uniform, fighting for them to make sure that they always had what they needed to continue to serve and be effective. This country and this House have been a better place because of your service.

Thank you, and God bless, and God-speed.

PEAK OIL—THE GROWING GAP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. BARTLETT. Madam Speaker, I have come to this floor nearly 50 times to talk about an energy subject. The last time that I was here in the well addressing this subject was about 2 years ago. During those nearly 50 appearances, I came here as a prophet. And now I return to the floor as a historian, because the event that I was concerned about and predicting has in fact occurred.

Let me explain. In the middle of the last century, two speeches were given by men just about a year apart. I am not sure they even knew each other. They both talked about the same subject. The first of those speeches was given in 1956. It was, I think, the most important speech of the last century. It was given by an oil geologist to a group of oil men in San Antonio, Texas, in 1956. At that time, the United States was king of oil. We produced more oil, we exported more oil, we used more oil than any other nation in the world.

M. King Hubbert predicted to that audience that in just 14 years the United States would reach its maximum oil production. That would be in 1970. And then we would produce less and less each year after that. Remember the context. The United States is in 1956 the largest oil producer in the world, the largest oil exporter in the world, the largest oil user in the world. This was an absolutely preposterous prediction. And so M. King Hubbert was relegated to the lunatic fringe.

Just a year later, about a year later, the father of our nuclear submarine