

While Federal Medicaid spending grows at 23 percent this year, the program continues to suffocate State budgets. And this bill does not control costs. Mr. BIDEN talked about if we don't bend the cost curve, we're in trouble. I will submit that we are in trouble because we have bent the cost curve, but we are bending it in the wrong direction.

PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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, I am here representing the Congressional Progressive Caucus tonight, the Congressional Progressive Caucus, a body of Members of Congress dedicated to the very simple idea that we all do better when we all do better. The Progressive Caucus, a caucus made up of Members of Congress—men, women, whites, blacks, Latinos, Asians, people of various different backgrounds throughout the whole country—all unified under the simple idea that everybody counts and everybody matters; that there is no one who doesn't deserve civil rights; that everybody deserves civil rights; that men and women should enjoy the same rights; that women should have a right to choose; that there is nobody who is outside the pale of our beloved community; and that we stand together on economic justice, environmental justice, stand together on the idea of health care for all, stand together on the idea of real consumer protection, stand together against the idea that Wall Street bankers and the well-to-do should have everything going their way. In fact, we think that the working men and women of America should have something going our way. In fact, we're the ones who do all the work around here and we're the ones who should see America operating on behalf of and for the American people.

This is what the Progressive Caucus is all about. The Progressive Caucus is all about saying that consumer justice is important, health care reform is critical, war is usually the enemy of the poor, and that we need to find a way to seek diplomacy and dialogue and find a better way out of the conflicts that our country finds ourselves in. That is what the Progressive Caucus is about.

I am going to be talking about some of our core beliefs, but how can I talk tonight, Mr. Speaker, without talking about the Health Care Summit? Obviously, the Health Care Summit was a big deal today. A lot of people were watching it on television. I want to commend President Barack Obama for having a transparent and open process.

My friends on the other side of the aisle, the party apposite, the Republicans, say that we should just start all

over. Well, as you could see by watching the broadcast today, there was ample debate, long hours of discussion. We've had many, many hearings here in Congress on health care. We've had a conversation with the American people going on a year, and they say scrap it? No, thank you. They wish we would, but we won't.

□ 2130

The fact is that we have had a national dialogue, focusing on what it is like to live without health care and facing the world with your children and your family without any health care coverage, facing bankruptcy as health care expenses skyrocket and you are unable to meet that reality, facing a situation where you have to put your medical expenses on a credit card, you know, which may have gone up to 28 or 30 percent. These are the kinds of things that concern us.

I want to commend the President for convening this dialogue today, for having this discussion. I do wish, however, that there had been a member of the Progressive Caucus in an official capacity there. It is true there were people from the Progressive Caucus there, but our leadership is RAÚL GRIJALVA and LYNN WOOLSEY, and I believe they should have been there. There were other people there who were members of the Progressive Caucus but none who were authorized to speak for the Progressive Caucus. I'm not happy about that, but you know what? Things are seldom perfect in life. I would have wished that we would have had it that way, but we didn't.

A few things were clear about the health care summit today, which is that the ideology still rules the day for our friends in the party opposite that Americans continue to face health care nightmares on a daily basis and that the urgency of change is as powerful as ever. We have got to move forward. There is no way that we as a Congress can engage the public imagination around health care for a whole year and then come up with nothing. We need to have a health care bill.

This is the Progressive Caucus, and I am talking about health care and the economy today.

I also want to say, as we talk about health care and the economy from the perspective of the Progressive Caucus, that this is a Progressive message coming to you for an hour. We come here every week, and we speak for an hour about the critical issues facing the American people from a Progressive standpoint, and that is why I want to talk about health care right now.

Let me start off the conversation about health care by saying that, today, not only was the health care summit on and not only was the same old debate laid out—Democrats, Progressives wanting health care reform for the American people—but the folks in the party opposite are not so big on reform and want to just keep the status quo.

The House also demonstrated and signaled its urgent desire to see health care reform when we took up the Health Insurance Industry Fair Competition Act just this week. This bill stripped away a protection that was granted to insurance companies, and it requires them to now compete. They got their exemption from antitrust laws taken away. It's not enacted into law, but it was passed in the House, on the House floor, just this week. The idea is that health care companies don't need to be exempted from antitrust laws. They need to have to face those laws because we need competition. When businesses compete, consumers benefit. Simple as that. When businesses compete, consumers benefit, but for far too long, the health care insurance industry has played by a different set of rules.

Since 1945, the McCarran-Ferguson Act—you may have heard of it—has exempted businesses of insurance from Federal antitrust laws. Now, that is not right, so we did something about it this week at last, on the House side, hoping that the body down the hall will do something similar. This bill that we passed off the House floor amends the McCarran-Ferguson Act by repealing the blanket antitrust exemption afforded to health insurance companies. This is something the American people want. Most people I talked to didn't understand why they had an antitrust exemption in the first place.

Under the bill, health insurers will no longer be shielded from being held accountable for price-fixing, for dividing up territories among themselves, for sabotaging their competitors in order to gain monopoly power, and for other anticompetitive practices. If they do it and if we can get it passed into law, then they are going to be held accountable; they are going to be taken to court. That's what we need.

Removing the antitrust exemption not only enables appropriate enforcement; it also will give all health insurance companies healthy, competitive incentives that will promote better affordability, that will improve quality, and that will increase innovation and greater consumer choice—as antitrust laws have done for the rest of the economy for over a century.

Removing this antitrust exemption is key, and it is supported by law enforcement groups and by the National Association of Attorneys General. The National Association of Attorneys General has consistently opposed legislation that weakens antitrust standards for specific industries because there is no evidence that such exemptions promote competition or serve the public interest. They do not promote the public interest. They undermine the public interest.

So I just wanted to tell everybody that this piece of legislation passed off the House floor, signaling greater change as we are driving every day a little closer to real health care reform. The Health Insurance Industry Fair

Competition Act passed off the House floor this week. It's just a piece of health care reform, but it's an important piece.

Let me now turn to the larger issue of health care reform by addressing something called the "public option." You've heard me talking about the public option, and I believe in the public option. You know, we're going to have this system in America of private insurance, which is not going to be undermined. I believe in universal, single-payer health care, but the present format is to, essentially, reform the existing system of private health care insurance. No problem. By the way, I'm always for private doctors, always for private health care providers. I just think we should pay for it through a single payer, which would be much more affordable for everyone. The public option is simply a government-run program, and I don't shy away from calling it that, because Medicare is government run and the VA is government run, and there is nothing wrong with that. It's an agency that could be set up by the government which would offer an insurance product for people to get health care coverage, and that could offer real competition to the private insurance market.

Now, the thing about the public option that you should know is that over 120 Members of the House of Representatives have said, in a letter, that we want that, and we would like to see it make it into law. Not only that, over 24 Senators have said that they want to vote on the public option as well. This is a very, very important development because the fact is, when you have 24 Senators and 120 House Members, that's a lot. Senator REID says he favors the public option. Clearly, the public option has already passed through the House once. So this is a great idea. It's supported by the American people. Seventy percent of the American public like it.

The public option should be in the final bill that eventually is signed by President Obama. The public option was talked about at the health care summit today, and we are very glad about that. Members of the Progressive Caucus went to the White House and handed out a document urging Members at the summit to raise the issue about the public option. Let me just state the facts about the public option.

One is that poll after poll has shown that the vast majority of Americans believes a public option should be included in health care insurance reform. Fifty-seven percent were for a strong public option in a Washington ABC poll this winter. If the American people want it, if it has already passed through the House, if 24 Senators say they want it, and if the majority leader says he wants it, why can't we get a vote on it? I am saying this is a Progressive idea that is good for America, and I want to urge Americans to say that a public option is a good thing.

Congress and the President have answered the call of the American people

by dealing with health care, but we've really got to get a good health care bill. If we are going to use reconciliation because we can't get any Republican cooperation, why don't we get the best bill we can get? Why do we get a bill that is less than we could get? Incrementalism has its place, but if we don't have to bother about getting 60 Senators in order to get around the filibuster rules, why don't we just go with a good bill which would really help the American people—one that would lower costs, that would increase affordability, and that would have an option for people? It's a good idea.

The Democratic health care reform plan, which passed through the House and included a public option, is a bill that makes a lot of sense. It covers pre-existing conditions. It stops the practice of rescission—denying you health care when you need it most. It stops the bankrupting of our businesses and of our families when they get sick.

As for the public option in particular, part of the plan that passed through the House offers and introduces competition; it lowers costs for consumers—taxpayers—and it brings a higher quality of health care to millions of Americans. I think Americans want to see the public option in any final product, and I think it is something that people should let their government know that they want.

Currently, in 34 States, 75 percent of the insurance market is controlled by five or fewer companies. Many of the areas of the company are dominated by just one or two private organizations. A public option would offer a choice to people living in these highly concentrated markets. This means that the addition of a public option would provide a quality and affordable choice. The public option offers competition. Again, in 34 States, 75 percent of the insurance market is controlled by five or fewer companies. In Alabama, almost 90 percent of the market is controlled by just one company. That's not fair.

In addition, the public option would provide competition for private insurance companies to keep them honest. It would be completely up to individuals to decide whether they want to access the public option. You don't have to use the public option. In fact, you could go to the private market if you felt there were a better deal there, but the public option would be there so that concentrated markets could not simply force you to buy their products.

If the Congress of the United States is going to mandate that Americans get health care insurance, we should at least say that there will be a public option so that we don't force you into the arms of a monopolistic, highly concentrated market which would take advantage of you because of its market advantages.

Americans should be free to seek health care without having to fear that they could not afford it or that they would incur tens of thousands of dol-

lars in debt. A public option offers us an advantage on cost. We know that existing public options, like Medicare and Medicaid, consistently have lower administrative costs than their private insurance counterparts. Of course they do. According to the Commonwealth Fund, the net administrative costs for Medicare and Medicaid were 5 and 8 percent, respectively. If you look at the top five private health insurance companies, their administrative costs are 17 percent. While the insurance market is controlled by fewer and fewer insurance companies in more and more States, there is little incentive to lower costs. Why should they? They're not in competition. A public option would offer that competition all over the country, and it would help Americans afford health care.

Let me just say that we've been debating health care for a year now. When we started out, people like me wanted a single-payer health care system. I am so proud of the over 60 Members of Congress who signed onto JOHN CONYERS' bill for single-payer health care, but we compromised when we said, Okay. We're not going to get that. The single payer was not really given a fair chance in the House of Representatives, in my opinion. Be that as it is, we said, Okay. We will compromise and do the public option.

Now the public option has been pushed to the side. In as early as August of 2009, we were told the public option is off the table. Off the table was what we were told. Well, the public option is such a good idea, such a powerful concept, that it keeps putting itself back on the table. So, when it looked like the public option was off the table again this winter—this winter, we thought, Okay. The public option is off the table again. Then we see a movement. First, it was just four Senators—Senator BENNET, Senator GILLIBRAND, Senator BROWN. These Senators came together. They wrote a letter to HARRY REID, and they said, We want to vote on the public option, and we're going to ask you to put it up there. Then it was five. Then it was six. It got all the way up to 24. Then there are a number of Senators who said they don't want to sign a letter, which is their choice, but they would vote for it if it comes before them.

Of course, we saw two dynamic freshman Members of the Congress—CHELLIE PINGREE and JARED POLIS—two very dynamic, young Congress people who authored a letter that 120 of us joined, and now both the Houses have these movements moving forward. We didn't see the public option in the President's proposal, but both Houses of Congress are seeing these movements towards it. I believe that, if we put that bill on the President's table with a public option in it, he will sign it. He said he favored the idea. Here is his chance to prove it.

□ 2145

The fact is that bureaucratic overhead costs coupled with multimillion-

dollar CEO salaries and bonuses equate to high costs for America's working families, and a lack of competition provides no incentive to change their practices, but a public option will make them compete and will provide access to millions of Americans potentially.

Higher quality. Competition always improves quality. Therefore, the public option will help consumers get better coverage for the same amount of money as their private insurers.

Now, there are myths about the public option, and I think people ought to know that. The idea of a public option being a government takeover or even a government-run program is not really the truth. The idea that a mandated health insurance is a new tax on people is also not true. What a public option really is is that the government would help cover the high cost of insurance for Americans while bringing those costs down through competition. Without health insurance reform, however, we can expect the problems that exist today to only get worse.

Now, the public option is not a takeover of health care. That's ridiculous. It's not true. It would simply be one option among many offered by the public. Now, it would be administered by the government, but so what. So is Medicaid, Medicare, the VA, and TRICARE. These are all government health care programs that people really, really like. You know, as a matter of fact, when it comes to Medicare, back in 1965 when we passed it, only 22 Republicans voted for it, and now they act like they're the defenders of the program, which they're not. But the fact is nobody's messing with Medicare nowadays. Why? Because it's a popular program. Even though only 22 Republicans voted for it in 1965 when it first passed, it is now the way we live, and nobody is going to allow it to be taken away.

In 10 years the out-of-pocket costs that are paid by individuals and families across America would increase by more than 35 percent and as many as 65.7 million Americans will be uninsured. That's intolerable in this great country. This means higher costs to taxpayers to cover hospital expenses of the uninsured. Employers will also have to pay health insurance premiums at least 60 percent higher than premiums today.

There are supporters for the public option in all areas of life, not just the House, not just the Senate, but also doctors are in support of the public option, and organizations behind them strongly support the public option too. These include the American Nurses Association, the American Cancer Society, the American Medical Association, and the AARP. Even hospitals such as the National Association of Children's Hospitals have supported the principles of health care change and the public option.

And let me just say when the American Medical Association that represents doctors say they're for the pub-

lic option, that lets you know that people on the other side of the aisle saying things like, Oh, the Democratic Congress wants to get between you and your doctor, isn't true. It's just not the case. So you need to be aware of the myths that are out there.

As was said before, three courageous members of the Progressive Caucus went over to the White House today and offered the Congressional Progressive Caucus's perspective, and I was proud that they did that. The CPC, the Congressional Progressive Caucus, did not receive an invitation to the health care summit, but we showed up and we handed our ideas to the people who were invited, and we were happy to see that both Speaker PELOSI and Majority Leader HOYER introduced the idea of the public option, and we thank them for that.

So let me just now move into another area before we wrap it up tonight, and what I want to talk about is the economy. Now, it's important, as we discuss the economy, to bear in mind that we've come quite a long way, quite a long way. In fact, when the Republicans were in office, they literally, not literally but figuratively, drove the economy into the ditch. They just ran the economy into the ground. The economy shrank 5.4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2008. Barack Obama was not the President then. It was under George Bush when the economy shrank 5.4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2008. The fact is that the economy lost 741,000 jobs in January 2009 alone. Remember, Barack Obama was not the President until January 20. This is a Bush failure and, of course, a Republican failure.

Under the Republicans we erased \$2.7 trillion in retirement savings. I will show you a board on that I have. And it's important to remember that people trying to retire saw their retirement savings just shrink under the leadership of the Republicans. Very scary. Not very nice to the seniors. And more than doubling the debt in 8 years. Now, these folks shake their finger at us like we're big spenders. Look, they doubled the debt in 8 years. When President Clinton left office, we had a surplus. They took care of that because they cut taxes for the wealthiest Americans and never paid for them and then had a couple of wars they didn't pay for and put us in massive debt. The worst recession since the Great Depression should be called the "Republican recession."

Now, just to show you a little bit more, I was talking about this idea of public debt a moment ago, and, of course, we all should be concerned about debt. As a progressive, I'm worried about debt because interest service on the debt can't be waived, can't be put off. You've got to pay it when it's due. And that means that it cuts into things, programs and expenditures that could literally help people who I want to see helped. Like helping people who are in need of medical assistance, help-

ing our schools, helping firefighters and police and teachers and public safety people. All these things get squeezed when you've got to pay all that high debt service.

But Republicans lack credibility on fiscal responsibility. They don't want to spend money to help poor folks and regular folks. That's true. But when it comes to helping out well-to-do people and really, really wealthy folks, who I am absolutely fine with—I've got a lot of friends who are doing well. But they don't need folks looking out for them because they've got the money. But the point is that Republicans lack credibility on fiscal responsibility. It's not that they don't spend. It's just they don't spend it on things that help your average citizen. They spend it on tax cuts for the very wealthy and wars.

So debt held by the public nearly doubled under the Bush administration. We can look here at the year 2000, \$3.4 trillion. We see this red ink just going up and up and up all the way to \$6.3 trillion in 2008 when the Democrats get the White House and the Congress.

So the fact is that this is their mountainous debt, and now they want to lecture about debt and fiscal responsibility, but it rings hollow because of their history.

Let me also show you this board. This is a good one. Democrats actually have a proven record of fiscal responsibility. Democrats are good with the economy. We do a good job when we're in charge. If you look over Reagan, Bush I, Clinton, and Bush II, you will see these budget deficits and surpluses. This is when we see the budget surplus during the Clinton years is going up. It actually goes above zero, so we actually have more money. But here the amount of money that we have is less and less and we're seeing ourselves greater and greater in debt under the Reagan-Bush years. You see the debt is actually going up while our surplus is going down. And then you see the surplus going up on the blue line, and then you see the dropoff when it comes to our surplus. We have no surplus here and then we have a negative surplus—also known as a deficit.

So if you look at this, Democrats have a proven record of fiscal responsibility. If you look at Reagan and Bush, Clinton and Bush, you're seeing the product of Republican leadership and their fiscal irresponsibility.

Now, this is an important board because right now it's all about jobs. We need health care because it's such a big chunk of a family budget. We need to get that down. We need to cover everybody. So health care is economic justice for people. But it's important to understand that we've seen the job losses because of the Republican recession. I just showed you that. Democrats turned around Republicans' job losses. Now look: We're losing jobs. All these red lines below this zero is unemployment. We're going down. Monthly change and nonfarm payrolls. You see that. And we're going all the way

down. We're just hitting it. And in January of 2009, you see Democrats are in control, and as we're just adding to job losses here, it's worse and worse and worse and worse, and then you see the slow but steady improvement.

Now, we're still not creating jobs, and this is a serious problem. But you can see that we're going in the right direction. You can see that with Democrats in there, we're doing better.

So the last month Bush was the President, we lost 741,000 jobs in a month. And the last month, and this doesn't reflect the most recent data, we lost 22,000. Now, we still lost, and that's bad. But the fact is we're losing fewer and fewer and fewer and you can see that in a few months, we'll be above the line and we'll be adding jobs, which is something very, very important to point out.

Do you know what the toughest job in the circus is? Cleaning up after the elephants. So the Democrats are trying to fix 8 years of Republican leadership in this country, and it's not an easy thing to do. But you can see in a short period of time, we're getting it all turned around.

Now, one of the things that helped turn things around is the Recovery Act. Now, you heard these folks say, oh, this is terrible, the Recovery Act is bad. You would think that the Recovery Act was something that wasn't any good. But look here. This is something you should take a look at:

"GOP: There's no hypocrisy in seeking stimulus money. Republicans say they are working on behalf of their constituents."

Now here's the full quote:

"The DCCC claims that 91 House Republicans are talking out of both sides of their mouths."

Now, these guys were voting against the stimulus. We didn't get one Republican vote for the stimulus. They didn't vote for it. They were all against it, even though it clearly put Americans back to work and stopped the bleeding of jobs. But that didn't stop them from going out in ribbon cuttings and being there and just trying to show off and say, hey, look, give me some stimulus money. I didn't vote for it, but I want to benefit from it. Isn't that terrible? Let me just read a little of this to you:

"Amid mounting criticism, House Republicans said this week that it is not hypocritical to vote against the stimulus and later seek money from it for their districts."

"After standing united in opposition to the President's economic stimulus bill a little more than a year ago, many Republicans have touted the benefits of that measure back in their districts, according to a comprehensive list compiled by the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee."

"Citing the stimulus and other measures, the DCCC claims that 91 House Republicans are talking out of both sides of their mouths."

"In recent days former Senator Alan Simpson, Republican from Wyoming,

and California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger have echoed the DCCC claims."

Like my dad, who's a Republican, they're honest Republicans, and Simpson and Schwarzenegger are telling the truth.

"But key House Republicans argue that a vote against the stimulus bill should not prevent them from writing a letter on behalf of their constituents seeking grants available from the \$787 billion measure. Some of them do say, however, that Republicans should refrain from attending photo ops."

And it goes on.

□ 2200

What is the point? The point is they created a recession with their policies of tax cuts for the rich, wars that they didn't pay for, tax cuts they didn't pay for, no regulation of Wall Street, and just letting things run amok, not regulating predatory lending though Democrats had been asking them to do it for years while we were in the minority. And then they create this situation where the economy tanks. Then when we put measures in place to bring the economy back to life, they vote against it, but then they run to take advantage of it. That is bad.

Now, the Recovery Act. The CBO, that is the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, estimates that in the third quarter of calendar 2009, an additional 600,000 to 1.6 million people were employed in the United States. That is pretty good. In the third quarter of the calendar year 2009, an additional 600,000 to 1.6 million people were employed. That is pretty good. That is trying to dig us out of the hole.

The Congressional Budget Office projects that the Recovery Act will increase real GDP by 1.5 to 4.5 percent during the first half of 2010, and 1.2 to 3.8 percent during the second half. That is actually good as well.

Now, Mark Zandi, who actually was a consultant for Senator JOHN MCCAIN when he was running for President, who is pretty conservative, said, "I don't think it is an accident that the economy has gone out of recession and into recovery at the same time stimulus is providing its maximum economic impact." So even a conservative economist is telling them that the stimulus worked and is working. And I just wish they would agree that Democrats are better for the economy. I just wish the Republicans would agree with the unbiased evidence that Democrats are better for the economy.

Now, it is important, I mentioned retirement accounts earlier, Retirement Accounts Recovering Under the Obama Administration. Now, here we see under the Bush administration the value of retirement accounts is going down, the value of retirement savings accounts. You see them, they are just going down, down, down, down, down. They are just dropping. And then you see under the Obama administration, retirement accounts are up \$1.8 tril-

lion, as we see them climb from the first quarter of 2009 steadily back up. More evidence that Democrats are better with the economy, which is the thing that helps you put food on the table, a roof over your house, and retirement money in your account.

Moving right through these boards here, and I just want to show the folks, the economy is swinging back to growth. Now, GDP is gross domestic product. That is the sum total of all the goods and services produced by the economy in a given period of time. You see that in the first quarter of 2008, we had negative GDP growth. It popped back up for a minute, but then it kept going down, down, down. This is all under Bush. And then you see GDP growth going back up. And these are the projected increases.

The fact is that the economy, GDP growth is increasing. That means real goods and services produced. That means people working. That means production. That means people providing services. And it means food on the table. It means soup in the pot. That is what it means. Or chicken, or whatever you like.

So let me just say, as I begin to wrap it up, the fact is that the economy is not back to health yet. It needs more things. I believe very strongly, and the Progressive Caucus agrees, that we need direct job creation from the government like the WPA, where we put people back to work, painting public buildings, working in Head Starts, doing valuable work that needs to be done, and that these jobs could be paid and they wouldn't be just special kinds of jobs, but they would just be jobs that people can do and hopefully keep that job.

If we can ignite the economy and keep the period of growth going. The economy is not out of the woods yet. We still have unemployment that is intolerably high, particularly in minority communities. This is intolerable. We have got to do something about it. There is no doubt about that. But we are going in the right direction. And we need to improve to keep the drive alive. Keep the drive alive, not turn back.

I just want to say to folks out across America, the fact is that it takes more than just a couple of years to get things straightened out after so many years of difficulty. We need young people, new Americans, communities of color, working people, labor, everybody to keep their level of enthusiasm up about what the prospects for America are and to not get discouraged just because things didn't pop back into shape as soon as George Bush handed over the mantle of the presidency. It is going to take a little bit of time, but things are clearly going in the right direction.

One year in, the evidence is clear, and growing day by day, that the Recovery Act is working to cushion the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression and lay a new foundation for economic growth. According to

the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, the Recovery Act is already responsible for as many as 2.4 million jobs. The analysis of the Council of Economic Advisers also found the Recovery Act is responsible for about 2 million jobs, a figure in line with estimates from private forecasters in the economy. Even the conservative American Enterprise Institute is agreeing that the Recovery Act is helping create jobs, which no Republican voted for the stimulus package. It is very important to remember that.

We recently learned that our economy grew 5.7 percent in the fourth quarter, the largest gain in 6 years, and something many economists say is due to the Recovery Act. So again, negative GDP growth, meaning we were losing, the economy was shrinking when Bush was the President, and now it is growing. Very important for people to know that.

The Recovery Act, by the way, it did cut taxes for 95 percent of working families. The Republicans love their tax cuts, but not for the regular working people, only for the very well-to-do. But the Recovery Act did cut taxes for about 95 percent of American families, the Making Work Pay Act tax credit. And that is about \$37 billion in tax relief for about 110 million working families in 2009.

The fact is loans were made to over 42,000 small businesses through the Recovery Act, providing them with nearly \$20 billion in much-needed capital. The Recovery Act funded over 12,500 transportation construction projects nationwide. When 40 percent of all construction workers are on the bench, that work is very, very, very welcome. These projects range from highway construction to airport improvements, of which more than 8,500 already are underway. It funded 51 Superfund sites from the national priority list. Of those sites, 34 have already had on-site construction. The Recovery Act, which I was proud to vote for, has done a lot of good for America.

So as we wrap it up today, it is important just to bear in mind that health care reform is a key component and a vital component of restoring our country to economic health. We need health care reform.

Remember, the Republicans had the House, the Senate, and the White House between 2000 and 2006, and they didn't do anything to improve the health care situation for Americans.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. ELLISON. The gentleman will have an hour to say whatever he wants.

Mr. KING of Iowa. I would be happy to yield to the gentleman in my hour as well.

Mr. ELLISON. I can't stay here all night.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Will the gentleman yield to correct a fact?

Mr. ELLISON. No, I am not yielding. You're going to say whatever you want later, so let me just keep going. From

2000 to 2006, the Republicans had the White House—check the facts, Mr. Speaker—they had the Senate, and they had the House of Representatives, and they didn't do anything to help health care.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. ELLISON. I have already answered that question. I will not yield.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRIES

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. ELLISON. I don't have to yield, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Is it common and normal for a Member to yield to another Member on a respectful request?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. It is entirely at the discretion of the gentleman who controls time whether or not he chooses to yield.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Further parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. KING of Iowa. When a gentleman states an erroneous fact into the RECORD, is a Member's alternative then to move to take down the words rather than ask for a yield to correct the record?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair does not respond to hypothetical questions.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I will concede this moment for now.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does the gentleman have a further parliamentary inquiry?

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I would have a point of order if we didn't have Members in bed right now, so I will concede this point right now and yield back.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Minnesota may proceed.

Mr. ELLISON. Let me just say for the third time, from 2000 to 2006, the Republicans had the presidency, they had the House of Representatives and the Senate, and they didn't do anything to help Americans improve the health care situation.

□ 2210

They didn't do a thing. They allowed premiums to increase. They allowed co-pays to increase. They allowed people to be denied for preexisting conditions. They allowed misery to accumulate around the health care crisis in America. They allowed the number of uninsured to increase, and they allowed a very difficult, awful situation.

So now we've got upwards of 45 million people who don't have health care, and while the Republicans could have done something about it, they did not do anything about it.

Now, in a few minutes, Mr. Speaker, I am going to yield and in a few minutes I am sure my friend from Iowa is going to have plenty to say. But I

would like, Mr. Speaker, that anyone listening to the sound of my voice examine the facts I just laid out because they are true.

The Republicans could have done something to help Americans address their health care crisis between 2000 and 2006, and they did not do anything. And since the Democrats regained the Congress, we passed SCHIP, State Children's Health Insurance Program, which President Bush vetoed, and we're trying to fix one mess they made with prescription drugs by filling the doughnut hole. But all that program was was a boon to large pharmaceutical companies, and we're trying to fix that large debacle now.

The fact is is that the Republican Caucus could have helped the American people and they declined the invitation to do so. And now while America has been embroiled in a conversation around health care reform for a year, they have come up with nothing constructive to say. All they want to do is deprive Americans of their right to civil redress under the law when doctors sometimes make mistakes. They call it tort reform. What it really is is denying consumers the right to redress grievances, which is an American thing to do to try to fix these problems.

Now, we're not saying that people who abuse the legal system shouldn't have accountability. We are saying do not shut the doors when Americans have a legitimate claim, which is what I think the Republican Caucus is in favor of.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that this hour, called the Progressive Caucus Hour, is all about talking about Progressive measures that have made America great. And I would offer you this, Mr. Speaker, that every single thing that has made America the wonderful, beautiful, great country that it is has been a progressive proposal.

Breaking away from England was progressive. Throwing off a dictator was progressive. Freeing people from slavery was a progressive thing to do. Allowing unions to organize was a progressive step forward. Civil rights was progressive. Women's rights was progressive. Getting rid of the poll tax was progressive. And it has been conservatives every step of the way trying to block these things.

America is a progressive country. America believes that everybody does better when everybody does better. America believes deep in its heart in religious tolerance. We believe in economic justice. We believe in equality for all people. But conservatives, trying to hold this country back and maintain the status quo, have been in the way all along.

So tonight, Mr. Speaker, may I yield back the microphone knowing full well that those following me will have plenty to add.

But with that, I will yield back.

PROGRESSIVES OR SOCIALISTS

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

Mr. KING of Iowa. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate being recognized finally here on the floor of the House of Representatives. Frankly, it's astonishing to me that a fellow Member of Congress has so little confidence in things that he says are facts that he refuses to yield and deal with the actual facts that he knew were before him.

To make the statement that Republicans did nothing on health care during those years of 2000 to 2006 is flat-out false, Mr. Speaker. It's a fact that we moved on health care. We moved some significant policy. And in particular, we passed the repair to the abuse of lawsuits, which today it was published by the Government Reform Committee—actually, was published 2 days ago—that the annual costs of lawsuit abuse and health care in America is \$210 billion. That's over \$2 trillion for the course of a bill, and there isn't one dime that would be taken out of the pockets of that \$2 trillion—a lot of which goes to the trial lawyers—that is offered by the President or the Democrats, and certainly not the gentleman from Minnesota.

And for him to stand here on the floor of the House of Representatives and very much deny the very fact that is a fact of record and then refuse to politely allow for a correction of that record so you, Mr. Speaker and, by extension, the American people have an opportunity to be honestly and truthfully informed is an affront to the dignity of the dialogue on the floor of the House. So that's just a start on my answers. And I didn't come here to provide a rebuttal for the previous hour.

But the American people need to know, Mr. Speaker, that there is a Progressive Caucus here and it's 78 members strong, the last time I counted the names on the list on the Web site. The Web site was put up on a poster over here, and they're pretty proud of the policy that they have. You can go on that Web site and read and learn that. One of them is a Senator; the others are House Members. They are the most liberal Members of the House.

And when you look at the history of the Progressives, you will recognize that that Web site, that now with Mr. GRIJALVA's name in the Web site, was the Web site managed by the Socialists. The Democratic Socialists of America managed the Web site for the Progressives. They put it up. They took care of it. They maintained it. They put the information on. They wrote some of the language that went on there—a lot of it for all I know—and carried their philosophy from the Democratic Socialists—that is the Socialists in America, by the way—on over to the Progressives' Web site. And when that linkage was uncovered and the pressure came up, then the Pro-

gressives decided, well, we'll manage our own Web site because we really don't want to have to put up with the criticism of our brethren, the Socialists. It's completely the brethren.

When you read the Socialists' Web site, it says clearly on the Democratic Socialist Web site, dsausa.org, Mr. Speaker. It says clearly on there, it starts out with, We are not Communists. I always had a little trouble trusting somebody starting out their dialogue with, well, I'm not a Communist, because you know there behind that there's a "but."

Democratic Socialists, the brethren of the Progressives, linked together with their Web sites until a few years ago to declare that they are not Communists but they believe in a lot of the same things that the Communists believe in.

But the difference, according to the Socialist Web site linked to the Progressives' Web site—proudly by the Socialists anyway, and I think proudly by the Progressives—they say, We are not Communists. But the difference is Communists want to nationalize everything. Communists want to have the State own all property and own all of everyone's labor and everything exists for the State. And the Communists want to do central planning to manage the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker, let alone labor.

The Communists are the ones that want to introduce a national health care act that's completely a single-payer plan paid for by the government. Nobody has to pay for anything. And it would require that everyone working within health care in America would be a salaried employee.

Oh, let me see. Where would I come up with that? Well, not necessarily on the Democratic Socialist Web site. Not necessarily on—let me see—the CPUSA Web site. I read that in a bill that was introduced by some of the Progressives here in this Congress in 1981. They believe and still believe in single payer. They think that health care should be free, that it's a right, not a privilege—not just your own health care, but everybody's own private health insurance policy; that the government ought to run all health care; that they would set up boards as central planning management boards that would tell everything how to operate.

But no one could be anything except a salaried or an hourly employee. You couldn't do fee-for-service. So if you're a super excellent brain surgeon, you get paid whatever they decide. You don't get paid for the number or the quality of the brain surgery that you perform.

But I am back to Democratic Socialists of America. What are they? Well, they're not Communists. That's what they say. And the difference is they don't want to nationalize everything. The Socialists, the, slash, Progressives, don't want to nationalize the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker—not right away, anyway.

□ 2220

But when you read their Web site, it says, we want to nationalize the major corporations in America. I take that to mean the Fortune 500 companies and probably some more, and they write that they don't have to do it all right at once, they can do it incrementally. They want to nationalize the oil refinery business so they can control the energy in America, and they want to nationalize the utilities in America so they can control the energy in America.

This could happen incrementally, they don't have to do it all at once. Socialist Web site. They say we don't elect candidates on our banner. We don't send candidates and get their names on the ballot under the Socialist ballot. We advance these candidates as Progressives because Progressives doesn't have quite the harsh connotation of the hardcore left that Socialist has.

So they hide under the Progressive banner and they advance the Socialist agenda, and it's on both of their Web sites. I wondered when I heard MAXINE WATERS from California a few years ago say, I think we should nationalize the oil refinery business. I mean, I had to take a breath, catch my breath for a minute, because nobody would say that in the society where I live. They don't want to nationalize the private sector. They believe in free enterprise and in competition. They understand the vitality, this robust economy that we have. But that was said. Where did that come from. MAURICE HINCHEY made a remark also about the nationalizing of the energy industry.

Where did that come from? How does anyone have the chutzpah to make such a statement as a Member of Congress that they want to start taking over the private sector. This is before our economy started in this downward spiral. So I heard these words that came from them, and I am reading off the Web site, Democratic Socialist Web site, and the echo comes back to be the same.

I look over at the Progressives, of which each of those Members I mentioned are listed on the Progressives Web site, and it's the same agenda. Then we have a candidate for President called Barack Obama, and he has this artful way of using ambiguities so that the left hears him say something that they want him to say, and the right doesn't hear the same thing. They might actually even hear what they want him to say.

But where does the President govern? He is elected on hope and change. Well, hope and change is not working so good right now, but where does the President govern? Way over to the left.

And I stand here, Mr. Speaker, on the floor of the House, after this 6½-hour health care summit today, and I am wondering, what is this about bipartisanship? What was this argument that came from the President when he heard the criticism you are not working in a