

with the problem I mentioned a moment ago. We have the superfund tax on the petrochemical industry to pay for the damage to the environment that they created that expired in 1995 and has not been renewed but we still have the superfunds to clean up, pushing that burden on State and local governments and on businesses that are required to spend money that wasn't their fault, giving the petrochemical industry a pass.

There's an opportunity, Madam Speaker, as the supercommittee is meeting, for Congress to step up in a bipartisan way to have resources to help rebuild and renew America. We're falling behind the Chinese. We're falling behind the Indians, the Brazilians, and the European Union, even while unemployment in the building trades is 20 percent or more from coast to coast.

There's an opportunity here for us to be able to stabilize the budget, deal with the infrastructure deficit, put hundreds of thousands of Americans to work virtually overnight, and maybe, just maybe, work together to heal the frayed political process here in Washington, D.C.

FUND FEMA NOT AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

You know, Madam Speaker, it is so ironic that the American people are hurting in many, many ways, including those in my district from Hurricane Irene which did damage all of the way up to Vermont, the fires in Texas, and tornadoes, and yet we can't come together as two different parties to find agreement to increase the funding for FEMA so they can help victims of these disasters, and yet we can find \$10 billion a month to send to a corrupt leader in Afghanistan so that he can wear his robes and his caps and American kids can die and lose their legs and arms.

I do not understand why this Congress and the President of the United States do not understand that it's time to bring our troops home.

□ 1010

The American people are hurting in many, many ways, and the folly of the last day here in Washington where we cannot come together to increase the funding for FEMA is absolutely unacceptable—unacceptable—to the people of this country.

I was listening to C-SPAN coming in today, and it was just really somewhat ironic that the people are so angry with Congress, both parties actually, and cannot figure out why we are not doing what's necessary to fix the economy and create jobs to fix the infrastructure that my friend from Oregon just talked about. Oh, yes, but we can still find \$10 billion a month for Mr.

Karzai. Let's fix his roads in Afghanistan. Let's train his people to be troops and policemen.

Madam Speaker, that brings me to this poster I brought down to the floor today. Two little girls, Stephanie and Eden, their daddy, Sergeant Kevin Balduf, a United States marine stationed in Camp Lejeune, which is in my district, and Colonel Palmer, stationed at Cherry Point Marine Air Station, which is in my district, were sent to Afghanistan to train Afghans to be policemen.

One night, they were having dinner, the trainees, the colonel, and the sergeant, and one trainee pulled out a pistol and killed both of them. What is ironic is the day before Sergeant Balduf and Colonel Palmer were killed, Sergeant Balduf emailed his wife, Amy, and said: I don't trust them. I don't trust them. I don't trust any of them.

So these two little girls are standing at their daddy's funeral at Arlington. And you can see in their faces, Madam Speaker, a look of pain and a look of misunderstanding of what has happened. They don't understand what has happened.

So, Madam Speaker, I hope we in Congress will find the will to encourage President Obama to bring our troops home, because Secretary Gates has already said and been recorded that we will be there until 2015. How many young Americans have to die in the next 4 years to prop up a corrupt government? It makes no sense.

I hope the American people will rally behind those of us in both parties who want to bring our troops home, and let's get them home before 2015.

Madam Speaker, I close this way, the way I always do: God, please bless our men and women in uniform; God, please bless the families of our men and women in uniform; God, in Your loving arms hold the families who have given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq; God, please bless the House and Senate that we will do what is right in God's eyes for God's people; and I will ask God to give wisdom, strength, and courage to President Obama that he will do what is right in the eyes of God for God's people. And three times I will say, God, please, God, please, God, please continue to bless America.

HOUSING FORECLOSURES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, I'm taking the floor today to talk about foreclosures.

The problem of housing foreclosures in this country continues to be one of the central reasons our economy is not moving forward. While a lot of this economic wreckage is avoidable, this Congress continues to fiddle while the American housing market burns. Families across this country are being

tossed out in the street, and many of them don't need to be—and we can help them. We can help fix the housing market so that millions of American families can stay in their homes and others can have a smooth transition into renting. We could help, but this Congress is doing nothing.

Millions of homeowners are suffering through the worst recession in 100 years, and the Republican majority is not doing one single thing to help them. Just look at this map next to me. This is a snapshot of foreclosures across this country. The dark red areas are where the worst places are, but you see it covers everybody in the country.

Now, there isn't a district that isn't affected by this crisis. The housing market doesn't care about your politics. Three years after the Wall Street meltdown, millions of Americans are still facing foreclosure. One in four homeowners in this country is underwater, and home prices continue to drop.

While the housing market continues to steadily destruct and millions of Americans are needlessly pushed into poverty, this Congress isn't doing anything to stop it. Instead of fixing the economy, today we're going to debate a bill—a Republican bill—that attacks public health and children. The Republican priority is not foreclosures. It is to make sure that every American is breathing more mercury and toxins.

When the Democrats were in charge, it was different. We thought you should be able to write down mortgage principal in bankruptcy and modify mortgages more easily and get lenders to the bargaining table to avoid foreclosure. But the last Congress, Republican Senators stopped all that. And in this Congress, the Republicans in the House want to make sure we don't do anything. Instead, they cut programs for foreclosures and cut affordable housing. Instead of taking actions, Republicans say the market will fix it. In the market we trust. Not in God we trust, but in the market we trust that everything will be better.

But we're losing. We're long past a healthy correction. The damage being done is completely unavoidable. Make no mistake, Republican economic philosophy is pushing millions of Americans into the street, middle class Americans.

It's important to remember it was the banks that caused this crisis. Well, we bailed out the banks, and how did they thank the American people for the bailout? The banks went into foreclosure overdrive. They robo-signed foreclosures and filed fraudulent documents as fast as they could.

FDR once said, "take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly, and try another. But by all means, try something." And we can act. By just reducing the principal on all underwater homes to fair market value, \$71 billion would be injected into the economy. Every homeowner would save about \$6,500 a year in payments, and millions of new jobs would be created.

Banks are still sitting on \$1 trillion in cash. By using 7 percent of that money, there would be millions of people kept out of poverty. The banks can afford it and it would be something we seem to have lost all sight of in Congress—it would be fair. We can restart the economy by helping homeowners. We can come out of this economic crisis by putting responsible homeowners on solid ground. The map says it all. Homeowners are struggling in every district of every Member of this Congress.

We can fix this foreclosure disaster. We can help American families who play by the rules. We could start action today and help the middle class. But, no, what are we going to do? We are going to fool around out here about the rules of the EPA that protect people against toxins and mercury.

This Congress has lost its way and it needs a change. And it's going to come, because all those people who are in foreclosure in this country when the next election comes are going to ask, "What did the Republicans in the House do?" And the answer is, "Nothing."

EPA'S ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. POMPEO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POMPEO. Madam Speaker, I came to Washington, D.C., 9 months ago with the hope that we would restore a little bit of common sense and a whole lot of spending control to Washington, D.C. I also came to Washington, D.C., having never heard of an eco-ambassador. Now I had heard of ambassadors and I am familiar with the environment, but I had never heard of an eco-ambassador.

Indeed, I had never heard of an eco-ambassador until just a few short weeks ago when our Environmental Protection Agency that has done so much damage to our economy, so much damage to our Kansas' Fourth Congressional District, our farmers, our manufacturers, and our families, our Environmental Protection Agency decided at this time of massive Federal deficits that we needed a new program to create eco-ambassadors—eco-ambassadors, each of which will be given \$6,000 of your money, eco-ambassadors which, in exchange for that money, will come to Washington, D.C., and go back to their home places and work for 20 weeks—20 weeks for \$6,000—part-time at that—for their internship program.

When you read the requirements to be eligible to receive an eco-ambassador internship position, you will be fascinated to see that it is an ideologically driven program. Students who apply must have a strong interest in environmental justice, social justice issues, and other issues relating to environmental health disparities in health, volunteer, or employment settings. This is a liberals-only policy.

□ 1020

The Environmental Justice internship is of course administered with your taxpayer dollars. We don't need a program like this at any time; we certainly don't need it at this time.

So I have offered a bill, H.R. 2876, the EPA Student Nondiscrimination Act. It simply says that when you apply for employment with the Federal Government, we're not going to seek to find out whether you agree with this administration's radical environmental agenda. We're not going to seek to find out if you have worked as a community organizer. All we're going to ask is that you are qualified for the position.

Now, there are many efforts and many concerns about environmental disparities across the country. I share those concerns, but our EPA and our Justice Department already have many remedies for folks who feel like they have been discriminated against. What we don't need is yet another Federal program aimed at trying to solve a problem that we know can't be solved in Washington, D.C.

I'll close with this thought: this is a small program. The total dollars expended in the scale of our massive Federal deficit are very, very small; but it is symptomatic of a place, Washington, D.C., that has become completely disconnected from America and common-sense values, the values that we all have in Kansas. We don't need eco-ambassadors. We don't need this program. And I would ask my colleagues to support my legislation to eliminate it.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. QUIGLEY. It's not too late. That's my message to Palestinian Authority President Abbas, who has announced his intention to seek unilateral Palestinian statehood at the United Nations this Friday. It's not too late to abandon this reckless route, engage in direct negotiations with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, and choose the path to peace.

There is only one road to a peace agreement, and that is through direct talks between Israelis and Palestinians. This course forward is clearly outlined in the Oslo Peace Agreement, which states that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be resolved through direct, two-party negotiations. Anything outside of these direct talks—particularly this Palestinian appeal for U.N. recognition—is a dangerous digression from the known way forward.

In addition to veering from the track toward two states, a status upgrade at this time could allow the Palestinians to pursue cases against Israel in international institutions such as the International Criminal Court. Such institutions could even be used to request advisory rulings on final status issues,

further circumventing two-party negotiations.

The U.S. has also made significant investments in bolstering Palestinian security and economic prosperity, all in an effort to enable the Palestinians to make the difficult concessions necessary to move toward peace. This appeal to the U.N. and rejection of direct two-party talks directly undermines considerable American efforts and investments in a peace deal. Abbas and the Palestinians need to come back to the negotiating table, and it is the U.S. that needs to lead them back and spearhead negotiations.

As a true and steadfast friend to Israel, there has never been a more vital time for America to stand strong with our ally. With the excitement and hope of the Arab Spring has also come a great deal of uncertainty—uncertainty about the strength of the relationship between Israel and Turkey; uncertainty about the willingness of the Egyptians to hold true to their promises under the benchmark 1979 peace treaty; uncertainty about the security of the Sinai; uncertainty surrounding the speed with which Iran marches toward a nuclear bomb; and uncertainty about the number of rockets being stockpiled by Hezbollah and Hamas aimed at the homes of Israeli citizens.

But there is one thing that must never be uncertain: America's support for Israel. A threat to Israel's security or legitimacy is a threat to America, and we will not stand by and let Israel face these challenges alone. Upon her founding over six decades ago, the United States was the first Nation to recognize Israel. And since that recognition, the special bond between Israel and the U.S. has only grown stronger on the bedrock of the mutual principles of freedom, justice, and peace. Now is the time to stand with our old friend and lead the way to peace.

It is moments like these that test our mettle. It is moments like these that are recorded in our history books. And it is moments like these where we must show our leadership.

America must do everything in its power to end this perilous Palestinian bid for unilateral statehood and get direct negotiations between the two parties back on track. And President Abbas must know there will be consequences for choosing the path of confrontation over that of negotiation.

The course to unilateral recognition is not free. The Israeli-Palestinian peace process is at a pivotal crossroad. The Palestinians can choose to pursue the dead-end track toward U.N. recognition, or they can adjust their course in their wrongheaded U.N. bid and sit down at the negotiating table with Israel. The choice is theirs. It's not too late to choose the path toward peace.