

If the President and the United States Senate want to know why our economy isn't growing, this is why. These are the real life implications for Fifth District Virginians and all Americans created by the regulatory agenda that has been put in place by this administration and the last Congress over the past 2 years. These added costs jeopardize the success of our small businesses and destroy jobs. The added uncertainty crushes the entrepreneurial spirit and stalls economic growth. And the added expansion of the Federal Government strips away our freedoms and our opportunities.

So when a diner owner in Farmville tells me that Washington is taking the breath away from the American people, this is what she's talking about, an ever-growing government that stands as a barrier between a struggling economy and a growing, vibrant economy that we all desperately want.

So as the House continues to lead the way and works to reduce unnecessary regulations, it is my hope that we will keep in mind the convenience store owners, the auto repair shop owners, and all of the small businesses and farmers who are relying on us to get this right, who are relying on us to support those policies that remove the Federal Government as a roadblock to job creation and return our economic recovery back where it belongs—in the hands of the people.

AFGHANISTAN STILL NEEDS AN EXIT STRATEGY

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

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

On October 7, 2001, the United States officially began Operation Enduring Freedom, and the war in Afghanistan was underway. The last decade of wars has cost thousands of U.S. lives and hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars.

As a member of the House Armed Services Committee and as a representative of thousands of servicemembers, military families, and veterans, I'm entrusted with weighing the decision on what the profound effect on our Nation's security this war has brought and on the men and women that risk their lives every day to ensure that security. As we mark the 10th anniversary of the longest war in America's history, we believe it's time for Congress to ask some very serious questions about our military engagement in Afghanistan.

Whom are we fighting in Afghanistan? We entered this war because of the threat posed by the international terrorist organization al Qaeda. While al Qaeda expands its operations around the globe, our military is tied up in a ground war against the Taliban, an Afghan rebel group with domestic ambitions. Senior intelligence officials have

estimated fewer than 100 al Qaeda members remain in Afghanistan, yet we plan to have 68,000 U.S. troops there in that country through the next year. If we are to defeat terrorism, we must stick to our original strategic mission, maintaining a laser-like focus on al Qaeda and capitalizing on our technological and intelligence advantages to cut off their financing, intercept their operations, and take out their leaders. The successful operation against Osama bin Laden epitomizes this targeted approach.

Where's our money going? Afghanistan is widely considered to be one of the most corrupt countries in the world, behind only Somalia, and news reports of new corruption emerge every day. Billions of U.S. dollars are siphoned off by crooked officials and contractors, carried out of the Kabul airport in bags of cash, and even funneled to warlords and the very Taliban that we often oppose. To date, the U.S. has spent nearly half a trillion dollars in Afghanistan, and that pricetag increases by \$10 billion every month that we stay there. Meanwhile, we are forced to cut critical services at home in the face of our rising deficit and financial instability. We continue to hemorrhage finite U.S. resources in Afghanistan, and it makes us less, not more safe.

When will this war end? While the current timeline commits 68,000 troops through 2013, there are reports, backed up by some facts, that in the ongoing talks with the Afghan government about the future of the U.S.-Afghanistan relationship, the U.S. is considering having 35,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan until 2025 at an expected cost of over \$50 billion a year.

The human cost of this war is immeasurable. The dedication and the commitment of American men and women in uniform is absolute. Our troops in Afghanistan execute their orders that put them at risk because they trust the mission in which they are deployed. That is absolutely essential to our Nation's security. This steadfast loyalty is our Nation's most sacred resource, and thus, it is our most solemn responsibility to ensure that it is never squandered.

There is no U.S. military solution in Afghanistan. A political reconciliation is essential. Afghanistan's future depends upon Afghans, not American soldiers. By ending this war, America can focus on rebuilding the foundations of America's strength and security by paying down our Federal deficit, growing our economy, and putting Americans back to work.

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THE PRESIDENT'S OCEAN ZONING PLAN

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

Mr. SOUTHERLAND. Madam Speaker, yesterday, in the Natural Resources Committee, we held an oversight hearing regarding the President's new National Ocean Policy, an Executive order to tell us how we can best use our oceans.

Yesterday, it was amazing to hear those who believe in this policy applaud the use of the Federal Government in bringing stakeholders together. I will say this: This particular policy has been driven from the White House through Executive order under the auspices of ocean conservation, when its actual effects will be far reaching, economically harmful and hurtful to American jobs and businesses both at sea as well as ashore.

Inside of this policy, there is something called marine spatial planning, how to best use our oceans, totally ignoring the common sense that the God who created us gave us at the moment He did create us. The background of this goes back quite some time.

In 2009, a task force—I love those here. We have so many. We have councils and task forces. Do you know what? We need to form another committee. Well, I'm of the opinion that had Moses formed another committee, they would still be wandering around in the desert today. However, that's the mode of operation here. And in these frameworks and in these task forces, they come out with effective coastal and marine spatial planning.

I believe this is one of the largest efforts of government regulatory overreach in my lifetime. And with the world being 73 percent water, what better way—for if we can capture and make sure that we determine what people do with these waterways, what better way to push our policies forward, to rob the American people of job opportunities and the freedoms that I believe were given at birth?

The National Ocean Policy is less about coordinating fishing activities with other ocean user activities and more about creating new regulatory processes to further restrict fishing opportunities in both the recreational and commercial fishing sectors, according to the director of public affairs for the At-sea Processors Association.

In my State of Florida, we have a crisis when it comes to homes and when it comes to real estate. Yet I know that homebuilders are going to be damaged greatly because this regulatory push does not just deal with offshore, but it also deals, as I stated, with onshore.

The National Ocean Policy has a potential to create yet another set of standards and/or approvals that could unnecessarily impose significant impacts on homebuilders, private landowners, and other businesses while providing minimal—minimal—effects. Yesterday, we heard that what this plan does is bring together, through an adaptive process, stakeholders. Well, do you know what? We have the ability as stakeholders to communicate now.

Since when do we need the Federal Government to tell us that we can talk

to each other? Have we been so dumbed down? No, we have not. We have the ability to talk now and communicate without forming another government bureaucracy that robs us of those freedoms.

And I appreciate that call to being a stakeholder at the table, but really—really—that would be like the Greeks asking the people of Troy to help plan the design and construction of the Trojan Horse. This is nuts—nuts.

I live in Florida. I lived on the coast. I have spent my whole life on the coast.

This is another plan to push onerous regulations upon the American people and to rob the States and to abolish and do away with the 10th Amendment. I'm telling you, the States should be doing more while the Federal Government should be doing less.

Do not be fooled by this. We must not be fooled by this. They say we need an economic analysis going forward. Well, how about a constitutional analysis to examine the balance between the Federal Government and the State governments?

The National Ocean Policy is something that concerns me greatly, and I really believe with all my heart it would have concerned, in a terrible way, our Founding Fathers. This is an effort to turn our oceans into an aquarium. It is high time that the American people stood up and said enough is enough.

SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Madam Speaker, I rise to defend Social Security. We've heard Social Security derided by certain extreme politicians lately claiming it can't survive, that it's unsustainable and that the beneficiaries who earned their retirement benefits need to face the hard truths. Well, here are some really hard truths about Social Security:

The average retirement benefit is merely \$14,000 a year;

The median income of senior households is only \$25,000 a year;

One in three seniors depend on Social Security for 90 percent or more of their income.

The fact is that Social Security is a critical program for seniors across our country. It is a lifeline to half of all seniors who make under \$25,000 a year.

This is a chart that shows the various income levels. Half of the people of our country who are seniors receive less than \$25,000 a year on the program. It is even more important to the 25 percent of seniors who earn less than \$15,000 a year. And for the nearly 4 million seniors who earn less than \$10,000 a year, it is the difference between scraping by or having nothing at all. According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, Social Security keeps 20 million Americans out of poverty.

It is especially important for women. Women over the age of 80 are most likely to be living at or below the poverty level. Nearly a quarter of women in that age group are officially destitute. Pay attention to them. When you're at the supermarket and you see them looking at cases and they can't buy anything, give them \$5. Social Security benefits millions of older women and helps keep them out of poverty.

What many people seem—or choose—to forget is that Social Security is an insurance program for retirement, for disability, and for survivorship. It is not designed to give you higher returns or beat the Standard & Poor's 500 or bolster your stock portfolio. It is not welfare. Social Security is an earned insurance benefit designed to give retirees, the disabled, and survivors stable, guaranteed benefits each month for the rest of their lives. It is financed by the taxes retirees paid into the system during their working years matched by their employer.

Born out of the Great Depression, President Roosevelt ensured the program would be financed by payroll deductions, matched by employers, so Americans would understand this insurance program is an earned benefit. This arrangement would guarantee, as he put it, that: no politician can ever scrap that Social Security program.

This is exactly why putting people back to work and creating jobs is the best long-term financing solution to ensure Social Security's long-term solvency. There are 14 million Americans out of work, and getting the unemployed back to work is the fastest way to inject billions of dollars back into the Social Security trust funds, stabilizing the program for generations to come.

With all of the misleading Republican rhetoric about Social Security being broken and a so-called "lie," they claim, some have forgotten that the other side has always been opposed to the program.

In 1935, the Social Security Act made its way through the Ways and Means Committee but received not a single Republican vote on the committee. The ranking Republican said at that time that he would "vote most strenuously in opposition to the bill at each and every opportunity." Republicans have opposed the program every step of the way.

In 1984, former Representative Dick Armey, now a Tea Party godfather, described Social Security as a "bad retirement" plan and a "rotten trick" on the American people. He said, "I think we're going to have to bite the bullet on Social Security and phase it out over a period of time."

And then in 1987, former Representative Newt Gingrich said, "While many politicians are still afraid to mention abolishing Social Security," he said, "I am convinced this generation is ready for honest talk and real leadership."

These are not retired politicians speaking. One is a leader in the Tea

Party, and the other is a candidate for the Republican nomination for President.

Even today in our House, we have Members who still are beating the tired, failed horse that Social Security is unconstitutional.

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But the numbers are clear. Half of all seniors live near or below the poverty line, and one in three seniors depends on Social Security for more than 90 percent of their income. What happens to these Americans if we start violating the program they depend on, frankly, for their lives?

Let me close with some comments from Americans in Ohio about Social Security. A woman from Toledo wrote: "My retiree insurance was canceled last year. I had to get a plan to pay for my medicine. Even though I have part D, I still have to pay for my prescriptions because I'm in the doughnut hole. It costs me more than \$700 a month. That's half my Social Security check." Her story is the story of millions of Americans across this country.

I urge my colleagues to stand with me to protect Social Security and its guaranteed secured benefits for all retired Americans. Our seniors have earned these benefits.

BRING OUR TROOPS HOME FROM AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. This Friday, October 7, marks the 10th anniversary of the beginning of the war in Afghanistan. Our men and women in uniform have fought valiantly in this war over the last decade at great cost. More than 1,700 American soldiers have lost their lives as they fought to destroy al Qaeda and hunt down Osama bin Laden. Thousands more have come home with very serious life-long injuries.

When I'm at home in California and talk with veterans and their families, I can see how much our soldiers have sacrificed. I want to offer my sincere thanks and appreciation to all of the men and women in uniform who have carried out their duty in Afghanistan.

As the anniversary approaches, I am thinking particularly of Army Captain John Hallett III of Concord, California, in my congressional district, and his family. Captain Hallett was killed in action in southern Afghanistan on August 25, 2009. I was honored to have provided him a congressional nomination to the West Point Academy.

This week, all of us should honor the tremendous sacrifices our men and women in uniform made for their country in Afghanistan. And our objective in Afghanistan has been achieved—Osama bin Laden has been killed, and few al Qaeda members remain in the country. Yet, unfortunately, our troops