

invaluable service to those who have sacrificed their safety for ours.

This 8,000-square-foot facility will provide the most basic necessity to those who cannot provide it for themselves, which is shelter. And when it comes to our veterans, Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that we encourage efforts like this and help those in need.

So, Chip, thank you and your company for putting your time and treasure to use to help others.

Mr. Speaker, times are tough and people are hurting. The greatness of the American spirit is that, even in those times, we still reach out to others who are in need.

So I am proud to call Chip Smith a constituent. I'm even prouder to call him my friend.

AMERICA IS NOT BROKE

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

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, America is not broke; so Republicans should stop saying it. Conservative pundits should stop spreading it, because this country isn't broke.

Now, our government temporarily is and millions of American families are, but our Nation is not. And my hypothesis is this: If we don't wake up to this fact soon, if we don't start investing our Nation's riches in spreading wealth out across this economy, then our whole economy is sunk whether you are rich or you are poor.

So, let's try to debunk this myth once and for all that America is broke, that we can't afford these investments.

And let's start here. It's pretty simple. The United States is still a global leader. We are still the richest country in the world on a per capita basis. For all the talk about the rise of India, China, and Brazil, if you take their population's adjusted wealth and combine it together, they are still 50 percent of U.S. wealth.

So if our country is still wealthy, we need to understand that we've made a choice to keep our government poor. Now, why is that? Contrary to popular belief, it's not because discretionary spending has run amok. Take a look at this chart. Discretionary spending has essentially remained stable over time. We've had a brief uptick with a couple of extraordinary pieces of legislation, but discretionary spending has remained stable.

Don't believe this chart? Take a look at this. If government is growing at extraordinary rates, you would expect for government employees to be growing at extraordinary rates as well. That's not true either. In fact, we have 16,000 less Federal employees than we did in 1970. And as you can see, the trendline just from 1990 continues to go down as well.

Now, this isn't all to say that government can't get leaner and meaner. It's

just a suggestion that there's another culprit at work, and that other culprit is revenue. Despite what you hear on TV, despite what you hear on Fox News today, taxes as a percentage of GDP today are at a 60-year low. Right now, we are collecting about 15 percent of our GDP in taxes. The problem isn't just that the government is broke; it's that we've made a decision, effectively, to keep it broke.

Now, if the government isn't broke and this country is still the richest in the world, why is it that so many families feel broke? Why is it so many families are broke?

□ 1110

Let's explore that for a second. Here is the problem right here:

Over the last 60 years, incomes for the bottom 99 percent of Americans have basically remained flat. What that has meant is that all of the additional wealth that we've accumulated in this Nation has gone to the richest 1 percent as their incomes during that same time have increased by almost 300 percent.

Do you want to see it in even starker terms? Take a look at this chart.

The 400 wealthiest Americans have a net worth that is greater than the net worth of the 100 million poorest Americans. Let me say that again: the 400 richest of us have more money than the 100 million poorest of us.

Now, having said all of this, getting rich is good. It's great. The richest 400 people didn't steal this money. They made it legally. We just have to start having policies in this country that make more people rich, that make more people feel rich. So we need to be having a debate in this country right now about how we do that, about how we put policies in place to lift more people into the ranks of those who have enough to succeed because an economy with this kind of wealth disparity, combined with an unwillingness to make the investments to shrink it, is destined to collapse. This isn't about pitting one group against another. This is just about economics.

It's not class warfare to suggest that, as an economy, we'd be stronger if incomes were rising for a few more people than the top 1 percent—the people who tend to spend domestically, the middle class, rather than invest internationally.

It's not class warfare to suggest that our economy would be stronger if more of our Nation's wealth went to local innovators and small businesses rather than to big multinational companies that tend to take income from the United States and use it to create employment overseas.

It's not class warfare to suggest that our economy would be stronger if more kids had access to the ultimate wealth creator—higher education—if we were investing our Nation's riches in making college cheaper.

Do you know what? If we have this discussion, everybody, not just the bot-

tom 99 percent, benefits from the discussion.

My friends, the government is temporarily broke. Millions of American families are broke, but our Nation is not broke. We're just pretending that we are.

Here's the thing: If we don't wake up from this dream soon, what is fiction today will be fact before we know it.

IN HONOR OF AMERICA'S BRAVEST

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

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, in having survived Hurricanes Rita and Ike, my district and the people of southeast Texas know and understand hurricanes and the devastation they can bring to our communities.

This past September, we dealt with a very different type of disaster in the form of major wildfires in the Counties of Jasper, Tyler, Trinity, Walker, and in my home county of Montgomery. Luckily for us, we were also granted our September miracle on Labor Day weekend as fire crews from across Texas—and, in fact, from the entire country—came to Magnolia to battle a three-county blaze that threatened to consume well over 10,000 homes and businesses in Magnolia, as well as thousands more in neighboring Grimes and Waller Counties.

In fact, if you look at this map, you can see the structures lost in Montgomery County were a fraction of the percentage of those saved by the brave fire crews. The fire was in this area outlined here, but you can see from the red, the yellow, the green, and the blue going out all the thousands of homes and small businesses which were saved because of the actions of our local firefighters.

I had the privilege to go up twice to those fire areas to see for myself how the fire lines came right up to these homes—within 5 feet of their front doors. Somehow our firefighters saved them, and then they did it to the homes next to them and to the homes next to those. It is impossible for me and for anyone who could see that not to be in awe of these heroes. Their skill and dedication saved the town of Magnolia, and I can't wait to join them this Saturday in Unity Park to honor their success and their hard work.

Chief Gary Vincent led the Magnolia Volunteer Firefighters and exemplified their motto: a community of unity. Gary united over 100 different firefighting agencies by his side. The chief also had help from our dedicated sheriff, Tommy Gage, and his deputies; our constables; our police departments; our terrific fire marshal, Jimmy Williams, who you need to meet; our school districts; and the Texas Forest Service—just to name a few of the people and agencies that stepped up like you can't believe.

California sent from the Federal Government the Interagency Incident Management Team, and I think they had

their eyes open. They got to see what happens when a community rallies together as volunteers. It was a sight to behold. Everyday Texans and everyday citizens in the Montgomery/Magnolia County area joined with our charity agencies from the United Way, to the Red Cross, to our local food banks, to our churches, to our YMCAs, to chambers of commerce in order to provide a response to the firefighters across this Nation, a response that we will be talking about for years to come.

We saw the best of our communities and the massive volunteer effort to feed, clothe, and take care of our bravest. At the Magnolia West High School staging area, I got a tour. If a firefighter were thirsty, three volunteers would rush over with a bottle of water, and there were likely two more behind them, carrying a hot meal, just in case that firefighter might be hungry.

In speaking about the firefighters who came from across the country, all they could talk about was how well they were treated by the community of Magnolia. They came in looking for water and a FEMA bar, and what they got was home-cooked meals, fresh clothes and necessities. If they asked for it, a volunteer found it and brought it right over. When these volunteers ran low, they simply sent out a message on Facebook to the community; and within 3 hours, that staging area in the ag barn was filled to the brim again. It was amazing.

The outpouring of love and support was truly a sight to behold. It's no wonder, back home we consider this God's country.

Today, it's an honor for me to be here on the House floor to honor our heroes. Without all of you, thousands of families wouldn't have homes to go to tonight or businesses in which to work. The proof is right here on this map.

This Saturday afternoon, Unity Park in Magnolia, our community, will come together to honor the men and women who beat back the fire, held the line and saved our community. We'll also honor them by heeding their warnings if the fire danger remains extraordinarily high. We must remain vigilant in our prevention efforts. That's another way we can honor our bravest, who spent the month of September away from their families, saving homes and businesses in our community.

God bless our firefighters. God bless our volunteers and all who supported them, and God bless our community.

RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE AND SACRIFICE OF AMERICA'S VETERANS AND MILITARY SERVICEMEMBERS

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

Mr. YODER. Today, I rise to recognize the service and sacrifice of our Nation's veterans and military servicemembers who have answered our country's call to serve.

Last month, we commemorated the 10th anniversary of the attacks of September 11, 2001, in remembrance of the victims and their families, while at the same time recognizing the need for continued vigilance as the United States seeks to rid the world of terrorism.

This month, we commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Afghanistan war. Ten years later, our Nation is safer as a direct result of the voluntary service of men and women who are willing to place themselves in harm's way, often under circumstances many Americans cannot fathom.

This willingness to serve and dedication to duty remains consistent with previous generations of veterans who chose to serve their country during our greatest time of need. Unfortunately, we have lost some of our greatest treasure in our fight against terrorism. Since October 2001, 4,914 servicemembers have been killed and another 46,376 injured as a result of military action in Iraq and Afghanistan. Recently, we again faced a tragic loss of life.

On August 6, a CH-46 Chinook twin-engine helicopter, carrying U.S. Army soldiers, U.S. Navy SEALs, and Afghan soldiers, was shot down in the Wardak province of Afghanistan, resulting in the greatest loss of life in any combat incident of the entire conflict thus far. The unit involved, B Company 7th/158th Aviation, is headquartered in New Century, Kansas, in the southernmost part of my district.

□ 1120

Last March I had the privilege to attend the deployment ceremony for the unit as they departed for training at Fort Bliss, ultimately deploying to Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. As my colleagues are well aware, deployment ceremonies are often somber affairs with family members wanting to spend every last second with their loved ones before they depart for duty and soldiers assuring family members that they will be okay and not to worry.

This past August, I was saddened to learn about the tragic events of August 6, 2011, hearing the news that three members of the unit had been killed during the combat operation. These soldiers, Army Specialist Spencer Duncan, Chief Warrant Officer Bryan Nichols and Army Specialist Alexander Bennett, are remembered as outstanding soldiers, dedicated to duty, their unit, and to each other.

Spencer Duncan was just 21, a 2008 graduate of Olathe South High School. He enlisted in the Army Reserve shortly after graduation; and before deployment to Afghanistan, he served at New Century AirCenter Aviation Support Facility in Olathe, Kansas. First he was an aircraft mechanic, and later he trained to become a Chinook door gunner. I had the honor of attending a memorial service for Specialist Duncan and witnessed the outpouring of friends and loving family.

Bryan Nichols was 31 and a pilot from Kansas City, Missouri, who, when hearing of the need to train people for mobilization, followed and sacrificed for our country, leaving behind a wife and son.

Alexander Bennett was 23 and was trained as a Chinook helicopter flight mechanic. Originally from Tacoma, Washington, he had already served one tour of duty in Iraq in 2009 before being deployed again, this time to Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to the families and friends of these three patriotic servicemen who gave the ultimate sacrifice that we all in this country might continue to live in a Nation of freedom and liberty. For their service and sacrifice to our Nation, a grieving country says thank you.

Mr. Speaker, next month we will celebrate Veterans Day and once again remember the service and sacrifice of all those who have faithfully and dutifully served, in peacetime and in war, throughout.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 22 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Reverend Scott Eynon, Community Christian Church, Tamarac, Florida, offered the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, it is our prayer that You will grant us wisdom today and that You will bless the Members of Congress as they lead our Nation during these challenging times.

Father, we are amazed by Your grace, awed by Your resplendent creation, captivated by Your love, and dependent upon Your guidance for every day. We do not take these blessings for granted. We thank You for them.

We also thank You for the problems that come our way, for they make us even more dependent upon You for Your guidance and for Your strength.

Father, Your Word tells us that righteousness exalts a nation. So help us to be great by striving to be good. May our Representatives exemplify principle-centered leadership.

Father, we ask that You would bless the men and women who serve in our military. We ask that You would bless those who serve here in Congress. We ask that You bless this great land that we call home. In Jesus' name I pray.

Amen.