

agencies to provide quarterly financial statements, auditing those financial statements and putting that information on a comprehensive Web site, as well as implementing the zero-based budgeting, we will greatly improve our Federal budget practice and enhance the public's ability to know how their tax dollars are being spent.

We expect and demand that companies conduct their business in a transparent manner. We should expect and demand no less of our Federal Government.

I want to urge my colleagues to co-sponsor this legislation. The American taxpayers deserve true accounting of how their money is being spent.

PUERTO RICO'S ABUSIVE GOVERNMENT PRACTICES

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

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, I've come to the floor on several occasions this year to denounce the abuses of the current government in Puerto Rico and discuss where the government has taken actions to suppress dissent and conduct business in secret, cutting the people out of the process of governance.

I've discussed the current regime's push for a dangerous, environmentally risky 92-mile natural gas pipeline known locally as the "gasoducto"; the violations of civil rights and human rights of workers who protested the firing of up to 30,000 government employees; closing the legislature to the press and the public and conducting their business in secret; the violent treatment of students who opposed a steep fee increase, whose protest was broken up with billy clubs and pepper spray; the civil rights abuses revealed in the devastating report by our own U.S. Department of Justice about the systematic abuses by the Puerto Rican Police Department; and the attempt to destroy the Puerto Rican Bar Association, one of the most important independent organizations of civil society.

And the reaction in official Puerto Rico to my denunciations here in the House is telling as well. The legislature in Puerto Rico, both Houses, controlled by the ruling party, approved a joint resolution condemning me—not condemning the abusive tactics and oppressive practices I denounced, and that the Department of Justice confirmed exists—but condemning me for telling you about them.

Now the effort in Puerto Rico to silence any and all opposition has reached a new low. Incredible as it may sound, according to press reports published in Puerto Rico, the Vatican sent an official to conduct an investigation on allegations of political involvement by the archbishop of San Juan, conducted in secrecy until the press got wind of it this week.

While no names have surfaced on who filed an accusation against the arch-

bishop, or who was in contact with the Vatican, it is telling that the elite of the ruling party has been quick to saturate the airwaves and pages of local newspapers with loud public accusations against the archbishop.

Attacking the archbishop is nothing new for the ruling party in Puerto Rico. They've done it many times in the past.

I'm a strong supporter of the democratic principle of separation of church and state, but as someone who has spent my life working to defend the rights of workers, minorities, working class people and immigrants, I have often been joined by people of faith and, particularly, leaders of the Catholic Church.

Just as here on the mainland, in Puerto Rico there is a broad religious leadership that has joined with the people as they strive to achieve a greater degree of social justice. Among those people is the Archbishop Roberto Gonzalez Nieves of San Juan.

Archbishop Gonzalez Nieves has courageously stepped forward on very important issues in Puerto Rico, such as the struggle to achieve peace on the island of Vieques, the need to protect civil rights and free speech, the freedom of political prisoners, and the just treatment of the poor.

But the one issue that has inflamed the passions of the ruling party against the archbishop has been his clear and firm stance on the need to reform Puerto Rican identity and the existence of a Puerto Rican nation. He has expressed a bold and comprehensive opinion in reference to Puerto Rican nationhood. That quote is, "Motherland nation and identity are indivisible gifts of God's love."

He's had the temerity to incorporate the Puerto Rican flag into the Catholic Church, a Puerto Rican church.

□ 1020

Mr. Speaker, this is just another instance where the regime, through any means necessary, seeks to silence all voices of opposition and undermine all independent institutions on the island. Whether they initiated the effort to silence the archbishop or whether they're just cheering it loudly from the sidelines, the current regime in Puerto Rico is repeating its pattern of driving all opposing forces into the wilderness.

Mr. Speaker, I am one voice, and I suspect that the Archbishop Gonzalez Nieves is another that cannot be silenced or driven into the wilderness.

I will be going to Puerto Rico this Friday night and trekking to the mountains of Adjuntas to meet with the good people of Casa Pueblo this Sunday where we will discuss the next steps of the people's opposition to the gasoducto gas pipeline project. Interestingly, the archbishop also expressed serious concerns about the gasoducto and in June participated in a meeting with leaders of the community discussing possible actions they could take in case construction of the pipeline actually begins.

I am sure that the regime's attempts in Puerto Rico to suppress the will of the people and impose upon them politically driven policies, such as the gasoducto, or get the institution of civil society to shut up will not be happy to hear what I have to say next week when I arrive on the island.

KEYSTONE XL/CANADA OIL SANDS

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Canadian oil sands transported via pipelines play a major role in supplying the energy needs of southern Illinois. Two weeks ago, I visited the oil sands in Alberta, Canada, and here is exactly what we saw.

On Monday of this week, I visited three facilities also, but before I talk about those three facilities, Daniel Yergin yesterday in The Washington Post said this about the oil sands of Canada: "Oil sands production in Canada today is 1.5 million barrels per day—more oil than Libya exported before its civil war. Canadian oil sands output could double to 3 million barrels per day by the beginning of the next decade. This increase, along with its other oil output, would make Canada a larger oil producer than Iran—becoming the world's fifth largest, behind Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and China."

On Monday of this week, I visited three facilities in southern Illinois that utilize Canadian oil sands: Robinson refinery, the Patoka tank farm, and the Wood River refinery.

Pipelines play a vital role in providing the energy needs for our daily lives. There are over 2.5 million miles of pipelines in this country: 175,000 miles of onshore and offshore hazardous liquid pipelines, mostly oil; 321,000 miles of onshore/offshore gas transmission and gathering lines; and 2,066,000 miles of natural gas distribution mains and service pipelines.

Keystone XL would stretch about 1,700 miles. Again, going back to Yergin's article, he says: "Though large"—he's referring to the Keystone XL pipeline. "Though large, it would increase the length of the oil pipeline network in the United States by just 1 percent."

Due to the high volumes of various liquids and gasses that must be transported, pipelines are the feasible mode of transportation. Imagine trying to transport this gas, crude oil on rail, on trucks, in our major waterways. In fact, just today there was a supertanker that was just hijacked by pirates on the high seas. That's the challenge of moving crude oil other than the pipeline system.

We continue to import oil from countries that are not our closest friends. Further blocking of this pipeline development will only increase foreign oil imports from far-off places that are not our neighbors.

This pipeline application is a jobs plan. Five major labor unions have endorsed this project, and there would be 20,000 construction jobs. As refineries expand, there's an estimated 100,000 new jobs as a whole. This Keystone XL pipeline is supported by the AFL-CIO and several other organized labor groups. In fact, they have started to run ads today in support of the pipeline and encouraging the Obama administration to approve it. Canadian oil sands are already creating jobs in my district in southern Illinois.

Caterpillar, which my friend JOE WILSON is going to talk about too—you'll see a larger mock than this. This is one of their major pickup trucks, lightly said. It's about four stories tall. The major place that this goes to is the oil sands in Canada. The tires, themselves, are two stories tall. The Caterpillar 797 is the largest truck they make. It's partially assembled in Decatur, Illinois. The truck is so large, final assembly must be done at the delivery site. The largest concentration of these Caterpillar trucks are in Alberta, Canada. These are manufactured in the good old U.S.A. These are great Midwestern manufacturing jobs that are directly tied to the oil sands development.

At my last stop on Monday to the ConocoPhillips refinery, I just posed this basic question to the reporters who attended the press conference: Would you rather have the oil being refined in Wood River, Illinois, come from Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, the Middle East, or Africa, or would you have that oil rather come from Canada? I think the answer is simple. So this administration must approve the Keystone XL pipeline.

POVERTY

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

Ms. LEE of California. I rise again today, as I've been doing every week, to sound the alarm on poverty in America. Twelve Members of Congress are or will be participating in the food stamp challenge, which is a nationwide effort to bring attention to the needs of the 45 million Americans who are receiving food benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or food stamps. For 1 week, we lived on the food budget of the average food stamp recipient, or \$31.50 a week, \$4.50 a day, which means I spent on average \$1.50 a meal. This is for 1 week.

Let me thank Congresswoman DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, TIM RYAN, JOE COURTNEY, JAN SCHAKOWSKY, DONNA CHRISTENSEN, ALCEE HASTINGS, KEITH ELLISON, JIM MORAN, JACKIE SPEIER, TED DEUTCH, MARCIA FUDGE, and ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON for their participation and their commitment to drawing attention to the struggle of millions of hardworking families to put food on the table during very difficult economic times.

We faced limited food choices, lacked access to fresh and healthy foods, and were repeatedly exposed to unhealthy and inadequate food choices that promote poor health, obesity, and hypertension. But of course, our week will end.

I hope that every Member of Congress will stop for at least a moment and consider the millions of American families who will face these challenges each and every day until they can find a good job with a real living wage.

Now, I'm a former food stamp recipient, and let me tell you that I was deeply thankful for my fellow Americans who were there for me and my children during a difficult time in our lives. The benefits that were extended to us were a critical help and provided a vital bridge over troubled waters when we needed them the most. But we didn't want to stay on food stamps forever, and we got off as soon as we could.

Let me also say that now is not the time to gut these critical human needs programs. We are facing record poverty levels and unacceptably high unemployment rates, and it is simply unconscionable to attempt to balance the budgets on the backs of the most vulnerable and the neediest Americans.

We must create what is being called a circle of protection around these core programs that keep American families from suffering the worst impacts of living in poverty.

But we must do more than just minimize the cuts to programs. We must make bold, targeted investments that will lift those families up and off of food stamps. We must improve and extend programs that create jobs and provide ladders of opportunity for all. We must commit ourselves to removing barriers, and they're many, to opportunity like poverty and hunger so that we can reignite the American Dream.

Mr. Speaker, on January 22, 2008, the House unanimously passed a resolution that I authored which committed Congress to the goal of cutting poverty in America in half in a decade. Now it's time to put that commitment to the test.

□ 1030

An estimated 46 million Americans were living in poverty in 2010; and according to the latest Census figures, the official poverty rate in 2010 is now 15.1 percent.

It is simply unconscionable that the richest and most powerful Nation in the world can allow so many of its fellow Americans to fall to the wayside and be left with little hope and few opportunities to reach the American Dream. It's clear that our policies and programs addressing poverty have not kept pace with the growing needs of millions of Americans. It's time we make the commitment to confront poverty head on, create pathways out of poverty, and provide opportunities for all.

I've introduced H.R. 3300, the Half in Ten Act of 2011. This bill would establish a Federal interagency working group on reducing poverty. The working group will be tasked with developing and implementing a national plan to reduce poverty in half in 10 years. We really should be talking about eliminating poverty.

It would also work to eliminate child poverty, extreme poverty and finally put an end to the historic and ongoing disparity in poverty rates in communities of color. It's simply unacceptable that communities of color continue to face disturbingly high rates of poverty, with 27.4 percent of African Americans and 26.5 percent of Hispanics living in poverty, compared to their white counterparts, who have a poverty rate of just under 10 percent.

It's time to work together to dramatically improve access to opportunities for low-income Americans so that they can climb up the economic ladder and reignite the fire of the American Dream.

We must put partisanship aside to preserve and extend the vital human needs programs that protect our most vulnerable communities. We cannot and we must not seek to balance the budget on the backs of America's poor, her children and an entire generation of young people, who are really now taking to the streets to protest the fact that they are afraid that theirs will be the first generation in America's history to be less well off than the one before.

JOBS FOR ALBERTA, JOBS FOR AMERICA

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Two weeks ago, I traveled to Fort McMurray in the province of Alberta, in Canada, with subcommittee chairman JOHN SHIMKUS of Illinois and Congressman BOB LATTA of Ohio of the Energy and Commerce Committee. We were accompanied by the Honorable Cal Dallas, the Minister of Intergovernmental, International and Aboriginal Relations for Alberta. We were welcomed to Edmonton by the Honorable Alison Redford, the newly inaugurated Premier of Alberta.

The purpose of this visit was to see firsthand the development of Canadian oil sands and to fully understand the positive impact this exploration has for the American people. We were briefed on the Keystone pipeline and how this project creates jobs. We saw the environmental stewardship where development is subject to environmental standards that are among the most stringent in the world. The Government of Alberta requires that companies remediate and reclaim 100 percent of the land after the oil has been extracted.

This project will connect a growing supply of Canadian oil with the largest