

faithful rally behind the men who now wear the red and black with two words, two simple words which express the sentiments of the entire Bulldog Nation: Go Dawgs.”

DEMANDING RELEASE OF ALAN GROSS FROM CUBAN PRISON

(Mr. ENGEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, today is the second anniversary of the unfair and brutal incarceration by the Cuban regime of Alan Gross, an American citizen; and I urge his immediate release.

Alan Gross is 62 years old and, in a trumped-up trial, was given 15 years in prison. Alan Gross has worked in international development in over 50 countries through the past several years and was in Cuba to aid the tiny Jewish community with telecommunications and Internet services when he was arrested and accused of being an American spy. This is a new low even for the Cuban regime. This is a new low even for the Castro brothers.

Alan Gross's wife and family need him. His mother was just diagnosed with inoperable cancer, and his daughter was also diagnosed with cancer. They need him back.

We demand him back. He is an American citizen, and we are watching and the whole world is watching. Alan Gross should not be incarcerated for doing nothing except trying to help a very tiny community in Cuba. And I demand his immediate release.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

(Mr. KINGSTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I think there are four things the United States of America needs to do to turn the economy around.

Number one, we need to balance the budget. We can do this on a bipartisan basis just by reducing the duplications in government and the overlap between State functions and Federal functions; also getting through the waste, and then trimming off 1 percent over time to bring revenues and spending at the same level. Right now spending is at 23 percent. Revenues historically have been at 18 percent. Common sense says you need to balance those out.

Number two, we need to get rid of the regulatory overload on businesses that are creating the jobs right now. Change regulations from an “I gotcha” mentality to one that “we’re here to help because we’re in it together,” for worker safety, environmental protection or whatever. We can do a lot just by changing the attitude of the regulators.

Number three, we need tax reform, tax simplification so that taxes are fair. The Tax Code needs to be a half an

inch deep and miles and miles wide so that everyone is participating. Let's get rid of the underbrush, all the loopholes.

Number four, and finally we need to drill our own oil. We cannot keep importing 65 percent of our oil. We need to have an all-of-the-above energy policy.

FIXING MEDICARE REIMBURSEMENT RATE

(Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on behalf of the 600,000 Medicare beneficiaries in Connecticut and the thousands of physicians who care for them. We need to take up a bill in this Congress over the next several weeks to finally fix the flawed Medicare sustainable growth rate formula.

Since 2003, for almost a decade, physicians have been dealing with the uncertainty that comes with scheduled annual rate reductions. They're staring at a 28 percent reduction right now. That means about \$28,000 per year per Connecticut physician.

If this were to happen, it would happen at the worst possible time. With all the baby boomers coming on to the Medicare rolls, there would be a lot of physicians who just couldn't take Medicare patients any longer. They'd likely have to lay off workers at a time when we already have 9 percent unemployment in Connecticut and across the Nation.

This is unacceptable and we have to do something about it. So over the next several weeks, let's fix this once and for all. Let's stand together as a Congress and put an end to this outdated system and provide some certainty and security for America's seniors and America's physicians.

□ 1820

URGING SENATE ACTION ON JOBS LEGISLATION

(Mr. MICA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, it's time for the other body to act.

The Republican-controlled House of Representatives has a plan for putting Americans back to work. We've moved on more than 20 pieces of legislation that now sit idly in the other body. We have provisions that will empower small businesses—the great job creators of America. We have provisions that will fix the Tax Code to help create jobs. We have provisions that will help manufacturing to have jobs in America, not overseas. We have provisions that will encourage entrepreneurship and growth and maximize American energy production. And all of

these measures sit over in the other body.

I call on the leadership of the other body and all Members to get this legislation moving forward. There are millions of people without jobs, and they need us to act not later but now.

And finally, I call on them to help finalize a 4½-year-old, with more than 21 extensions, FAA bill that still languishes. It's time to stop the nonsense and get America back to work.

Let's pass these bills held hostage.

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MEEHAN). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, thank you.

My name is KEITH ELLISON, cochair of the Progressive Caucus, and I do hereby claim this Special Order hour on behalf of the Progressive Caucus.

Right away, I'd like to introduce my good friend from the great State of Georgia, Congressman HANK JOHNSON, who has served with distinction along with me since 2007. Congressman JOHNSON is the whip of the Progressive Caucus. Tonight we're going to be talking about jobs, income inequality, and we're going to be talking about this issue on behalf of the Congressional Progressive Caucus.

Our Web page is right here at the bottom of this document that I'm showing, Mr. Speaker. So we do encourage people to sign up and get ahold of us.

In the very beginning of this hour, I want to recognize my friend from Georgia so that he can make some introductory remarks about the importance of jobs, just as soon as he's ready to take it on.

If the gentleman is prepared to make some opening and preliminary remarks about the importance of jobs, economic justice in the American middle class, I would like to yield to the gentleman to take it away there.

Congressman JOHNSON.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. I thank the gentleman from Minnesota, my junior in the House. When I say that, I mean we're both juniors, having served now in our third terms. We will be officially recognized, I guess if we're fortunate to make it back for the 113th Congress, that will be our fourth term. We will be seniors, and we will be permanent seniors as long as the voters allow us to be. And we certainly want to do what the voters want us to do here.

What the voters of the Fourth Congressional District of Georgia tell me over and over and over again, day in and day out, 24-7, is that jobs is the issue, and they want us to pass the President's job creation bill. They don't understand why simple proposals that will create jobs and reinvigorate

our economy are something that we can't come to grips with here on the House floor. And I tell them to keep the faith, but I also tell them where the problem lies. It is not with the President. It's not with the Democrats in the House of Representatives. It's with my friends on the other side of the aisle, the Tea Party-Grover Norquist Republicans who want to balance the budget. Their main issue is balancing our budget. And certainly our budget needs to be balanced, and that's something that we should do. It's not our first priority.

Our priority right now, and I agree with the people of the Fourth District, it should be jobs. And if we don't create jobs, if we leave people on unemployment or unemployment having expired, that means less money circulating in the economy. If there's less money circulating, less economic activity, less job creation. And so there's a lot that we can do, Congressman ELLISON, to help the people, especially during this holiday season.

Mr. ELLISON. I thank the gentleman.

I just want to say this is the holiday season. We should have a spirit of charity in looking out for our fellow Americans during this time of year. But unfortunately, we have seen a no-jobs agenda from the party opposite. From the majority party, we have been here 11 months, we haven't seen any jobs bills out of them.

They say that tearing apart the EPA is a jobs bill. It is not a jobs bill. They say that damaging the National Labor Relations Board is somehow going to bring forth jobs. It will not.

Everything they say is a jobs bill basically boils down to two things—I think you might agree, Congressman—is deconstructing health and safety rules and cutting taxes for people who already are rich; and this is not a jobs bill.

A jobs bill is taking care of our Nation's infrastructure, putting our veterans back to work, as we tried to do today. The Democratic Caucus offered a motion to recommit to help support jobs for our veterans, get small businesses to hire them, and we didn't get any Republican support, which is quite amazing to me.

The fact is that, yes, here we are nearing the end of this year, nearing the end of 2011, and we're seeing unemployment insurance perhaps about to run out. We're seeing payroll tax cuts about to run out. Therefore, some people will see the end of their unemployment insurance and other people will see an increase in their payroll taxes.

And it shocks me that our Republican friends are all for tax cuts, can't wait to vote for a tax cut, dying to vote for a tax cut whenever the recipient of the tax cut is rich. But if the tax cut happens to go to somebody who works hard for a living, who goes to work, gets their hands dirty and comes home, they don't want to see a tax cut for that person. They just want to see tax cuts for only some people.

I think that you're right to describe our colleagues as the Tea Party-Grover Norquist Republican Party because that seems to be who's running things over there.

You know, my father was a Republican. He is a Republican. He hasn't voted that way in a while. But he says, I remember you guys could go down there and talk. You could debate the issues. Some of us wanted to pinch a penny a little harder, some of us wanted to emphasize pulling yourself up by your bootstraps a little more. You liberals want to help everybody.

That's what he says about me. But the point is we could find a way to get along.

Today the moderate Republican, I'm looking for him. I can't wait to have him show up, because I cannot see anybody who has the spirit of cooperation that we could cut a deal with that could balance fiscal discipline on the one hand and the need to help and respond to the needs of Americans on the other hand. We see people who are carrying forth an extreme ideological agenda that is all around tax breaks only for the rich people, that revolves around unemployment being ignored, that revolves around all of these things.

They say "jobs." People shouldn't be confused, Congressman JOHNSON. You will hear Republicans say "jobs." You just won't see them do anything about jobs, because if they want to do something about jobs, we could pass the American Jobs Act right away.

□ 1830

We could help make sure those payroll tax deductions are extended, and we could make sure unemployment benefits are extended, but we're just not seeing any of that.

What we are seeing is described on this board right here, which is the Republican no-jobs agenda. They've got a no-jobs program. They're saying, Get rid of the EPA, the Environmental Protection Agency, which protects the water and our lungs; make sure we are subject to toxic, hazardous waste and pollution; and cut taxes for rich people. Then somehow, magically, we'll end up with jobs. That's not going to give anybody a job.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. It certainly will not create any jobs. There is a false perception that has been bought into wholesale, unanimously, by my Tea Party-Grover Norquist Republican friends, and that is that deregulation somehow creates jobs.

Now, I know what kind of jobs are created when you deregulate the health and safety of food, water, air quality, drugs, Wall Street. I know what happens when you don't have any regulations. It means you're going to have more people going to the doctor because of unsafe and unhealthy conditions—adulterated food, water. It means that you will have more—

Mr. ELLISON. Asthma.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. People in the mortuary business who are trying

to determine the cause of death for people. You will have more cleanup workers, workers who are dispatched to clean up toxic sites. You'll create those kinds of jobs. Yet, as for the kind of high-level, 21st century jobs that America needs in order to be the leader of the world economy in this global environment that we're in, there is not one measure that the Republicans have introduced that will stimulate the creation of those kinds of jobs.

So what we're doing, Congressman ELLISON, is just creating conditions of great suffering so that people will vote against President Obama next November. The stated goal of my friends on the other side of the aisle—their main, central goal—is to make sure that President Obama is a one-term President. They don't care about how much pain they inflict on the American people, on the 99 percenters—and 47 percent of them are millionaires, so they don't have to worry. It's just to serve a political purpose.

Mr. ELLISON. The gentleman mentioned that the stated goal of the Republicans was to make President Obama a one-term President. This is not just political rhetoric. MITCH MCCONNELL—and anybody sitting in front of a computer can Google it and look it up—said that was his goal, which was to make President Obama a one-term President.

I think the goal of a Member of Congress ought to be to look after the welfare of the American people. I think a Member of Congress ought to be trying to figure out how to look after the best interests of the congressional districts that they represent. I think that ought to mean jobs, health, safety, education.

Trying to defeat the President should never be anyone's goal. I can guarantee you it was not my goal. Even though I did not think that his administration was the best administration for America, my first goal was not to get rid of President Bush. It was never my top goal. My goal was to try to promote peace and justice, economic opportunity and prosperity, not to try and defeat somebody else. The fact is that the Republicans have neglected the economy, and they've neglected the middle class. It really is too bad.

So, on this issue of paying for the extension of the payroll tax deduction, I just want to say that there is \$1,000 that Americans don't have to pay in their paychecks when they get them every 2 weeks or every month, which is because of the payroll tax cut. If that expires, they'll see 1,000 more bucks over the course of a year that they'll have to pay.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Starting January 1.

Mr. ELLISON. Starting January 1, it's going to come out of their checks.

Now, Democrats have said, Let's ask the most well-to-do Americans—

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. The top 1 percent.

Mr. ELLISON. And they don't have to pay based on their first \$1 million;

it's just after their first \$1 million—to toss a little back to the American people so that we can extend the payroll tax cuts for working class people.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. But Grover Norquist doesn't want them to do it.

Mr. ELLISON. Grover Norquist said no. They signed a pledge.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. They signed it 20 years ago.

Mr. ELLISON. They signed it. They signed a pledge, not to the American people, but to Grover Norquist.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Who does he represent?

Mr. ELLISON. Do you represent him?

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. I don't represent him, and he doesn't represent me or the folks that predominate my district. I've got a 99er district.

Mr. ELLISON. I've got a 99er district as well.

The thing that really gets me is that, if Grover Norquist lived in my district, I would feel duty-bound to at least listen to him because I listen to everybody in my district. But to sign a pledge to him to subvert the interests of the 99 percent is an outrageous thing.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. All the while, Congressman ELLISON, pitting Americans against each other, trying to stoke hatred and anger amongst the 99 percenters on any issue they can.

Mr. ELLISON. Right, divide and conquer.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. That's the way it is.

So right now, Congressman ELLISON, I feel like I have to say this because you're such a great example of a true American patriot, one who lives life in accordance with your inner ideals. We have the freedom in this country to do so, but there are those right here in this Congress who would try to turn the American people against you and people like you because of the religion that you have chosen to follow.

Mr. ELLISON. That's right.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. They don't have any idea that your dad is a Republican.

Mr. ELLISON. Yes.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. They don't have any knowledge of how you grew up and what kind of values you were taught and what kind of family you had. They just want to condemn you because you are a Muslim. They want to make you a threat to America, a threat to our military, and make a threat of those engaged in the military who happen to practice the faith of Islam. It plays into this decision to put Americans through this suffering so that they will then vote against President Obama and the Democrats so that the Republicans can then throw the welcome mat out like they have done for the large corporate interests and wealthy individuals in order to control public policy in America.

Mr. ELLISON. The gentleman makes an excellent point. I mean, let me put it like this:

How are you going to get the 99 percent to vote for the exclusive interests

of the 1 percent? Or a better question: How are you going to get 50 percent plus one to vote for the interests of the 1 percent? You've got to keep them divided. You've got to keep them confused. You've got to keep them asleep. You've got to keep them disliking each other for no legitimate reason.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. So you hold hearings on issues that are false issues.

Mr. ELLISON. Yes.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. You create controversy where there is none.

Mr. ELLISON. Right.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. This is a game that, certainly, many people see is being played, but I wish far more people saw and understood what is actually taking place in their House of Representatives. I believe that it's one reason we have two groups of 99ers—the Occupy Wall Street and the Tea Party movement, those who are dissatisfied with how things are going in America.

Mr. ELLISON. I do hope that we can help the people understand that their interests lie with each other, right? So whether or not you're a Muslim, Christian, Jew, Buddhist, Hindu, Bahai, a person who doesn't practice any faith but is just spiritual, an atheist—or whatever you may happen to be—the fact is we all breathe the same air; we all occupy this same small planet; and we have to find a way to live here. Whether you are black, white, Latino, Asian, no matter whether you're from the South or from the North, no matter whether you were born in America or you came here, no matter whether you're straight or gay, or no matter who you may be, you're an American.

□ 1840

When you and I stand up in this very room every morning and we say the Pledge of Allegiance, we, in that Pledge of Allegiance, with these very simple words, “and liberty and justice for all,” all, liberty and justice for all, all Americans, I urge Americans to look for the common good, the things we all share.

How can we come together around a common narrative of a shared reality as Americans so we don't look at each other as you're a this and I'm a that, and I don't like you because of this historical thing and all of this kind of stuff. Let's find a way to unite our people; because if we can unite our people, Congressman JOHNSON, we can stand up and advocate for policies that are to the best good of the American people.

The American people will be wide awake and clear that our economic interests lie with each other, and we will not vote a program to give tax cuts to millionaires simply because we have been convinced that people of a different—people who pray on a different day that we do or pray in a different way than we do, or have a different appearance than we do are somehow our enemy.

You know, we've got to build human solidarity. This is what we've got to

do. And the one thing I like about the Occupy movement is you go there and you see people of all colors, all cultures, all faiths. You go there and you see people, even people of different income groups.

There was a group that we had at our hearing, which we had just a few days ago, which there is a videotape on, on our Web site, USCongress.org, and they were calling themselves the Patriotic Millionaires. Now these are people who used the American free enterprise system, came up with a great idea, sold it, people bought it, and they did well in the marketplace.

Now, this is a good thing, but their attitude is not, yes, America, you have public schools which educated my workers, you had publicly funded roads which allowed me to drive here, to drive there. You have the police department, which protects my business. You have the military, which protects our whole country.

Yes, America, you've done all this stuff for me, but all this money is just mine, and I'm not giving any to anyone. They didn't say that. They say, you know what, to whom much is given, much is expected and they don't mind doing their fair share for America. That's the Patriotic Millionaires; that's the spirit that helped this country become a great country; and it's a spirit we need today.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. I do believe that you are 100 percent correct on that, and I want to give a shout out to those millionaires who are socially conscious. There are so many people who are afflicted and who are just eaten up with greed, and they already have more money than they can possibly spend in this lifetime; yet they have an insatiable quest for more and more and more.

They are the ones who are supporting people like Grover Norquist and like Dick Armey—

Mr. ELLISON. FreedomWorks.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Who is a proponent of the Tea Party movement; and those are the people, the Koch brothers, those kinds of interests that benefit from our system of government but then, ironically, they would support and encourage those who want to do away with government. They want to strip government of its power to regulate. They want to strip government of its power to protect and to create fairness and prosperity. And it is just basic. I don't care how rich you are, but if you're riddled with envy and with the need for more, you know, you just can't be satisfied, you are going to be unhappy.

And the person who is unemployed but doing their best to find a job and take care of their family and despite all obstacles is willing to do with half a crumb that they have extended to their neighbor because their neighbor is in the same shape, we're all in this together. Those are the types of ideals that we used to have in this country, we used to exemplify. But now it's this

culture of greed and avarice and self-satisfaction. Reminds me of the old days of the Roman Empire.

Mr. ELLISON. Or even the old days of the robber barons, like the 1890s, you know, 1900. This was a time when industry in America was young, and there were no right—labor unions, there were no environmental protections and people would, if you lost your hand on a punch press, you just were out.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. So be it.

Mr. ELLISON. And if you actually tried to get a fair wage from your boss, you just could be arrested or thrown into jail or whatever. And if you got sick based on the smog that the smokestack was pumping out, then you just died young, I guess.

But then America went through some changes; and we said, you know what, workers are going to have the right to organize. That's a good thing. Our air is going to be clean. Companies are going to have to abide by some of our environmental regulations.

And there became an American consensus where we said, yeah, you know, we're a mixed economy, which means that we have a strong public sector, but we have a strong private sector too. And the private sector, you be innovative, you come up with good products, services that people need, and by all means we hope you do well, but after you do well we need you to toss something back—

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Give back.

Mr. ELLISON. For the common good. And what we have now is we have people who say, I don't care about the common good. And here is the thing—

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Every man for himself.

Mr. ELLISON. Every man for himself.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Only the strong survive.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair must ask that the Members yield and reclaim their time in a more orderly fashion so that the court reporters are able to make the appropriate transitions.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Fair enough.

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you, sir.

And so we are now at a time, we have now approached the time where there are some people who become well-to-do whose attitude is that they want to shrink government to the size you can drown it in a bathtub. This is what Mr. Norquist has said. That's a quote from him.

His vision of America, like the Koch brothers, they do oil refineries and stuff; and you drive by some of these plants and they smell awful, and you know that nothing good can be coming out of those smokestacks, but they want a condition in America. Their vision is that if a person from the government says, you know what, there's a lot of people getting sick around

here, you can't just spew that stuff out of that smokestack, we're going to regulate that stuff and some of that stuff you're going to pay for the costs and the harm that you've caused to people as you go making money on that factory you have.

They have a vision where that factory owner will say, Mr. Government, you get out of here. I'm going to call your boss. I gave a campaign donation to your boss, and we're going to just make you leave us alone.

And if we can't get your boss to back up off of us, we're just going to sue you back and dump a ton of paperwork on you, and you don't have enough lawyers working for your government agency to defend the public interest; so we'll just drown you, and we're just going to be able to do whatever we want to do.

This is the kind of condition they want to create. They want an environment where the government is too small to tell them, you cannot pollute the air. You cannot abuse people's civil rights. You cannot hurt people's interests, the public interest this way. And that's the kind of condition they are creating.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. I could not have said it better; and I will say, so that I don't repeat what you've said, that when we do have a strong government, then government is there to protect the interest of all of the people, those who are the so-called job creators, who haven't been creating a lot of jobs here lately, by the way. I don't know why they still have that title, because all the jobs have been moving offshore, out of America and leaving these workers here without jobs.

We're doing ourselves a disservice by cutting government and cutting our ability to clean up the mess that has been created through decades, now, of deregulation. It has caused us to be a society where we spend more money on health care, but we're the sickest people in the industrialized world, among the industrialized nations.

□ 1850

We've got a financial system that nearly collapsed because of lack of regulation. And the same people who profited so mightily back during those winner-take-all days want to keep the winner-take-all days, make the big bonuses, the obscene bonuses at year end that they're getting ready to publicize now, and they would rather collect those bonuses than create jobs for Americans to clean up the environment, to reregulate Wall Street. They want to cut those jobs, so job creation, it will actually result in the job creators, or the 1 percent, being able to experience even more profit.

People should understand that if you help someone else, it comes back to you. These are just simple concepts of living that we have gotten away from as a society.

Mr. ELLISON. What you're describing is a win-win situation. But some

people have a psychology of a win-lose. They think in order for me to do well, you have to do poorly. But the truth about the universe we live in and a strong economy is that if I do well and I'm creating prosperity in the world through good products and services, and then I give you some of my money by hiring you, then you have some money and you will bring me value and we will see the economy grow and we all can be a little more prosperous. But some people think, well, if you get something, then that means I don't have something, so they just hoard. This is a very, very poor strategy to pursue.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. If the gentleman would yield, what we do when we create job growth and when we spread the wealth, it means that we're able to pay down that deficit, that debt that we have. We are able to clear that out. America is certainly not in a crisis as far as debt is concerned. We borrow money at 2 percent. You can't get it much cheaper than that. And while that cheap money is available, we should be borrowing that money and investing it in our own economy, in our infrastructure, in our research and development for medical care, health care delivery, energy production, our education system from the buildings on down to the lowest piece of equipment that's in there, the teachers who teach our children. We should be investing in those areas. We'll see this economy turn around rather quickly, and we'll see that debt disappear quicker than most people believe that it will.

Mr. ELLISON. I just would like to say something very important here.

It's common for our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to say we're broke, we're broke. They get up and say we're broke all the time. It's like one of their favorite things to say. The truth is we're not broke. America is not broke. This is designed to create a certain sense of crisis and urgency to scare people into favoring a program of austerity which they propose.

But I think it is important to note that two-thirds—two-thirds—of American corporations don't pay any taxes at all. Two-thirds pay none. And I just want to point out to Americans, Bank of America doesn't pay any taxes. They got a bailout from the government. The American people got a call from Bank of America: Oh, my God, we bought Merrill Lynch; we bought Countrywide. It's not a good deal. We're going down. Save us, please. Through the Congress, which is the people's House, they got their bailout.

Now, the assumption was that Bank of America would then turn around and pay the money back and then help people with their mortgages and help improve the economy. What they actually did is they didn't pay any taxes and they laid off 30,000 people. Bank of America didn't pay a single penny of Federal taxes. I've got more money in my pocket right here than they paid in taxes.

Boeing, despite receiving billions of dollars from the Federal Government in taxpayer giveaways, Boeing didn't pay a dime in U.S. Federal taxes.

Citigroup. Citigroup deferred income tax for a third quarter in 2010, amounting to a grand total of zero. At the same time, Citigroup has continued to pay its staff lavishly. John Havens, head of Citigroup's investment bank, is expected to be the bank's highest paid executive for the second year in a row with compensation of \$9.5 million. They paid no taxes at all.

ExxonMobil, they paid no taxes. In fact, I think we give them money. Big Oil tax dodgers use offshore subsidiaries in the Caribbean to avoid paying their fair share. Although ExxonMobil paid \$15 billion in taxes in 2009, not a penny of it went to the American Treasury. It went elsewhere. This is the same year that the company overtook Walmart as a Fortune 500 company. Meanwhile, the total compensation of ExxonMobil's CEO is about \$29 million.

We say we're broke. What we're doing is we're not collecting enough revenue because we think that corporations are job creators. And, of course, they're not creating any jobs, as you pointed out. But we're operating on some faulty assumptions.

General Electric. In 2009, General Electric, the world's largest corporation, filed more than 7,000 tax returns and still paid nothing to the government in taxes. GE managed to do this with aid of a rigged Tax Code that essentially subsidizes companies for losing money and allows them to set up tax havens overseas. With the Republicans' aid in Congress whose campaigns they finance, they exploit our Tax Code to avoid paying their fair share.

And who do Republicans blame? The middle class. They say that the middle class is the problem. They say tax breaks for billionaires, which is the GOP plan, tax breaks for huge corporations, which is the GOP plan, huge bonuses for big CEOs; but who is it who our friends in the Republican caucus think is responsible for all of the problems? Well, it's public employees.

I just want to point out something very important before I yield to the gentleman.

The Republicans now have said they will support a plan to extend the payroll taxes by cutting the Federal Government workforce 10 percent. And by giving—get this, Congressman—a means testing for Medicare, food stamps, and unemployment insurance benefits. That ought to get a lot of money. But public employees are who they think should bear the brunt of the refusal of the corporate elite from paying taxes.

They say that teachers should pay, that cops should pay, firefighters should pay, job training programs should be cut. Small business investment, no. Investment in the National Institute of Health and Research, we

should cut back on that. Schools, they should have to pay. Clean energy, we can't afford that. That's what they say. Health care, can't afford that. Infrastructure investment; I come from a city where I-35, the Interstate 35 bridge over the Mississippi River fell into the river and 13 Minnesotans died, 100 got severe back injuries, all because of deferred, delayed maintenance. Infrastructure investment is not just a job creator; it is a public safety issue. And, of course, college affordability. They want to cut programs that make it more affordable to go to college.

The brunt and the burden of balancing the budget is not and should not be on our public employees, our everyday heroes, the people who take care of our kids, the people who look after our younger people, the folks who look after us, the police department. Who are you going to call? Firefighters.

I thank the gentleman for allowing me to elaborate on this point because I want to say that, on the one hand, they say we're broke. We're not. What we are is we don't ask the wealthiest among us to help out. And what they offer as a solution is to cut the people who give a good quality of life to the average Americans—our public employees.

I yield to the gentleman.

□ 1900

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Thank you.

Many Americans watched in horror as the drama unfolded on the I-35 bridge, the aftermath of crashing into the waves of water below and taking out a multitude of cars and taking lives and causing people to be injured, and also resulting in an economic detriment to that area that needed that bridge in order to continue to conduct business. We can look at it sterily on the TV from a distant location, but we should realize that the same thing that happened to you guys in Minnesota can happen to us in Georgia with our own bridges that are in disrepair due to deferred maintenance.

This is something that can happen not just in Georgia, not just in Minnesota, but all across the land. And it doesn't have to be that way, because as President Obama has proposed in the American Jobs Act—or as a part of the American Jobs Act—there is money—a small amount, but any amount is better than none—for infrastructure. I think it's \$50 billion. That infrastructure, in addition to helping with our public safety issues—health, safety, and well-being of the people—would also create jobs. So we're killing more than one bird with one stone by passing the American Jobs Act.

Not one of my friends on the other side of the aisle has been able to put forth any rationale for not considering any part of that Jobs Act. We did, I'll give them credit, pass something last week having to do with veterans. They just could not find it within their hearts to avoid voting for that. But if

there was some way that they could, they would have.

They are insisting that the tax cuts to the working people of this country, the payroll tax, they want that to be paid for. But nobody said anything last year about paying for the extension of the Bush tax cuts.

Mr. ELLISON. Right.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Nobody said anything and nobody is saying anything because they want those tax cuts to become permanent while they at the same time would vote to impose a balanced budget amendment, which really would just simply lock in an unfair tax rate or a tax system that is unfair, would lock it in and make it much more difficult to change it.

So, Congressman, these are issues that I'm pleased to sit here and discuss with you. I look forward to further dialogue from both people on this side of the aisle, along with my friends on the other side of the aisle, because when it's all said and done, we're all in the same boat together.

Mr. ELLISON. I want to say that it's been a real pleasure to spend this last hour with you, Congressman JOHNSON. We in the Progressive Caucus believe in one America—all colors, all cultures, all faiths. We believe in promoting human solidarity, not making Americans fear each other. We believe in economic prosperity and justice for working and middle class people. We believe in environmental sustainability, and we absolutely believe in peace with our Nation and other nations. We are always going to promote diplomacy and dialogue and development over war.

We are the Progressive Caucus. I will allow the gentleman to offer a final word. If I could just say, my name is Congressman KEITH ELLISON, the co-chair of the Progressive Caucus. Look us up on the Web.

The final word will go to Congressman JOHNSON. After that, we will yield to the Republican side.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. I just want everyone to know that even though I stand up and talk about the Grover Norquist-Tea Party Republicans, I admire the Tea Partiers because they got up off of their duffs because they were upset about how things were going. They were misled in terms of thinking that the health care reform was not going to be good for them. It's good for them. And they will soon find out—they will continue to find out—that the things that we have done are good for them and their attention will be diverted from this President to their pocketbook. And so I look forward. I admire them for their activism. I love them. Don't take it personally when I talk about you being a Dick Armey-Tea Party Republican of the Grover Norquist ilk.

With that, I will close. I believe that my friends on the other side of the aisle are ready to delude you with some information.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

GOP DOCTORS CAUCUS: MEDICARE SENIORS AND OBAMACARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. FLEMING) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. FLEMING. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I come before this House tonight to talk about a very important issue—it's been important for years, and it's going to be increasingly important and increasingly a part of the debate—and that is health care, and particularly health care for our seniors. We've got lots going on. ObamaCare, of course, was passed in 2010, and we're running into all sorts of problems. Of course, I and my Republican colleagues here tonight voted against it.

I'm joined tonight, by the way, by two of my colleagues, Dr. PHIL ROE, an obstetrician from the great State of Tennessee, and Dr. SCOTT DESJARLAIS, who is, like me, a family physician.

I thought I would just give a brief introduction about Medicare and how that fits into the budget. I know that Dr. ROE is going to talk in more detail about that.

No speaker would be complete without a chart, and I have several tonight. This is one I think that's important for everybody to understand. This pie chart breaks up spending for the Federal budget. If you will notice, the vast majority of this pie is in what we call permanent mandatory or so-called entitlement spending and interest. What makes up a large part of mandatory spending is Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. The size of this pie, this section of the pie, is growing. In fact, if you recall, back in the nineties we actually balanced the budget. The last time we balanced it, I think was in the late nineties. It was a lot easier to do back then because entitlement spending, permanent spending, was not in place to the extent that it is today. It was growing, but not as big.

What is the difference between mandatory spending and discretionary spending, which is the other two pieces of this pie? Mandatory means that if you qualify for a certain type of service or payment, whether you're on Medicare, Medicaid, whether you earned it or not, if you qualify for it, the government must pay. No matter who shows up or how many people show up, the government must pay. So, therefore, the government cannot per se control that cost.

Discretionary cost, on the other hand, is split into two: defense, which is around \$600 billion to \$700 billion a year; and nondefense discretionary, which is what we run the government on. That we can adjust, although we've not done a good job in controlling this. In fact, that's increased probably 25 percent just in the last 2 years under President Obama.

But I want to illustrate for you what the problem is, and that is that the en-

titlement spending, which we don't control, with an aging population and the fact that it's dependent on government spending, is growing at a much faster rate than our revenues and inflation.

□ 1910

This is a chart that outlines where we are today with Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare, the part of entitlement spending. Now, let me say, first of all, Social Security is down here in the purple, and you notice that it slants upward and then it flattens out. Social Security is not our problem. Let me repeat that: Social Security is not our problem.

And people who are on it or will be on it, in my opinion, have nothing to worry about. Now, we may have to tweak it, we may have to adjust it, but you'll notice that the cost really rises relatively slowly, and that's just a matter of demographics. And we can adjust this, as we have in the past, and make this sustainable. There are other ways to do it, in terms of allowing Social Security recipients to invest some of their money and so forth, but that's beyond the scope of discussion tonight.

The next group in green is Medicaid and other health care. You'll notice it's going up faster. And Medicaid is health care for the poor. And then finally in red you see Medicare, and you see how that explodes and it goes up continuously. Medicare alone will completely displace all the budgetary spending eventually if we don't bring that under control. And that would mean we'd have to give up on government itself, we'd have to give up on a national defense—everything—unless we begin to control that.

Now, at the rate things are going, Medicare will run out of money, become insolvent by 2020. And that is straight from the CBO, the Congressional Budget Office. Another way to look at it is that our spending is now equal to 15 percent of the total Federal spending is Medicare, blowing out of control. What has made this worse is ObamaCare actually cut \$500 billion, that is, half a trillion dollars, out of Medicare to use for subsidies for middle class health care plans.

So let me repeat: Medicare is running out of money; it's exploding through the roof. And what does ObamaCare do, the Members who voted for it, it actually cuts money out of it and depletes it of money in the future so that it becomes insolvent. And here's where the cuts are: \$135 billion for Medicare Advantage, which is the private health care version of Medicare, \$112 billion, which was taken from hospitals, \$39.7 billion from home health, \$14.6 billion from nursing homes, and \$6.8 billion from hospice care. These are very real cuts.

And the only explanation that the other side gave us, our Democrat friends, is that somehow we'll cut out fraud, waste and abuse. Well, let me warn you, any time a politician tells

you he's capable of doing that, watch out, because I've never seen it done and I don't expect to see it done in the future. Because, you see, in order to cut out the massive fraud, waste and abuse, you have to spend even more money to find all the bad actors. The best way to do away with fraud, waste and abuse is to make the system much smaller, perhaps even privatize it, and make the system accountable rather than a Big Government bureaucracy, which wastes money, whether we're talking about the Department of Defense or Medicare. So that should give you kind of a beginning of where we are with Medicare.

Let me just close my opening remarks by saying that there's basically two options when it comes to making Medicare again solvent and available for us in the future. There is a Republican plan, which would allow you, if you are currently on Medicare or 10 years from becoming on Medicare, to keep Medicare as it is. And it is sustainable, as far as the CBO tells us, indefinitely.

However, we would have to reform that for younger adults today who will be senior citizens by opening up the insurance system, creating a marketplace for seniors to buy insurance, and then let government help them with what we call "premium support," and allowing competition in private care to drive the cost down and raise the level of service. In fact, what we in Congress have today is the very same thing.

The Democrats, their plan is this: goose egg, no plan whatsoever. Under their plan—or non-plan—Medicare runs out of money in 8 years. And they've failed to present an idea, much less a bill, as we have, that would even solve that. Well, that gives you an idea of some of our opening discussion.

First tonight, I want to introduce my good friend, PHIL ROE. Dr. PHIL ROE, as I said, is an obstetrician. I think he has some comments about the financing of Medicare and other things as well.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. I thank you, Dr. FLEMING, and I appreciate you hosting this hour tonight and a chance for us to discuss in detail the health care of this Nation.

You know, about 4 or 5 years ago I made a decision, after 31 years of practice, to think about running for Congress. And one of the reasons was I knew that the health care issue was going to be huge in the debate in this Nation's future. And, boy, has that turned out to be prophetic.

Secondly, the thing that I noticed in my patients when I practiced, the single biggest factor for both Medicare patients and my other private patients and patients without health insurance, was it was too expensive; it cost too much money to go see the doctor and go to the hospital. If it were more affordable, more of us would have health care coverage.

Thirdly, we had a group of patients in my practice that couldn't afford expensive health insurance premiums.