

great relief to working families, allowing them to keep more of their earnings at a time of declining incomes, shriveling assets, and rising prices, and it should be extended. But it must be extended responsibly to avoid doing further damage either to the economy or to the Social Security system that this tax supports.

That means we have to make up the lost revenue. Now the Democrats have said, well, no problem, just tax the rich. In fact, they say that a lot. The problem is that the tax increases they propose are marginal tax increases, precisely the kind of tax increase that does enormous damage to the overall economy. Remember, more than half of net small business income would be subject to their tax increase—at precisely the moment when we're depending upon those small businesses to create two-thirds of the new jobs that our people desperately need.

Now the measure passed out of the House this week also does far more harm than good. Unfortunately, the House added \$167 billion to this year's already crushing deficit, mostly to pay for the payroll tax cut, purporting to repay 1 year's tax relief over the next 10 years. How does it do that? Well, in part, it tacks on additional fees to mortgages backed by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. This shifts the burden to home buyers, who will end up paying far more in new taxes that are now hidden in their mortgage payments than they will ever get back from the tax cut. True, under the House version, the average family will save over \$1,000 in payroll taxes, but if that family takes out a \$150,000 mortgage backed by Fannie or Freddie, they'll end up paying an extra \$3,000 as a result of this bill—\$1,000 of tax cuts for \$3,000 of extra mortgage payments.

Put more bluntly, the House version kicks the housing market when it's already down, making it that much more expensive for home buyers to re-enter that market and adding to the pressures that have chronically depressed our home values. Worse, the House version would turn Fannie and Freddie into tax collectors for the general fund. If the House bill is enacted, we will have constructed a cash machine for government with an adjustable knob. And given the insatiable appetite of this government, the odds are far greater that that knob will be turned up and not down in coming years.

Ironically, one of the reasons to continue the payroll tax cut is because of shrinking family assets—mainly the value of their homes. The House version adds to the downward pressure on their home values while telling them we're doing them a favor. Some favor.

Fortunately, there is a way to extend the payroll tax cut, protect the Social Security system, and avoid doing further harm to the economy, and that's the measure offered by Mr. LANDRY of Louisiana, H.R. 3551. That bill was given short shrift in the House last week, and that's a shame.

Mr. LANDRY's bill would give every American the choice to receive the year of tax relief in exchange for delaying their retirement by a month. According to the Social Security chief actuary, this would pay for itself. It would give every family in America the choice of deciding for itself whether the benefits of the tax cut are worth the cost of working a month longer. It would provide tax relief for those families that need it without doing harm to the Social Security system that the tax supports and without shifting the burden to pay for it to home buyers, as the House version does, or to job creators, as the Senate version would have done.

It's not too late to fix this problem the right way. And I would strongly urge the House to take Mr. LANDRY's bill more seriously in the closing days of this session.

□ 1030

BILL OF RIGHTS DAY

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

Mr. COHEN. Madam Speaker, today is the 220th anniversary of the passage of the Bill of Rights. It was declared Bill of Rights Day by Franklin Roosevelt back in the forties and it's an anniversary that's too often overlooked.

Ken Paulsen, the President of the First Amendment Center in Nashville, Tennessee, at Vanderbilt University's campus and the American Society of News Editors, recently wrote that the Bill of Rights is "a document that guarantees core personal liberties, including freedom of expression and faith, a fair judicial process, the right to bear arms, and protection against unreasonable government seizures . . . yet almost no one takes time to reflect on the importance of December 15th and the anniversary of these fundamental freedoms," and particularly what they really are. That's why I wanted to come to the well today and spend a few minutes reflecting on this amazing document and the freedoms that we derive from it.

It's easy to take our Bill of Rights for granted. Of course we have the right to speak our minds. We don't live in fear that the police will break down our doors without exigent circumstances or a warrant. It would be ridiculous to imagine a church of America to which we all must belong and to which we must worship according to its dictates; but you only need to look across the globe to the Arab Spring and elsewhere to see millions of people protesting and risking their lives just to have a taste of the freedoms we take for granted, and you realize how fortunate we are.

When the Constitution was ratified, there were very few individual rights guaranteed. It was mostly about setting up the structure of government.

But Thomas Jefferson and others argued that the Bill of Rights was necessary to protect individuals from their government. Think about how wise the Founders were to ensure that the very government they were establishing would not encroach on certain fundamental liberties of the people. As Jefferson wrote in letter to James Madison, "a bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on Earth."

Since Jefferson was not part of that Constitutional Convention, James Madison took up the task of drafting a bill of rights. After much debate and compromise, 10 amendments were approved and added to the Constitution. Right at the very beginning, we find the bedrock of the Bill of Rights, the great five freedoms of the First Amendment: religion, freedom of speech, press, to peacefully assemble, and petition of government. Those are the most basic freedoms we have, but they're not always without controversy.

From the so-called "War on Christmas" to government-led prayer in school, we continue to debate what the free exercise of religion and the establishment clause meant. And that is not new.

Thomas Jefferson found himself deep in the war over religious liberty as well. In response to attacks that he was insufficiently religious, he wrote in a letter to Benjamin Rush, "For I have sworn upon the altar of God, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man." He went on to explain in his famous letter to the Danbury Baptists that there is "a wall of separation between church and State" since "religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God."

But that does not put the issue to rest. We continue to wrestle with these issues today. But the Bill of Rights, particularly the First Amendment, is what enables us to work our differences out peacefully through the democratic process.

We have the right to speak our mind without fear that the government will stifle dissent. We have the ability to hold our government accountable with a vibrant free press because an informed citizenry is what keeps democracy strong. And we have the right to protest when we're dissatisfied with our government.

Whether it's actions by the Tea Party or the Occupy movements, the people are exercising their right to assemble and petition their government for redress of grievances. As elected officials, it's up to us to consider their causes while also protecting their rights.

I remember back in 1993 when I was a Tennessee State senator, in one week I stood on the legislative plaza and I defended the Second Amendment urging the passage of Tennessee's right to carry bill, and the next week I was on the plaza supporting a woman's right to choose, which comes through the

Ninth Amendment. No two people of either of those rallies were the same; they were indeed very different. But what they were advocating was both in the Bill of Rights, and both supported such and the Bill of Rights supported them.

I have devoted much of my career to fighting for fairness in our criminal justice system. It's the Bill of Rights that builds fundamental fairness into that system, particularly the Fifth, Sixth, and Eighth Amendments. It guarantees that we'll have a reasonable bail, a fair chance to prove our innocence, have a lawyer, be able to question witnesses, and, if convicted, we won't be subject to torture or other cruel and unusual punishments.

The Bill of Rights embodies the core values of this Nation: freedom, fairness, justice, and equality.

We need to remember, though, that we have not always upheld those values. For example, the Fifth Amendment guarantees that we won't be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. But many of the same people who drafted the Bill of Rights and the Constitution owned slaves, treated them as property, and gave them no rights whatsoever. It took almost 100 years to abolish slavery and almost another 100 years to get beyond the Jim Crow laws that continued such.

We must honor the Bill of Rights and respect it for what it has done and recognize it today.

I thank Thomas Jefferson and James Madison and others who gave us the Bill of Rights; and I swore upon the altar of God, eternal hostility toward all forms of tyranny over the mind of man.

We must always strive toward that "more perfect union" discussed in the preamble of the Constitution.

That's why we should be thankful for the organizations that fight each day to defend the Bill of Rights and our freedoms.

You may not always agree with them, but groups like the ACLU, People for the American Way, and the Freedom Forum, are on the front lines defending our rights, even when it means taking unpopular positions.

Every day, we're touched by the Bill of Rights, but too often we fail to recognize its importance.

I hope my colleagues, and all Americans, will take time today to think about the Bill of Rights and how lucky we are to live in a country that guarantees us the liberty and freedoms enshrined in that document.

GUNS AND MONEY SENT TO CARTELS BY U.S. GOVERNMENT

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Madam Speaker, when most people think of smuggling, they envision outlaws in the dark of night lawlessly shuffling around guns and money to other outlaws. Most people would never imagine that the government of the greatest nation of the

world would be engaged in a stealth smuggling operation by sending guns and money to narcoterrorists.

It appears a group of people in the ATF and the DEA, all under the supervision of the Department of Justice, facilitated trafficking of guns and money to the drug cartels—the national enemy of Mexico and of the United States. These vicious cartels have inflicted terror on both sides of the border. They are literally at war with the Mexican people, the people to the south of us, our neighbors.

First we learned that the Justice Department, with the help of the ATF, apparently facilitated smuggling of over 2,000 weapons to the drug cartels. These guns included semiautomatic weapons and sniper rifles. People have died because of this activity. These weapons were used to kill at least 200 Mexican nationals and two U.S. agents.

The Attorney General admitted to me in the Judiciary Committee last week, more people are going to die, all because our government is helping the drug cartels in Mexico obtain automatic weapons.

Of the 2,000 weapons smuggled to Mexico, most are still unaccounted for. We don't know where they are.

The Attorney General is the chief lawyer and law enforcement officer in the country, but he claimed last week in the Judiciary Committee he didn't know about Fast and Furious until recently. He either didn't read the memo or he didn't get the memo. What is more remarkable, Madam Speaker, he claims he doesn't know who authorized the smuggling ring. To coin a phrase from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the idea that Eric Holder, the head of the Department of Justice that oversaw this operation, was not involved or was unaware of what took place requires a "willing suspension of disbelief."

The question is: Is there a rogue group of moles operating stealth activity in the Department of Justice? Apparently, no one really knows. The Attorney General also admitted last week that this operation was in fact reckless.

It's worth noting, Madam Speaker, when a person recklessly causes the death of another person, it's the crime of manslaughter. If people under the Attorney General violated U.S. or international law, they need to be accountable for their actions.

It's been almost 1 year since Agent Brian Terry was murdered and when we first learned about this foolish operation we now know as Fast and Furious. Terry was killed by one of these smuggled guns to Mexico, but yet no one claims to know who is responsible.

The second part of the rogue operation was the apparent laundering of money to the Mexican narcoterrorists facilitated, once again, by the United States Government.

According to a New York Times report last week, undercover American narcotics agents from the DEA

laundered or smuggled millions of dollars in drug money to the drug cartels. How many millions, no one knows. They allegedly handled the money on its path to the hands of the drug lords. This failed operation, like with the guns, was an effort to track the money and bring down the cartels. Of course, the cartels are as strong as ever.

The administration claimed in a statement last week that it was working with the Mexican Government on the operation on "joint investigations to detect and dismantle money laundering networks." However, according to a spokesperson for President Calderon of Mexico, they had no idea the DEA was involved in this drug money laundering operation.

The DEA and the ATF are under the control of the Justice Department. These disturbing operations facilitated the worst kind of result: They have resulted in people dying. And millions of money and hundreds of guns are unaccounted for.

□ 1040

The drug cartels are the narcoterrorists. They are the enemy of Mexico and the U.S. They exist to obtain money and guns, and the United States helped them get both. Somebody needs to go to jail.

We need an independent counsel to investigate the Justice Department and the ATF. The Justice Department cannot be trusted to investigate themselves because the agency has lost credibility. Even Washington insiders responsible for Fast and Furious and money laundry smuggling cannot hide from the long arm of the American justice system because, Madam Speaker, justice is what we do in this country.

And that's just the way it is.

IN GOD WE TRUST, BUT CAN HE TRUST US?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RANGEL. I rise, Madam Speaker, to share with the House the importance of extended unemployment insurance, increasing disposable income, and to try desperately hard to shatter the myth that some of the opponents of extended unemployment have expressed, and this is that Americans don't want to work and would prefer to receive a check and that receiving this check is a deterrent for them to go out and search for jobs.

I can't believe that this is a Republican doctrine because, outside of these Halls, most Americans don't wear on their sleeves whether they're Republican or Democrats or liberals or conservatives. Most Americans just want to be a part of this wonderful American Dream.

And while we work in order to have wages, so much a part of having a job is self-esteem. That's what our great country is about. Not since the Depression have Americans felt so embarrassed because their kids are being