

wealthier than all three of those nations combined on a population-adjusted basis.

And, so, we have wealth in this Nation. What we have done, though, is make a conscious choice to make our government poor. We are going to spend about a million dollars a year more than we actually take in in revenue. And it's important to talk about why that is. First of all, the notion that discretionary spending is out of control, which is the popular belief, just isn't true. In fact, discretionary spending since 1980 has remained pretty static. If you don't believe that, then think about this statistic for a second. If you thought that government spending was running amok, you would expect that Federal employees were increasing, as well. Well, that's not true either. Since 1970, we actually have 16,000 less Federal workers than we did then.

Now, this doesn't mean that the government can't get leaner and that it can't get meaner. It just means that there's another culprit at work when we talk about why our government is so broke, even if our Nation is not, and that's revenue. Today, as a fraction of GDP, this country is collecting less taxes than it has in 60 years. In fact, today, we are collecting only about 15 percent of taxes as it relates to GDP. Now, we're spending more, but the bigger problem is that we're collecting less revenue.

So, if the problem is that the government is broke but that our Nation isn't, why does it feel like so many people are out there that are broke? Well, let's explore that with the last chart. Here is the essential problem. Over the last 30 years, the incomes of the bottom 90 percent of Americans have remained virtually flat while the incomes of the top 1 percent of Americans have grown by 300 percent.

□ 1140

This is a recipe for economic disaster because, if the bottom 90 percent of Americans don't have enough money to spend, then pretty soon they're not going to be able to buy what the top 1 percent are selling. Everybody fails if this economic equation continues.

And the economic history of the last 100 years tells us one thing—that government has a pretty important role to play in helping to create wealth among the bottom 90 percent. We create real, widespread wealth when we invest in education to move more kids more quickly through quality higher education. We create real, widespread wealth by investing in businesses that create technologies before they become commercially viable. And we create real, widespread wealth by investing in infrastructure so that once again people and goods in this country can move from economic center to economic center without delay.

Yes, these investments cost money, but this country isn't broke. Prosperity in this Nation has never ap-

peared out of thin air. It's never come from gutting consumer protection or environmental regulation, it's never come through slashing taxes for the wealthiest Americans, and it's never come from government just sitting by on the sidelines and letting other countries eat our technological lunch. It's come through an innovative partnership between public investment and private ingenuity.

Now, America can recommit ourselves to this partnership, but only if we wake up to the reality that we are not broke.

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 41 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

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Loving and Gracious God, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

We ask today that You bless the Members of the People's House to be the best and most faithful servants of the people they serve. May they be filled with gratitude at the opportunity they have to serve in this place.

We thank You for the abilities they have been given to do their work, to contribute to the common good. May they use their talents as good stewards of Your many gifts and, thereby, be true servants of justice and partners in peace.

As this first session of the 112th Congress draws near its end and pressing legislative business once again weighs heavily on this Hill and throughout our land, withhold not Your Spirit of wisdom and truth from this Assembly. Give each Member clarity of thought and purity of motive so that they may render their service as their best selves.

May all that is done this day in the People's House be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. PALAZZO. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote

on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. PALAZZO. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. COURTNEY led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT PROTECTS THOSE WHO SERVE

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the House passed legislation that supports and provides for servicemembers and their military families who have chosen to dedicate their lives to service in our Armed Forces to protect American families.

After victoriously fighting the global war on terrorism for over a decade, our military families deserve recognition for their service. This bill gives to our military families a 1.6 percent increase in basic pay and protects against the rising cost of health care fees.

Additionally, the National Guard Chief, General Craig R. McKinley, will be provided a seat on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, giving the Guard a voice in military discussions. As a Guard veteran and proud dad of three Guard members under the command of Adjutant General Bob Livingston, I am grateful for the recognition of Guard capabilities.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

FACTS ARE STUBBORN THINGS

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

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, our third American President, John Adams, once said, "Facts are stubborn

things; and whatever may be our wishes . . . or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, the facts are that the health care reform law is working for millions of young adults all across this country. Yesterday, the Department of Health and Human Services released figures which show that 2.5 million young Americans up to age 26 are now covered because of the Affordable Care Act's provision that allows age 26 coverage for families. Private and public employers all across America now provide this benefit at a cost of only, on average, 1 percent to health care costs. This is a plan which is working.

Last week, figures came out that showed that 2.7 million seniors are now getting relief from prescription drug costs—\$1.5 billion in reduced prescriptions drug costs because the Affordable Care Act is closing the doughnut hole.

Facts are stubborn things, and the facts show that the health care reform law is helping young Americans and older Americans.

FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA

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

Mr. CRAWFORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Southside High School chapter of the Future Farmers of America from Batesville, Arkansas. Southside's FFA chapter, under the leadership of Mr. Chase Hilton, revitalized its animal science program 3 years ago. Since resuming the program, Southside has been a powerhouse in State and national competitions.

One hundred thirty-five students at Southside, many of whom have never been involved in livestock, are now working in the school's stockyard raising cattle, sheep, hogs, and horses. Recently, Blaine French and Trenton Tosh won honors at the Independence County Fair with Grand Champion Angus and Hereford cattle. Blaine had Grand Champion and Supreme Champion hogs, and also won Best of the Best Showmanship Award.

Trenton Tosh won Grand Champion Hereford Heifer and Grand Champion Hereford Bull at the Arkansas State Fair.

Southside's Livestock Evaluation Team, made up of Blaine French, Trenton Tosh, Jackson Mead, and Thomas Johnson, were named the Arkansas State Champions and went on to place eighth in Nationals.

More important than any medals or awards are the life lessons those students learn and are learning through State and national competitions.

I commend Southside Future Farmers of America and their instructor, Chase Hilton, for their outstanding achievements. I know they're watching now.

Congratulations. Great work.

THANKING OUR RETURNING TROOPS

(Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Members, thank you, and to my colleagues again, let me acknowledge the wearing of the yellow ribbon in a bipartisan way to say thank you to our troops.

But I do want to thank as well, again, the Young Scholars Academy and Dr. Anella Coleman, who were so kind to make these ribbons and to learn about our appreciation for the work of our troops coming home from Iraq. Over 100,000 have come home in the last 14 months, and I'm asking our Members to go home and yellow-ribbon your offices and your community, and have signs on your marquee that say, Welcome home to the troops, a job well done.

We never want our troops to come home from any battlefield, called to serve their Nation, to a silent America. And again, as we've supported or promoted better conditions for family and troops, we were able yesterday to give them a 1.9 percent increase in salary.

Now, as we go home for the holiday season, doing our work, let us say thank you to our troops. Thank you, Members, for wearing a yellow ribbon today.

□ 1210

PUT AMERICANS BACK TO WORK

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, it's time for President Obama and HARRY REID's do-nothing Senate to work with House Republicans to get America back to work. To date, House Republicans have passed 28 jobs bills, most recently the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act, a bill that ensures all hardworking Americans keep more of their pay, protects Social Security, ensures access to medical care for seniors, and creates jobs.

But President Obama's contempt for job creation through energy development is astonishing. Why would he stand in the way of almost 200,000 new jobs that come with the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline that has bipartisan support? President Obama says he wants to put America back to work, but, at the same time, he threatens to veto a bill that would do exactly that and take us one step closer to energy independence.

The American people can't wait any longer. I urge the Senate and the President to act on measures that will spur job creation and real economic growth.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WESTMORELAND). Members are reminded that remarks in debate may not engage in personality toward the Senate.

PASS THE JOBS ACT

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

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be here wearing this yellow ribbon to welcome home our troops from a job well done in Iraq. My thoughts go back to April of 1968 when I came back from Vietnam to a very different America, and I'm grateful that today our troops are coming back to a welcoming and thankful Nation.

In that vein, as we sit here today and think about the holiday season, the majority of us will be fortunate enough to spend this time being surrounded by family and friends; but we should never forget that, at the same time during this holiday season, there are many among us who are homeless, who are hungry, who are out of a job and simply do not know where their next meal will come from.

This should serve as an important reminder to all of us here as Members of Congress that we must work jointly in a bipartisan manner to address the critical issues of our time. It is simply unacceptable that partisan politics prevent us from working for what's best in this country.

THE ULTRALIGHT SMUGGLING PREVENTION ACT OF 2011

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

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, the House will soon have the opportunity to approve the Ultralight Smuggling Prevention Act of 2011. This bill will make changes for those using or planning to use ultralight aircraft in cross-border smuggling similar to those using other aircraft. It will also continue ongoing cooperation between the Department of Defense and Homeland Security that is enhancing efforts to combat illicit cross-border trafficking.

As pressure has been applied to the border, Mexican organized crime has turned to a new and innovative smuggling approach—the use of ultralight aircraft. It's a pressing concern.

A similar bill introduced by my colleague from Tucson was overwhelmingly approved by this body in the last Congress, and those provisions were included in standalone legislation that I introduced in this Congress.

I congratulate the Senate for having passed S. 1974. I appreciate cooperation on both sides of the aisle to get this important matter to the President's desk.

VACANT AND ABANDONED HOMES

(Ms. FUDGE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. FUDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the large number of vacant and