

To see that rate go up to 6.8 percent at a time when our economy—Treasury bonds are being sold at a 2 percent yield. You can get a 30-year fixed mortgage for, really, under 4 percent right now, variabilities at much lower. When you tell people that this rate is going to double to 6.8 percent for this one segment of the population, young Americans who really are doing it for the purpose of improving their own situations, it's greeted by just absolute utter disbelief.

At a time when, as you point out, debt levels—and I've got a little chart here from the Federal Reserve which shows where we're headed right now in this country. We have got to, number one, not make the condition worse by increasing the interest rate—and again, we've run the numbers.

Over a 5-year period of time, somebody who has got a Stafford loan portfolio is looking at an additional \$5,000 in interest payments. It's \$11,000 for over a 10-year period, which is quite normal, as you said, for people paying back their student loans. We are compounding the trend lines for which the Federal Reserve Bank has, again, put up the warning flags to tell us that we're just creating crushing debt.

The Wall Street Journal had a story, which I was thinking of it as you were speaking earlier, about a young couple with student loan debts who basically were putting off starting a family and buying a house because of the debt levels, that they were basically just working to pay for every month in terms of their burdens there.

We need to be, frankly, A, dealing with the issue of the rate increase obviously in the next 67 days; but, secondly, we need to have a much bigger national conversation to talk about measures like your bill to create, again, a system that rewards people who are current with their payments, who are making progress in their lives but that are not going to have a ball and chain around their necks in terms of debt levels that, again, as you point out, at the end of the day really inhibit creativity and investment and innovation for people at a time in life when they really should be just spreading their wings, not dragging these huge burdens of debt that really hold them back and hold our country back.

So, again, I really appreciate your contributions here this evening. The clock is ticking, 67 days and counting.

Mr. Romney yesterday basically put up a strong signal to the congressional majority in the House here, the Republican congressional majority, that this is something that we must do. And we're still waiting. 146 cosponsors on H.R. 3826.

I'm not somebody who has a big ego. If somebody has a counterproposal to come up with a different way to do this, we're all ears. But what we don't need are the comments of the chairwoman of the Higher Education Subcommittee basically saying she has no tolerance for students with \$80,000 in

student loan debt. That is a Congress which is out of touch with the reality that young people are confronting these days, who are really trying to improve themselves and fill the workforce needs of this country.

We cannot afford that type of leadership here in this Congress. We need to have people who are focused on the real condition of the middle class in this country, but also really focused, like Abraham Lincoln was back in 1862, about what's important in terms of the future of this country.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. Your request for us to keep interest rates at 3.4 percent is so reasonable that we need to act on that right now. The point that you mention, that we need to have these loans available for our students so they can get the training that they need to be hired into jobs that are going unfilled right now, in metropolitan Detroit, which is known for having a high unemployment rate, where people really want to go to work, there are thousands of jobs that are available in metro Detroit that are not being filled because employers can't find the folks that have the training in the information technology area for software engineering.

So, we want to encourage people to go to school even if they don't have the money. We want them to be able to borrow loans without having to go into this type of debt.

My final point is this, too: that if we allow borrowers to be burdened by student loan debt to such a degree that they can't pay off their debt, we, as taxpayers, are on the hook for this debt. Probably one-half trillion of it is taxpayer backed. So we're on the hook for this one way or the other. We should give our borrowers a helping hand so they can manage their student loan repayments, pay this debt down, and then get on with their lives and help us create jobs throughout this country and throughout this world by selling the best products that metro Detroit knows how to do.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. CLARKE.

In closing, I just want to end where we began, which is that it's 67 days and counting.

Today, all across America, there are high school seniors who are experiencing probably one of the most exciting moments in their lives, which is that they're going to the mailbox to find out whether or not they've been accepted to a 2-year school or a 4-year school. I remember those days. I have a son who just finished up college—and remember how exciting that was—and a daughter who's in high school and who's hopefully going to hear soon when her turn comes. But the fact of the matter is they need to have some horizon, some predictability at this critical moment to make sure that they can plan and budget to pay for college.

□ 2000

Financial Aid offices all across the country are putting up warning flags

for students and their families that interest rates are going to double unless Congress acts. And the fact of the matter is that creates an instability about planning for what college to go to, what kind of budget a family can really accommodate in terms of paying for student loan debt. And that's wrong.

I mean, we can do better than that as a Congress. We can do better than that as a Nation.

Again, we're glad to see that Mr. Romney finally came around, even though he had sent out signals in opposition to this type of approach by supporting the Ryan budget which locks in the 6.8 percent interest rate.

But you know what, this issue is too important to get sucked into sort of partisanship here. It is time to move forward, just like we did in 2007, when 77 Republicans voted in favor of the College Cost Reduction Act; 35 Republican Senators supported it. President George Bush signed it into law, a program named after Republican Senator Robert Stafford from Vermont.

I mean, come on. You know, people are sick and tired of the fact that every single issue, whether it's a highway bill, a payroll tax cut extension, or education assistance for middle class families gets sucked into this partisan maelstrom in Washington, DC.

And the fact of the matter is there's 146 Members on our side that have cosponsored H.R. 3826 that are looking for a signal from the Republican majority to say, you know what, it's time to look at our history. It's time to look at the genealogy of the Stafford student loan program and the great bipartisan support to cut those rates 5 years ago.

Let's come up with a solution. Let's move. Let's help those families whose students are being accepted into college and those financial aid offices that are trying to help families budget and plan for the next academic school year.

Sixty-seven days is really not enough time, even today, but we should at least not compound it by delay and, hopefully, not compound it by letting just a totally unacceptable increase in interest rates for Stafford student loans to go into effect.

And I look forward to working with you, again, in the next hours and minutes and days to make sure that that doesn't happen. Thank you for joining me here, Congressman CLARKE.

I yield back the balance of my time.

WESTERN CAUCUS ON JOBS

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

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be on the floor tonight speaking on behalf of the Western Caucus. We, in the West have been working for 2 years now—for a year and a half—to help the Obama administration out with their tasks.

In September of last year, September 11, President Obama said that he would keep trying every new idea that works and listen to every good proposal, no matter which party comes up with it. And so 4 days later, on the 12th of September, last year, we in the Western Caucus, Senator BARRASSO and myself, sent a letter to President Obama outlining the "Jobs Frontier Report"; but, to date, we have not yet heard from the administration.

In that jobs report we have, basically, 40 different pieces of legislation that create American jobs, utilize American energy, and also stop regulations that are in the process of killing, during this year, 3 million more jobs.

So at a time when the Nation is faced with 8.2 percent unemployment, continuing over 8 percent, month after month, for one of the longest periods of time in our history, the administration seems pretty flat-footed on ideas, and so we in the Western Caucus felt like we could assist in that. That's our business. Many of us are familiar with the industries, we're familiar with the job creation that can go on in the Western States. And so we felt that we were offering help to the administration but, to this point, they've been completely unresponsive.

If you go on our Web site, you would be able to see the "Jobs Frontier Report." We've got the cover of it depicted here, and it simply describes in that report the 40 exact pieces of legislation that have already been written and submitted in order to create these jobs.

Now, it would be important to understand that all of these jobs, not one of them requires Federal input, no Federal expenditure, no Federal stimulus, no tax to the American people. And, instead, we're simply trying to solve the problem with the free market that has caused this country to be so great in the past.

We are faced with unemployment in the West that is actually much higher. It's 10.1 in percent in the West, which tells us that the accusations that there is a war on the West, a war on jobs in the West by the administration are verifiable in the unemployment figures.

We have other documentation. Gas prices have doubled since 2009. The public lands are facing increasing restrictions.

The President has recently stated that the oil production is up in the U.S. Well, he stated a correct thing; but what he should have been, from his perspective, talking about is it is all produced on public lands. And when we analyze that, we find out, in 2011, that oil based on public lands, produced on public lands, actually decreased by 14 percent, and that the gas production, natural gas production, decreased by 11 percent.

And so when Secretary Salazar levies his charge that the facts don't speak for what our position is, maybe we could redirect the Secretary to go to

the Web pages for the government that would describe exactly what we're showing here, that the oil production that is occurring to increase our total production is occurring on private lands. It is not occurring and is, in fact, decreasing on public lands.

That's because the government is slowing down the permitting process. They're finding new and restrictive ways to implement requirements on people who would be creating jobs, who would be drilling for oil; and each of these processes simply strings out our investment.

We had testimony earlier today, the House and Senate Western Caucus came together, had testimony from two different panels; and one of the panelists explained that they had bought—they had paid for these leases on public land, but they, in fact, then turned them back because the requirements turned it into a proposition that they had not bid on at all.

So we continue to find these case examples of too much interference, too much regulation, causing the energy sector to slow down in certain areas on public lands therefore creating more unemployment and creating a bigger gap.

I'll finish one thought, and then I'm going to yield time to my friend, Congresswoman LUMMIS from Wyoming, who is a member of the Western Caucus and is the vice chairman of that. We were in the hearing together earlier today.

But at this time in our Nation's history, almost everyone agrees that the greatest threat that we face is the continuing debt and the year-after-year deficits.

There are only three ways that you can solve deficit. If you're spending more money than you're bringing in, as a family, well, you've got a couple of choices. Number one, you can go out and get a second job or retraining to where you make more income so you can increase your income.

Number two, you can cut your expenses down; or, number three, you can borrow money to make up the differences.

The Federal Government is faced with the same conclusions. It either needs to increase revenue, that's by raising taxes; or you can increase revenue by growing the economy, that's creating more jobs.

Secondly, you can cut spending. Thirdly, you can borrow.

Unfortunately, the Federal Government goes one extra step that most families, some families actually resort to, but it's against the law for families. It's perfectly legal for the government. But the fourth thing is to print money. And it's that printing of money, that debt which is not being able to be repaid that is the great threat to the country.

If we were to look across the West and see where we've choked off jobs and put those people back to work in the hundreds of thousands of jobs, then

each job would do two things. First, they would cut the cost of the government because those people come off unemployment, welfare, food stamps; but then, secondly, they go to work and start paying taxes. So you have a squeeze from both the cost end, because the government is spending less money; but you also have an increase in revenue so your costs and revenue move together when we create jobs.

□ 2010

That's the reason that the Western Caucus is concentrated on jobs rather than a taxation policy or a borrowing policy and especially not on the printing-of-money policy.

So at this moment, I will yield time to my good friend, CYNTHIA LUMMIS, from Wyoming. We welcome you tonight and thank you for being willing to speak on behalf of the Western Caucus.

Mrs. LUMMIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate your work as chairman of the Western Caucus.

The western States are roughly the 17 western States and three island governments, but they also include Members from States who have very similar problems, but who happen to be east of the Mississippi, such as some of the southern States along the Gulf of Mexico that have enormous energy reserves and face some of the same regulatory burdens. Also, people from coal-producing States that are east of the Mississippi, such as West Virginia, where a heavy attack on coal has jeopardized jobs and the future of coal in this country as a contributor to our energy future.

As we see from the chart next to me and from what Congressman PEARCE has previously told us, even though energy production is up, oil and gas production is up on private land. This is the bar to my far right. Over closer to me to the left, it shows that energy production, oil and gas production from Federal lands has declined—11 percent in the case of oil and 6 percent in the case of natural gas.

Now, why is this affecting gas prices? Why does President Obama say that drilling more now on Federal land will not affect oil prices now or the price of gas at the pump?

Well, there's two ways to look at that. One is he's correct that it's not going to affect the price of gasoline today or tomorrow. But the fact that we're not drilling now and that permits are not being issued now—we know of about 22 projects for the proposed 44,000 new oil and gas wells on private land that are being held up. That's going to be gas production and oil production that will be available in the future, anywhere from 3 to 7 years, that because of these regulatory burdens is not going to be produced.

That not only drives up the price of gasoline and power of all kinds, energy of all kinds, in those future years long after President Obama is out of office, but it does affect today's futures market because the people who are looking

at the price of gasoline are looking at whether production is continuing to go up in this country. That is a factor that is considered when futures pricing occurs, and because it's very obvious that the government policy in the United States for the last 4 years has been away from oil and gas and coal and in favor only of solar and wind energy because we subsidize it so heavily and promote it so heavily at the United States Department of Energy, it does affect the price of oil, gasoline, and eventually gasoline at the pump.

Now, another factor related to the coal issue that I mentioned is, are we going to hurt our environment if we don't quit using coal? The answer is to look at our regulatory work that was done prior to President Obama taking office, and it's represented on this chart.

Let's look from 1970. The population in the United States is up 48 percent since then; coal-fueled electricity up 184 percent since then. The gross domestic product of the United States up 200 percent since the 1970s in part because we have had affordable, reliable, and abundant electricity. So much of what we've done in this country in producing job growth is based on the fact that we have been able to rely on affordable, abundant electricity. Half of that has come from coal.

Now, in that same time period, emissions from power plants had declined 60 percent. Look at all of this growth. Look at even the growth in coal-fueled electricity and the decline in emissions down 60 percent. And that's due to the Clean Air Act and compliance with the Clean Air Act.

The point here being regulations can be valuable when done properly, and the Clean Air Act was a regulation that had the desired impact. It dropped emissions 60 percent by 2008. The problem has been since 2008, the efforts to overregulate have stifled our ability to create more energy from coal. It has reduced the number of jobs from coal. It has reduced revenue from coal, and it has reduced the affordability of electricity going into the future.

Mr. Chairman, I have some other points that I want to make about this. But for now, I'd like to just point out that the people who are bearing the brunt of our policies on energy in this country for the last 4 years have been people of very modest income. Because when gasoline prices go up at the pump, when your electric bill goes up, it is the people who are in the lower- and middle class population or in a category of workers who make very little money and struggle to make ends meet, especially single mothers, who are really bearing the brunt of these policies.

These policies are choices of this administration. They are conscious decisions that they are willing to see prices go up for coal, oil, gas generated power in order to make them more competitive with higher-cost, higher-priced wind and solar energy.

These are bad policies for the average, everyday American. These are bad policies for America's working mothers.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity.

Mr. PEARCE. I thank the gentlelady from Wyoming for her presentation and the facts that she presents.

One of the things that people constantly say who are opposed to oil and gas, to energy coming from America, is that it's impossible to drill and remain environmentally sensitive and safe. I think that those people are simply not looking at current technology.

It is possible with today's technology to drill up to 7 miles horizontally. That would be like drilling from here in this room here across the Potomac River somewhere out into Crystal City and putting a drill bit through a window that's maybe this large.

So what we're able to do is drill down 3,000 or 4,000 or maybe 5,000 feet, turn horizontally and drill and hit the zones of production. It is possible in today's technology to preserve almost the entire footprint of whether we're wanting grass lands or forest lands or whatever. We almost don't have to disturb those because the drill bit actually will be so far beneath the surface, we don't have to go in and clear locations like we did 15, 20, and 30 years ago.

You can also take one well, drill it straight down and then come off that and put multiple well bores so that what used to be spread on a quarter-acre or quarter-mile spacing or half-mile spacing might now today be one well for any number of the distributed wells.

So the environmental impacts of drilling today are probably less than in any other technology.

Wind energy, for instance. Wind is very large in New Mexico. They've got these miles and miles of wind generators standing in the air. Very large footprint. New Mexico is very capable of producing a lot of wind, but one of the problems is that the wind doesn't always blow and the sun doesn't shine all the time.

We had in Arizona recently—one of the operators of a wind farm said that they get about 12½ percent reliability, that is about 12½ percent of the time they're getting generated power out of the wind, and it's somewhat higher in Arizona for solar, about 25 percent of the time.

So when people are talking about converting from oil and gas to wind and solar, and I think every one of us believes that we ought to be using all of those forms of energy, but we have to understand that if we go to 12½ percent reliability, that's the amount of time that when you flip the switch that you're going to have power.

□ 2020

I think most of us are living lives that we demand and need power immediately for use of home appliances, for use of our computers. In manufac-

turing, you don't want power that is just available part-time. Generally, manufacturing is expensive and competitive. We're trying to keep our manufacturing jobs here, and the last thing we want to do is tell manufacturers you've got to shut down for 10 hours today because the wind is not blowing. The modern economies absolutely demand the predictability of good power when you flip the switch to turn on equipment or to turn on things in your home.

It is possible to provide those energy resources at the same time that we protect the environment. In my father's generation, there were lots of problems. In my generation, I watched as major companies began to clean up things that had originated back in the twenties and the thirties. So it's necessary for us to say that every single one of us wants to see the environment clean. They want clean water. They want the soil to be clean and clean air. And it is possible to achieve both because of the technologies that we have today.

I would draw our attention next to the fact that this administration has been saying that they want an all-of-the-above energy policy. At the same time, then, they're increasing restrictions on public lands and access to public lands. They're making it more difficult for the producers of both coal and electricity generation. They're making it so much more difficult that everyone in the West is struggling under the load.

The reason that the West has to deal with the problem more than the East is that the Western lands are so much more owned by the government. State government and Federal Government own such a large proportion of the land in the West that it's incomprehensible to States back East exactly about the problems that we face. But whether it's endangered species, whether it is restrictions, whether it is EPA, all of the agencies play a part in slowing down the process.

Recently, our administration—through Mr. Abbey at the BLM—said that we really want the BLM across the Nation to lower the time required to give permits. In fact, that time is still abysmally high at over 200 days.

I see my friend from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) standing ready to speak. At this time, if he is ready, we'll yield time to Mr. BISHOP, and we appreciate your presence on the Western Caucus.

Mr. BISHOP is the past chairman and still a respected person on the House Western Caucus. Thank you for being here tonight, and we appreciate your participation on the caucus.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. I appreciate the gentleman from New Mexico's introduction, which is far more fluent than my presentation will be.

I share what the gentleman from New Mexico, as well as the gentlelady from Wyoming, have said on this particular issue, that we in the West seem to have a unique situation in which there is an

effort to try and stifle—hopefully by simple incompetence and not out of planning—but stifle the economic growth that we need so desperately in the West for our kids and for our future.

There are two things that were said today that I read in the paper that come from this administration, which tells us that we're obviously in a campaign season and that the words are simply being used in a unique and different way.

The President once said that the party to which I belong is currently engaged in a war on the poor, which I find unique because, to be honest, when you have overriding and ever-increasing energy costs, that—as the gentlelady from Wyoming said—is the real war on the poor.

Somebody who is in the bottom portion of our economic sphere, our economic stratus, will pay three times as high a percentage of their income for increased energy prices as those who are in the top will. If you have a nice urban job, you may have an inconvenience as energy prices go up. But if you're one of those struggling working families trying to make ends meet, this becomes a unique situation.

When gas prices go up to \$4 or more, climbing towards \$5, they may dip down again, but they will certainly rise one more time. It hurts the poor far worse than it does any other sector of our country. They are the ones who have the least likely chance of actually having some kind of fuel efficient automobile, and yet they probably have the greatest chance of needing desperately that car simply to go to work, and have no other options whatsoever. They are the ones who will have the most difficult time trying to heat their homes in the middle of winter with the increased cost of fuel. They are the ones who will recognize, first of all, that whenever the cost of gasoline goes up, the cost of food will also go up, simply because it takes money to send that food to market so that you can buy it. All of that hits those who are in the lowest sector of our economy harder than those who are in the upper sector of our economy.

One of the estimates we used a couple of years ago said that for every \$420 a family has to pay in increased energy costs, it will equate to 6,000 jobs that will be lost in the economy. That's one of the problems that we simply find ourselves in. The sad part about that is we don't have to do it. This is not an energy-poor country. In fact, it is an energy-rich country.

We should be using the resources that we have here in the country to enrich ourselves and to help each other to have a better lifestyle, not getting worse. And the competition for energy is going to increase as time goes on. There are 6½ billion people in the world; 2 billion of those 6½ billion have no electricity today. They're going to want that in the future, which means our energy needs will be increasing,

not diminishing. It doesn't matter what kind of efforts you put in there, our energy needs worldwide will be increasing. We have to be able to plan for that.

I have a good friend who is one of the CEOs of an energy company today who said when he was in college back in 1973, the word went out there that we were in an energy crisis, we were running out of oil, and we had to come up with a way of solving that problem. That was still the Shah's era, and so we did.

In 1977, we came up with a national energy plan. It was a colossal failure. It was an effort to do centralized planning here in Washington to come up with a way of solving our problem in the future, and it failed miserably. Thirty years later, we have people in the bureaucracies of this administration who want to try and reinvent a very bad wheel that didn't work back in the 1970s.

Someone has to tell this administration and this city that back in 1988, the Berlin Wall fell down and the idea of centralized planning was discredited throughout the entire world, not only in government, but also in industry. Everyone learned that lesson except the bureaucracies here in Washington, where a solution of this administration and far too much that takes place in this city is still the same idea: let's get a Big Government plan and let the government control everything. We want energy security, but we don't want to drill anywhere. We don't like \$4 a gallon gasoline prices, but we're not ready to increase any refineries anywhere. We don't necessarily want more coal or hydro or nuclear, but we're not ready to come up with any kind of alternative. We actually do want to have more gas coming in here, but we're not ready to put any pipelines in place to try and make sure that actually happens.

The end result is we lose. The Western Energy Alliance made the prediction that because of our lack of energy development on public lands in the West, we have lost 16,000 jobs and almost \$4 billion of infrastructure investment that comes in there.

The Secretary of Interior made a speech today where he called a lot of things we talk about here in Congress the "imagined energy world." I think this administration believes in that imagined energy world.

It's very easy for this administration to list all of their alternative energy projects by name, because they have very few of them. They're not moving ahead with solar power. They're not moving ahead with wind power. They're not moving ahead with anything else, and they're not moving ahead with alternative forms either. And this hits us in the West specifically.

MR. PEARCE, I don't want to consume too much time. You may want to go in another direction. But I'm an old school teacher, and this is one of the areas that is of concern to me.

This map is obviously the United States. Everything in red is what is controlled by the Federal Government.

□ 2030

You notice that we in the West have the unique opportunity of having one half of everything in the West controlled by the Federal Government. The Federal Government controls one out of every 3 acres in the Nation, and in some of our States it's like 90 percent, 70 percent, 60 percent of all the land is still controlled by the Nation.

Now, one of the things that you may say is, Well, is that bad? I want to contend to some of my good friends who live in other parts of the Nation that they have an interest in all of this red stuff over there because my good friends who live in the East are shelling out \$8 billion to \$9 billion a year in order to control the West, to pay for all this land. Every year, in their efforts to make sure this map stays the same, that's \$8 billion to \$9 billion that comes out of their pockets.

What do they get for that investment? They get this map. The States that are in red are the States that have the hardest time funding their education systems over the last several decades.

Now, notice once again the States in red. The area in red is the Federal Government's own land. The States in red are the ones that have a hard time funding. You notice there is kind of a correlation simply between the two? This is what the United States is getting for its \$9 billion investment to control the West. We are harming our schools.

Now, even in this land that's in the West, we have a huge backlog in maintenance issues. Our National Park Service is hundreds of millions behind in their maintenance system.

There are some States like mine that simply said, you know, this is ridiculous. Our kids are being harmed in their education funding. We can't generate the money we need for our own infrastructure. Why don't you just let us take control of the land, and we will save those pristine areas that need to be saved. We will ensure there is access for recreation and multiple use, and we will develop those resources.

The Secretary of the Interior today said, simply, that concept defies common sense. The idea that only the Federal Government has the ability and the intelligence to control this kind of land and that people who live in the States obviously can't do it defies common sense.

What this means is the Federal Government that wants to spend more money for land acquisition, that cannot maintain its own land right now, that harms kids in the West with their education funding, that underfunds all the projects that are there right now and simply wants more and more, that's the common sense. If that, indeed, is the future, then we have a long, long way to go.

We in the West simply have a simple situation. We can do it just as well, if not better, and my argument to you is we can actually do it better. That's what should be common sense. Our kids are being harmed by this system. We are not producing jobs for our kids because of this system. What I think we need to do in the West is realize this is a country that has energy potential, energy ability, job potential, job ability, and we have kids that definitely need that.

We in the West pay more taxes than they do in the East when you add everything up. We put a higher percentage of our State budgets into education than they do in the East. We actually have higher class sizes than those in the East. We have more kids than those in the East.

We need to have the ability of actually meeting our particular needs. Part of that is for this administration to simply realize you've got to help develop the resources that we can. We can control it. We can fund it. We can do it if you give us the opportunity just to move forward.

This administration says that we are producing more oil now than ever before because it's all being produced on private property where they can't control it, try as they might to. If they simply unleash the potential in all this red area, this country would move forward in a growth spurt that is almost impossible to imagine. That's the commonsense plan.

I am very happy to be a part of this issue because I'm excited about what my colleagues are saying in a much more refined way than I have been able to do that, and I'm excited about hearing some more of my westerners who realize, hey, listen, there is a war on western jobs and it needs to stop. We need to have help in creating western jobs, not hindrance in stopping western jobs.

Mr. PEARCE. I thank the gentleman for his comments and would, again, accentuate both his points and the gentlelady from Wyoming's about the administration's current war on the poor. We have heard repeated comments from the administration and their representatives that we need to get the price of gasoline up so that people will consume less, that, yes, the price of electricity by our policies will necessarily increase dramatically. The price of electricity increasing, the price of gas increasing, punish the poor terribly. Why would we have policies that are so unfair to the poor? It defies imagination.

Also, following up on my friend's comments about the Secretary saying that it is impossible, just not feasible, even unimaginable that people in the States would take better care of the property than the Federal Government has, I would simply direct the Secretary's attention to those massive forest fires in the West. They are managing our forests in order that they would burn down. They and the Federal

Government have choked the bureaucracy full of people in order to manage these resources, but, instead, they manage them in a process that ultimately sees that they will burn down. It's not a question of if but when.

The final comment I'm going to make, and then I'm going to yield to my friend from Colorado, but the President recently asked for \$52 million to crack down on speculators, which he claims are the cause of high gas prices. \$52 million to crack down on speculators.

Now, speculators, you have to understand that they make their money by guessing which way the market is going to go. Right now they see a government that is choking down access to supplies, so they scratch their head and say, We think maybe the price is going to go up and so they speculate and buy on the assumption that the price of gas is going up, the price of oil is going up, and lo and behold, they're making money.

But if the President were to announce today that he was going to open—and people sincerely believed him, that he was going to open access to Federal lands, those same speculators who today think the price is going to go up would begin to say, Oh, I better buy down, because if I bid up and the price falls, I'm going to lose money. So those speculators would begin to drive the price down.

But he doesn't need \$52 million. All he needs to do is give one sentence from the White House that the war on the West is ending and we're going to open the West oil production up again. That would do the trick; no \$52 million putting us deeper into debt. It simply makes sense to us from the West because we see it day in and day out.

We're joined tonight by our good friend, DOUG LAMBORN, from Colorado, and welcome here. It's nice to see you, and we appreciate your participation in the Western Caucus. We appreciate you being here tonight.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you, Representative. You do such a great job representing New Mexico, and you know so much about energy issues and financial institutions, issues like that as well. But this is a great forum. I thank you for organizing this and your leadership on energy issues.

I want to quickly address an issue that is of great concern to many people, myself included, and that is: Who should be regulating things like hydrologic fracking, fracturing—or fracking, for short—here in the United States? We have about 10 different Federal agencies that have their hand involved one way or another in regulating fracking, or at least trying to do so, from the EPA all the way to the Securities and Exchange Commission, if you can believe that.

I'm concerned because in my work on the Natural Resources Committee, along with ROB BISHOP that you heard from earlier, we have been hearing that the Bureau of Land Management, one

of the agencies that our agency oversees, is proposing rules regulating fracking on public lands. The concern about that is that right now, in a State like Colorado, my own State, those State regulators are already doing a great job regulating fracking. They know the local geology. They know the water, the water aquifers. They know the things that someone in Washington is not really going to know.

If you add a second layer of bureaucracy onto what the States are already doing, you have the potential—in fact, the certainty—of crippling job production, crippling energy production, because you'll have twice as many regulations to have to deal with if you're an energy producer. Why in the world do we need to, when the States are already doing a good job, add another layer of red tape and bureaucracy? I'm really concerned about that.

The subcommittee that I'm the chairman of on Natural Resources, Energy and Mineral Resources, is having a hearing in Denver next week on Wednesday, the 2nd of May, at the State Capitol in Denver. We're going to get right into this very issue.

□ 2040

Should the States be regulating fracking, or do we also want to have the Federal Government regulating as well? I hope that the evidence shows—and I believe it will—that the States are already doing a great job. We can only lose by having another layer of regulation.

This is an issue that affects energy in the West on public lands, and I'm really concerned that we have Federal agencies getting involved when the States are already doing a fine job and it's only going to hurt the production of energy and the creation of jobs.

Mr. PEARCE. That is absolutely true. One point that is often omitted by the opponents of fracking is that the people who most want fracking not to communicate with the fresh water are the oil companies themselves. They drill this million-dollar well bore, then they run casing in the well bore. They put cement outside that casing in order that they can have a nice tight well bore in order to produce the oil that allows them to pump the oil out expeditiously. And when they frack, they frack thousands of feet below the water zones. They're usually right up at the surface. And for contamination to occur, that pressure that is pumped down in the thousands of feet lower in the well would have to come outside the well bore, outside the cement around the casing, all the way to the surface, and then contaminate the water up there. In doing that, they have ruined the entire well bore.

So the companies themselves are watching to see if there's any drop in pressure. That's when you know that you've got something bleeding off. They shut everything down. They patiently look at it. The oil companies, again, are the best custodians of the

water because they don't want to ruin the well that they have spent drilling and a lot of money in completing.

I notice that my good friend, Mrs. LUMMIS, is back at the podium, and would yield more time to her at this point.

Mrs. LUMMIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to point out what States are experiencing in relation to our Federal budget. So let's start with the Federal budget. Here we have all our revenue for 2011 in this column. Here we have just our entitlement programs that we spend money on in this column. So we're spending all of the tax revenue we take in in this country just on our entitlement programs. That is Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, other mandatory programs such as food stamps and school lunches. And then, of course, interest on the debt. Which means every other discretionary program and the global war on terror and our national defense is all borrowed money—borrowed from China, from Saudi Arabia, from Japan, and from American companies and the American people. That would never happen in the State.

On the front page of my State's statewide newspaper today was an article that our Governor, Wyoming Governor Matt Mead, is asking all State agencies to budget for an 8 percent cut in spending, and the health department, a 4 percent cut in spending. This is because natural gas prices in the United States have dropped below \$2 in MCF, which is extremely low, and my State is the second largest producer of natural gas in the Nation, and we're heavily reliant on natural gas for revenues.

So what do we do when our revenues decline? We cut spending. We budget differently. We don't hire people to sit in vacant positions. We leave those positions vacant or, better yet, make them completely go away. That's what States do to manage their problems. But an interesting source of revenue for the State is income off State lands. And it's a very important source of revenue.

Now, Mr. BISHOP from Utah pointed out earlier this evening that the American taxpayers are paying \$8 billion, Mr. BISHOP, to pay for administering public lands in the West. In my State of Wyoming, we could be managing those lands. And if you went and looked at the quality of our State lands, you would be thoroughly impressed. They are beautifully managed. The stewardship is well done. We are producing oil and gas. We're producing livestock, cattle, and sheep. We're producing timber. We're producing recreational opportunities, open space. We're creating, because of all that open space, places where clean air, clean water, and clean living can really work together. It is a wonderful system with much smaller administrative costs than the American people are paying for the Federal lands in the West.

We've proven that as States who received land when we became States, we can manage all of the land in our State that's not private land.

Consequently, I agree with what Mr. BISHOP said earlier. The fact that we have NEPA, FLPMA, SMCRA, CERCLA, and lots of other laws that are managed from the Federal Government's level that could be managed at the State level would make it much less expensive, would make the land stewardship closer to home where the people who really love and thrive on these important lands live and work and want to recreate and want to participate in the management of these lands.

They would also produce more revenue for the States, making States like Utah, like my own State of Wyoming, where we prioritize public education above all other expenditures of government, we would make more money available. Because as you know, in most States, the property taxes go largely to the education system. Well, when the land belongs to the Federal Government, the Federal Government doesn't pay taxes. Consequently, that money is not available to us.

Now, States do get something called PILT payments—payment in lieu of taxes—but they're not the same as if that land were on the tax rolls of the States in which those lands reside. Consequently, look at what we've summed up. We're producing less jobs off Federal lands with more regulations, more cost to the American taxpayer, less revenue to the States, less revenue to the Federal Government, and less potential for job creation. The job seekers end up being on unemployment instead of paying taxes because of the salaries that are paid. And when you have great-paying jobs like in the oil and gas industry, where the average job pays \$72,000 a year—a much higher wage than the average wage in our States—we really are hurting ourselves terribly by not prioritizing jobs, not using Federal lands to their fullest capabilities in a way that provides great stewardship that those in the West value and seek and yearn for and want and would never compromise in order to have a robust State and a robust economy.

I want to thank Mr. PEARCE once again for his leadership.

Mr. PEARCE. I thank the gentlelady.

Before I yield time to my good friend Mr. BISHOP again, I'm reading in today's quotes that Interior Secretary Salazar said that House Republicans live in an imagined energy world. I appreciate his concern and his criticism. I consider it as constructive. But think about this imagination.

The President in March of 2012 said: We can't just drill our way to lower gas prices. We can't drill our way to lower gas prices. That's a viewpoint that could be considered legitimate, except that about the same time he's calling for Brazil and Saudi Arabia to increase their drilling in order to get the prices

down so that people in America don't have to pay as much at the pump.

□ 2050

Now, I'm not sure what imagined energy world says that it will cause the price of gas to go down if they drill in Saudi Arabia and Brazil, but it won't cause the price of gas to go down if they drill over here. That, to me, argues that it is that that is instead an imagined energy world.

The Secretary goes on to talk about that these members of the Republican Party are members of the Flat Earth Society in a demeaning term. Now, in my county, you can see from one end to the other, miles and miles; and if you turn and look east, you can see all the way to Dallas 300 or 400 miles away. I do live in a flat part of New Mexico and can see across the line into Texas. And so he speaks in demeaning terms about flat Earth, and yet he's very happy to have all the production of oil and gas that comes from there.

So the flat-broke administration is criticizing the Flat Earth Society. And of the two, I would rather live on flat ground than be flat broke. And so I would yield to my good friend, and then I will close out.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. I thank the gentleman from New Mexico, and, once again, I do agree with you. I enjoy your image of the world much better than this particular administration. It reminds me of "Back to the Future" when they had the two movies, what happened if Biff got the sports sheets and what happened if he didn't? It's almost what we're doing here. There are two actual visions of what the future of this America will be; and, I'm sorry, this administration keeps taking us down the road in which Biff actually does have the sports sheets and he is able to win all those bets and get control of everything.

I just want to add one other thing to what the gentlelady from Wyoming also said here. When we talk about the Federal Government and what the Federal Government does on public lands, I just want you to realize it is not only related to public lands itself.

We find that this administration is not satisfied with just living within the boundaries of public lands, but is coming up with policies that impact private property that is next to those public lands. When this administration took over, in the State of Utah there were 77 oil leases that had gone through a 7-year review. They had all the public hearings, they did everything, they were ready to be let for sale to try and develop those resources in the eastern part of my State.

The very first thing this administration did was recall those 77 leases. It didn't matter that the process had gone through, they had done the work. They recalled them for the purpose of special interest groups for their satisfaction. What happened in the eastern part of my State is the unemployment rate simply skyrocketed not only for

these 77 leases that were on public land; but the private sector that was there ready to invest saw the handwriting on the wall, and they pulled out of that particular area. They were not ready to go through the kind of harassment as well as the regulation that they could see taking place. And the unemployment skyrocketed; the investment in that area went. Only now is it starting gradually and gradually to come back in.

Here is the problem that we have with this administration's policies: Not only do they inhibit energy production and jobs that can be generated on public lands; their efforts of increased regulation and efforts to inhibit that kind of development take away jobs on private property where they see that there is not a future there and they don't want to go through the regulatory hassle. So what could have been developed in my State basically went to North Dakota on private lands, and there they found their ability to make lots of money and to increase the energy production here because they simply did not have to deal with this administration.

Unfortunately, it's not just about energy jobs. This administration on public lands is doing the same thing for recreation jobs. With the number of roads that have been closed on the forest and BLM lands, stopping the ability of people to hunt and fish and do other forms of regulation, even the kinds of regulation on outfitters that tells them what kind of coffee they have to serve when they're on Park Service property, that is an impediment to the development of our recreation community and recreation jobs at the same time.

One of the things we have to realize is that this administration's effort to try and control everything is producing nothing that is helping us create jobs for our kids to keep them at home. I appreciate Mr. PEARCE for actually starting this process and talking about this issue because it needs desperately to be addressed.

Mr. PEARCE. I thank the gentleman. Senator HATCH is going to introduce this week the West Act, which is a combined 10 bills that we have previously sent from the House of Representatives that are sitting dormant drawing dust in the Senate, and so he is going to lump them together and push them out. Those are a part of our "Jobs Frontier Report." And those acts do things like H.R. 1229, Putting the Gulf Back to Work Act, that's by Representative HASTINGS; H.R. 1230, Restarting American Offshore Leasing Now Act by, again, Mr. HASTINGS; H.R. 1231, Reversing President Obama's Offshore Moratorium Act; H.R. 2021, the Jobs and Energy Permitting Act, and that's by Mr. GARDNER from Colorado; H.R. 1837, the San Joaquin Valley Water Reliability Act by Mr. NUNES of California; H.R. 872, Reducing Regulatory Burdens Act by Mr. GIBBS; H.R. 1633, the Farm Dust Prevention Act by Ms. NOEM; and, finally, H.R. 910, the

Energy Tax Prevention Act by Mr. UPTON.

Now, just talking among friends, I would feel that the Secretary of the Interior exposes a little bit of thin skin. These are credible debates that we're having in America right now, whether we should use foreign oil or oil produced in this country, whether we should export our jobs overseas to produce energy or whether we should get them here.

I read where Mr. Salazar says that the fact is most of the Outer Continental Shelf resources are open for business, he says. Well, then, give us the nod, and we'll simply pass those first three bills: Putting the Gulf Back to Work Act; Restarting American Offshore Leasing Now; and Reversing President Obama's Offshore Moratorium. If it's already the case, then just humor us, nod your head, and nothing will be changed since it's already open for business, and if the President would tell the Senate to go ahead and pass just those three bills, we could send them up to the President, and we could have plenty of jobs starting out and plenty of American production.

Again, I would look back at the price of natural gas. When the administration says that you can't drill and come up with lower prices, the price of natural gas a couple of years ago was in the \$12 range. Today, the price is about \$2.50. Now what caused the price to go from 12 to 2? When the price is going up, the President says, I need \$52 million to control the speculators that are driving the price up. But when the price goes down, somehow he's not saying we need to give you \$52 million back because now those speculators are driving the price down.

This view of energy in the White House, originating with the Secretary of the Interior, somehow doesn't get the fact that the reason the price of natural gas has fallen from 12 to 2—and that's a very steep decline—is because we have drilled our way into lower prices. We've increased the supply enough through more jobs and more production that world demand is kind of swamped with the supply. It's, again, an economic equation of supply and demand.

I think that's the greater impact in the price of gasoline today. The supply and demand of oil and the supply and demand of natural gas controls that. We have drilled our way to success in natural gas because companies went everywhere drilling on private lands.

But now, then, the administration is saying we need to curtail all that production here because it's not going to lower the price; we need to control the speculators. These are simply inconsistencies that are punishing the American public. They're punishing the American public and especially the poor in the American public by higher gasoline prices and by higher electricity costs. It's making it to where families just can't get by, to where they can't make the payments for the

month. And poor families everywhere are having to make choices to buy energy or to live in cold, live without air conditioning, and to not be able to drive and see their grandkids.

What kind of choices are those? Those are not the choices that I think most Americans want. I think most Americans like our lifestyle. Our lifestyle is based on two dominant things—the cost of food and the cost of energy. And when we drive both of those costs up through overregulation and through government limitations, then we're doing a disservice to the American public.

Every single person in America wants to see our land protected, they want to see the workers protected, they want to see soil, water, and air protected; but they also are desperate to see jobs created. It's within the power of this body, it's within the power of the Senate, and it's within the power of the President to create those jobs, to create the answers for an America that is tired, for an America that is scared, and for an America that is worried about its future and the future for her children.

□ 2100

It's within our power in this town to reverse those things, to stop the war on the West, to start making sense in public policy, to start making decisions that create solutions—real solutions for not just jobs, but for careers where people can plan their lives, they can set aside to buy a house, or to send their kids to school. That's the America that all Americans want across party lines, across racial lines. People for generations have come to this country for that promise, for that hope, and that opportunity. It starts with us in this town. It is time for us to put aside the differences.

We ask the Senate to pass the West Act; and, Mr. President, we respectfully ask for you to sign that act to bring jobs to the West and bring prosperity to the Nation.

God bless this country, and God bless each one of the taxpayers.

I yield back the balance of my time.
ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCKINLEY). All Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. SCHIFF (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of business in the district.

Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas (at the request of Mr. CANTOR) for today on account of illness.

Mr. MARINO (at the request of Mr. CANTOR) for today and the balance of the week on account of medical reasons.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.