

any way, addressing driver safety. It in no way prohibits States from being innovative, from creating new technologies, new programs, doing things that are not recommended in the bill or this program. States are free to do whatever they want to do on this issue.

So to continually pound away at the point that we're somehow taking away the ability of States to be flexible is simply incorrect. It's not consistent with the program in question. It's not consistent with the language of the bill we are discussing.

With that, I would inquire of my friend—I have no more speakers on our side—is she prepared to close?

Mrs. BLACK. I am.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to oppose the motion.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. BLACK. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

This is a worthy goal. As I've already said, I'm a nurse. I'm a grandmother. I'm a mother. I want safety on our roads.

I have served in the State legislative body where I have voted three times on distracted driving. We did our studies, we found what the problems were in the State of Tennessee. We were able to pass laws to make the roads safer.

□ 1440

Careless driving of any form must be stopped, and I applaud the piece in the bill that will create more study so that States can have more information about just what they need to craft in their State that will be identified as distracted driving.

Obviously, distracted driving does not just mean cell phones, and it does not just mean texting. There are other forms of distracted driving—a mother turning around to correct her small child who is sitting in the back seat. I personally have seen those kinds of accidents. Someone reaching for a CD to put in one's disk, I personally have seen the devastation from that action. There are many forms of distracted driving, and this study will help us and the States and the public to understand what those forms of distracted driving are. In my motion, that is left in place.

Again, we have to be very cautious about our dollars and how it is that we hand our dollars out. I talk about this almost like legislative candy, this \$79 million, to incentivize or to entice States to do something, and 39 of them are already doing something related to distracted driving.

As a matter of fact, if we take a look at this whole discussion on the transportation bill, we know how precious every dollar is. We're talking about infrastructure and about creating jobs. This \$79 million can be best used by its intended programs, which are to build roads and bridges and to make our roads safer by making sure that our roads and our infrastructure are in the best shape. States are already doing

this job. We don't need to take \$79 million and hand it out to States—using candy to get them to do what we want them to do.

Absolutely, safety is the major issue, but States can make that decision. States have enough knowledge to know what's best for their States.

So, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to protect States' rights and to support my motion to instruct.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to instruct.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to instruct.

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

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

CONCERN OVER RE-LICENSING THE DAVIS-BESSE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

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

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, FirstEnergy, which operates the Davis-Besse nuclear power plant, has consistently misrepresented to the public structural defects in the building that shields its reactor.

Their latest fable is that cracks in the circumference of the shield building were caused by a snowstorm that occurred in 1978.

In 2002, FirstEnergy covered up information about a hole in the head of a reactor that jeopardized the safety of millions of people, for which they were fined \$28 million. FirstEnergy caused the blackout in August 2003, which put 50 million people in the dark, because they were too cheap to hire people to trim trees.

Can they be believed when they claim a snowstorm 34 years ago created cracks that appear today? Are buildings all over northern Ohio falling apart today because of the blizzard of '78, or is this just another in a series of desperate lies used to keep a plant going that should be either shut down or massively repaired?

How long before FirstEnergy's 34-year snow job is fully exposed?

THE PROGRESSIVE MESSAGE

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

CONCERN OVER RE-LICENSING THE DAVIS-BESSE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

Mr. KUCINICH. I thank the Speaker.

I spoke here a minute ago on the floor of the House concerning my deep and abiding concern about a nuclear power plant in the State of Ohio called the Davis-Besse nuclear power plant.

This power plant, from the time it was first licensed, has experienced a series of shutdowns, so much so that there was a period when the companies that originally owned it had massive losses because the plant was not up and running. They had so many difficulties that it became an embarrassment to the nuclear industry, itself.

We are now at a point when this plant is trying to get a new license for its nuclear facility. There are over 104 nuclear power plants in America. Some of them have achieved re-licensing. Others are in the process of applying.

One of the things that we have to be concerned about, because we are talking about nuclear power plants, is the structural stability of the plants, which includes the shield building and reactor, and that the structural stability of these plants is going to be assured.

□ 1450

In the case of FirstEnergy, they have a shield building, and there have been questions raised about its structural stability. Unfortunately, FirstEnergy went out of its way to tell one story to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and another story to the public. They told the public that the cracks that were seen in the shield building were not really substantive, but they told the Nuclear Regulatory Commission another story.

Understanding that we have a lack of candor on the part of a nuclear reactor permit holder here, we have to be very concerned about their public statements, about their private disclosures, and about the implications for re-licensing.

These cracks in the shield building, which are in the circumference of the building, they're telling the Nuclear Regulatory Commission the reason these cracks occurred is because there was this blizzard in 1978, where the wind direction was—if I'm correct—primarily out of the southwest, that this is responsible for the cracks. But the cracks are around the whole building. They're not able to explain that.

Nor do we know whether or not their sister reactors on the other side of Lake Erie at the Perry nuclear power plant have, in fact, been adequately inspected to see if the same winter storm adversely affected them. If the winter storm did not adversely affect them at the Perry plant, then how is it that you had cracks only at Davis-Besse? And why were the cracks around the circumference of the building, instead of just in one area where the wind was driving the snow?

In 2002, FirstEnergy covered up information about a hole in the head of the reactor.

I want to ask my friend from Minnesota if he needs any of this time right now, because I can conclude.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. ELLISON. I want to thank the gentleman for claiming the time. I guess I was about 4 minutes behind. And, of course, you've got to be on your toes around here.

I had come prepared to do a Special Order.

Mr. KUCINICH. I'm going to shortly yield and ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from Minnesota would be able to have the balance of the time.

Mr. ELLISON. If the gentleman from Ohio wants to, we can share the time, if you'd like.

Mr. KUCINICH. I ask the Chair if it would be possible for me to have unanimous consent to yield the remainder of my time to the gentleman from Minnesota.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Unanimous consent is not required.

Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Minnesota will control the remainder of the hour and yields to the gentlemen from Ohio.

Mr. KUCINICH. I would just ask for a moment to conclude here.

Why am I bringing this up about the Davis-Besse nuclear power plant? Some people would say: Why shouldn't you give FirstEnergy the benefit of the doubt?

This is a company that 10 years ago covered up information about the hole in the head of a nuclear reactor. They were this close to having a breach, a fraction of an inch from having a breach of the reactor. They had files that were in a photo, and Federal investigators weren't given access to that. It ended up where this company gets fined \$28 million because they weren't candid with the government and could have put the people of Ohio and Michigan and Indiana and Canada and the water of Lake Erie in jeopardy.

Many people remember, particularly in cities in the east, that time in August of 2003, where all the lights went out in the east. Remember, some people were sitting on their door steps for the first time with no city lights, looking up at the stars, but it wasn't particularly all that beautiful because what was not beautiful is the fact that there was this massive loss of power all over America's east coast that came about because of a series of technical glitches, the root cause of which was that this company, FirstEnergy, wasn't properly trimming trees because they didn't want to hire the people to do it.

This is the same company that's telling us the reason why they have cracks in a shield building is because of a blizzard 34 years ago. Hello.

We have to be very careful before we let a company that operates so fast and loose with the truth be in a position to have a license to continue to operate this nuclear power plant. In the alternative, they're going to have to make massive repairs. If they won't make the massive repairs, then the NRC ought to do the right thing for the

American people and have this shut down.

I do not want to see another Fukushima in the United States of America. I do not want to see the people in my district at risk. I do not want to see the people in Ohio put at risk because you've got a company like FirstEnergy operating in the shoddy way in which they operate, misrepresenting conditions to the public, and telling the NRC one thing and the people another.

I can promise you, Mr. Speaker, I intend to stay on top of this.

I appreciate the opportunity here, and I yield the remainder of the time to the gentleman from Minnesota, the co-chair of the Progressive Caucus of the Congress, a person who has done a lot to take the message of the Progressive Caucus across this Nation in a way that's been very dynamic, the Honorable KEITH ELLISON.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Minnesota is recognized.

Mr. ELLISON. As I was listening to the gentleman from Ohio recite the facts and the details of this energy situation, I couldn't help but think to myself that we need massive investment in public infrastructure in this Nation. It's not simply a jobs issue, though it is a jobs issue. It's also a public safety issue.

The gentleman talked about Fukushima. That was a catastrophic event, but if we don't take good care of our Nation's infrastructure, a catastrophe will occur. I can testify to that, because I'm from Minnesota. In my State only a few years ago, we saw our bridge fall into the Mississippi River. Thirteen Minnesotans lost their lives, 100 fell into the Mississippi River 65 feet below and suffered severe back and spinal injuries.

Infrastructure, folks, is not simply a jobs issue. Infrastructure is not simply an economic issue. Infrastructure is also a public safety issue. We need to make a demand that our government focus on infrastructure investment at this time.

Mr. Speaker, I'm KEITH ELLISON. I'm the co-chair of the Progressive Caucus. I hope to be joined in this hour by other members of the Progressive Caucus. I think some members of the CBC will be joining me, as well, to talk about the situation involving Attorney General Holder.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we're the Progressive Caucus. We come with the progressive message. The progressive message is basically very simple, Mr. Speaker. It is the idea of liberty and justice for all.

Mr. Speaker, you know that every morning we in Congress come down to the well, and we're very honored to say the Pledge of Allegiance. And the progressive message of the Progressive Caucus is basically embodied in that pledge:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one na-

tion under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

We're indivisible.

□ 1500

Yes. It's true, we come in different colors. We come from different cultures. We come from different religious backgrounds. But we are one Nation. And yes, it's true that it's "liberty and justice for all." No exceptions. Everyone. Old, young, black, white, Latino, Asian, born in America, people who came here to immigrate, people of different religious backgrounds. People who are straight, gay. Americans are Americans are Americans, and they have the freedom to be who they are and have the liberty to pursue happiness as they define it and within the law and consistent with the rights of all others. But that's where it ends.

This is the Progressive Caucus, and I'm here to talk about the progressive message. And, Mr. Speaker, our email is right down here: cpc@grijalva.house.gov. We encourage people to stay in touch with us because we like to hear what the people have to say. We like to hear their insights, their values, what they think is important. So we encourage people to stay in touch at cpc@grijalva.house.gov, the Progressive Caucus Web site.

Mr. Speaker, we've been here another week in Congress, another week where we are going to have serious problems going on within a short period of time. I believe today's date is June 21. Within 9 days, on July 1, what we are going to see, Mr. Speaker, is interest rates on student loans double. We are going to see an expiration of our transportation bill. And do you think we took up either one of those issues on the House floor today or yesterday or at any time since Monday, Mr. Speaker? Absolutely not.

We urge the Republican majority to think about what's going on with the American middle class. Student loan rates will double on July 1. This could affect literally thousands and thousands of American students, and yet we're not acting on these issues at all.

The Democrats have said, Yes, absolutely. Progressives have said, Yes, absolutely. We cannot let student loan rates double at a time when we see colleges all over America experiencing double-digit increases in tuition, when the price of an education has gone sky-high, outpaced inflation manifold. And now, when the Congress tried to fix it, we're going to let it go back to the bad old days and let student loan interest rates double, costing students perhaps as much as \$1,000 a year.

And then even though the Republican majority agreed with the Ryan budget, which said we should just let the students have to pay more, they then saw the light and came back and said, Okay, we don't want the student loan rates to double either. But then, Mr. Speaker, what happened was they said, But we want to take the money out of women's health.

Of course we couldn't agree to that. We can't pit students versus women. We can't say we're going to help students but we're going to take the money away from women under the health care act, from cervical screenings and such. You can't do that. That wouldn't be right.

What if we asked the most wealthy members of our society, the richest Americans, to just do a little bit more so that students could have an affordable education? And our Republican friends said, No, never can we ask rich people to do a little bit more.

So now here we stand, Mr. Speaker, 9 days before student interest rates are about to double, and we saw no action on it on the floor this week. This is a horrible tragedy. This is a sad situation.

We lost 28,000 construction jobs last month. Congress still hasn't passed a highway bill. The highway bill is due to expire 10 days from now, 9 days from now, and our friends in the majority have not addressed this issue. This is a shame. It is a stain and it is a disgrace.

If you hold the majority in the House of Representatives, you have to focus on the needs of the people. And I hope the people are paying attention today, Mr. Speaker, because within this coming week, the student loan interest rates are due to double. Interest rates on student loans are due to double in 10 days, and the highway bill is due to expire in 10 days, but we have not touched these key issues on the House floor. And I'm just asking my Republican majority friends, why won't they pursue a "jobs" agenda instead of the "no jobs" agenda they've been pursuing.

The President laid out a great jobs bill, yet we haven't seen any action on it. Let's have a vote on it, Mr. Speaker, up or down. What is the Republican majority afraid of? Do they fear that there are a few Republicans who really believe that Americans need jobs, who will join with all the Democrats and put America back to work? Put it on the floor. I think that the American people want to vote on jobs.

So let me just say, Mr. Speaker—because I think it's so important that we have to restate certain things. If you just tuned in, student loan interest rates will double July 1 if Congress does nothing. This week, we did nothing. So the clock is ticking, and I am a little worried.

After losing 28,000 construction jobs last month, Congress hasn't passed a highway bill, and that bill is due to expire because the Republican majority won't pass a long-term transportation bill. This is a mistake, this is bad leadership, and the American people should know about it.

But, Mr. Speaker, I know you're thinking, Well, what did we do? If we didn't take care of the issues that are so pressing, what did the Republican majority do this week? They must have done something, because we were here.

Well, I'll tell you what they did. We authorized the killing of the sea lions

in the Northwest. I don't think that's a key issue we need to focus on.

We waived 39 environmental laws within 100 miles of the border. We said, Don't worry about complying anymore with 39 of the environmental laws within 100 miles of the border. So if you're within 100 miles of a border, I guess clean air and clean water just happen. But of course any 6-year-old kid knows that's not true.

What else did we do? This area within 100 miles of the border where we waived 39 environmental laws, this includes areas in Minnesota, where I'm from, like the Boundary Waters Wilderness or Voyageurs National Park. These are beautiful, pristine national treasures. And in my opinion, it's a shame to say that environmental laws would not apply there.

Thank goodness these bills haven't been taken up by the Senate because the Senate clearly knows that this is bad policy. But it didn't stop the Republican majority from pushing it because the Republican majority believes that all problems will be fixed if we don't regulate industry and if we cut taxes on the very well-to-do. They're mistaken about that, but that's what they believe. And I give them credit for saying it all the time because it gives the American people a chance to know what choices they have in front of them.

What else did we do, Mr. Speaker? We required Federal agencies to give oil companies 25 percent of all public lands they nominate for drilling. I will say that one again. The House Republican majority required Federal agencies to give oil companies 25 percent of all public lands—that's our lands, my lands, your lands, Mr. Speaker—they nominate for drilling.

So they used to say, "Drill, baby, drill; drill, baby, drill." They're not kidding about that. Even after the oil spill in the gulf, which hasn't slowed them down, they are still on this thing about letting drilling happen whenever, however, whatever they want.

I think that there ought to be some public lands that are pristine and nice for the American people. And yet the Republican majority passed a provision that required Federal agencies to give oil companies 25 percent of all public lands they nominate for drilling.

Now, if you think about that, Mr. Speaker, think about this. Regardless of the natural beauty, regardless of the environmental harm, regardless of the fishing or hunting damage, we would mandate that Big Oil gets one-fourth of whatever it wants. That is bad policy, but yet that was what was passed on the House floor this week.

What else did the Republican majority do this week, just so the American people know? We weakened the Clean Air Act protections. We required the EPA, the Environmental Protection Agency, to elevate cost concerns above all others.

So are you noticing a theme? The Republicans like to say, We have an all-

of-the-above strategy for energy. They say, We want oil; we want wind; we want biomass; we want all this, all this, all this.

□ 1510

But if you look at what they actually put on the floor and voted through with the Republican majority, they don't have an all-of-the-above strategy. They have an oil-above-all strategy. Oil above all. There is a theme here. This "oil above all" was quite unfortunate. This Congress can do better. We should be taking action now, not delaying until it is too late.

And I just want to, Mr. Speaker, this week, as we all are concerned about student loan interest rates doubling on July 1 and we are all concerned about the expiration of the highway bill, knowing that workers will be laid off if that happens, it is a shame we didn't address these critical issues facing the American people. But instead, we spent our time deconstructing environmental and health protections for the American people. I am disappointed about that, but that is what we did. And I think the American people have a right to know about it. So, Mr. Speaker, I am going to tell them about it.

But I would like to talk a little bit about what we have been doing not just this week, as I just have, but talk a little bit more globally about what we have been doing this whole 112th Congress, because there is a theme, undeniably, that we have been pursuing. There is a theme that we have been working on. Again, it is: cut taxes for the wealthy, leave taxes for middle class, and cut regulation for industry. Cut important environmental and health protections so that industry can keep more of the money so they don't have to spend it on making sure the air is clean and the water is clean.

I'd like to talk a little bit about America's energy future because that has been a theme on the floor we've been fighting up and down. And I mentioned I want to talk about the whole 112th Congress. Because even though that has been a recurring Republican theme, if you ask the American people what they want us to talk about, what you'll see on this chart, Mr. Speaker, is a question. And the question is simple. It simply says: Do you think the government should be doing more to help improve the financial situation of middle class Americans, should it be doing less, or do you think the government is doing the right amount to help improve the financial situation of middle class Americans?

So just to put the question out there again, Mr. Speaker, because I kind of went by quickly and the type is kind of small: Do you think the government should be doing more to help improve the financial system of middle class Americans, should it be doing less, or do you think the government is doing the right amount to help improve the financial situation of middle class Americans?

Well, this poll, pretty recent, right back in April, only a few months ago, and what Americans have said, Mr. Speaker, 67 percent of them said: do more. Two-thirds said: do more. So they don't think the government is doing enough to help improve the financial situation of the middle class. And, Mr. Speaker, they are right. Because the American people know that if we were to pass a highway bill that would help the middle class. If we would help college affordability, that would help the middle class. If we would do things like invest in our Nation's infrastructure altogether, that would help the middle class. If we would stop selling off public lands, that would help the middle class. If we would help make sure that we have sane and sensible and reasonable environmental protections like there are, but the Republicans want to get rid of, that would help the middle class. But the Republican majority, their argument is that the government should do less.

Now they say smaller government, smaller government. Lower taxes, smaller government. They say it so much that I can repeat their mantras in my sleep. They are great at repetition. But the American people say the government should be doing more to help improve the financial situation of middle class Americans. Two-thirds of them think so.

So as we can't pass the Buffett rule, we can't do anything about student interest rates, we're letting the highway bill expire, two-thirds of Americans think we should not be doing that. We should be doing more, not less. So those people who talk about smaller government and all that, they are not where the American people are.

Fifteen percent said: do less. That must be the Koch brothers or something like that. And 14 percent say: do the right amount. So about 29 percent say to do less or do nothing more and 3 percent said they didn't know. Two-thirds said the government should be doing more. And they're right, the government should be doing more. So that's why I want that point to be in front as I discuss this issue of America's energy future. We talked about energy today, and I want to discuss that a little more.

We need an energy plan, Mr. Speaker, that puts the interests of the American people ahead of the interests of Big Oil. Republicans say they want an all-of-the-above approach to energy. They say that all the time. Again, I credit them for being able to repeat the same theme over and over again. Great discipline on their part. But the only thing they've presented is an oil-above-all approach; oil above all else. Oil above wind. Oil above biomass. Oil above solar. Oil above anything. And they've proven that is their belief by the bill that we were dealing with this week.

We should never mistake the interests of Big Oil and the polluters for the

interests of the American people. We should always understand that oil is one way to power our country, and for the time being it is going to be a part of our energy portfolio. But we should not be giving them massive subsidies. We should not be giving them massive subsidies when they're making record profits. We should not relieve them of basic health and safety protections to make sure that our natural wonders don't get destroyed, our wildlife doesn't get destroyed, our recreational industries don't get destroyed.

The oil spill in the gulf is still fresh in my mind. And I'm outraged, Mr. Speaker, that BP was able to write off the cost of the cleanup. I don't think enough Americans know that BP was allowed to write off the cost of the cleanup of the gulf. In other words, they simply foisted that cost on the American people, which I think is terribly unfortunate.

So this week, the Republicans brought an energy bill to the floor that simply checks off from Big Oil's wish list. To me, it felt like if Big Oil was to have a wish list, the Republicans just played Santa Claus. And I don't think that's the right thing to do. I think what we should do is recognize the fact that petroleum will be a part of our energy portfolio, but we should minimize it. We should promote other sources—green sources of energy: wind, solar, biomass, conservation. We should be investing in innovative approaches, not just subsidizing the fossil fuel industry, as we do, to the tune of about \$110 billion every 10 years.

So as I said, Mr. Speaker, this week Republicans brought an energy bill to the floor that simply checks off from Big Oil's wish list. It weakens public health protections. It forces arbitrary giveaways of public land. As I already mentioned, it puts energy drilling ahead of all other uses of Federal land. The oil, gas, and coal industries are already getting billions in corporate welfare. They will receive at least \$110 billion in subsidies over the next 10 years. These subsidies have been won by decades of lobbying. Lobbying.

These subsidies have not been won because what they are asking Congress to do is such a great idea. They have had high-paid lobbyists come down here and work over Members of Congress to give them what they wanted. And it has accumulated to the tune of about \$110 billion a year. So they have a lot of power around here.

But I think that we would not be serving the public properly if we just turned over public lands so they can drill on them and spill on them and make all these mistakes that we ultimately have to pay for because they have won themselves tax breaks which allow them to write off the costs of these spills.

In 2011, the oil, gas, and coal industry spent \$167 million lobbying the Federal Government. That's \$167 million paid to lobbyists by the oil, gas, and coal industry. Now why, if they're right, do

they have to spend so much money trying to convince Congress they are so right? If you've got a good idea, we would be able to review the bill and vote your way, if you've got something in the interest of the American people.

□ 1520

But if you have something that's for the special interests, well, yeah, you know, you've got to pull out the guys in the monogrammed shirts and the \$1,500 suits to come tell us why we've just got to give them this loophole—which, by the way, Mr. Speaker, they always promise will bring jobs but rarely does anything other than bring them a lot more profit.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker, the renewable energy industry also needs investment, not just the oil industry, which doesn't need it. Clean energy is the fastest growing job sector in the world. America should be leading, not getting left behind. As the world is investing in new energy production methods, America is investing and putting subsidies on fossil fuels.

Now, from a scientific point of view, Mr. Speaker, we call the oil, coal, and gas industries fossil fuels. Why? Because these fuels are basically derived from just hundreds of millions of years worth of time going by and organic matter, trees from a million years ago and so forth. This is what fossil fuel is made from. But I think there's another good reason to call oil, gas, and coal fossil fuels. It's because they're the old way of doing stuff.

We need some new ways of doing stuff. We need to invest in clean energy. If we want to stay the strongest economy in the world, we need to invest in industries growing the fastest. Experts say that investing in clean energy gets more bang for the buck, Mr. Speaker, in creating jobs than the fossil fuel industry.

China has surpassed the United States in clean energy investment. China has surpassed the United States in clean energy investment, spending almost twice as much as we do, and the U.K. and Spain are not far behind.

Analysts believe that developing new clean energy techniques, like wind and solar, could support 20 million jobs by 2030 and trillions of dollars in revenue. And yet this week on the energy bill we were dealing with, that was not what we were talking about. On the land bill we dealt with, that's not what we were talking about. We are giving more and more to those who already have too much and an old industry. We need to, yes, recognize that oil is going to be part of our energy portfolio, but it shouldn't dominate it, and we need to invest in new energy where the job growth centers are.

Investing in clean energy creates three times as many jobs and more opportunities at every pay grade than traditional energy jobs. Yet we're subsidizing the fossil fuel industry six times the rate of supporting the renewable energy industry.

I offered a simple amendment. Last week, Mr. Speaker, I went to the Rules Committee and I offered a simple amendment to the Republican energy bill. It was a commonsense piece that was ruled out of order. And when I saw some of the things that were ruled in order, I was shocked. All my amendment said—that was ruled out of order and we weren't allowed to debate on the floor—is it is the sense of the Congress that the fossil fuel subsidies should be reduced to help control the budget deficit.

Now, my friends in the Republican majority are famous for harping on the deficit and the debt. They always talk about our children and our grandchildren. I don't know where they came up with that phrase, but it's remarkable to me that you can get all those politicians to say exactly the same thing all the time. I'm not saying there was some study group or poll. I'm just saying it is a remarkable coincidence.

My point is, though, you would think that if I said to you, Hey, look, let's have the \$110 billion we give every 10 years to the fossil fuel industry, let's let that be part of deficit reduction, you would think that my deficit hawk friends would be all over that. But, unfortunately, we weren't even allowed to debate that because, of course, that might put some people on the hot seat.

We all want to reduce America's deficit, the Progressive Caucus included, but we want to do it in a way that promotes green jobs, reduces our dependency on fossil fuel and hydrocarbon fuels, and increases conservation and green energy. But by maintaining these subsidies, it increases the deficit by \$110 billion every 10 years. I hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, especially the fiscal conservatives, agree that \$110 billion in fossil fuel subsidies to profitable companies doesn't make any sense. We need a true all-of-the-above strategy, as President Obama has said, that invests in clean, renewable energy, not this oil-above-all bill that we saw this week. It's very sad and unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to turn our attention to another issue which I think is really important and we really need to focus some attention on, and that is the issue of Attorney General Holder.

Yesterday, Republicans on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee voted to hold Attorney General Holder in contempt of Congress. This was a sad occasion because Attorney General Holder is a great American and deserved better treatment than he got from the Republican majority House Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

Along with all Americans, I certainly mourn the loss of the Customs and Border Protection agent, Brian Terry. Mr. Terry was a public servant who deserved to live his life, and it is a horrible shame that he was killed in a gunfight in Arizona in December 2010. We all agree that the gun-walking pol-

icy, which was a policy started in the Bush administration, and that allowed thousands of guns to be bought by weapons traffickers should be investigated. This program has no signs of merit that I can see, and it is too bad.

But here's the thing. This is why it is unfair to hold Attorney General Holder in contempt. As soon as he learned of the tactic, this gun-walking thing, Attorney General Holder condemned the tactic and ordered the Inspector General to investigate. And since then, he has testified before Congress seven times and provided more than 6,000 pages of documentation as asked for.

At this point, the Oversight and Government Reform Committee was demanding a document, and the Executive, as is the tradition in every administration, said documents that basically are conversations between a client and a lawyer and basically are deliberative documents are not proper stuff for disclosure, and the President asserted executive privilege. And what happens then is the Attorney General gets hit with a contempt of Congress.

Instead of working in good faith to investigate what went wrong, it appears that Republicans on the committee, and maybe next week on the House floor, have used this strategy for political gain. Even after Attorney General Holder provided 6,000 pages of documents to Congress, House Republicans subpoenaed highly sensitive documents, including photographs of crime scenes and reports on a confidential informant, in order to score partisan political points. This is a misuse of the gavel.

And last week, they withheld funding for our Nation's law enforcement operations in retaliation. We should not withhold funding for our Nation's law enforcement operations simply to score political points. This is a mistake and it is wrong, and I just hope, Mr. Speaker, there is no one in need of law enforcement resources that doesn't get them because of this spat that the chair of the Oversight Committee has going on with Attorney General Holder.

There is an African proverb, Mr. Speaker, that I think you might appreciate. It says, when the elephants fight, only the grass gets trampled. And so when the chair of the Oversight Committee wants to fight with the Attorney General, only regular people who need law enforcement resources suffer.

So I'm sad that happened, and I hope today we can abandon this time of witch hunts. Last time, the Republicans went after President Clinton a few years ago. It didn't help them. They impeached him but couldn't convict him. It took up a lot of time. We clearly were not able to focus on the needs of the country. I hope that they learn a lesson and refocus on things like interest rates on student loans that are getting ready to go out and the transportation bill. These are things that we need to focus on, not this political stuff that they're trying

to use to position themselves for the election. That's all I want to say about that for now, Mr. Speaker.

□ 1530

I want to talk a little bit also—to change the subject, Mr. Speaker—about money and politics. The Progressive Caucus passed a resolution to support something called Resolution Week. This is when municipalities, city councils all over across America passed resolutions asking Congress to initiate a process to overturn *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*.

Now, *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* basically came to the conclusion that money was speech and corporations were people. Corporations are not people. I've never seen a corporation put on a uniform and go to war. They've been contractors, but they are people who go risk their lives. They don't have children, they don't raise families. Corporations don't die. They have limited liability.

Basically, a corporation is designed to do one thing and one thing only—make money for its owners. And yet, the Supreme Court said that a corporation is a person, and persons have the right to freedom of speech, and so any money they want to put in any campaign, they can. What this has done is really turned our elections into auctions, and the highest bidder wins. Now, this is a shame. We need to overturn *Citizens United*.

The Progressive Caucus was honored to be part of Resolutions Week, when we saw officials passing resolutions across American cities asking Congress to overturn *Citizens United*. If we're going to get a constitutional amendment to overturn *Citizens United*, we need an awesome public display, awesome amount of communities rising up and demanding that this happen. And last week, we saw cities do it.

I'm proud that my city of Minneapolis, very honored that Minneapolis passed a resolution calling for the overturn of *Citizens United*; also honored that the city of St. Paul passed a resolution to overturn *Citizens United*, honored that Duluth, Minnesota did so several months ago. Also, New York, Los Angeles—Chicago is considering a bill, and there are many, many, many more. Over 1,600 elected public officials, both local, county, State, and Federal, have joined together and said this is bad legislation, and I was very honored that the Progressive Caucus was a part of it.

By organizing from the ground up, we can restore democracy to the people, for the people, and by the people. Several Members of Congress have already introduced constitutional amendments to overturn *Citizens United*.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as you may know, the traditional method to get a constitutional amendment—and again, there are now 27 constitutional amendments, we need one more to overturn *Citizens United*—Congress will pass something, then they will send it to

the States, and two-thirds of the States need to pass it, and then the President signs it, and then it's changed. The process, however, needs to be well supported by the public. So we have tried to start this grassroots movement, joining with other leaders like Move to Amend and others, to see Citizens United overturned.

We have several Members—as many as 12 Members of Congress have introduced bills to have an overturning of Citizens United. I was very honored that we are partnering with city officials, who are the closest unit of government to the people, very honored to represent 12 cities in my own district, all great public servants there. I hope that we can work together to say that money should not overwhelm the political process.

Mr. Speaker, one city official said, look, people may think this is some big national issue, but think about this: If a wealthy individual wants to have a development in a particular part of town where the elected city council says, You know what? This is zoned for parks or residential, whatever; it's not appropriate to go here, a wealthy individual could simply dump as much money as they want to in a city race to the opponent and give money to the opponent of the people opposing this project, and then basically buy off the city council. So this is something that local officials are correctly concerned about. The bottom line, though, is that we've got to move forward, and I'm proud that the Progressive Caucus is part of this effort. So this work we did last week I thought was great.

The Progressive Caucus has come up with an important declaration. Since we have all these constitutional amendment proposals—over 12 of them—we had to come in unity some kind of way, and what we decided to do is this: all join on a declaration. And the declaration says this, Mr. Speaker:

We declare our support for amending the Constitution of the United States to restore the rights of the American people undermined by Citizens United and related cases to protect the integrity of our elections and limit the corrosive influence of money in our democratic process.

So that's what the declaration says. Over 1,600 elected officials, two State legislatures, more than 150 cities and towns, all calling for repeal and overturning of Citizens United.

If I could make just an example, we've seen outside spending on campaigns up 1,600 percent since Citizens United came in—up 1,600 percent since Citizens United. Quite frankly, it's really something. It's gone crazy, and we've got to do something about it.

You might be thinking, Mr. Speaker, well, what do we do between now and when we pass the constitutional amendment? One thing we could do today is we could pass the DISCLOSE Act. This is a piece of legislation by Representative CHRIS VAN HOLLEN—a very dynamic leader, a gentleman from

Maryland—and it requires public reporting of corporate campaign activity so that you can't have secret money.

Right now, you could have a situation where some billionaire takes their personal money, dumps it into a super PAC, and then the super PAC spends the money. We don't even know who that person is spending the money. So, under the DISCLOSE Act, we would find out the identity of some of these people. So we could do that right now. And by the way, some of the money we see creeping into American elections very well could be money from foreign sources. Senator MCCAIN very correctly pointed out that there's one wealthy individual who has been putting a lot of money into election campaigns, and he is a billionaire and owns a casino in China. He's using his wealth to influence American elections. So that's foreign money, if that's the way it is. So the thing is that we do not want people outside the United States trying to shape the elections in our country, and so this is the thing that we are moving forward.

Overturn Citizens United, amend and disclose—amend the Constitution and disclose secret donors.

I'll close this section on this point, Mr. Speaker: Corporations are not people. And in America, democracy should never, ever be for sale.

Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 11 minutes remaining.

Mr. ELLISON. With these last 11 minutes, I would like to take just a few minutes to talk about this college loan issue. I've talked about it a little bit already. I would like to elaborate.

College loan rates will double if Congress doesn't act by July 1. I've made that point, I'll make it again. This week, President Obama called on Congress to act. Remarkably, as I said several times tonight, Republicans in Congress are threatening to just allow the doubling of our student loan interest rates.

Americans owe more tuition debt, more student loan debt than there's credit card debt, and student loan borrowing is more common now than it would a decade ago. This is because States are sending less money to public universities, so public universities have to make up the money by increasing tuition, and that means students having to borrow more money.

At a time when the average student loan debt is about \$25,000 and tuition prices continue to rise, students are borrowing more than ever to complete their degrees. Seven million undergraduates would be affected—that's 7 million, Mr. Speaker—by a doubling of student loan interest rates, raising the cost by about \$1,000 per person. Our Nation's student loan debt burden is massive and now exceeds \$1 trillion.

After initially blocking any solutions, Republicans are finally hearing calls. As I said before, they did make an offer, a counteroffer—I think I cred-

it them for that—and they said, okay, we don't want to see a doubling of student interest rates, so we'll do something.

□ 1540

But when they came up, their pay-for, the way they want to pay for it, was to say that they wanted to cut health care services for children and breast cancer screening. So we're not going to hurt kids and women in order to help students, so we couldn't go with that deal.

We proposed that we ask the most well-to-do individuals and corporations to help. I guess what I'm saying is, if I went to a billionaire or a billionaire corporation and I said, look, we're about to see 7 million students' costs of education go up. Can you help, since you make so much? And it seems like what they're saying through their representatives is no.

This is outrageous. I think the truth is that America, a Nation that has made it possible for BP and ExxonMobil and GE and all these big corporations to do so well, should do well by America. I don't think that's asking too much.

It's not right to protect the richest people in America, and let everybody else get by the best they can. This Nation has made it possible for them to earn all that money, and I don't have any problem with people making good money. I just think that if you make good money, and you have used our police force, our military has protected you, our roads and bridges and our transit system have allowed you to move your goods and services around, our EMS system has made sure that if you get sick we'll come help you, our public schools have educated your workforce, then I don't think it's asking too much to say, put in the pot and help some kids have affordable education. I just don't think that's asking too much.

Now, somebody said to me, Well, Keith, in my day I paid my way through school. And I said, in your day school didn't cost \$28,000 a year.

I'm 48 years old. When I went to law school, I graduated and I had \$12,000 student loan debt. That's nothing compared to what students are dealing with today. They're graduating with twice that, on average.

So I just want to say, as I close out tonight, Mr. Speaker, the Republican majority, elected by the people of their districts, are here, just like the Democrats are, to discharge the duties associated with their office and, that is, to promote the general welfare and to look out for the American people. I think making sure that student interest loan rates don't double is part of that. I think that making sure we have a decent highway bill that will help pay for the construction and maintenance of our roads and bridges and transit system is part of that. And yet this week we haven't done anything to do that.

The standard conservative line on the economy right now is that the government has done too much. But, yet, as I have already proven, the American people do not agree. Two-thirds say the government needs to do more than it's doing. So now I think the government has a duty to step up.

And, no, I don't think the government is the solution to every problem. And I know my conservative friends like to mischaracterize what progressives say about that. We don't believe government is the solution to every problem, but we do believe government is part of the solution to many problems. And if you cut it back and you scale it down and you make it too small and too weak to do anything to help people, then, of course it won't be able to help people, and that's a shame. The American people have a different set of expectations.

I just want to say, as we wind up and I begin to yield back, it's time in America where we recognize that there is an important balance between the private sector and the public sector, and the market fundamentalists who occupy this House on the Republican side of the aisle must begin to recognize that government has an important role to play. And if we abandon our role, America will be poorer for it.

If we don't step up to the plate and make sure that tuition interest rates are decent and reasonable and that we're making sure that we have a decent highway system, Americans will suffer. And we cannot allow that to happen in the richest, most powerful Nation in the history of the world.

I yield back the balance of my time.

THE CONSERVATIVE CAUCUS

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

Mr. WOODALL. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time, and I appreciate you giving me a moment to set up.

I have got to tell you, Mr. Speaker, I love coming to the floor after my good friend from Minnesota. I enjoy it every single time it works out in that way because he is an able representative of the Progressive Caucus which, I would argue, sits way over on the left-hand side of the political continuum.

And I would hope today, Mr. Speaker, I will be an able representative for the Conservative Caucus, which sits over on the right-hand side of the political continuum. And we absolutely disagree about what this Federal Government ought to look like.

I want to talk primarily about the President's health care bill in the Supreme Court, a decision that's coming down next week. But I want to start with where the gentleman from Minnesota ended, Mr. Speaker, and that is to say that conservatives believe that government is not the solution to

every problem. That's certainly true. It's absolutely true.

But more importantly, there are different levels of government in this country, and we seem to forget that. Something happens, and my colleagues know this. You know, Mr. Speaker, you and I were part of the largest freshman class in modern times, and 99 of us came to this institution together and said it's not about how it has been run, but it's about how it can be run, and we can do better.

But something happens to people when they drive across the Beltway. That's that little interstate that goes around Washington, D.C. When they come inside the Beltway, something happens to them and they suddenly think they're the smartest person in the room. They suddenly think that if only all Americans would live their life the way they want other Americans to live their life, then everyone would be happier; and that's just not true.

I don't care how well-meaning anyone in this institution is, Mr. Speaker. There is not a man or a woman here that knows more about how my family should pursue happiness than my family does. There is no Member here from outside the State of Georgia who knows better about how Georgians should pursue happiness than those of us in Georgia do.

And I would say, as my friend from Minnesota finished talking about the student loan program, you may not know, Mr. Speaker—I know you all have a proud tradition of education in your home State and some very fine institutions of higher learning there. In Georgia we have what's called the Hope Scholarship. And for years and years, it allowed every single college student, college-bound student from the great State of Georgia, college graduates, B averages and above, every single one to go to State schools in Georgia for free.

You know how much Federal money we used for that program, Mr. Speaker? Zero. Zero.

Time and time again my colleagues come to the floor of this House, and they talk about what we need to do in Washington to help college students across America. Let me tell you something. You all came from your own State back home that has the power today to do those things. It does not have to happen in Washington. It can happen back home. It can happen at the city level, it can happen at the county commission level, it can happen at the State legislature level. Dadgummit, Mr. Speaker, it can happen at the family level, all of these decisions that we talk about in Washington, D.C.

And that takes us right into the health care bill, Mr. Speaker, because here's the secret. And I don't know if everybody in the House, Mr. Speaker, knows the secret and, that is, that as patently unconstitutional as the President's health care bill is, had the State of Georgia passed it for Georgians, it would have been perfectly fine. Hear that.

There are different powers that the United States Constitution allows State governments to exercise than it allows the Federal Government to exercise. The States have the power to mandate behavior. We see it regularly. We see requirements for what must be included in insurance policies, for who has insurance policies, that regulation of the individual market. But not the Federal Government.

So I want my friends in the Progressive Caucus to hear me clearly. I'm not anti-government. I want each role the government plays, I want it to play it as well as it possibly can. I want every government dollar to be spent as efficiently as it possible can. I want every government mandate to be as limited and efficacious as it can possibly be.

□ 1550

With that, Mr. Speaker, I take you back to President Bill Clinton, August 21, 1996. Why is that important, Mr. Speaker? You and I weren't even thinking about being in Congress in 1996. Why in the world is that important?

It's important because it was August 21, 1996, when President Bill Clinton signed into law Federal health care reform that passed this United States House, led by Speaker Newt Gingrich, a Republican from the great State of Georgia, 1996. Folks talk like health care reform hasn't ever come down the pike in this country, Mr. Speaker, in 1996, the House and the Senate and the President—Republicans, Democrats—all came together to pass health care reform.

Let me tell you what they passed in 1996. Here we go. It's from President Clinton's signing statement:

This Act will ensure the portability of health benefits when workers change or lose their jobs, and it will protect workers against discrimination by health plans based on their health status.

Mr. Speaker, does that sound familiar? Does it sound like the very same words that would have come from one of President Obama's speeches when he was pushing his health care bill? Why is that? Why is President Clinton speaking these same words 15 years ago, and yet there are still health care solutions that Americans are searching for? I'll tell you why.

Because, in 1996, with Republican Speaker Newt Gingrich and with Democratic President Bill Clinton, folks came together, and they solved health care problems for every single health care plan that the Federal Government had the right to regulate. Hear that: every single plan that the Federal Government had the right to regulate.

In the State of Georgia, we have an office. It's a constitutional office. It's in the Georgia Constitution. It's called Commissioner of Insurance. We all vote on it. It's a statewide-elected office. We vote on it every 4 years. That individual has the right to control State-originated insurance policies, primarily the individual market and some