

THE NEAR COLLAPSE OF THE ECONOMY: AVOIDING A REPEAT PERFORMANCE

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. There is plenty of blame for the near collapse of the economy over the last 5 years—greedy, even criminal business behavior, lax or nonexistent oversight with regulators asleep at the switch. Clearly, there were some reckless consumers and a failed political system. But as instructive as the postmortem might be, it's more important to avoid a repeat performance.

What should we do? I would suggest we simplify, regulate, and prosecute.

Let's begin by reinstating the Glass-Steagall, Depression-era bank regulation that helped promote stability in that industry. It would be a small step in the right direction, a signal that the era of deregulation, unfettered, is at an end. I hope we can move to performance-based regulation. The Dodd-Frank bill had many important and valuable features, but I fear that it is at risk of becoming a bureaucratic nightmare.

We do need to regulate. The cozy, light-touched, gentle—some would say diffident—approach that assumes that the gentle people in the financial industry will self-police must be a thing of the past. We should provide the various regulatory authorities with adequate staff and budget. We should pay them properly so that they aren't a training ground to be hired away for much higher salaries by the industry they're supposed to regulate. We should have high expectations that they will do their jobs, and then we should back them up and not undercut those efforts.

Finally, we should prosecute. Sending people to jail will send a message. All of the people in American prisons collectively have not stolen as much with guns as the American public, our pension funds, our businesses lost in the near meltdown of the economy. Every time somebody illegally profits from a financial transaction, somebody else loses. Crooks, whatever the color of their collars, should be held accountable.

To make this happen, the public needs to focus some of their frustration to make this an issue in the election. At a time when politicians and special interests are making strange and outrageous noises, here is a real issue for them to address.

REGULATORY REFORM: FINDING A BALANCE

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

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, for the record, America's businesses and innovators do not need the administration mandating how they run their

companies—yet it regularly does and in the form of burdensome and costly regulations. We all share in the responsibility to find the balance of making sure employees have the safest working conditions possible while allowing them to have a job to come back to every day. Burdensome, onerous regulations place such a heavy toll on businesses that hiring slows and they are forced to start cutting from their workforces.

□ 1010

Part of protecting employees' jobs is making sure that the business they work for is still able to grow and create more good-paying jobs for those in Michigan and across the country.

Over the course of this Congress, I have had the opportunity to speak with numerous small businesses, owners, and workers who state unequivocally that they'd rather Washington hand out less regulations and more certainty. According to a Chamber of Commerce small business outlook survey from earlier this year, nearly 80 percent of small businesses say taxes, regulations, and legislation make it harder for them to hire. That's because small businesses are forced to pay on average \$10,000 per employee per year in order to comply with excessive regulations. The Small Business Administration has reported that when added up, those costs amount to \$1.75 trillion annually, which is enough money for businesses to provide 35 million private sector jobs with an average salary of \$50,000 per year.

Mr. Speaker, truly, the price of red tape is the loss of American jobs. Because of these regulations, the United States is also losing its competitive edge. According to the "Global Competitiveness Report" for 2011-2012, the U.S. fell to the fifth most competitive economy in the world. It is down from second place when President Obama took office in 2009. The reason stated by the report: more burdensome regulations.

I ask my Big Government colleagues: What's wrong with being number one? Regulations are important, and businesses should be held accountable for the safety of their employees. But how much is too much? So far this year, the Federal Register has run more than 40,000 pages of regulations that range from burdensome to downright ridiculous. It contains such provisions as multiple hospital claim reimbursement codes for injuries caused by parrots and burns from flaming water skis. We need regulatory reform that cleans up the system, removes duplicative regs, and wipes out burdensome and excessive rules.

My Republican colleagues and I in the House have passed dozens of bills to pull back the government's regulatory arm. We passed the Regulations From the Executive in Need of Scrutiny, or REINS, Act which would require both Congress and the President approve all major rulings created by Federal agen-

cies. We also have passed rules that would discourage any regulation that will have an annual impact of more than \$100 million, resulting in major increases in costs and prices, or impose a significant negative effect on competition and jobs.

This week, we'll vote on H.R. 4078, the Red Tape Reduction and Small Business Job Creation Act, which would prevent any Federal agency from taking a significant regulatory action until employment has reached 6 percent or less. House Republicans remain committed to growing the economy and requiring congressional approval for any regulation that has significant impact on the economy or burdens small businesses and costs jobs.

We must stop allowing unelected bureaucrats to enact job-killing rules with no checks or balances. By preventing these kinds of job-hindering proposals, we can give job creators more certainty about what rules they can expect. Small businesses are our country's real job creators, creating seven out of every 10 jobs.

To protect these jobs and our country and Michigan, I'll continue to fight for less red tape here and in Washington, and more jobs in our homeland.

TRIBUTE TO KATHLEEN "KATHI" WILKES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, these are tasks that we often do not find welcoming. I rise this morning to pay tribute to a public servant among us, someone who served in this House as a staff person, a chief of staff in my office. I rise this morning to pay tribute to Kathleen "Kathi" Wilkes, whose memorial service will be held this afternoon, July 24, 1:30 p.m., at the Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria, Virginia.

Kathi died suddenly last Saturday. The good news is that so many of her friends were able to fly in, as I was able to do from Houston, and to be with her in those waning hours. One can always ask the question why, and there is no explanation for someone so full of life, so ready to serve, so willing to help, to lose their life so suddenly, even as she was so active the week of her death.

Kathi had a wonderful history of coming from Ohio, touching down in Pennsylvania, in Houston, and Washington, D.C. How often can what we call a "civilian" touch the lives of so many States and so many people? Kathi pulled herself up by her bootstraps, supported herself, and became a nurse. As she was so good at nursing as well, she continued to nurture people, maybe in the spirit of Florence Nightingale.

That was not enough for Kathi. She continued to put herself through school and ultimately graduated and became a lawyer. That brought her to Houston, Texas, working for one of the major

corporations there, but it brought her into my life so many years ago. There, she was a light as well, interested in helping and befriending not only my husband and myself, but my two little ones, Erica and Jason. Boy, did they have a buddy in Kathi Wilkes. She loved to do things that children much smaller and much younger than herself enjoyed. She was just a fun-loving person. Then, of course, she traveled to places around the world embracing friends.

As she came back to Washington, D.C., to become the chief of staff in the 18th Congressional District, what a light she was in the office, bringing in great talent and other young people who were nurtured, counseled by her, tutored, and made great. Then, of course, what a partner in legislation. She was there through the ups and downs of the 1990s, through the impeachment proceedings, as I was a member of the House Judiciary Committee. Through all these tough times, Kathi was there.

Then we were able to do something quite great, if I might say so myself. This House was built by slaves, the Capitol of the United States of America. But as we looked around a few years past, there were no statues of African Americans, less an African American woman. I passed legislation, along with then-Senator Clinton, to place a statue of Sojourner Truth in this House. Sojourner Truth was a person who had been an abolitionist, a suffragette, a slave, a mother of 13 children, who had seen most all of them sold into slavery.

Kathi worked without ceasing to ensure that that statue was sculpted, that we had the opportunity to place it historically in the United States Congress, and it was honored with 2,000 people coming to see the placement of the Sojourner Truth statue having then-Secretary Hillary Clinton and First Lady Michelle Obama and, of course, the Speaker, NANCY PELOSI, present. What a wonderful day and occasion and tribute to the hard work of Kathi Wilkes.

It is befitting that I rise today to express the deep pain that so many of us feel, friends from all around the world even, but certainly in this Nation. Friends, as I said from Ohio, to Pennsylvania, to Washington, D.C., to Texas, many of whom will be able to come today, others of whom will celebrate her in Houston and in Ohio. One may ask why she is deserving of such. In the backdrop of such terrible tragedies that have faced us in Aurora and places around the world, as we mourn the loss of so many in the occurrence of last Thursday, I stand here today to say that I know that if Kathi Wilkes were alive today, she would be somewhere trying to help, to nurture, to assist my office, to be of help, even as she is no longer a chief of staff, but really a former chief of staff.

That is simply the way Kathi Wilkes is to her mother, her son, and, of

course, her granddaughter and her many relatives and many friends. We have lost a good friend, but I can see her now taking wings.

Farewell, my good friend. You have served well and made us proud. More importantly, you have given of yourself. May you rest in peace.

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AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, I had the privilege to speak to well over 200 retirees. Many of the retirees are veterans of our previous wars for this country. They wanted me to be there with them to discuss sequestration, their benefits, and what do I think is going to happen, which I could not honestly tell them. And none of us really seem to know until we get back after the election in November.

But, Mr. Speaker, when I spoke to this group of retirees, I took this poster down, and I had it on a stand like this one. It says: "Funding the Enemy: How U.S. Taxpayers Bankroll the Taliban." And I told these veterans that it was time to get our troops out of Afghanistan. It was time to stop sending money to a corrupt leader named Karzai and time to bring the troops home and spend the money here in America on our own people and guarantee the benefits for our veterans, which they have earned.

Mr. Speaker, I got a strong applause from those people, who have served this Nation, and their spouses. This took place in Jacksonville, North Carolina, which is in my district. The Camp LeJeune Marine base is in my district. And many of these in attendance served in the Marine Corps, the Navy, a few in the Air Force. And they agree with me, it is time to stop spending money, digging a hole that has no end to it, known as Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, in a critique on this book, "Funding the Enemy," I read one of the most candid behind-the-scenes examples of war reportage. This book contains a host of voices that spell out the chaos and mayhem of America's longest war.

Mr. Speaker, it is a no-win situation. I'm a history major from college, but I'm not an expert on history. But in everything I have ever read about Afghanistan, the end is always the same. No nation has ever gone to Afghanistan and changed anything, nothing at all.

And, Mr. Speaker, speaking of mayhem, yesterday in The New York Times—and I will quote the article—the title of the article is "Top Afghans Tied to Nineties Carnage, Researchers Say: Activists Say Powerful Figures Are Blocking 800-Page Report" of carnage in the nineties by many of those that are leading Afghanistan today.

I don't know why there is not more outrage from Congress. Anytime we

have a debate about Afghanistan, it's a few Republicans and a few Democrats who stand up. And we might get 10 minutes, but that's about all. Ten minutes? We are spending \$10 billion a month; young men and women are losing their legs and arms. And 10 minutes is all we're going to debate the policy in Afghanistan? That, in itself, is crazy.

In this article, it further states:

The American Embassy here has been another source of objection to the mass-graves report. American officials say releasing the report would be a bad idea, at least until after Afghanistan's 2014 Presidential election is complete.

This has been a failed policy. It should have stopped after Mr. Obama got bin Laden. The reason we went into Afghanistan was to get bin Laden and al Qaeda which was responsible for 9/11. Well, he is dead now; al Qaeda has been disbursed all around the world. It is time to stop this failed policy in Afghanistan.

And I will say to the embassy that does not want this report out, Why? Why do you continue to play this game with the American young men and women who give their lives and limbs in Afghanistan? Why won't you be honest with the American people and Congress and say, Bring the troops home; stop spending money we don't have.

The money is actually borrowed from China, Mr. Speaker. We owe China \$1.3 trillion. We can't pay our own bills. Yet we're going to borrow the money from China to send to a corrupt leader named Karzai in Afghanistan. And, Mr. Speaker, the subtitle of this book, "How U.S. Taxpayers Bankroll the Taliban"—it's the Taliban that are killing Americans.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I will ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform.

ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to express my heartfelt sorrow and condolences to the victims and their families and the community of Aurora, Colorado, a great tragedy. Words are inadequate to describe it. And it's certainly a reminder to everyone that no time is promised to any of us. And we never know what will happen in the next second or the next minute or the next hour and certainly the next day. So we give praise that we were able to wake up this morning, come to the floor of the House and talk about an issue that is going to take a lot of time to heal.

But while we are healing, we have work to do in this Congress. You see, the assault weapons ban, in place for 10 years, expired in 2004. And after the expiration of the assault weapons ban, it's been open season.

Now, I know that there are people who hold the Second Amendment dear.