

more than half of them are older than 25 years old.

You are not talking about a teenager living at home. You are talking about people who are living independently in the community, trying to get by on \$7.35 an hour or close to \$15,000 a year, in a job that often has no benefits—health benefits, pension, et cetera.

Fifty-five percent of the people on minimum wage are working full time. Forty-four percent have some type of college education, an associate degree or bachelor's degree or other higher education. That is the reality of the minimum wage worker in this country. It is not the myth of a teenager living at home, looking for some pocket money.

These are hardworking people trying to get by, often on two or three jobs, without the benefits. Without that ability, if they miss their rent, they get evicted, and then they are homeless. As Mr. RANGEL said, these are some of the same people that then show up on our health plans that States provide for being low-income.

So you know who then is subsidizing their salaries? We all are. Every single individual who is a taxpayer pays into those programs. While that employer may not offer a wage that they can live on, we all subsidize it, so that they can actually get something as basic as health care.

So there is a real need to pass the Fair Minimum Wage Act that is proposed. We have tried and tried in this body to get a vote on it. We have signed a discharge petition. Virtually every Democrat in the House of Representatives has signed that.

We need those Republicans, especially those Republicans who are on record supporting a minimum wage, to also sign that, so we can get a vote before we leave in a few weeks, before the November elections, before the end of the year—because I think a question that I would want to ask my Representative when I see them in the community in the coming weeks before the election is: What have they done to help make the middle class stronger? What have they done to help people who are aspiring to be in the minimum class? What have we got done in Congress?

There was a Congress in 1948 that was called the do-nothing Congress because they got so little done. The first year of that session, they passed 350 bills. Last year, this body passed 88.

Here we are sitting another week back in Congress, and we haven't raised the minimum wage, we haven't passed equal pay for equal work so that women make just as much as men do, and we haven't done anything about the affordability of higher education, allowing students to refinance their loans.

These are simple issues that aren't partisan issues. They are not Democratic/Republican. They are not liberal/conservative. They are about whether or not you are fighting for the middle

class and those who aspire to be in the middle class or whether you are here trying to help out the special interests and the lobbyists who represent the special interests. It is really that simple.

So we need to pass a raise for the American people. That means you pass an increase in the minimum wage. As other Members have said, it will lift so many people out of poverty and give a raise to so many people to help stimulate the economy.

So the Progressive Caucus is fighting each and every single day while we are here for a variety of issues: raising the minimum wage, trying to stop wage theft in this country, trying to extend unemployment insurance so that everyone who is out of work can still get some benefits while they are looking for work so that they can get that job. We all know the best social program is a job, and we want to make sure that everyone can get that job.

We need to continue to do the things that Congress needs to get done and we have not gotten done. So the minimum wage is one issue that we wanted to talk about today.

As we have the President speaking to us this evening, we want to make sure that this body has a very full and rich debate. As we passed in a bipartisan way, 370-40, we need to have a real debate and have real questions answered before we get involved, so that we never again have what happened the last time we got involved in Iraq because we are back again. There was no "mission accomplished." A banner and a fly-in in military gear is not a successful end to an involvement.

We need to make sure whatever we do this time is thoughtful, done with consultation of Congress, with narrow scope, and with a partnership with other nations specifically in the region to make sure that we are doing this not alone or not largely alone.

With that, Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Caucus appreciates this time this evening, and I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1745

ISSUES FACING THE NATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate my colleagues across the aisle talking about the economy and pushing for a raise in minimum wage because that is what a party does after their party has totally devastated the economy. It is what you do after your party's President, with help from the majority in the Senate led by HARRY REID, are able to just wreak havoc with an economy that should be doing really well.

This economy is ready to take off. ObamaCare, as we have said for over 4

years, is going to harm the economy. It is going to knock people out of work. It is going to put people from full time to part time. Republicans have been explaining this ever since not one of us voted for that bill. We also explained there were \$716 billion in cuts to Medicare.

A lot of seniors that vote Democrat voted for this President, voted for a Democratic majority in the Senate. They have now been shocked this year as they are not getting the health care they once did. Why? Because of ObamaCare—seniors are getting mistreated.

When we want to talk about the economy, the most staggering numbers I can imagine have come out in the last year, and the President has even acknowledged it was true. He complains we are not doing enough for the middle class.

Well, we agree with that. We certainly agree with that. We need to help those that are not making enough money. Then quit knocking them out of their jobs, Mr. President, HARRY REID. We have got over 360 bills down at the Senate. Passage of just 10 of them would help this economy, but they won't bring them up.

So the devastating, most incredible numbers are these: since Barack Obama has been President of the United States, for the first time in our Nation's history—it has never ever happened before in any President's tenure, whether it was 4 years or 8 years or shortened by tragedy, no President before Barack Obama has ever presided over an economy in the United States in which 95 percent of all the income in the United States went to the top 1 percent, never ever.

Only under the leadership of President Barack Obama, of all the Presidents, only this President has brought us to the place where 95 percent of all of the income in America goes to the top 1 percent.

People wonder why there is so much money that flooded into the Obama campaign in 2008. Not as much flooded into his campaign in 2012 because there was some people losing money. The economy wasn't doing as well as expected.

Is there anything more devastating than a President acknowledging the fact that 95 percent of all income has gone to the top 1 percent? Then he gives speeches and talks to people like he can't understand how the Republicans could allow this big growth between the poor and the rich. Well, we need the President to tell us how he has done it, but the trouble is we know how he has done it.

He talks about fat cats and then makes sure that they are the ones that get rewarded. He talks about going after Big Oil and proposes a bill that would do nothing to hurt Big Oil, but would absolutely have devastated independent oil producers who actually drill and produce around 95 percent or so of the United States' oil and gas wells.

Because of this President's ObamaCare, because of his overregulation, because of his top-down demands from the EPA wanting to usurp all authority for people that couldn't find their rears with both hands, they are the ones that are telling industry how to run their industries.

This President has created a mess. He demonizes companies for trying to survive by moving to a country that has a corporate income tax rate that is a fraction of the rate we have.

We now have the largest—the highest corporate tax in the world, and this President thinks the answer is more taxes. He has never been educated by people who know how an economy really works, people like Arthur Laffer that helped Ronald Reagan get the economy going after President Carter nearly killed it.

He has never sat down at the feet of people really who understand economies and what makes them work, what makes them fail. So he doesn't understand that when government uses its heavy, heavy hand, they hurt economies.

When the President pronounces laws out of his mouth that have never passed Congress and makes that the newly-enforced law, then it creates havoc in the economy because capital goes where it feels safest.

When you have a President, like a dictator, that just pronounces new laws because he doesn't like what Congress has passed and prior Presidents have signed, then companies are not going to be able to survive very well in that environment, so they move on and go somewhere where they can survive better.

The answer to getting people better jobs and higher wages is not to mandate further regulation. The answer is to lower the corporate tax, draw more companies back here, so that people can have better jobs, people can have more jobs.

I know at some point—because there is so much intelligence in the African American community, I know at some point a majority are going to figure out that the Democrats have done massive damage to the African American communities and that the answer is not making them more dependent on the Federal Government, but in pushing them to reach their potential, to reach for the sky, not with Federal handouts, but with good-paying jobs.

I was in Marshall, Texas, just in the last few weeks. There was a young African American who has been out of school for a while. He was so excited because he had been able to go through the 5-week truck driving school there, was getting his commercial driver's license, and for the first time in his life, he was going to get a good job paying \$40,000 to \$42,000. It excited me seeing him so excited. He is just a huggable guy that was so thrilled.

So now that he had a job promise that was coming up in a couple of weeks when he finished and he knew

how much he was going to make and that, in 3 years, he had the chance of making \$100,000, that he has now gotten engaged—because he wanted to wait until he had a job and he could take care of his wife and they could take care of each other.

He didn't want to be on the Federal dole. He wanted to provide for himself. This man had all kinds of capability, and now, he is going to be able to meet it, not because of this President or the overregulation, but because he took a 5-week training program and was going to get a good job.

That is where you help people, not in the handouts, but in the hand helping to rise up to the potential that God has given them.

Some have claimed Republicans have a war on women, that women only make 70 percent of what the men have. There are so many false statistics that are quoted. We know it is very unfortunate. We are very sorry that the White House penalizes women and rewards men because the men make a lot more in the same top positions than the women do. So apparently, that does happen some places, and we hope the President will address it in his own White House lawn, in his own house and yard.

The fact is if across the country everybody was paying women only 70 percent of what they paid men for the same job—people are smarter than the President realizes—they would be hiring nothing but women because they work for so much cheaper.

That is one of the problems that the African American community has. When huge businesses combined with the Democratic Party to bring in and lure as many illegal aliens into this country as they can and start giving massive numbers of amnesty, then they are not going to have as many job opportunities, and they are not going to make as much money.

People are beginning to see that in the African American community. That is why their unemployment rate is so much higher than that in other ethnic communities and the overall unemployment rate—such damage to such wonderful people.

Just like that young man in Marshall, Texas, another—he was a much older guy, big guy, African American, just thrilled for the man because he is graduating, he has got a job coming up, he has been out of work so long.

You don't help people by saying, "We are going to pay you for a year not to work." You help create an environment where there are jobs where you can reach your potential.

Mr. Speaker, the question that my friends ought to be asking is, "Why is one job no longer enough for so many Americans?" If we get to the bottom of it, you will find out. ObamaCare is a problem, overregulation is a problem, stifling America becoming energy independent by propping up forms of energy that do not create a profit unless they are propped up by taxpayer dollars—let

this economy run. Let people reach their potential.

One other thing: I know the President is going to be making a speech on Syria. I literally thank God that the President was not able to do a bombing campaign like he wanted to do a year ago, in which he literally would have done so much damage to—not a good man, but the leader in Syria, Assad, that it would have allowed ISIS to be in charge now. People across America have figured out ISIS is a threat to all of us.

I will wait to see what the President has to say, but when you know that the President was wrong about Egypt, about the Muslim Brotherhood taking over in Egypt, was wrong when he was pushing to keep the Muslim Brotherhood and a tyrant like Morsi in charge in Egypt, when over a third of the population in Egypt came to the streets and said, "We don't want radical Islam; and you, America, under Barack Obama, you helped us with a constitution that doesn't even include impeachment, it is shari'a law"—and they have now passed a constitution that requires the Christian churches and Jewish synagogues be rebuilt with government money, and this administration continues to be heavy-handed against them because they didn't want radical Islamists in charge.

□ 1800

In Libya, as moderate Muslims in the Middle East have told me in visits over there: None of us really liked Qadhafi, but he was helping you and helping us against terrorism and you helped al Qaeda-backed rebels take him out.

But for America's bombing, the radical Islamists would not have control of Libya, Algeria, or Tunisia today. Thank God for the Egyptians rising up and saying, as moderate Muslims, as secularists: We stand with the Jews and the Christians, and we don't want radical Islamists running our country.

I hope this country—our country's leadership, at least, under the President—will wake up. Stop hurting the freedom-loving Egyptians that don't want the radical Islamists you supported in Egypt back in charge of Egypt. Don't help ISIS in Syria. Don't help them in Iraq. And if he had just signed the Status of Forces Agreement that President Bush had all but had ready to sign, getting cute with that so it fell apart, then we wouldn't be having all these problems today in Iraq and Syria that we are.

He is getting horrible advice, and it is time the President took a hard look at who he really gets advice from, because the moderate Muslims in the world don't want radical Islam taking over and they don't, as they have told me privately, like the people that this President has advising him.

The economy is ready to take off, if this President will get out of the way, and people can make money and get back to where one job is enough for a person to make it and do well. And if

we cut down on the massive expenses ObamaCare is causing, we can get rid of that and get back to real health care reform. Because even if you save \$100, \$200 a month, that would get you a vacation that people have not gotten this year.

There is so much we can do for America if the government of this country, the people at the top of the government, will just finally realize the American people have more answers than we do, and then they will show us.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

U.S. ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PERRY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. CÁRDENAS) for 30 minutes.

Mr. CÁRDENAS. Mr. Speaker, today, I want to talk about the United States economy. I want to talk about the number one thing that politicians talk about when they ask you to support them when they are on the campaign trail, and that is that we want to put America to work.

I know what it is like to put America to work because I am very proud to say that, before I got elected to office, my full-time job was to put Americans to work. I owned a business, and there were dozens of families who depended on me as the leader of that business, as the owner of that business, to make sure that we were successful. So I had to do my job so that dozens of people could go to work and do their job.

Every year, millions of Americans go to the polls and hope and pray and think and expect that their elected people are going to focus on putting America to work. But unfortunately, ladies and gentlemen, the leadership of this House under Speaker JOHN BOEHNER has been delinquent in doing one simple thing, and that is to focus on bills that create jobs. In some cases, it is bills that move government out of the way to make sure that people can put people to work in private industry. In some cases, it is about changing laws that are broken and old and just don't work for today's economy, changing those laws to make sure that Americans can go to work.

Democrats have made jump-starting our economy a priority, and I believe in that priority. Since I have been elected to Congress, I have been fighting for that priority to try to get bills heard in our committees that will create jobs, that will move America forward, and that will move Americans who are hard-pressed and want to get off of the unemployment lines back into work. I have been trying to get them through committee and eventually to the floor of this House so we can have the debates and we can cast our votes for America. Unfortunately, those bills just languish, sitting somewhere in the corner, and don't see the light of day.

For example, the biggest bill to ever pass either the House or the United States Senate since this 113th Congress has come into session was a bill that was passed by the United States Senate with bipartisan support. There are 100 United States Senators, ladies and gentlemen, and 68—Democrats and Republicans—voted “aye,” voted “yes,” voted affirmatively for that bill. If this House would have taken up that bill, or H.R. 15, a bill that looks just like it, that would have boosted our economy.

Ladies and gentlemen, you hear people all the time right now today on the campaign trail saying, “Reelect me,” or, “Elect me,” and they are talking about the economy and talking about deficit reduction. That one bill was analyzed by a third party. It was not analyzed by the Democrats, not analyzed by the Republicans, not even analyzed by the Independents. It was analyzed by a third party whose job is just to call it like it is. That bill, if passed by Congress and put on the President's desk, would give us an opportunity to have a deficit reduction of at least \$900 billion. But that bill doesn't see the light of day—not in this House.

That bill has not been taken up in this House. Speaker JOHN BOEHNER has said over and over: I'm not going to take up that bill. I'm not going to take up that issue. I'm not going to support the American economy with that bill. I'm not going to do the right thing by America and give the economy of the United States of America the biggest boost we could ever see coming out of the actions of the United States Senate and this House of Congress.

It has been sitting here in this House in the corner collecting dust while too many Americans are having their unemployment run out, while too many Americans are losing their homes, while too many Americans are telling their children: I'm sorry, son, we can't afford to continue to send you to college. We don't have any money because we don't have a job.

The United States economy can do better, but unfortunately, it is because this Congress chooses not to do the right thing that the United States economy moves along slowly, picking up just a little bit. That is not good enough. That is not right.

What I am doing here at this moment tonight and the reason why I came to this floor, the reason why I asked the Speaker to give me some time to speak on an important issue—the economy of the United States of America—is because it tears me apart to know that the lack of leadership in this House and the lack of leadership of Speaker BOEHNER is crippling our economy.

We have \$900 billion of deficit reduction wrapped up in one bill, and that bill has sat in this House and has not heard a debate in any committee. It has not heard a debate on the floor of this House. The people that you elected have not had an opportunity. The 435 Members of the United States Congress have not had an opportunity to stake a

claim on whether or not they believe that we ought to put Americans to work, that we ought to get out of the way and fix a law that is broken, a law that does not work, a law that should have been changed a long time ago; but we can change it at any moment on any given day in this House, and this Speaker refuses to allow that to happen.

What is going on right now in the United States Congress is just like what happens in your home or sometimes in a workplace. Let's say you have a family and everybody in the family has been assigned their chores, their responsibilities. Let's say you have a workplace where everybody has their job duties and their titles.

In the United States Congress, we have our chores and we have our responsibilities. Our job is to pass laws to help America move forward and to make sure that all the different dynamics of the number one economy in the world can flourish. That is our job. But the United States Congress, this House, has refused to do its job.

What is going on is just like that example I gave you. Let's say in your home one member of your family chooses not to do their part. You know what happens? Something good eventually happens. Somebody in that house, somebody in that home, somebody in that workplace sees that that job is not getting done, even if it is not their primary responsibility, and they think of the bigger picture. They think of the whole family, the whole house, the whole home. That person in the workplace thinks of the whole body of workers there and says: Somebody ought to take that job and get it done, even though so-and-so isn't doing their part—and that is their job.

Congress is not doing its job. It is not passing this law. But you know what happens eventually? Somebody walks over there and does it themselves, even though it is not their primary responsibility. But we ought to be grateful that there are people like that in every community, in every household, in every business, in every work environment. But not in this House, not as long as JOHN BOEHNER, our Speaker, chooses not to allow us to have a debate, to do our job, to have a vote. Maybe it passes, maybe it fails, but our job as Members of Congress is to legislate, put ideas, good, bad, and otherwise, before the Members of this House and vote up or down, “yea” or “nay”, “yes” or “no,” to move America forward and let the votes fall where they may.

There is a bill that has been languishing in this House for close to a year and a half, and the bottom line is we have not taken up our duties and our responsibilities. As a result of that, in another branch of government there is that one person—not 435, not 100—that says: I want to move the economy of the United States of America forward. I want to fix a broken system. I want to see it fixed. I want Congress to