commit to them. But we should not be surprised by a benefit whose design was the result of ideology trumping practicality.

It is obvious that an enormous portion of the benefit needs fixing and that it will take a tremendous effort to make seniors have access to the affordable lifesaving drugs that they deserve.

Step one should be extending the May 15 sign-up deadline. Step two should be dropping the penalty for late sign-up. Mr. Speaker, I strongly encourage my colleagues to support such measures.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN SAVES SENIORS MONEY

(Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, Connecticut seniors are signing up for the new Medicare prescription drug benefit, and many are saving hundreds and thousands of dollars.

The CHOICES bus visited the senior citizens center in Plainville, Connecticut, and Thomas and Margaret Bernatchy spoke with a trained counselor. Mrs. Bernatchy takes many drugs, and it costs the couple $7,000 a year. After discussing their needs with the trained counselor, Mr. Bernatchy signed himself and his wife up, and they will save $5,000 a year.

Mrs. Anita Willequer who also lives in Plainville was attending exercise classes at the senior center and decided to pop in on the Medicare CHOICES counseling session. She spends only $55 a month on drugs, but she will save $500 a year. ''This is a tremendous savings,'' she said. ''I was glad I asked about it. I hope it helps a lot of people.''

With each passing day, more and more seniors are talking with Medicare-trained advisors, getting their questions answered, signing up for savings. Help your seniors sign up for savings.

TAX RELIEF RECONCILIATION PACKAGE

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

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, as the Congress begins to finalize this year's legislative agenda and draw this session to a close, I am very pleased to see this House continue to do the people's work right up to the end. I am especially pleased this House will soon vote to allow the American people to keep their money and not raise taxes. Clearly, the opponents of maintaining the tax status quo do not trust the taxpayers with their own money.

Mr. Speaker, let us review some statistics. The economy grew by 4.3 percent in the previous quarter, the 10th consecutive quarter in which the economy grew by more than 3 percent. Consumer confidence rose by 14 percent in the previous 3 months, and we have a 5 percent unemployment rate which is lower than the average unemployment rate for the past three decades. And to top it off, since May of 2003, 4.4 million jobs have been created.

Mr. Speaker, the results are in, and the American taxpayer has passed with flying colors. So let us keep this growth growing. Let us show that we trust the true engine of this economy, the American people.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to do the right thing and support the tax relief reconciliation package.

THERE IS A VICTORY PLAN

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

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, President Bush gave an important speech last week in which he clearly outlined a plan for victory in Iraq, organized around three tracks:

Political: isolate the terrorists, engage those outside the process and build stable, pluralistic national institutions that can represent all Iraqis.

Security: clear areas of enemy control, hold those areas with Iraqi forces, and build capacity of local institutions to deliver services and advance the rule of law.

Economic: restore neglected infrastructure, reform stifling Saddam-era regulations, and build government capacity and human capital to reach full economic potential.

Already we have seen progress in each of those areas, yet Democrats continue to argue that President Bush still has not laid out a plan. It is as if they cannot see the forest for the trees. They are so intent on not seeing a plan that when one is placed in front of them, they simply will not acknowledge it.

Mr. Speaker, Democrats need to realize that disagreeing with the plan does not mean there is not one.

EXTEND TAX RELIEF FOR AMERICANS

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, did you see the great economic news? Last month, November, 215,000 new jobs were created. Just another sign that the positive, productive policies of tax relief are working.

In the past 2½ years, 4.4 million new jobs, an unemployment rate of 5 percent, lower than the average for the 70s, the 80s and the 90s.

Look at the economic growth that has occurred over the last 10 quarters, more than 3 percent growth each quarter, 10 straight quarters. Mr. Speaker, this is very good news.

The American people expect us to do the responsible hard work that respects their hard work. I call on all Members of Congress to put aside politics and vote in favor of the extension of tax relief for all Americans and not to raise taxes at this pivotal time.

GALVANIZING A NATION

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

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, it was a Sunday morning on December 7, 1941, and the planes came down and Pearl Harbor entered the history of infamy in the United States of America. Days later, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt would use that term from this very podium in describing the holocaust of that day. But from the tragedy of Pearl Harbor came a galvanized Nation that rose as one man to confront imperial Japan and Nazi and Fascist Europe.

I was here on another morning such as that, another clear day when the planes came down and the holocaust of September 11, as December 7, galvanized a Nation. Let us learn from the Greatest Generation that saw the horror of our enemies at Pearl Harbor. Let us allow September 11 to galvanize our resolve in the war on terror. Complete the mission as our President has challenged our Nation to do.

NATIONAL CHRISTMAS TREE

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, last week an 80-foot spruce tree was delivered to the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol building. Originally billed as the Capitol Holiday Tree, this beautiful spruce has been officially changed back to its historical name, the Capitol Christmas Tree, by the Speaker of the House, in time for the lighting ceremony to be held this Thursday. Predictably, the Speaker's move was unwelcome to the adherents of political correctness who constantly demand ''mainstream policy'' from our leaders.

So what is the mainstream on this issue, Mr. Speaker? A poll conducted last week provides some revealing numbers. Eighty-one percent of those polled expressed opposition to religion being excluded from public life. Eighty-three percent think nativity scenes should be allowed on public property. Ninety-three percent think the phrase ''In God We Trust'' should remain on our currency.

We would do well to keep these numbers in mind the next time the left wing attempts to arbitrarily define the mainstream for everyone. And I applaud the Speaker for taking a commonsense stand in calling our Capitol Christmas Tree what it is.