

compete with that. We cannot even get international labor organization standards put into our free trade agreements which just say no child labor, no slave labor in these other countries. We cannot even get those into the agreements we sign.

We are not asking for everything. We are asking for basic human rights in the trade agreements that we sign.

When a lot of us talk about fair trade in this country, at least, at the minimum, have a social safety net that addresses unemployment benefits, that addresses health care insurance for people. How much anxiety would be relieved if you did lose your job if you knew you were going to have health care provided for you and your family.

Every time free trade agreements have come before this House and before this country, the commitment was always made that we had to invest in education. Meanwhile, in Ohio, the No Child Left Behind provisions are underfunded by \$1.5 billion, with a "B", a year. That is \$1.5 billion. So if we want to grab the last 25 percent of the kids and pull them across the finish line, which is what No Child Left Behind is supposed to do, and we are going to have all these Federal mandates, the Federal government must make a decision. Are we going to give tax cuts to the top 1 percent or are we going to invest that money in the No Child Left Behind so that every single child in this country will have an opportunity to compete on an already uneven playing field in the global economy?

Investments in research and development through the Veterans Administration are being cut. The facts are that we have told our kids that they must make investments in themselves and in their education through going to college, and yet we see the Pell Grant not keeping up with inflation and we see children not having the opportunity to live and work in a country where there is a reasonable wage and an opportunity for upward mobility.

We are trying to argue comparative advantage, a doctrine that was established in the early 1800s. We need to change our policy. I never thought that we would be asking for Newt Gingrich to come back and bring some reasonableness to this Congress.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CONYERS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FLAKE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

GASOLINE PRICE HIKES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, gasoline prices have hit an all-time high. The national average for gasoline is now \$1.77 per gallon, up 25 cents from the beginning of the year; and President Bush is doing nothing to alleviate the strain that this is taking on the American people, on American businesses and on the American economy.

Mr. Speaker, high gas prices impact all of us, consumers and businesses alike. High fuel costs translate into a loss in profits margins for the manufacturing and transportation sectors that force prices for products and services higher, hitting American consumers twice. Not only do Americans need to dole out more cash to fill their gas tanks with the little disposable income they have left, they are forced to pay higher prices for goods and services.

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For instance, Continental Airlines sought to impose a fuel surcharge for their services. And the real impact of all this is a slowdown in the economy with the potential for even more job loss. In fact, an estimate by Merrill Lynch shows that every penny increase in gasoline prices at the pump is equal to \$1 billion in lost consumer spending. That is nearly \$25 billion in lost spending since the beginning of the year.

Furthermore, Merrill Lynch estimates that while Federal tax refunds would total \$55 billion from February to May this year, a 30 percent increase from last year, and theoretically give the economy a nudge, higher pump prices will wipe out as much as half of the positive economic impact that these Federal refunds might have had.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out, too, that this is happening on the watch of an administration that said they would make energy policy a priority in the United States. Yet more than 3 years after President Bush first stepped in the White House, we have no national energy policy, and we have no national energy policy because the bill that the White House presented to Congress was filled with an extraordinary collection of energy industry giveaways, crafted by the members of Vice President CHENEY's secret energy task force, instead of meaningful policies that would increase fuel efficiency and the use of renewable and alternative energy sources.

Mr. Speaker, there are two things that President Bush must do immediately. First, he must hold off placing more oil in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve until prices come down. The SPR, or the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, is a power tool that the President can and should use in times of need, and right now consumers need relief. If President Bush reduced the amount of oil placed in the petroleum

reserve, we would have more on the market driving prices down for Americans now. The SPR can then be replenished when oil prices are lower.

Second, Mr. Speaker, President Bush needs to get on the phone with OPEC and demand increased oil production. Recent news indicates that OPEC has hinted at plans to lower production by 1 million barrels per day after April 1; and the administration's response to this from Secretary Abraham is that the U.S., and I quote, "will not beg OPEC for oil." That is a different tune than the one that candidate Bush sang during the 2000 election. Four years ago on the campaign trail, President Bush, in a swipe at President Clinton, said, "What I think the President ought to do is he ought to get on the phone with the OPEC cartel and say, we expect you to open your spigots and the President of the United States must jawbone OPEC members to lower the price." Mr. President, put your action where your mouth is and insist that OPEC increase production now to alleviate the strain these high gasoline prices are having on the American people and the American economy.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot afford to lose more jobs because of the President's inability to address this problem. He needs to address it now, and I think we should continue to take issue with it and bring it up on the floor until he does.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KLINE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. STRICKLAND addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

RESIGNATION AS MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following resignation as a member of the Committee on Agriculture:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, March 30, 2004.

Hon. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Effective March 30, 2004, I hereby resign from the Committee on Agriculture.

Sincerely,

KEN LUCAS,
Member of Congress.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignation is accepted. There was no objection.

PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. BAIRD) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address a matter that we would all