

productivity and job creation. We should be looking at ways to minimize the damaging effects of frivolous lawsuits, excessive regulation and taxation, and rising health care costs, just to name a few.

The critical part is that our job growth agenda has got to be a job-creation agenda. We need to recognize that we are on the right track and we can do even better.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE MONEY IS THERE FOR EXTENDING UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

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

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, we are going to be leaving Washington, D.C. this afternoon and going back to our home districts, and it saddens me that we are leaving Washington without extending the unemployment benefits that are so desperately needed by so many unemployed Americans.

Just in Ohio alone, since George W. Bush became President of our country, we have lost 236,000 jobs, and 170,000 of those jobs have been high-wage jobs with good benefits. Across the Nation, some 3 million jobs have been lost under the President's watch, making him the first President since Herbert Hoover to actually have a net loss of jobs during his tenure as President. That makes it all the more troubling to me that with so much job loss in our country and so many unemployed workers in my State of Ohio, that we would leave Washington, D.C. for this extended vacation without extending unemployment benefits to our unemployed constituents.

The fact is that in Ohio alone, already, 31,300 workers have exhausted their benefits; and between now and June, this will be 2,200 workers per week who will have exhausted their unemployment benefits.

In my region of eastern Ohio in the Steubenville area, 380 workers have already exhausted their benefits; and by the end of June, that number will swell to 700 workers.

Mr. Speaker, these statistics are not merely numbers; they represent workers. They represent the heads of households. They represent parents who need to provide for themselves and their children, to be able to contribute to their communities and their churches.

That is what we are facing in Ohio. It just is amazing to me that in light of these circumstances, the President's Treasury Secretary, Mr. John Snow,

came to Ohio last week and he verbally defended the outsourcing, the sending of American jobs to other countries, indicating that it strengthens our economy to do so. How can Treasury Secretary Snow or President Bush come to Ohio and look unemployed people in the eye and tell them that they care about them when they deny them these needed resources?

The money is there, Mr. Speaker. What I am suggesting and calling for will not result in an increase in taxes. There are multiple billions of dollars in the unemployment fund, money that has been placed there by workers and employees for just such a time as this. Yet it seems to me that perhaps out of an insensitivity to what is really happening, and unawareness of the tragedy of unemployment, or maybe a hardness of heart, this House and this administration will not support the extension of these benefits. I assume it is because if we extended the benefits it would be an admission that we have not solved the problem of joblessness in this country. Maybe we do not want to add to the accounting that would increase the amount of the deficit. But I want to tell my colleagues, the leadership of this House and the President of the United States have no hesitancy in increasing the deficit if it is necessary in order to give tax breaks to the richest people in this country.

Think of this: here we are leaving Washington, D.C. today, going home and knowing that there are thousands and thousands of unemployed workers who are, on a weekly basis, exhausting their benefits, and who, through no fault of their own, they have lost their jobs.

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But through the resources of this government we can help them. We could lessen the pain that they feel. We could make it possible for them to continue to provide the needed resources for their families. And, yet, we are turning our back on them in their hour of need.

I hope that when President Bush comes to Ohio for his next visit the constituents in Ohio will ask him, Mr. President, why were you unwilling to support an extension of unemployment benefits to those who are out of work?

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

(Mr. DEFAZIO 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 Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DAVIS of Illinois 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 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 New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

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

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to follow my fine colleague, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND), who I think touched on some very important points that we need to address in this Congress and we should not be leaving.

Many of us to go back to our districts, some of us to go on Easter vacation, before we address this issue of unemployment benefits; and I think this issue illustrates for the country exactly how removed the United States Congress actually is from the problems that we are dealing with in middle America.

It is easy for politicians to mouth words that somehow we are supposed to address the problems that we have in this country. But the American people are beginning to realize that the rhetoric that has been coming from the Nation's Capitol, the rhetoric that has been coming from this administration, has not been addressing the issues that face average working families in the State of Ohio. The unemployment rate actually crept up to 5.7 percent.

Do we want jobs to be created in this country? Absolutely. You will never hear me, or I think any other Member of this body, somehow downplay job growth as if it is a bad thing. Because we want the American people to go back to work.

But there is so much that needs to be done with this economy. Let us look for a second at the issue of the minimum wage. I want to talk about a couple of other issues, but for now we want to talk about the minimum wage.

During most of the 1960s and 1970s, working at the minimum wage kept a family of three out of poverty. Today, that same family is 24 percent below the poverty level.

The purchasing power of the current \$5.15 per hour minimum wage is well below that of the 1960s and 1970s level. From its peak in 1968, the purchasing power of the minimum wage has declined over 36 percent.

If you are wealthy in the United States of America, you are doing pretty well, and you get all the benefits