

Banca rotta, the bench is corrupt, the bench is broken.

We are a Nation of laws, but we are also a Nation that legislates on a foundation of religious and spiritual values.

□ 1645

Nothing in Christianity or Judaism or Islam supports the concept of usury against the defenseless, but that is exactly what this corrupt, broken bench does: It pits women and children against credit card companies. Corporate lawyers will get their money regardless of whether women and children get their dinner. Shame on the credit card companies for demanding this, and shame on the Republican majority for caving in. Republicans are enslaving the American people to credit card companies.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FORTENBERRY). The Chair will remind all persons in the gallery that they are here as guests of the House and that any manifestation of approval or disapproval of proceedings or other audible conversation is in violation of the rules of the House.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

AMERICA NEEDS COMPREHENSIVE ENERGY POLICY

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is April 15, an important day. It is tax day. Today, millions of Americans are in the process of filing their taxes. When all is said and done, many will get a refund from Uncle Sam. Hopefully, these refunds will not be needed to pay to fill up their gas tank.

At every town hall meeting I have held, the price of gasoline has been a significant issue. Last weekend when I was at home in my district, I saw gas costing \$2.15 and \$2.24 and even higher per gallon. The prices do not seem to be coming down any time soon.

If we had a comprehensive energy plan in place, we might not have seen these massive price increases. The time to act is now.

What are the facts? Well, since 2001, the average price of gasoline increased 86 percent, from \$1.23 to \$2.29 a gallon. U.S. imports of oil over that period of time have increased by more than 10 percent, and the price of a barrel of oil

has more than doubled from just over \$23 to over \$50 a barrel today.

Many remember the early 1970s when we sat in lines to get our gasoline, and those lines often stretched for blocks and blocks. That gave us a lot of time to think, and most of us vowed that our Nation should never be dependent on foreign oil again.

Today, however, the sad truth is we are actually more dependent on foreign oil than we were then. So, as tax day arrives, let us be certain that we adopt an energy policy so comprehensive that future tax refunds will do more than just get spent on a tank of gas.

HONORING JOSIE GRAY BAIN

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

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the life of Josie Gray Bain, a brilliant woman who was a dedicated wife, mother, and pioneer educator, who I had the distinct honor to work with closely when I served on the Los Angeles School Board.

Josie Gray Bain was born in Atlanta, Georgia, where she attended elementary and high school. Shortly after graduation from high school, she met and married Reverend John C. Bain of Los Angeles. In the fall of 1930, Josie Bain relocated to Spring Hill, Tennessee, where she and her husband began their first ministerial appointment. Their son, John David, was born soon thereafter. Both Josie and her husband enrolled at Drake University, where Josie received her B.S. degree with honors and continued to do graduate work there.

In 1942, Josie Bain moved with her husband to Los Angeles, California. She completed her graduate studies at California State College in Los Angeles, Immaculate Heart College, and the University of Southern California.

In 1948, she began her career in education with the Los Angeles Unified School District as an elementary schoolteacher at Marianna Avenue Elementary School. After teaching several years, she was promoted to positions of ever-increasing responsibility. Josie ended her brilliant career as Associate Superintendent of Instruction, the first African American in the history of the Los Angeles Unified School District to be appointed to the position.

Josie Bain was an active member of several professional and civic organizations, including Delta Kappa Gamma, Education Sorority; Delta Sigma Theta, Education Sorority; National Council of Negro Women; the Urban League; United Methodist Women; and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. She founded and served as president of the Interchange For Community Action, which provided scholarships for many disadvantaged minorities for more than two decades.

Josie Bain devoted her life to her family, God, community, and her

church. She lived her life with style, grace, integrity, and vitality. Her dedication to helping children was recognized by all those whom she touched, and her accomplishments were evidenced by numerous awards and honors bestowed upon her throughout her life.

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

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

REAUTHORIZE AMTRAK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, today we introduced a bipartisan Amtrak reauthorization bill that will truly serve America's traveling public. I want to thank the gentleman from Alaska (Chairman YOUNG), the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE), and the ranking member, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR), for joining me in this effort. This is truly a bipartisan effort and shows the strong support Amtrak has within the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the Congress.

The current funding issues concerning Amtrak brings up a fundamental question of where this Nation stands on public transportation. We have an opportunity to improve a system that serves our need for passenger rail service, or we can just let it fall apart and leave this country's travelers and businesses with absolutely no alternative form of public transportation.

Without the funding Amtrak needs to keep operational, we will soon see people that rely on Amtrak to get to work each day waiting for a train that is not coming. We continue to subsidize highways and aviation, but when it comes to passenger rail service we refuse to provide the money Amtrak needs to survive.

This issue is bigger than just transportation. This is about safety and national security. Not only should we be giving Amtrak the money it needs to continue to provide service, we should be providing security money to upgrade their tracks and improve safety and security measures in the entire rail system.

Once again, we see the Bush administration paying for its failed policy by cutting funds to public service and jeopardizing more American jobs. This administration sees nothing wrong with taking money from the hard-working Amtrak employees who work day and night to provide top-quality service to their passengers. These folks are trying to make a living for their families, and they do not deserve such

shabby treatment from this administration.

We spend \$1 billion a week in Iraq, \$4 billion a month, but this administration zeros out funding for Amtrak. Just one week's investment in Iraq would significantly improve passenger rail for the entire country for an entire year.

I just want someone to explain to the American public why investing in transportation in Iraq is so much more important than investing in passenger rail service right here in the U.S.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for this administration to step up to the plate and make a decision about Amtrak based on what is in the best interest for the traveling public, not what is best for the right ring or the Republican Party or the European counters over at OMB.

Today in America, we have 50 million people without health care. We have the highest trade deficit in the history of this country. We have a \$477 billion Federal deficit. We have a \$375 billion shortfall in transportation funding, and we still do not know what happened to the weapons of mass destruction or who at the White House outed one of the CIA agents. Yet this President's top priority is bankrupting Amtrak. I do not understand that.

I represent central Florida, which depends on tourists for its economic development; and we need people to be able to get to our State to enjoy it. Ever since September 11, more and more people are turning from the airlines to Amtrak, and they deserve safe and dependable services.

This is just one example of Amtrak's impact on my State. Amtrak runs four long-distance trains from Florida, employs 990 residents with wages totaling over \$43 million, and purchased over \$13 million in goods and services last year alone, and they are doing the same thing in every State they run in.

Some people think the solution to the problem is to privatize the system. If we privatize, we will see the same thing we saw when we deregulated the airline industry.

Shortly after 9/11, I was in New York when the plane leaving JFK Airport crashed immediately after takeoff. I, along with many of my colleagues in both the House and Senate, took Amtrak back to Washington. I realized once again just how important Amtrak is to the American people and how important it is for this Nation to have more than one form of transportation.

I encourage everyone that uses Amtrak to get to work or to travel to call their Congressman or Senator and let them know how important Amtrak is to them. This is not about fiscal policy. This is about providing a safe and reliable public transportation system that the citizens of this Nation need and deserve.

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

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

ENERGY POLICY DESPERATELY NEEDED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I heard a colleague just a few moments ago refer to tomorrow being the day that is known as the filing day for our taxes. Some might call it a rainy day in April. The gentleman is so right. It is the day that so many Americans are filing their returns and are hoping to pay for the governance of this Nation. Many Americans in this time frame are facing some very difficult times.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to put before this body a challenge that I think is enormously important. What do you say to Americans who are filing their tax forms and who are facing \$2 plus and growing price per gallon on gas? This is an indistinguishable amount, meaning you can be a multi-billionaire or a person who is simply trying to make ends meet, keeping the doors open, paying the rent, providing for four or five members of their family, working in a blue collar or hourly job, and in order to get to a job across town, across county, or into the next State, we are asking Americans to pay \$2 plus per gallon for gas.

Internationally, gasoline is quite high. The United States has always had the opportunity to experience a better quality of life. This is a hardship on Americans. And as the committee of jurisdiction has marked up energy legislation, I frankly believe it is not soon enough and it will not move soon enough. I think it is important for the President of the United States to announce an energy relief policy that deals specifically with the high price of gas for those who are now suffering under that burden.

I do not want to leave industry out. As I have traveled through the airports, I am delighted to see that the numbers have gone up after 9/11. But, frankly, representing Houston's Intercontinental Airport and the fourth largest city in the Nation, realizing the traveling public has many needs to travel by airplane, the cost of jet fuel is killing our airline industry. In fact, my hometown airline, their employees have taken an actual cut in salary so the airline can survive. But as they have done that, the jet fuel prices continue to go up and up and up.

□ 1700

Any legislation that we pass next week or the following week will not address that crisis, so I call upon the administration to acknowledge this as an economic crisis and establish some immediate relief, whether or not it is

going into those petroleum reserves on a temporary basis, a 60-day basis, to bring some relief because there is going to be a point when those airlines that equate to a sizable proportion of our GNP are going to collapse under the burden of jet fuel cost; and there will be a time when whole communities, urban areas and rural areas, will have a population of employees who on an hourly basis are working and cannot afford to get to work.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about and to add to the discussion what I think was an unfortunate legislative initiative that was passed today. We all would hope to run away from bankruptcy. That is not the direction that the American people desire to go. I find the American people innovative, hardworking, desirous of a better quality of life, desirous of giving their children a better quality of life.

And so I am offended by a bankruptcy bill that suggests that we represent a bunch of ne'er-do-wells and those who are running away from their legitimate debts. That is what we did today. Frankly, we passed a bankruptcy bill, Mr. Speaker, that puts in place a provision that clearly is not needed. We have a bankruptcy code and a series of bankruptcy judges and each and every day they make a decision when a frivolous litigant comes through the door and looks in all the raging color, this is certainly a person who is just simply trying to avoid paying their debts, has the resources, and that person, if you will, is dismissed or their case is not allowed to proceed in the bankruptcy court.

Now, in the backdrop of a number of corporate filings of bankruptcy, my own constituent, Enron, that filed bankruptcy and put 4,000 people out of work, some of whom lost their lives because of the tragedy, when we allow all of these major corporations to file bankruptcy, now we are going to stand in the door of the courthouse and tell hardworking Americans and middle-class Americans, if you don't pass a litmus test, you get back out there and fall under the crunch and the concrete of your debts. If you have a medical emergency, if there is death in the family, if you have lost your job or if you happen to be active duty Reservists whose families have lost the income of that breadwinner, who now are in Iraq and Afghanistan not for 6 months but for 1 year or 2 years and some who are forced to re-enlist again because of the shortage of personnel, these individuals now will have to pass a means test in order to be able to file bankruptcy because they are burdened by the responsibilities that they cannot pay.

Mr. Speaker, we voted on a bankruptcy bill, and we defeated the motion to recommend that would help these Reservists. It is a shame on us and a shame on this House. Mr. President, I beg of you not to sign this bankruptcy bill until we take care of the active duty Reservists and National Guard. That is the least we can do for those who are offering their lives.