you-go plan is not going to pay. It is only going to go. We must deal with the shortage of workers.

So I have good conservative friends of mine discussing immigration, telling me, you should lock the border down. I say, I am sorry, I look at this curve. When I talk about immigration, I look at this curve because I have self-interests. I want someone to have a job that pays for me.

Now, if we do not have enough workers, we have two options, and they are simply two options. We can say it in any way, and we can be mad or we can be contentious about it, but we have two options if we do not have enough workers. Number one, we bring in enough workers to fill the jobs, that is called immigration; or, number two, if we do not bring workers in, we will send jobs to where the workers are, because employers must have employees. As we consider now this relationship of the population, if we begin to say we do not want immigration, that we will send the jobs to where the workers are, this $11 trillion begins to get smaller, this relationship begins to get bigger, and we move to stagnation, and we move to stagnation for the next, through 2042 and beyond.

We have a relationship that is developing, and this relationship, once it is established, once our economic model is set, it is going to be very difficult to turn it around. So prudence would suggest that we consider deeply if there is a problem: if there is a problem in Social Security, if there is a problem in our budget, if foreign countries are really beginning to peck away at our job base. And we have to deal with those.

Now, there are many things that create the economic climate of the country. These are the economic relationships, but the economic climate must be discussed also.

We hear frequently on the floor of this House about the outsourcing of jobs. Why would jobs go to another country? And generally, the accusation is made that it is simply because Republicans want it to happen. I think that is thin. I think that it is lacking in coherence. The real truth is that jobs leave because countries are providing better climates. I will tell my colleagues that when companies can pay 12 percent tax versus 36 percent that they pay here, over time they will migrate. We have other costs. We have energy costs. It was said that we were simply supporting Big Oil when we passed the energy bill. Now, my own perception is that right now, natural gas is selling for about $7 in the United States. It is selling for 70 cents in Africa, 50 cents in Russia, or just vice versa.

Now, we have been shipping chemical jobs over to Africa and Russia because chemicals use a lot of natural gas. Companies cannot continue making chemicals here with natural gas that is 10 times the cost in other nations. So the chemical council came to me in January of 2003 and said, at that time the price of natural gas was $4.50, and they said, we cannot sustain this. Please, please, we have to have an energy policy, get renewables, start opening up plants, whatever we can do, because we are beginning to ship good $100,000-a-year jobs overseas.

Now, many of our friends on the other side of the aisle are concerned about the environment, and well they should. But they are concerned to the point that they will not consider the things that need to be done that both keep the environment clean and affect the cost of energy. If we do not begin to come together as both parties and represent our common viewpoints at a table to find the solutions, we are going to wrestle each other to a standstill, which we have been doing for years, while Africa and the Soviet Union are quietly pulling our $100,000-a-year jobs away from us.

Now, it is not by design. Neither party, neither Republicans or Democrats, would want those jobs to go away; but, sometimes, we are unaware of the consequences of our daily actions. The cost of taxes is one thing that will drive jobs away. The cost of energy is another thing that will drive jobs away. The cost of lawsuits is another factor that will drive jobs away.

Earlier in this presentation I mentioned that we had discussed downstairs in this Capitol with about 70 or 80 foreign CEOs, CEOs from German companies, English, French, they began to tell us the factors that will drive them out of this country. Simply stated, they actually had a chart showing just dots on a chart showing the factors as they polled their own companies about, those companies that were in the room, which things were the highest importance.

They will tell us that lawsuits, energy, taxes, and, quite frankly, another one was education, many of the workers coming through the doors; as you recall on the 5 percent unemployment, the workers that show up are not prepared. If we do not begin to deal with education so that indeed no child is left behind, we can wrestle over the concept all we want, but if we do not cure it, these factors, taxes that are not competitive, energy that is not competitive, lawsuits that are 100 times greater, the chance of lawsuits in this Nation, than others nations, and a poor education so that the kids going into work are not able to do complex tasks. Those are the things that will absolutely take away the future of our country.

So my appeal is constantly that we as Republicans and we as Democrats, we can continue to represent the viewpoints that we hold dear, but we must begin to work together. I do not care if it is quietly in rooms behind closed doors to wrestle with those things; but we must begin to deal with those elements that would drive companies out of this Nation, because as companies leave this Nation, our $11 trillion economy becomes smaller, our relationship between government spending and the economy becomes larger, and it moves us towards stagnation.

For myself, I will do everything I can to protect the environment, to create jobs, to create an environment in this country that will offer growth so that my children and my grandchildren will have the same opportunities that my wife and I had: to grow up fairly poor, to buy our own business, to pay it off, to run for Congress, and from a family without much political capital, serve in a Nation like this with a democracy like this and a Republic like this. For me, that is the hope of America, that is the hope for future generations, and my own perspective is that it is the hope for the world.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. INGLIS of South Carolina). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, this is again another edition of the 30-something Hour where the gentleman from Florida and I will take an opportunity to talk to the 30-somethings, not only of Congress, but of the country, and try to articulate the best we can the issues that are facing the country today and how those issues will affect future generations. I think being in the 30-something Group and being young or being a student in this country, Leader PELOSI has asked us to do our best to reach out to young voters across the country and not only talk about issues like education, budget deficits, the importance of the Pell grant, the importance of No Child Left Behind, but a lot of other issues.

Some previous speakers tonight have mentioned a couple of different things on economic policy in the United States of America and why corporations, multinational corporations find it easy to leave the United States, and it is because of the litigation, it is because of the environment, it is because of the overregulation, it is because of the high taxes. But if you look closely at why businesses are leaving the United States of America, you will see that they are going to countries that have no health care program, they do not have any environmental laws, they do not have any human rights laws; and the previous speaker suggested that maybe they go to Africa because they have cheaper natural gas costs, or go to Russia.

Russia is a country that is moving away from democracy, moving back to its Communist roots of the past several decades, tightening control of the media. Russia is not exactly a great place to do business. And the wars that are going on in Africa, left and right, and the different countries on the continent, not exactly a good place to do business.

What we ask corporations and multinational corporations to do in the

United States is to meet your obligation to the country. Corporate profits are the highest they have been in the history of the country, and corporate taxes are the lowest they have been in the history of the country. And if you want to talk about education, we have a No Child Left Behind program that is completely underfunded. It is underfunded in Ohio by over $1 billion a year. Fifty percent of the kids who live in Youngstown City School District, in my district, live in poverty; and 85 percent of the students that go to Youngstown city schools qualify for a free and reduced lunch.

The corporations, the multinational corporations have gotten every single thing they have wanted from this Congress. Ninety-three percent of the tax credits and tax breaks out of the energy bill go to subsidize oil and gas companies. The pharmaceutical companies get buyouts, billions of dollars through the Medicare program with no price controls, with no ability to reimport the drugs, without giving the Secretary of Health and Human Services the ability to negotiate down drug prices, and you want us to feel sorry for the pharmaceutical industries, the credit card companies, one of the most profitable businesses in the country, push through a bankruptcy bill that screws consumers to the wall. Fifty percent of the people that file bankruptcy file because of medical reasons, either their own or someone in their family; and you tell me if you have a sick child and there is only one way to pay for it, you do not pull out the credit card and zip it through. You most certainly do.

The days of defending the multinational corporations that have no loyalties to this country need to be over. But that is consistently what happens here, because they raise the money, it goes into the coffers, and the majority party runs elections and spends a lot of money and buys a lot of TV ads.

Talk about the environment. These businesses are moving, like when they cross the border into Mexico, the maquilladoras that they go to, former American companies that move to Mexico, now leaving Mexico and going to China; the rivers in Mexico are some of the most polluted rivers in the world. Inhumane. You can tell where the people work in Mexico because the little shacks that they assemble have the name of the corporation that they work for. That is where they live. We need to start exporting our values in this country, not just our jobs.

□ 2100

And I think that the multinational corporations and the big boys who are here are able to fly their corporate jets into Reagan National Airport and walk around the halls of Congress and spread around a lot of money have gotten everything they want.

And it is the small business people in my district who own the mold shops, the machine shops, the small little shops that are in the supply chain who do not have the wherewithal to move to China. Who is sticking up for them?

The number one problem in this country is health care. Health care costs are going up 10, 15 percent a year. 45 million people are uninsured, a health care system that is disastrous, and we haven't even touched it in this Congress. Haven't even touched it.

And I think it is a shame that we are able to get up here, and some Members of this body are able to get up here and talk about how the poor corporations are not getting a fair break. 85 percent of the kids that get free and reduced lunch in Youngstown, they are not getting a fair break, and in Cleveland and in Akron, and in all other areas of the country, in the urban cores people are not getting a fair break.

And until this Congress starts paying attention, you want to compete with the Chinese, you want to compete with the Indians, you better make sure our citizens are healthy and educated, and make sure that we protect a lot of the social safety net that we have in place today, including Social Security.

And until we recognize that it is programs like Social Security that have helped lift people out of poverty, or that 5.2 million children live in families that receive Social Security, and that the Social Security benefits in 2002 lifted 1 million children under the age of 18 out of poverty. And now we are talking about getting rid of this system.

Now, we are here to talk about Social Security, and the long-term implications of what the President has proposed. Before we get into it, I wanted to make a point that I think is extremely relevant to the debate on Social Security, and something that I hear. And I have had three or four Social Security town hall meetings in my district, and have a couple more coming up. I hear from average people who just come and sit, and afterwards we open it up to question and answers.

And inevitably at every meeting, we will have a couple of people who either, from the microphone, or come up to me after, say the way to stop, or the way to fix Social Security is to create more jobs in the United States and have more people working at a higher wage to pay into the Social Security system.

Now, I do not know if long term that fixes the whole problem. But I think it makes a tremendous point. And I have spoken here many times at this podium about what is going on with the Chinese. And the Chinese at this point are cleaning our clocks. And I have small business people in my district who are literally months away from folding up the tent because they are not able to compete anymore with the Chinese.

And so the first point is, we need to grow the economy. We need to create jobs. We need to increase tax revenues so we can balance our budget. And what is happening? 2004 we had over a $10 billion trade deficit with China, just with China alone. The actual trade deficit is much higher. But, China is flooding our markets with their exports, and we are having very much trouble trying to get our products into their markets.

And what becomes scary, as we begin to run these high deficits, not only trade deficits, but budget deficits is that the money we are borrowing, last year close to $450 billion, that was offset by a Social Security surplus, around $450 billion deficit last year, 41 percent of the debt is coming from foreign-owned countries, or is owned by foreign countries, 41 percent.

So as we continue to run these deficits, we are borrowing money from the Japanese, from the Chinese, from all kinds of different countries who are getting more and more leverage over the United States, whether it is on domestic policy or foreign policy, and so it becomes very, very important, as we talk about Social Security, to make sure that we do not put ourselves in a position to owe other countries a lot of money.

Now, we are going to go over here briefly exactly what President Bush's privatization plan is and what it does and why it is dangerous to the American people, and then talk a little bit about what the President has said over the past week as he began to put some meat on the bones of his proposal.

If we privatize the Social Security system, we are going to have to borrow a lot of money, $1.4 trillion in borrowing the first 10 years of the President's plan. So, in addition to the $7.7 trillion, $7.976 trillion debt that we have today, we are going to have go out and borrow another $1.4 trillion over the next 10 years to meet the demands of a privatized Social Security system.

This massive borrowing will endanger our economy, and, as I already stated, increase our indebtedness to foreign countries. Why in a time when we are competing against the Chinese in a way we have never had to face this kind of stiff competition, why would we want to go out and put ourselves in a position of economic weakness and go out and have to borrow more money from the Chinese in order to fund our annual deficits?

That is bad economic policy. It is bad politics. It is bad geopolicy for the United States of America, because it weakens us when we are trying to deal in the international arena, and it raises taxes on our kids and on our grandkids.

Now, we just found out last week in my family that my brother and his lovely wife are going to have a little baby boy. Now, this little baby boy, when it is born in October, will owe $27,000 the minute he is born. Owe $27,000 to the government because of the debt that we have, the $7.97 trillion debt. And then if we tell my brother's little son that we are also going to go out, and we are going to borrow another $1.4 trillion, with a T, over the next 10 years, then all we are telling

that newborn baby is, we are going to increase the burden and put it on you.

See, we are going to borrow it today, and we are going to leave it for you to fix one day. And that means increased taxes for the next generation. And we are playing today and borrowing all of this money like the bill, like the bills never come due. And that is what is irresponsible. And that is what we want to point out.

And I think that is one of the main reasons why the country in some polls even show the President's approval rating at 32 percent. That is why the country is not gravitating towards this program no matter how many cities and how many States the President wants to go to. And I think it becomes evident.

Now, here is the chart which is really hard to believe. And I think these numbers have changed slightly. But, this is a ticking clock. This is always moving, and it is moving rather quickly. The national debt today is 7 trillion, $796 billion. $7.97 trillion is what the United States owes other countries.

So if you are born today, you owe $26,349 the minute you are born. If you are sitting at home on the couch watching C–SPAN or Everyone Loves Raymond or some other show, you owe $26,349 to the Government.

And so add this up to a baby who is born today, factor it out 18 years from now. If we continue running at the clip we are running at $500 billion deficits every year, what is this little baby going to owe when he or she is 18 or 22? And then you add on top of that a family who has to not only pay this back, but also borrow money to go to college, and tuition rates in Ohio, and I know in Florida, have doubled over the past several years, over the past 5 years for sure.

If we continue going at that clip, what is that little child going to owe when they are 22 and they graduate college? They are going to owe this, multiple that out 18 years. They are going to owe the money they borrow for college, multiply that out with what the cost of living is going to be 18 years from now. What are we doing to our kids? And that is what this whole debate is about.

This debate is about a program that has been successful, and it is about a program that we need to maintain, and we need to project out into the future and make sure that we guarantee the benefits of the recipients of the program.

Now, the President last week did a press conference and did several events, my good friend, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK). Also I see my good friend, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is here as well, and the President put a little meat on the bones last week. He took this plan that was a skeleton, and last week he put some meat on the bones. And we had based most of our comments up to this point, not only in the Democratic and Republican caucus, but in the 30-something Working Group, we have made sure that we talked about what the President's blueprint was.

But, last week, the President confirmed for us exactly what we had talked about, that a privatized Social Security plan would mean benefit cuts for middle class Americans. And so the President, by outlining his plan last week gave us some figures. And we did some math.

He gave us his projections, and we did the math. If the President gets his way, someone earning $37,000 would have a 28 percent benefit cut. That means they would lose one-quarter of their Social Security. One-quarter. And you are not making a lot, you are only making $37,000.

Someone earning $45,000 would have a 42 percent benefit cut. 58,000, you would get a 42 percent benefit cut. And, finally, someone earning $90,000 would have a 49 percent benefit cut. So you made $90,000, you would lose half.

Mr. Speaker, I now yield to the gentleman from Ohio. Thank you for joining us. I would like to make perfectly clear here that you are not in the 30-something group age range.

Mr. STRICKLAND. What this discussion needs is some maturity. I was just sitting here listening to you, and what you say is absolutely true. But I just will point out that under the President's plan, if you make more than $20,000 a year, you can expect a significant reduction in your benefits. Think of that.

Now, they can call these people higher income if they want to, but today $20,000 is not a huge salary. So the statistics you gave for the $37,000 income and the $58,000 income and the $90,000 income brackets were accurate, but you can make as little as $21,000 and you are going to experience a significant reduction in benefits under the President's plan.

□ 2115

Mr. Speaker, I yield back to my young friend from Ohio.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) gracing us with his presence and his maturity and his distinguished nature.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) who is also mature, distinguished, and of very good nature.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. The gentleman used that distinguished thing quite loosely.

''Everyone Loves Ryan,'' is that your favorite show? I just want to ask. The gentleman used it as an example. Does the gentleman watch it?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I do. Does the gentleman watch it?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I watch it every now and then. I am too busy reading legislation and trying to do the things that I need to do.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. What is the gentleman's favorite show?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. ESPN.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. SportsCenter.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I like to watch the ''Home Shopping Network.'' I like watching things my kids watch. I like Sponge Bob, and I like quite a few other funny movies.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Does the gentleman watch any of the old shows, the ''Archie Bunker'' reruns and ''Cheers''?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I watch ''Archie Bunker.''

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. ''Three's Company.''

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I am a night owl so I stay up late so I see a lot of shows in syndication. It is good stuff. I like ''VH–1 Soul.''

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Does the gentleman ever watch ''Married With Children''? It has some very funny reruns.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. That is a very funny show.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Ed O'Neill who plays Al Bundy is from Youngstown, Ohio.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Get out of here. He is from Youngstown? Is there a road named in Youngstown after him?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. No, we should do that.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. That would be nice.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I will work on that right after we get this Social Security thing going. We will have Ed O'Neill Boulevard in Youngstown. We will do it.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Why not. He is probably in the fight to protect Social Security.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. He is definitely in the fight to protect Social Security.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. A lot of hard-working Al Bundy-like guys that are out there.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. If Al Bundy is not against privatization, who would be?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. What a great American.

As the gentleman knows, we like to put a little humor into this.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We think it is funny anyway.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. We think it is funny, maybe some others may think it is funny. They say if you do not like what you are doing and you cannot talk with a little humor now and then, you will worry about things you do not need to worry about 24 hours a day.

I can say it was great hearing the gentleman talk about the deficit, hearing the gentleman talk about the Social Security privatization plan or blueprint or philosophy that the President says he has. But I can tell you this, that I am very concerned. We know in the past whenever we have approached a national program that is a part of the fiber of our country, that the administration and the majority side, there is always a smokescreen there.

The numbers are not exactly what they say they are. So since the President last Thursday night talked a little bit about his blueprint and his philosophy, I do not know if I can take that

for being the accurate plan that the Social Security, that the President has for his Social Security plan. And I know there are some people on the Hill that are running around sharing some of those numbers and saying how we are going to save Social Security. And I can tell you there is more to saving Social Security than privatization. And private accounts and privatization of Social Security is the backbone of the President's philosophy or plan.

I just want to remind the Members and I also want to remind Americans that if they can just remember, and I said this last week and I said it a week before last and I will say it again this week because I think it is just that important, we have started talking about the deficit, the highest deficit in the history of the Republic.

Never before in the history of this country have we had a deficit as high as it is now. Never before have we been indebted to foreign nations, because they are buying our debt more than at any other time in the history of our country.

Being a Member of the 109th Congress, I always tell my constituents it is an honor serving them here in Washington, D.C. And the reason why it is an honor is because I have the ability to come to this floor because the Democratic leader designated this hour for the 30-something Working Group and other Members that wish to come to the floor to share with Members of this Congress and the American people the importance of focus and paying attention and making sure that they hold us accountable for what we do.

Now, this whole privatization issue, I can state that I am very concerned. And what I have read in the paper and what I am seeing of polling numbers, Americans are concerned. There is no place in this Social Security, some may call it reform, some may call it saving, some may say that it is a crisis. And I am glad that American people, they know and also Members of this House know the truth that Social Security is not in a crisis.

A crisis is if Social Security were going to dissolve or not be able to provide 100 percent benefits in the next 5 years. A crisis would be even if it was 10 years from now. A crisis would be even if it is 15 years from now. When we are talking about 50 or 47 years from now that the President's Social Security plan will not be able to provide the benefits that Americans deserve and they paid into Social Security, that is not a crisis.

Now, there will be some discussion, I believe in the 109th Congress, on Social Security. I think it is important that we talk about fact, not fiction. If folks want to see fiction, there are a number of cable stations that they can go to or Members can go to.

We just finished talking about what we do in our leisure time when we are ready to be entertained, but not here in the U.S. Congress. We are not here for entertainment purposes. We are here to handle the business of the country to make sure that the Republic is strong and to make sure that the American people get their taxpayer dollars' worth of representation.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. When the gentleman is talking about a program like Social Security, when we are talking about the most productive program, the most efficient program that the government runs and a proposal comes along in which the President has the wherewithal to defend it, the Congress has the ability because of the party structure to pass it, then you can be sure there is going to be a big fight. And you know what, the Founding Fathers would want a big fight about this.

You fight about big things. You fight about big ideas. And I do not think there is anything wrong, and I think we have a constitutional responsibility to have a big fight.

Article 1, section 1, the people govern, the Congress has a say. And the rules of this House and especially the rules of the Senate protect the views of the minority. So we have an obligation to stand up here at 9:23 at night and try to do our part in communicating our message. And we respect the President, respect the office, respect the other side of the aisle. I have many friends over there. Good friends. But we are allowed to disagree on major issues. And I hope we can get back to what happened in 1983.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Let us talk about what we disagree on. We disagree on the privatization of Social Security. There is nothing wrong with that.

We disagree, Democrats, in our leadership, all the way down to the freshmen Member that just got here a couple of months ago. We disagree on increasing the deficit. We disagree on that. We disagree with the majority side. Democrats, we disagree with the majority side in this House on foreign nations acquiring more of our debt. We disagree on that.

We disagree on Americans losing benefits under the flag of reforming Social Security. We disagree on that.

People ask constantly, what is the difference between Democrats and Republicans? I am not one to generalize. And we said last week and I will say again this week, I commend my brave Members on the other side of the aisle, some Republicans, that are saying that I am not with you, Mr. President. I am not with you, majority side, on this whole philosophy of privatization of Social Security, and I commend them for that. I am glad that some Members went to go see the Wizard and picked up some courage and said that I am not going to do it.

That is leadership. Leadership is saying not just because we can do it, we should. You do not do things just because you can. There are things that I can do, but I use restraint because it is the right thing to do on behalf of the greater good.

So I think it is important that people understand there are 48 million Americans that are receiving Social Security; 33 million of them are retirees. And there are a number of people in this debate, that is the reason why last week and the week before that and the week before that and the week before that that we continue to come to the floor to talk about Social Security.

Someone that is 17 right now, this is their issue. Someone that is 12 that is receiving survivor benefits because their parents have passed on or father or mother has passed on, this is their issue. Unfortunately, they cannot vote because if they could it would be another person in the fight that would be able to let this Congress know what they agree with and what they disagree with.

For the individual that is down in my State of Florida that is retired, this is their issue because I go back to the Medicare prescription drug debate. There was a lot of discussion, there was a lot of politics going on, I must say, a lot of discussion about prescription drugs. And from Florida let me say that that is a big issue.

I can say this also, that we came to this floor given information from the majority side and from the administration on the true costs of what they may call prescription drugs and not allowing us to have negotiating power with the pharmaceutical companies to be able to bring prices down for prescription drugs.

Could the gentleman do that again?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That was off camera.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. The gentleman was listening. I like that.

I think it is important that people understand that what is being said loosely at this particular time you cannot take to the bank as truth. Case in point: during the prescription drug debate we were told, all of us, every Member of Congress was told that it would be a $350 billion program. And then we moved down the line, and slowly it moved up to $400 billion. And then after the debate, after we passed the plan, we find out someone made the wrong calculation. The gentleman talked about math earlier. They goofed up. It is $530 billion.

This is real money. And then 3 months ago we find out that it is going to be $724 billion. What is the true number? Is $5 trillion the true number of the President's privatization plan, the majority side's privatization plan? Or is it $9 trillion, $10 trillion, $12 trillion?

You want to talk about saying that we are going to do things on a credit card, we are doing it in the worst way. I want to make sure Americans and Members of this House understand that we are not surplus spending here. This is deficit spending in the worst way.

I am on the Select Committee on Homeland Security, the Committee on Armed Services. We share in that committee; we will have a committee markup. We start working on bringing a bill to the floor for the defense of this

country to support our men and women in uniform that are abroad fighting for those that this Congress has given them the ability to do. We are saying that we are fighting on behalf of defense and making our country strong, economically strong. Meanwhile, we are spending on a credit card in the worst way and then finding new ways to be able to put more on that credit card.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I think that is a great point. We are putting everything on the credit card right now. And in the President's proposal, how does taking money out of Social Security and putting it into the market fix the Social Security system and make it more solvent than it is? As we said many times here, the magic number is $5 trillion over the next 20 years.

□ 2130

Five trillion dollars will have to be borrowed by the United States over the next 20 years. How does that make our country stronger, if we are out borrowing?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, we are saying $5 trillion, but do we know if that is the real number?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That may not be the real number. The gentleman is exactly right. That may not be the real number, and why is the President more worried about a deficit in 2041 of maybe $300 billion, which the Social Security trust fund will be running at a deficit, instead of a $600 billion deficit today? I do not understand why he and this administration is so overly concerned with kind of the long-range deficit that can be fixed with tinkering with this program instead of worrying about what is happening every single day, as the heart and soul gets stolen out of the United States economy, with the loss of manufacturing, the loss of business, the jobs placement, the jobs that are leaving, are $10- to $12,000 less without health care benefits.

Counties and cities are going bankrupt all over the country. They cannot afford to put on police and fire levies. I think two-thirds of the school property tax levies for schools in Ohio the last election cycle failed. I mean, this is eroding the heart and soul of the country day by day by day. This slow drip keeps happening, and it seems like instead of worrying about 2041 when we are to plug a little leak, we need to address the geyser that is happening right before us.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I would be concerned if we were by ourselves in the objection to privatization to the President's philosophy and some Members of the majority side. I would be very concerned, but I am not as concerned as I would be if we were wrong.

There is times, folks say, well, you know, you have got to take it on the chin for the team. Let me tell you something. Social Security is no time to take it on the chin for the team because we have real people who are being affected by this, and I am glad the American Baptist Churches U.S.A. is on our side saying no to privatization, on the side of the Members that are willing to watch out for the American people that are counting on Social Security.

When I started to talk about the fact that there is a 17-year old and 12-year old and someone that is 65 or 70 or 50 or 45 or 42 or 38, this is their issue, and the reason why it is their issue is that we as Americans believe in making sure that when we give our word that we keep it. There is nothing wrong with that. There is nothing wrong with keeping your word. There is nothing wrong with saying that this is wrong and we want to continue to head in the right direction.

I am glad that we are not by ourselves, and I am glad that the Alliance for Retired Americans are out there doing the things that they are doing and having town hall meetings. I am glad that we have Members on the Committee on Ways and Means that are willing to go to the end on behalf of Social Security and making sure that Americans get what they paid into.

This is not something that someone just kind of walked around and said, well, you know, I am not going to work, I am not going to do anything, but I look forward to collecting Social Security. These are people that work every day. These are individuals that are looking forward to Social Security being there for security when they need it. It is not a pension plan. This is not something that someone works for 123 Construction Company for 30 years and at the end hopefully the pension fund will be there for them and they will be able to retire on that, because even now, more than ever, we are seeing companies that are not holding up their end of the deal for their workers and their retirees. That is what Social Security is there for; you will not be left alone.

Social Security has the back of so many Americans, Democrat, Republican, Independent, Green Party, you name it, no party. It is there for you, and we want to make sure that individuals who are looking to prosper on the back of American workers are not able to do that.

Let me tell you what's a guaranteed deal, $955 billion in Wall Street, that is guaranteed. The folks that are running around here talking about privatization, that are not Members of the Congress, are individuals that are looking to prosper when we get those public dollars on Wall Street.

I want to mention something else because I hear some folks running around here talking about, well, there are Members of Congress who do not want you to have what they have. Well, this is interesting.

We have health care. I want my constituents to have health care. I want Americans to have health care. We have 25 million Americans working without health care, 46 million families without health care because those workers do not have health care. We have a health care crisis. This is a crisis. Someone wants to talk about crisis, that is a crisis. Social Security not being what we want it to be in 50 years is not necessarily a crisis, and I think it is important that Members and the American people understand that we have to deal with these issues in the order that they come in.

We have Americans right now that do not have health care. I was just at a meeting. This is the Uninsured Americans Awareness Week throughout the Nation. This is a nonprofit group that is trying to come up with a bipartisan way to deal with the uninsured. It is a crisis, and I am glad that they are out there in the fight. I am glad that they are making sure that people understand.

Going back to what I was saying, the issue about what Members of Congress have that Americans do not have, you hear Members of the majority side, you hear the President say, well, the Members of Congress and Federal employees have a thrift savings plan. Yes, we do. We have a thrift savings plan. A number of corporations that are out there and a number of businesses that are out there offer their employees some level of a pension plan or a thrift savings plan, but guess what? We also have Social Security. We have Social Security. Even Members of Congress have Social Security, but what is being offered now is is we want to privatize your accounts. It is not Social Security under privatization. It is Social Security under the way we see it now. So when folks start talking about, well, we want to give you what Members of Congress have, guess what? We have the backdrop of Social Security, and we want to make sure that every American has Social Security and they can count on it.

We are where we are right now because there are good people that are out there not only in the organized labor community, but there are people out there in the pulpits that have members of their congregation or synagogue or what have you that are under the poverty line if it was not for Social Security. So when we start talking about privatization, I want to make sure that the Members understand, privatization means that we are going to gamble on your security, your security in your retirement.

It has been already stated by the administration that benefits will be cut in the light of saving Social Security because they say, on the majority side, that it is in a crisis, which it is not. This is not fiction; it is fact. I know that the American people are aware of it.

I want to thank my friends over at the Campaign for American's Future. I want to thank the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities for the work that they do and sharing this work with Americans, young and old. I want to thank Rock the Vote that has been out there, and their representatives come

to the Hill to speak before committees, to share their concern for the privatization of Social Security. They are flatly against the privatization of Social Security.

People ask, well, why is the Children Defense Fund involved in this battle of no privatization of Social Security? They are involved because they know that young people that are already having a hard way to go right now in this country as we speak, and I mean throughout this country, not just in my district but in districts throughout this country, congressional districts in the States and in neighborhoods and in communities, they are having a hard enough time. The last thing we need to do since we are watching out for the future Americans when they grow up and become the leaders in this country, and the workers in this country, is to hand them a $26,000 share of the deficit because we are watching out for them, to take $5 trillion and say that we are working on your behalf to make sure that you are secured in the future or we are going to increase the deficit by $5 trillion.

That is the number we are using today because, as I mentioned, the prescription drug plan that passed this House in the 108th Congress and the other body and was signed by the President, we were told it would be $350 billion to later find out it will be $727 billion. This is real money. This is something that we are passing on to future generations, and if we are going to watch out for future generations, we have to make sure that we are doing the right thing when we are in control.

I just want to say that I feel good about the fact that the 30 Something Working Group, as we come together when we are not on the floor, that this is the number one issue. Yes, there are other issues, but Social Security is the number one issue facing Americans right now. The privatization of Social Security is something that we have to continue to fight on their behalf, those individuals, those 4 million Americans that are now in the Social Security program, those Americans that receive $955 a month on average, those 33 million Americans that are retired and those young people that are on survivor benefits, their parents have passed on or a parent has passed on who was taking care of them, brought them up. They are now receiving their survivor benefits. It is up to us and it is up to brave Members in this House to fight for them to make sure that we cannot say, oh, we had a bad week on Wall Street so, guess what, we have to cut some of their benefits. We have to fight for them.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, that is a great segue into a couple of the e-mails that we received last week that I think put a human face on what you were just speaking about.

We got one from Denise Harmon who was from Evanston, Wyoming. She says: ''Hello, I'm 40, so I'm one year over the age group you are looking at.'' But, again, we are here talking about a lot of other issues and not just the people who are in their 30s.

''I have some IRA's, a mutual fund, a retirement plan with stocks, bonds, and annuities started through my previous employment, a 401(k) type plan with my employer, and a pension as a State employee in Wyoming.''

Denise goes on to say, ''I am very uncomfortable with the idea of using private accounts for Social Security. My mutual fund lost half of its value and at the rate it is earning, will take another 5 to 8 years to get to the rate of my deposit.''

So, just as you said, she lost sounds like thousands of dollars here and it is going to take another 5 to 8 years to get to the rate of her deposit. So, if she was planning on retiring in say 2002 and her 401(k) or mutual fund was cut in half, then she would not be able to retire if that was Social Security.

It sounds like she has some other things going on here, but what we are saying with the privatization is that your Social Security would be your mutual fund and it would be subject to the whims of the market. It would no longer be a guaranteed benefit, and when the gentleman from New York was here, he explained it great. Here is the stock market up and down, up and down, up and down, but here is the Social Security program, slowly growing, slowly paying out benefits to meet with the wage index so you maintain your buying power, and this is exactly what Denise is talking about.

She goes on to say: ''Everyone else I know, from my retired father to my peers to my kids who have mutual funds in their names for college funds have been burned by the private financial sector.''

And this is something that really hits home: ''My grandfather lost his railroad pension in the 1970s (he worked for Rock Island Lines) when Rock Island went out of business. He relied on Social Security and Medicare. He required nursing home care due to dementia and died with nothing, in fact, he probably cost the government because the company he gave his life to defaulted on him.

''Social Security is meant to be the no-risk retirement backup system. You shouldn't allow people to gamble with that money.''

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And do not forget to remind Americans that Social Security also pays for the disabled and for children whose parents die early.

I want to thank Denise for writing in. That was great.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I wanted to mention a few other things I did not mention earlier. This whole $26,300 and change of the deficit that we are talking about.

Mr. RYAN, if you can put that board back up, because I think that is very, very important. Thank you, Mr. RYAN, I appreciate that. This $26,349 and change is something that we need to pay very close attention to.

We did some math, and this is good math. The average American that graduates, be it with a postgraduate degree or a 4-year degree or what have you, has on average a $20,000 debt of either student loans, because of the lack of Pell grant dollars or what have you. You can buy a new car with $26,000. You can put a downpayment on a home with $26,000 and still have some left over. You could buy groceries for five families for a year with $26,000. That is a lot of money. You could start a small business with your new education with $26,000.

Was this deficit delivered by the minority side? No. This deficit was delivered by the majority side. And I think it is important that Americans understand that. So if folks want to know what we stand for on this side of the aisle, I think we have made the point clear. I think Americans understand and the Members of this House understand that if we are going to approach the Social Security issue, that it has to be bipartisan, like in 1983 with Tip O'Neill and Ronald Reagan. That bipartisan bill passed this House and that is the reason why Social Security is solvent for the next 50 years.

Mr. RYAN, it was a pleasure being here with you once again. I look forward to the future and getting back to talking about this issue and, hopefully, taking some action.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. It has been a beautiful experience; I enjoyed it thoroughly. I want to give everyone at home some e-mails.

We also received another e-mail from a Karan Szatko from Overland Park, Kansas, and she wanted to thank us for talking about and to our generation and the issues that really matter. She is hoping to get more involved in government and getting her voice heard and doing what she can to help this great Nation we all love.

So, hopefully, these 30-somethings, it sounds like they are having some effect on some, and I just want to give everyone the e-mail. You can e-mail us through Leader PELOSI's office: 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov or you can get on our Web site at Democraticleader.house.gov/30something.

So send us an e-mail, drop us a line if you have any stories that you can relate to us that we may be able to share here on how this may affect your family.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, I have another Web site real quickly, because we like to verify, verify, verify where people can go on and Members can go on. If you want to learn more about what the President's plan does to the middle class, you can go on www.cbpp.org. That is the Center For Budget and Policy Priorities. That is cbpp.org.