

has pointed out with his presentation on peak oil this is a serious matter that demands our collective attention and we have got to deal with it in a responsible way.

So I thank the gentleman from Maryland (Dr. BARTLETT) for his support, for his leadership in dealing with a very important issue for all Americans, energy.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. The gentleman mentioned a collision course with catastrophe. I just wanted to make a quick quote from the article in the paper that the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA) was mentioning.

"The least-bad scenario is a hard landing, global recession worse than the 1930s," says Kenneth Deffeyes, a Princeton University professor emeritus of geosciences."

He goes on to say that he made that prediction because "the worst case borrows from the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse." That is better than war, famine, pestilence, and death.

It is interesting that the gentleman's "collision course with catastrophe" is mirrored by what he said.

I want to yield the remainder of my time to a colleague who has a fascinating Energy 101. We will only get partway through it today and we will give him a chance for a full explanation of this.

Mr. EHLERS. I thank the gentleman for yielding and I thank him for organizing this session.

I want to go very quickly through one item, and as we said we will continue later. I am a physicist. As a physicist, energy is tangible to me but to most people energy is intangible. You cannot touch it, see it, feel it, smell it or taste it. In other words, with our senses we cannot detect it. The only tangible aspect of energy for most people is the price at the gas pump and the utility bill at the end of the month.

But I have a wish and I wish it were true but my wish would be that energy would be purple. If energy would be purple it would be tangible. We could see it. And if you drive up to your house in the middle of the winter and saw the purple oozing through the walls and coming out in rivulets around the doors and windows where they are not sealed properly, you would say, oh, that is horrible. I am wasting all that energy. It is costing me money. So we would make sure that we would get the house sealed up.

Or if we were driving down the road and a Toyota Prius such as is owned by the gentleman from Maryland (Dr. BARTLETT) or Honda Insight or some other hybrid vehicle went past us, there would be just a little bit of purple around the outside of it because it is very energy efficient. But if an SUV roared by there would be a huge cloud of purple. You could hardly see it. If people saw that they would say, why, that is foolish. Why would I want an SUV that is using all that energy? We are wasting energy. We are wasting

money. Why do I not get a hybrid vehicle?

My point is simply because energy is intangible, it is very difficult for people to understand the problem and to deal with it. But if we can believe the experts who tell us about energy, it would be just as good if we saw it because energy is purple.

□ 2100

I am wearing a purple tie for a reason. First of all, I like it. But, secondly, it keeps reminding me if energy were purple, we would certainly change our energy use habits and we would do a much better job of conserving, as the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT) observed earlier about conservation. That is very important.

And I have to tell everyone in this Chamber and all of my colleagues, there is no faster, cheaper way to increase our oil supply than to conserve what we use. Because we can get the use of more energy at lower cost by doing that than by any oil exploration scheme and refinery-building scheme or anything else you wish to do. It costs less to conserve energy than it does to produce more. That is a very important principle to remember.

So I hope that everyone in this Nation and certainly everyone in this Congress recognizes the importance of energy efficiency. Conservation is just one part of energy efficiency, but we can certainly use our energy more efficiently than we have in the past. We can get more bang for the buck because we have the technological capability to do that today.

And it is absolutely essential to do that because, as you heard, we are being held hostage by other countries. Our energy costs are being used against us in various ways, and we simply have to start conserving energy, using it more efficiently, imagining that it is purple and keep trying to reduce the amount of purple that we produce by our use of energy. Then we have a chance of balancing our import-export balance, reducing the deficit of payments, and having a better economy at home because our money will be staying here rather than going abroad.

### 30—SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, once again it is an honor to come to the floor. We would like to thank the Democratic leader as well as the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), our Democratic whip, for allowing us to have this hour here to talk about the issues that are facing Americans and the issues that we feel should be brought to the forefront which are not being addressed.

Tonight I am joined by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) and also by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN). I am glad to be joined by them once again because, as we have said before, we are going to come to the floor night after night to try to push the American agenda forward as best we can.

As my colleagues know, being in the minority here in the House of Representatives does not bring about the kind of power one needs to be able to respond to the needs of Americans. But I can say that being in the minority and pointing out these issues of how we could do the job better than the majority side has done, I think is not only educational for the Members of this House but also should bring about some kind of change so that we can have better representation here in Washington, DC, especially representation in terms of legislation that passes from this floor and out of this Congress and on to the White House.

We have been out for a week on the Columbus Day break, and I know the gentleman and his constituents have been getting lots of rain in New Jersey, so my prayers go out to your constituents and many others. Being from Florida, as you know we receive our fair share of good and bad weather. Mainly good, and so we want folks to come to Florida; but we know the Garden State has been hammered, along with other States around it, for quite a few days now. So I hope all is well with those counties that are trying to survive some of the flood waters.

I think it is important to begin where we left off almost a week ago, Mr. Speaker, and to address the issue of having an independent commission for the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita and making sure that not only are those Americans not forgotten but that we not forget the mistakes that took place during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina so that they never happen again. Never again in the United States.

I think it is important for us to also realize, Mr. Speaker, that it was not just a storm. It was the aftermath of the storm and the lack of governance on the front end, making sure that our levee systems were where they should have been and the issues as relates to those buffer islands in the gulf coast area, especially in Louisiana. Those issues should have been addressed by the Federal Government in making sure that we have the kind of buffer to protect one of our greatest U.S. cities.

As my colleagues may know, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS) and also the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) on our side of the aisle have introduced an independent commission bill that we have been working to get to the floor for some time now. I think that not only the Members but the American people need to realize that the power of this House, if we were in the majority, and this is not a partisan issue, but if we were in

the majority, because there is a bill that is there that almost every Member, if not every Member from the Democratic Caucus, has signed on to this bill calling for a 9/11-like commission to deal with the issues that are facing the Katrina victims and to be able to analyze in an independent way outside of this process, outside of the partisanship, to make sure we do what we did for the 9/11 victims, to give them their fair share of representation and insight; making sure that they are not dragged through the mud, becoming victims once again.

Mr. Speaker, as we open our discussions here tonight, I also wanted to make sure that we deal with the issue of corruption and cronyism. When we left here over a week ago, we were dealing with that issue; and I wanted to make sure that we talk about that a little tonight with my colleagues.

I also brought some articles with me that I think Members should be made aware of, and that we share with them the importance of governance and oversight. So there are a number of issues that we are going to talk about, and I just wanted to make some opening comments regarding those items, but I will be happy to yield to my colleagues at any time.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome our newest 30-something member joining us from New Jersey this evening; but before I get into it, I want to make an announcement. Since we left here last week, we had last week off, and since we left here, there has been an addition to the Ryan family. My brother had a baby last Friday night on his birthday. Nicholas John Ryan. So I want to welcome him into the world officially, and say hello to his first two friends, Zack and Molly Leonard, who were all over to the house the other day, and I fed the baby for the first time the other day. So here I had the bottle, and I fed him. It was great.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, A, congratulations; and, B, because you were feeding the baby for the first time yesterday, I hope that you knew what to do when you were feeding the baby.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Well, see, I took a week and I watched. I was very timid. I did not want to make any mistakes, so I watched for a while. I watched my brother. I was being a little hesitant with the bottle, and my brother is like, jam it in there, you are not going to hurt the kid. So you pick up and gain a little confidence, and then I burped the kid. It was great. Bingo.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. There you go. Great uncle.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And the godfather. I am also going to be the godfather.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Two-fer.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Yes. So this is a lot of pressure. You think being a Member of Congress is a lot of pressure, try being the godfather to the first new baby in the family.

So that for me has kind of changed my perspective, and it makes all of the

stuff we talk about here that much more important because you begin to see the timetable, the effect our decisions have over the long term.

I know a couple weeks ago when we left, we were talking about this administration, this Congress putting people in charge of key positions, in charge of key processes that need to happen here, whether it was in FEMA, Medicare, or regardless of what it is. There has been, over the past 5 to 10 years in this body and now in the executive branch, a host of cronyistic appointments to key positions. There have been people put in key positions, like FEMA, that have absolutely no experience whatsoever. All we are saying in this Chamber from the Democratic side is give us a chance to run this place. Give us an opportunity to be able to handle the levers of government and allow us to lead.

That is the opportunity that we are asking the American people for, my good friends, because our colleagues who have had the levers of government over the past, since 1994 in the House and since 2000 in the White House and in the Senate, have not been able to govern. They just have not been able to do it.

You do not have to look very far. Ask yourself sitting at home, what is going on here? I mean, we have higher energy costs, we have more people in poverty, we have tuition costs that have doubled, we have our FEMA administration that has been devastated financially. We have put cronies in key governmental positions. We are leaking information about CIA agents. I mean, what good is going on right now? Somebody please help me.

We are bogged down in a war that is costing us \$1.5 billion a week. I repeat, \$1.5 billion a week. We are getting our clock cleaned by China. Delphi, the largest auto supplier in the country, filed for bankruptcy. They are asking their workers to take 60 percent pay cuts. I have over 5,000 workers in my district, in Warren, Ohio. What positive is happening today due to the Republican leadership in the House, Republican leadership in the Senate, and the Republican leadership in the White House? I cannot seem to find anything.

I think this country deserves a lot better, and I think we need to start talking about that, my good friends. This country deserves better. After September 11, this President had more political capital than any President probably since FDR after Pearl Harbor, and he asked the American people to go shopping. That is the best leadership you can come up with in the United States of America? We deserve a little better than that, I think.

He did not start an alternative energy policy, not to fix the health care system that is a mess, not to take care of the millions and millions of young kids that live in poverty, not fund No Child Left Behind. What are we doing? The biggest leadership move is to ask the country to go shopping? What is

that? That is terrible. That is terrible leadership.

We have given this President the opportunity time and time and time again to lead, and he has not done it. He has not done it. And now the whole Delphi situation, which I am a little too intimate with because of the workers in my district. And General Motors. I have a General Motors plant in my district. Believe me, I understand why the corporations are doing what they are doing. The rising costs of health care are crippling the American businessperson. Crippling the corporation and the small businessperson.

So now they are trying to squeeze blood out of a turnip in the form of asking middle-class citizens in the United States of America to get less health care or to pay for more health care, whether they are in a union or not in a union, instead of addressing the key issue, which is that the insurance lobby and the health care lobby and the pharmaceutical lobby which has a stranglehold around the United States Congress.

Let us be honest. How about a little straight talk from the House floor tonight? Check it out. When you are passing the Medicare prescription drug bill, there are four lobbyists for every one Member of Congress; and I know I did not have a lobbyist, I did not have one, let alone four, so somebody had eight. Now, imagine that. When we get this health care issue under control, that will release a lot of potential that can get freed up, investments that could be made back in the United States of America.

□ 2115

For example, and I am sorry because we have been dealing with this for the last week, with the Delphi situation, this money that this corporation saves, and we all want to save Delphi. We want it to be a solvent company and we want them to maintain the work that they have in Ohio. Of course we do. The way the system is set up is any savings that they get, they are going to invest that money into China. That is what they are going to do. So the whole system is screwed up to where you are forcing corporations to invest into these other countries.

Here we have an opportunity with this independent commission to oversee a problem with the government through FEMA, the problems that FEMA had, to oversee it in an independent manner like the 9/11 Commission, and the Republican leadership put the kibosh on it. They put together a bust-out committee that is 11 Republicans, 9 Democrats, that is going to totally, totally, whitewash this thing. Get out the Brillo pads because they do not want the truth to come out. The Democrats will not have any subpoena power. Get a Republican Governor, a Democratic former Member of Congress, put together an independent commission and let us try to fix this problem. Let us try to fix this in a way that we are putting partisanship aside.

Mr. Speaker, next we will hear from the newest member of the 30-Somethings, and we charge him two sets of dues because he is almost 30-Something twice.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I do not know how many times I am going to have to endure these comments about my age.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I never say anything about the gentleman's age.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, that is because the gentleman is almost his age. Tell the American people how old you are.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I am 39.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. See, he graduates out of the 30-somethings next year. I am going to be a one-man show.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, since the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is at the younger end, he wants to talk more about the older people that are involved and the wiser people. And I would say to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE), we will not prolong it any more.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I want you to know that one way to deal with the age problem is to hang out with the younger people so I feel younger.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. You are welcome here every time we are here, my friend.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, let me follow up on what the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) said because he certainly was right. We had a week when we were back in our districts doing things locally. I was thinking when I was listening to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) about three events that I attended in the last 48 hours in my district or nearby which point to this whole idea of what is good and what is the Republican leadership and what is President Bush doing because all I hear are complaints about his policies.

For example, on Sunday, I went to a senior complex for a group of seniors that were meeting in Lakewood, New Jersey, which is a community just outside my district. It used to be in my district until redistricting a few years ago. What I heard was how expensive it is for seniors to buy their prescription drugs, and how they did not feel that the President's new program, which goes into effect in January, was going to help them in any way.

One gentleman in particular, I remember, was one of these guys who was essentially forced into early retirement and promised a fairly generous health care plan that included prescription drugs. What he has found since he retired is that every year the cost goes up and the whole agreement, if you will, that was initially set out has essentially made it so he really cannot afford to buy the prescription drugs even though he has the coverage under a plan for his early retirement.

The other seniors were talking how the Federal Government should negotiate price reductions like they do for the VA or the Department of Defense.

My answer was that is what the Democrats wanted to do. The reason it did not become law was because the Republicans opposed it. I remember in the Committee on Energy and Commerce I had an amendment that would have required negotiated prices by the Medicare Administrator, and it was defeated on a party line vote.

The bottom line is Republicans are so aligned with lobbyists and the cronyism they do not want to do anything that is going to be helpful to the average person. This prescription drug bill is a perfect example.

In addition, all the seniors were saying as of October 1, all these different private drug plans are being promoted on television and they have no idea what they are all about. I said be very, very careful. Do not sign up for these things until you really look at the details because they may not be helpful to you.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to highlight that fact. This totally puts into perspective what happens down here under their leadership.

We have a prescription drug bill that we spent \$700-some billion over the next 10 years on, but we were told it was \$400 billion. So that is another issue, to start a prescription drug Medicare program, and we are not doing anything to control the costs, whether it is reimportation from Canada or to allow the Secretary of Health and Human Services to buy in bulk.

There would be every Medicare beneficiary behind that proposal. And you can say Merck, you want to negotiate this, we want 30 to 40 percent chopped off, and they would do it because they want the contract. We would not have to create a new bureaucracy. If people think the old Democrat Party wants to create a new bureaucracy, they are wrong. This is a progressive idea of giving the Administrator already in place the power. It is a progressive idea that makes sense, but you can only do it if you are not tied to the pharmaceutical lobby like our friends on the other side of the aisle.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I have ceased even referring to this program as Medicare because as far as I am concerned there is nothing Medicare about it. You said we need to show to the American people how we would do things differently because we want a chance to be in the majority and to run the country.

Here we had a clear contrast. The fact of the matter is every Democrat, or maybe one or two that did not vote for a substitute, that basically would have been just like we do now with Medicare Part B, how seniors pay for their doctor bills, and that would have been under Medicare as a regular government program. They would have paid a \$25 premium per month, and had their choice of whatever prescription drugs they wanted. They would not have to go out privately and shop around. They would have had a \$100 deductible and 80 percent of the cost paid

for by the Federal Government, 20 percent copay. We already have it for Part B, and the Republicans rejected that to a person. There is clear contrast. This is the kind of thing we would do if we were in the majority and in charge.

I want to use another example. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) talked about the rain and the storms in New Jersey. There was a senior complex in my district that was near a brook where a number of homes were completely destroyed and people had to be moved out. I went there this morning with the Army Corps of Engineers because the Corps has a project that would correct the situation that we would like to do. It would cost about \$8 million to do it. What I am hearing from the Corps, we would like to do it but we have to see if we have the money.

What happened with those levees in New Orleans is no different from what is happening around the country. We are not funding these infrastructure needs, whether flood control or whatever it happens to be. The reason, and I am going to go back to another forum, right after I met with the Corps this morning and talked about this flood control project which has been delayed for a number of years now, I met with students at Rutgers, a State university in my district, and we talked about the Iraq war.

I started out talking about an exit strategy and what needed to be done. A lot of the students were talking about the cost of the war, not only cost in terms of the lives and the wounded, but also the cost of the actual dollars we were spending and the fact that because we were spending so much money on the Iraq war, we were not able to pay for a lot of domestic needs, whether it be student financial aid. They were stressing that, of course. But I was thinking about my flood control project which would have avoided all of the damage and all of the people who had to move out if it had been in place.

The bottom line is we are spending all of this money on the Iraq war. The President does not have an exit strategy. He keeps talking about how everything is going to get better, and the cost is not only lives and the wounded, but also in terms of the dollars we are not spending here domestically, and we are not investing in the future to remain competitive with China and the other countries competing with us.

People get this. I am not making this up. This is within the last 48 hours at three different forums or opportunities I had to meet with my constituents, and this is what they are saying. They are not happy. They realize there are alternatives. The bottom line is some of those alternatives are easy, some are hard. Democrats are saying we have alternatives, whether it is prescription drugs or any of the other topics.

Many of us voted against all these tax breaks that the President gave because we knew it would put us into debt and we would not have money to

pay for a lot of the domestic programs, and most of the money went to the wealthy rather than the average person.

One more thing, and that is when we were here last time, the week before being back in our districts, I think it was the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) talking about the energy bill because the next day we voted on the Republican energy bill. She pointed out there was no benefit from this bill. It would not do anything to reduce gas prices or reduce our dependence on foreign oil. All of the things that people would like us to do, the Republicans were not doing.

What it was doing, two things she mentioned, one was it was going to allow for offshore drilling off the coast of Florida and New Jersey, all these sensitive areas. The second thing the gentlewoman mentioned was it was going to weaken the Clean Air Act. Lo and behold, the interesting thing was the next day the Republicans took those provisions out of their energy bill because there was such a hue and cry. When they finally passed the energy bill, they barely were able to pass it. We had to wait an hour for them to get the votes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Ninety minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. The bottom line is that this Republican majority is starting to fall apart because their policies are not good for the American people. Even some of the Republicans are starting to realize it and are not willing to vote for some of the junk bills that come to this floor with the Republican leadership.

I just mention that because I think there is hope here. I left last Friday thinking maybe now because of yourselves getting on the floor, maybe because Democrats are speaking out and talking about why these Republican initiatives are not helpful, maybe people are starting to realize it. Maybe some Republicans are starting to realize it. That is why I admire what you are doing because I think it is making a difference.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) has been resilient in pushing us to get up to the floor once or twice a week. I just saw a poll last week that had 60 percent of the independent voters in the country are sick and tired of what has been going on in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Wagner from General Motors said D.C. better do something about health care. We are not doing anything. What we are doing seems like we are doing something, but the energy bill is not really doing anything.

The gentleman mentioned the \$1.5 billion a week that we are spending in Iraq. I want to share one thing. This is a great article today in the Washington Post. The first line says it feels like the 1990s minus the good parts, all of the scandals that were going on, but the economy, energy costs and everything is bad.

There was a proposal made, and talking about dealing with the Chinese, we

need to offer, and that is what we are doing as Democrats, we just need to convince the American people that we are offering alternatives and do have ideas, whether it is prescription drugs or alternative energy.

I want to share a proposal from the National Academies and it is a combination of a variety of different things to get our math scores up. Our math scores in 8th grade, we ranked 15th internationally and in the 9th grade we ranked 24th internationally. We are not going to stimulate the economy if we do not have engineers and math and science majors, and the 30-Something Group is calling for a million new engineers and scientists over the next 10 years because we believe that is going to be the greatest stimulus.

But let me share the proposal from the National Academies to spend money on math prizes for high schoolers, pay raises for math teachers and to boost Federal research funding by 10 percent annually for 7 years. That would cost \$10 billion a year. That is it. We are spending \$1.5 billion a week in Iraq. The American people judge, \$10 billion a year on increased Federal funding for research and development and targeted investments to increase math and science scores in the United States of America among K-12 school kids. That is what the Democrats want to do, versus \$1.5 billion a week in Iraq, versus hundreds of thousands and millions and trillions of dollars over the next 10 years in tax cuts for people who make more than \$600,000 a year.

□ 2130

Pick what they want. Democrats, increased funding for Pell grants to lower tuition costs. Republicans, cut taxes for the top 1 percent. Trillions.

Democrats, fully fund No Child Left Behind, make sure every kid who is eligible for more funding, for afterschool tutoring, summer school, before school; Democrats are for full funding of that. Republicans, no. We have to give our tax cuts to our buddies.

And that is the difference. Time and time again and over the course of the next year, we are just going to hammer the differences between the two parties.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) brought up some interesting points; and I can tell him, as a parent myself, this issue of No Child Left Behind, we would talk to our Republican leadership colleagues and they would say, well, that was a bipartisan bill and over on the opposite side, in the Senate, folks were having press conferences and bill-signing ceremonies and everything.

But we believed that we were going to see full funding of No Child Left Behind and that this Congress would go down in history as the education Congress, and we are not even close to fulfilling our obligations. As a matter of fact, we have about eight States that are suing the Federal Government over

No Child Left Behind unfunded mandates. These are States. These are not other countries. These are States here in the United States that taxpayers pay money.

We have a number of school districts that say, listen, if we can opt out of it, we want to opt out. We do not want to opt in. That is not a federalized education program to help local communities and chambers and all the other do-gooders in small communities and big communities who want to make sure they have an educated workforce. It is not that same theory.

We have one other issue that is here. The gentleman mentioned the issue of the energy bill. I am glad that resurfaced because I am going to tell the Members the reason why that is important. The energy bill came to this floor, and for 90 minutes we sat and stood here on this floor waiting for the board to close. What we call the board here in Congress is a voting board. For several minutes, almost 1 hour. The bill was defeated. And, Mr. Speaker, I think this is where if I had a yellow flag and I was a referee or an official on the 40 yard line that I would actually throw a flag. I would have thrown the flag because the spirit of the rules were violated because when the board opens up and there are 15 minutes to vote, there are 15 minutes to vote, give or take 1 or 2 or 3. But when they say the board is open for 15 minutes and we will close it when we win, then that is a violation of the spirit of the rules of this House. And it feeds into the whole issue of the corruption and cronyism.

I have two young children; and if there were a homework assignment that was due, and my wife and I have to sign their reading stuff and say that it is done, but it would not be fair if my children were to do their homework and there were two other children in the same classroom or in the same school that say, Well, I do not have to do my homework. I will just do it two nights from now because my father or my mother is a chairperson of the PTA and we have power like that. We can do it. That would not be fair to the children who actually did their homework.

I use that analogy because I want to make sure that the Members and the American people understand what we are talking about. Yes, it is a bad thing dealing with children, but it is a horrible thing when we are talking about national policy for the greatest country on the face of the Earth, the shining example of democracy. Now, we salute one flag. And my colleagues heard me speak a couple of weeks ago about those Americans; and, yes, we think about those 2,000-plus individuals who have fallen in this war, but for those Americans who are still here who are voting for representation and fair play, they are individuals that are without limbs now.

We have all gone to Walter Reed. We have all gone to these hospitals in our own communities, these VA hospitals, watching these men and women come

back, half of their head blown off, legs and arms missing. And we are here and we walk through this door and we put our voting cards in these machines to represent them and the Americans that they fought for. And then we come to the floor because the majority did not get what they wanted when they wanted it, to say that they will hold this vote open as long as they have to to make sure that they twist enough arms on the Republican side because every Democrat voted against the bad policy, this bill.

I do not even want to address it as an energy bill because basically it was just a giveaway to the industry. That is all it was. Everything, 7 months prior, that could not go straight-faced into the "energy bill" at that time they got in this last time right before we took a break of the bill that just passed recently. And the reason why they got it: A, Hurricane Katrina came through. Hurricane Rita was on its way. The bill was already being marked up before Rita came, but it was on its way to help deal with the issue of price gouging and making sure that we are able to provide energy for our country and hopefully bring down the price of gas, and it did not do that. What it did was it raped our environmental laws. It raped the process of fair play in this institution.

There are certain things, as Members of Congress, we cannot allow to happen on behalf of the institution. When the record books are opened, the annals of history of the 109th Congress, yes, there will be individuals that will be mentioned; but also it will be that day that we were on the floor and the spirit of the rules of the House were violated in the worst way, time after time again. Time after time again.

The leadership from this side, Mr. Speaker, came to the floor with a parliamentary inquiry. The clock was at triple zero. Obviously, the measure did not pass, Mr. Speaker. Can we ask for the Speaker to call the vote? And each person was gavelled down for not making a parliamentary inquiry, and the Speaker said what he had to say at that particular time to keep it going. The gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), Democratic leader, came to the floor, gavelled down for asking the question and then pointing out the fact this is what is wrong with Washington now, the culture of corruption and cronyism, not in the dark corners of Congress but under the lights on international, not national, but international television that we are willing to rape the spirit of the rules of this House and the spirit of fair play in America. Not something that we watched on cable television in some foreign land somewhere in a Third World country. Not there. But right here for the world to see. I would not say the hypocrisy of the democracy of everyday Americans, but because of the leaders who allowed it to happen here in this House.

Mr. Speaker, last point, I just want to make sure that we understand, as

Members of Congress, that we have a responsibility in the majority and minority. I take full responsibility for what took place, Mr. Speaker, here on this floor, yes. Did I do everything I could? Of course I did. Did I walk over to the other side of the aisle and talk to some of my friends over there that are level-minded individuals, who will go unnamed because we do not want them to receive any repercussions for speaking out, who said, I think that the vote should have been called. Well, you need to go tell your leadership that the vote needs to be called.

I mean, we want to do it in a gentlemanly way. We call ourselves, Mr. Speaker, gentlemen and gentlewomen, respect for the institution, and still the vote was not called. I mean, individuals' arms were twisted. You vote, hurry up, and trying to call the vote while they went. And it almost happened once, and then the conscience kicked in of some Members and they changed their vote and it went back to a losing vote again, and they said we have to hold the board open another 20 minutes because we did not get our way.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, he is absolutely right. This is strictly an abuse of power. That is what is going on here. This is the majority, the Republican majority, abusing their power. And I think that last Friday was the perfect example of it. And it was not the first time. I have to say one thing that was interesting that he pointed out was that was the first time I remember that they did it in broad daylight, because if the gentleman remembers, most of the time when we had to deal with these major policy initiatives, which that was not, they waited until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning so nobody was watching. And, of course, the best example of that was the Medicare prescription drug bill, which, as the gentleman knows, was voted on at 3 o'clock in the morning. We had to wait here for hours while they were twisting arms all night for that too and even lied about the fact of how much it was going to cost; otherwise they would have never passed it. Remember when they said it was only going to cost, I guess, 400 billion, and then it ended up being 600 or 700 billion?

We see this abuse of power constantly. I see it in my committee because what happens is when bills come to committee, they do not go to a subcommittee. They do not have a hearing. When the Democrats were in the majority, every time we had a bill that we wanted to move, we had a hearing, sometimes several hearings, in the subcommittee. Then we would have a markup in the subcommittee. Then it would go to the full committee. Then it would go to the Committee on Rules. And at every point there was an opportunity not only for the majority but also for the minority to have some input into what went on.

But that does not go on around here. A lot of bills just go to the floor with-

out even having a hearing or even go into committee, and then they change it when they get to the Committee on Rules. They do not allow us the opportunity to offer an amendment or to offer a substitute so that our voice is not even heard. And what is going on, the reason why they have these closed votes and have to do this arm-twisting is because these are bad bills. These are not bills that are good for the average American, and they can barely get enough people to make a majority and they are even starting to lose some of their own Republicans.

If the gentleman noticed, a lot of Republicans voted "no" on that energy bill, and then they had to twist their arms to get them to come back and barely pass the bill. This is happening all the time. It is an absolute abuse of power. It is not letting the minority have its say, not letting the minority have a voice. And I think it is very important that we get that out there.

This is procedure and a lot of times people maybe listen and maybe they get bored or they yawn because they say this is just procedure, but in a democracy these kinds of procedures are very important. And when the Republicans are abusing the procedure, it is really bad.

And I want to mention one more thing. I cannot help but mention it. The other day when the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), the majority leader, was forced to step down because of the indictment by the grand jury, a lot of people forgot that the only reason why that happened was because Democrats insisted that the Republicans go back to the original rules. They tried to change the rules of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct at the beginning of this Congress to say that if somebody was indicted in leadership that they did not have to step down. And we came here, and the gentleman was part of it too, and insisted that we go back to the old rules, the bipartisan rules, that had that type of provision in it. And there were other changes as well that we insisted on.

So, again, it is important that we speak out because we can make a difference and the public needs to understand the abuse of power and the cronyism that is going on here.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I just want to share something with the gentleman, because this is serious business when we come to the floor to talk about these issues. We always say we were elected to represent not only our constituents but also the American people. When they voted for us, they federalized us. They allowed us to come here to vote on policy and to create policy on behalf of the betterment of this country.

The gentleman mentioned something and we do a lot of work here. We have information. We meet off the floor to be able to talk about some of these issues. The Washington Post Federal

Page, I just want to take this and make sure everyone understands this is about saluting one flag. This is not about what side of the aisle we are on. But the reason why we point out the fact, Mr. Speaker, that the majority leadership has not taken leadership to lead us in a way that we should be led in fair play when we are saluting one flag on issues that are facing national security, I am on the Committee on Homeland Security and I am on the Committee on Armed Services with the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN); and I can tell the Members right now that energy, as far as I am concerned, is a national security issue.

□ 2145

So when folks come to the floor not on behalf of the American people and national security but on behalf of special interests, I personally have a problem with it.

I take the Federal Page from the Washington Post. This is actually from October 5. This story here talks about: Storms show system out of balance. GOP Congress has reduced agency oversight.

I think it is important that we pay very close attention to not only this article. It names not only three Republicans, one on the other side of the body in the Senate and two here in this body. As a matter of fact, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. HARRIS), two of my colleagues, called for hearings, Mr. Speaker, on FEMA, the money that was spent last year in Florida on counties that were not truly affected by the four storms that came through, the money that was just given out without any oversight, just simply, for the committees wrote a letter, which one I sent on, to have oversight hearings on FEMA. I agreed with that, yes, we should have oversight hearings. If something went wrong, that is the thing that the Congressperson does, call for oversight hearings.

These are Members that are in the majority. These are not Democratic Members that have said we need to have oversight hearings. These are the Members in the majority side that said we need oversight hearings. Guess what. They did not happen, and this was last year. This was the story that they asked for the hearings last year. It still did not happen.

The point I am making on this article, it goes on to say that it took an analysis of the first 6 months of Congress between 1983 and 1997, to make a comparison. This researcher found that both Chambers of Congress both reduced their numbers of hearings. Actually, in the House, there were 782 hearings in 1983 of oversight, and it went down in 1997 to 287. In the Senate, they had 439 hearings on oversight, and in 1997 it went down to 175.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, I want to say, because I have been here longer than the gentleman, and he has already told

me that many times, the fact of the matter is I remember when the Democrats were in the majority. I was here from 1988 to 1994 when we were in the majority. The core of our being in the majority was oversight. That is what we did. That was our life blood. We spent more time on oversight than anything else.

I remember specifically in my committee, the Committee on Energy and Commerce, every one of the subcommittees had oversight on health care, environment, consumer issues, energy, you name it. That was our MO. For all practical purposes, the Republicans have eliminated any real oversight. So you are absolutely right.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We have said it 1 million times. Article I, Section 1 of the U.S. Constitution creates the House of Representatives. The people of the country govern. Anything that is created from there we have oversight of, and that is the essence of this democracy. We try to represent the republic that we have. This is our job, overseeing FEMA.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Overseeing the Federal Government, but see, the issue that is so difficult here is the fact that this is our main job, and we are not doing it.

It takes a while to get a culture. If it is corruption, it comes and it goes. When you have a culture of corruption and cronyism, that means two things. Someone has not been overseeing the rules. Someone has not been saying listen, no, I am sorry. We have the Department of Transportation. This is what you are supposed to be doing because we are the oversight committee of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and we have oversight over you and we are elected by the American people to make sure that your tax dollar is being spent in the appropriate way.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We write the checks out of this body. The checks come if you are going to write the checks but not oversight.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. This is what we have done, and in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, in the aftermath of Hurricane Rita. We are living with the highest deficit in the history of the republic. We are standing and we are doing this, and what goes back to this article that I was addressing a little while ago, it talked about the fact that there is no checks and balances.

I just want to remind the Members, since some might have maybe not fully focused on what is happening, the Senate is Republican-controlled. The House is definitely Republican-controlled. The White House, we know for sure that it is under Republican control, and when we see the amount of money that is now having to be spent, I am just going to take Katrina. I do want to talk about health care, and I know the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) has the next hour, and I just want to talk a little bit about health care again.

But I can tell you this, I am going to take Katrina for an instance, \$200 billion plus. A big part of that is the fact that Louisiana or New Orleans were flooded, under water. Hundreds of thousands of Americans were displaced.

Two things happened there. Americans died but two things happened there. There was a lack of governance, and I can tell you that if we had the right kind of oversight, if maybe that Army Corps of Engineers captain or commander would have gotten what he needed to do exactly what the National Hurricane Center called for or to do exactly what Members of Congress from that area asked for, or to say that since we are doing all of these strategic review of vulnerabilities, I am on Homeland Security so I know the language, since we are doing all of that and we did all these things when we knew when we were vulnerable, then we are supposed to respond to that, and we did not. That is where the lack of governance comes in.

So this whole issue of oversight is a big issue, and if folks feel that it is not going to be in a community by you, it is already there. Katrina knocked the scab off of the Department of Homeland Security and others that have said that we are ready for anything that happens. It is a perfect example that we are not and we were not. Communities should not have to go through it to learn it, and we are the Congress and we are supposed to do better when we know better, and we know better, and we are not doing better because we are not willing to lead.

On this side of the aisle, we are here at some couple of minutes before 10:00 saying that we are ready and willing to lead or share in the leadership. What is important here is that we allow a bipartisan nature in dealing with some of the issues that we pointed out here tonight, and that is not happening. That is where it comes in.

So I am glad historically that the gentleman was able to share with us what happened when Democrats were in control, how many opportunities that the minority had an opportunity to be a part of legislation and inclusion.

Mr. PALLONE. If I could just say, that is the other part that is so important is, again going back when the Democrats were in the majority, most legislation was done on a consensus, bipartisan basis. In other words, you would find in my committee, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), on the Committee on Energy and Commerce, who of course was the chairman, and legislation, if it was an energy bill, if it was a health care bill, he would start by going to the ranking member, the Republican man, the minority, and saying what input do you want into this bill and let us sit down and there would be meetings, and they would try to build a consensus on legislation.

That does not happen anymore around here. I mean, it is very rare to

see someone who is the chairman of the committee on the Republican side reaching out to the Democrat on the committee and saying let us see if we can work together and come to a consensus on a bill. That is why most of the time you did not have to have these situations where you would vote in the middle of the night and have to get people to change votes because, if the bill came to the floor most likely it was a consensus measure and most people voted for it.

Some people may say not everything has to be that way, and not everything was that way, but the bottom line is when someone is elected, when you are elected or I am elected, our constituents send us down here. They do not expect us to just come down here and object to everything because we do not have input. They expect that we are going to have some input on what goes on, and to deny us that, which is what the Republican leadership does for the most part now, I think denies the basic principle of democracy.

We are not supposed to be coming down here and just objecting. We are supposed to be part of what goes on, but we are not allowed to for the most part. We cannot bring up amendments or ask for hearings. So this is the problem.

I just want to go back and say one more thing. The reason why the Republicans do not want the oversight and do not want the accountability is because they are doing bad things. The reason they do not want to have this bipartisan Katrina Commission is because they do not want the commission to come back and report that there were problems in what the FEMA Director and the administration did during the hurricane.

It is pretty simple stuff, because if it is bipartisan and it has equal members and there is a lot of oversight, they are going to show what the problems were. They want to whitewash. That is the bottom line. That is why they do not want this independent commission. It is uncovering things.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Exactly. So they are picking their own personal political situation over what is best for the American people. Can you think of a better reason to take someone out of their leadership position?

We all play politics here. We are just here. You get 435 people in a room, there is going to be politics. We understand that, but when you consistently and constantly pick your own personal political interests over the public interests, even if it means not getting to the bottom line, not getting to the kind of reforms that are going to be needed, then that is a real problem, I think, and I think the American people from the polls and from the people we talk to in our district seem to feel the same way.

Mr. PALLONE. There was an editorial in the New York Times on September 26 about faking the Katrina inquiry. The last paragraph, if I could

just read it, said this. It says, There is no way to whitewash a hurricane. A government dominated by one party should be disqualified from investigating itself. Just as President Bush repeatedly fought the creation of the 9/11 Commission until public pressure forced him to yield, so should the public now demand the administration and Congress get real about Katrina.

That is what we are getting with this Republican-dominated committee. It is just going to be another whitewash, and we cannot allow it. So I appreciate the opportunity.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I think what is important here are several points that the gentleman has already made.

You have this chart here dealing with the whole gas price issue on the middle class, and I just want to take a couple of minutes of this hour just to talk a little bit more about what is called an energy bill.

We had an alternative, and the reason why I call it an alternative to the gas or to the energy bill is the fact that we were in the majority and it would be called an energy bill dealing with price gouging and also making future investments and bringing out alternative fuels to be done by a certain date. Also, our alternative said if you price gouge, we are not talking about someone at the pump, we are talking about the oil industry that has soaring, through-the-roof profits in a time that we have individuals who cannot even make it to work now because they cannot afford to buy a tank of gas. They did not get an increase. Their employer did not say, listen, we are going to give you about three hundred more dollars a month so you can pay for gas. They did not say that.

So we dealt with those individuals in our alternative by saying that if you price gouge the American people, not only will it allow State Attorneys General to enforce the law, but you will pay serious fines, up to \$3 million a day. Every day you price gouge, you pay. You do not get your profits and run off and the stockholders are happy. No, you are punished, and it not only dealt with gas. It dealt with oil and LP Gas and heating gas.

I think it is important for folks to understand that we were for real about it, and the majority side was really defending the industry. I know we are going to have more time.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Let me do this, we want to give the e-mail address, 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov.

□ 2200

#### 30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP: REFORMING GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. FOXX). 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. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be back

and continue our discussion here. I hope for the next hour, my good friend, we can talk about something that I think is very important for the Democratic Party and what the future of the Democratic Party is all about, and that is reforming government. We are the party of reform. We have offered alternatives, as we have talked about in the past hour and over the past several weeks, that have been ignored; but we are not going to let that stop us. We are going to continue to talk throughout the rest of this year and into next year about the different reform measures that we are going to propose, and we are going to be critical of what we think is a broken system in general and broken systems in general, all of these different systems in our government.

I was thinking about this and talking about this last night, about how our government runs today; and our government really runs today totally designed like an industrial-age system. It is almost like an assembly line. We have our health care over here and our education is over here and our foreign policy is over here and our research is over here, and none of the component parts are allowed to ever come together. That is an old assembly line kind of system. You deal with this part and you put that part on and then that part, and everything is separated.

Government in the 21st century needs to be integrated and unified. A health care system that does not teach healthy eating habits and has a diverse physical education requirement in our schools or gives our kids good food in our schools, that is not a comprehensive health care system. Because at some point we are going to pay the bill for obesity or diabetes, or whatever may come from the long-term effects of not having a healthy diet. And one day, somebody is going to be on Medicare, and we are going to have to pay the price.

I want to just talk for a couple of minutes about what is going on with Delphi and their bankruptcy and how I think the system right now is a bit broken. Basically, over the last 30 years or so, this company and their workers have generated a lot of wealth over the past 30 years. A lot of people in Ohio and in Mississippi and all over the country have made money. Workers were paid well, and they had pensions and benefits and health care coverage and everything else. The wealth that these workers created was taken and invested in China, first in Mexico, then in China. And now, because of all of that that has happened, we increased the global supply of labor, that is driving down the wages here in the United States of America, which leads to Delphi filing bankruptcy because they cannot compete with their competitors who are doing a lot of business in China.

It just is something broken when a worker or a group of workers who create wealth and that money is taken