

Yet we have made a mess of this Nation's finances, and we need to start now, and we have started in this first 100 hours in the Democratic majority to address that mess and clean it up. The expression is "pass the buck," but what we have instead been doing is passing the debt. We should not be passing trillions of dollars to future generations with "borrow and spend." Instead, we should pay as we go.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Illinois for that perspective.

It is wonderful to be joined this evening during the Blue Dog special order by a number of new members of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition. I believe we have had three, and this will be make four new members join us for this discussion and this debate here on the House floor this evening.

I am pleased at this time to yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania, PATRICK MURPHY.

Mr. PATRICK MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Thank you, sir. I appreciate the opportunity to speak here tonight amongst my colleagues here in the Blue Dogs.

When you come down to Washington, you align yourself with people that are just like you, people that represent not just you personally, but your district back at home and your interests in your district back at home.

When Congresswoman BEAN talked about Thomas Jefferson and the future generations, I couldn't help but think that I kissed this morning when I came to work my baby daughter goodbye for the day, Maggie Murphy. I mentioned earlier she was born 6 weeks ago.

When you look at that bottom number there that the Blue Dogs fight for, that \$29,000, every newborn in America is born into that debt, that \$29,000 apiece, they are born into that debt, and this Congress previously just let it keep rolling and rolling and growing and growing.

Finally the Blue Dogs have arrived now, and the Blue Dogs are saying, listen, we are not going to take it anymore. We are putting our foot down. We are going to be disciplined.

That discipline is something I learned personally in the military, that families in my district in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, know about, because in my district we have Washington's Crossing, where those soldiers that started the Revolution, that really earned our independence, showed the discipline when they didn't have the best uniforms. They didn't have the best equipment, but they had a belief, and they stood by their beliefs.

That is exactly what the Blue Dogs do, and they keep it simple. They say we stand for two things: Fiscal discipline, fiscal responsibility; and, number two, a strong national defense.

That is why it is an honor that the families in the Eighth Congressional District, they know that their congressman, in myself, in PATRICK MUR-

PHY, and our colleagues of the Blue Dogs, that we stand for something, and that we will fight every single day to bring down that number, so that when people like Maggie Murphy and other newborns in Lower Bucks Hospital and all over America, when they are born into our great country, and it is a great country, they are not born \$29,000 in debt.

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. Speaker, if I could say one other thing to the American people, and that is the gentleman you just heard from from Pennsylvania is also an Iraqi war veteran, a member of the 82nd Airborne, and the folks of Pennsylvania and this country can be very, very proud that PATRICK MURPHY is here in Congress with us today.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Indiana, and I yield to the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. SCOTT.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Thank you very much, Mr. ROSS. It is indeed a pleasure to be here with everyone, as I said earlier.

I think in conclusion tonight it is very important that we let the American people know that we very soberly understand this charge that has been handed to us as Democrats to lead in this Congress, and we also understand why and we handle that responsibility with great care.

One of the things that it is important for us to point out, when they ask what can we do and what is expected of us, is to stand up for the American people finally at last and lift up our way of life.

We have two duties to do under the Constitution as Members of Congress and they are expecting us to use these tools and do them well, and these tools are, one, oversight. Through our ability to oversee this government we can make these changes happen. The other is appropriations, to handle their money as good stewards. These are the things that we are committed to do, and this is how we will get to the new direction that the American people expect us to get to.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the many members of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition for coming to the floor of the House of Representatives this evening and joining me for a discussion on how we can restore fiscal discipline and common sense to our national government, how we can bring this number down, Mr. Speaker. As we conclude, I will remind you in that this number actually went up by some \$40 million during the hour that we have been here on the floor this evening.

□ 2130

TAX INCREASES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, it is certainly an honor to be here on the House floor, and it is a great opportunity to

follow the Blue Dogs tonight, that coalition on the Democratic side that are talking about fiscal responsibility, because that is what I want to also talk about tonight. It is an extremely important issue. It is a pocketbook issue. And one I didn't hear mentioned too frequently by my friends in the Blue Dog Coalition has to deal with taxes and what we are responsible for here in Washington, which is spending, and also making sure we are not reaching too deep in the pockets of the American people and spending their money.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned that the American people are unaware of what is going to happen here in Congress in the next 4 years. There is a countdown. The countdown begins. It is 1,452 days, and we will see over that period of time the tax cuts that we put in place as a Republican majority, they will expire. So the American people, over the next 4 years, will see a \$200 billion tax increase, money that will be taken out of their pockets.

The Democratic majority doesn't even have to act. They can just run out the clock. I am not sure the American people realize that, that if the Democrats don't act to extend these tax breaks, that they will see this \$200 billion tax increase occur, as I said between today and January 1, 2011. As I said, I appreciate the Blue Dogs coming here and talking about fiscal responsibility, but unless they act and they join with the Republicans to see these extended, that is what the American people face.

What do these tax cuts mean? They mean that over the last 4 years we have seen 7.2 million jobs created in this country because of those tax cuts. Just in the month of December, 167,000 jobs were created in this country. The unemployment rate in this country is down to 4.5 percent. That is the lowest average it has been in four decades, and that is directly attributable to the tax cuts that we passed over the last 4, 5, or 6 years in this Congress. Again, if we don't extend them, if we don't do the responsible thing and let the American people keep more of their money, there will be dollars taken out of their pockets.

Now, what has happened with those tax cuts is that the American people have gotten to keep more of their hard-earned dollars. The American people, from Pennsylvania, to Arkansas, to California, to Arizona get to keep their money in their pockets and get to decide how that money is going to be spent. It is not going to be spent in Washington by bureaucrats. When you get \$2,000 or \$4,000 more in your pocket a year because of these tax cuts, you decide whether you will use it as a downpayment on a car, save the money for your children's college education, or buy a new washer and dryer or refrigerator for your home. These are the things the American people want to be able to purchase, and they can do it with these tax cuts.

As I said, I am very, very concerned that we are going to see this \$200 billion tax increase if we don't move forward to expand that. We had four major tax relief packages since 2001. We cut taxes on the American taxpayer in every walk of life. Across the board, every American has benefited by this. We eliminated the marriage penalty tax. We stopped penalizing people in this country for being married. We should be encouraging that in America: marriage. We doubled the child tax credit from \$500 to \$1,000. If we don't act to extend that, that will be cut in half over the next 4 years.

We removed 10.6 million low-income Americans from paying taxes all together. People are not paying taxes because we lowered those tax rates. We lowered tax rates on our small businesses and employers.

I know every single district in this country has numerous small businesses. It is the backbone of the American economy. And we have cut taxes for those people in small business, and they have been able to take that money and reinvest it in their businesses and their employees. I know full well because before I came to Congress I didn't serve in the State legislature, I wasn't a trial attorney, I was a small business owner, and I worked to employ between 30 and 40 people. I know what it is like to meet a payroll, and I know what that burden is like to have to pay crushing taxes. I know what it is like to make sure my bills are being paid every month.

So as a small business owner, I know firsthand. As a family man, as a father of two children, and a daughter that will go to Penn State University next year, I know it is important to save for college. Every American wants to save money to help their children get educated. As I said, I think it is extremely important that we here in Congress act responsibly to keep those tax cuts in place and there is record revenue coming into Congress.

I hope that the Democrats will take a lesson from history, from one of their own, Jack Kennedy, in the 1960s. President Kennedy did the right thing. He cut taxes. What happened? Revenues increased to the government. What happened in 1980, when Ronald Reagan did the same thing? He cut taxes and revenues increased to the Federal Government. And we did that again in 2001 and 2003. And what happened? History has repeated itself. Revenues are at the highest levels that they have ever been to the Federal Government.

So once again, I am absolutely committed, and we are going to be coming to the House floor week after week talking to the American people, reminding them that if the Democrats do not act, do not aggressively pursue the extension of these taxes that the American people will be penalized.

And I think that here in this next hour I am going to be joined by many of my colleagues who want to stand up and talk about this. And the folks com-

ing down to the floor, most of them, if not all of them, are former small business owners or still own small businesses and have families and raised families, so they can talk to the issues that we are here talking about tonight: what it means to get \$2,000 more a year in your pocket, or \$4,000 or \$5,000, or have lower tax rates, if you are running a business.

I will now invite some of my colleagues up, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVIS). I yield to him.

Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. SHUSTER for giving me this opportunity. I too am a father of two and a small business owner, and I am truly honored to have this occasion to discuss my ideas. This open discussion is part of what makes us so great as a Nation.

I am from the First District of Tennessee. It is a place of beautiful, majestic mountains, thriving communities, and a growing economy. Northeast Tennessee has unrivaled beauty and unsurpassed potential. However, the beautiful First Tennessee District and our country could be headed toward economic danger. For instance, in the last week, the three-fifths majority required to raise our taxes has been removed by the Democrat Party.

Tax cuts are not permanent. Seemingly, it is only a matter of time before these massive tax increases are put in place. It is our responsibility to protect the American people from these unnecessary tax burdens. If the tax cuts that are in place are allowed to expire, some families could see an increase in taxes up to 39 percent. Married couples and families will once again be subject to the tax penalty.

As I speak tonight, time and time again history has proven that tax reductions have spurred economic resurgence. Our current economic figures once again prove this fact. With the tax cuts in place, real after-tax income has risen 9.6 percent since the year 2000. The United States has grown faster than any other G-7 industrialized nation over the past four quarters. The time to control spending and to make tax cuts permanent is now.

I will be joining many of my colleagues in signing a letter to President Bush encouraging him to veto any legislation implementing tax increases on working people and on the businesses of America. It is not the time to place greater financial burden on the families of the First District of Tennessee nor the many other people of this great Nation.

Mr. SHUSTER. I thank the gentleman from Tennessee and would just point out that, as the gentleman said, he is a father, and I understand that he was a hospital manager before he started his own business. So he knows firsthand what it is like to be out there meeting a payroll, facing the tax burden of this country. So I really appreciate not only that you are here in Congress and you bring a common-sense, a small business owner's per-

spective to the legislative process, but you are here tonight talking about these issues that are going to be vital to not only people in Tennessee and Pennsylvania but across this country. Every American is concerned about their tax bill.

It was interesting, the Blue Dogs were down here talking this evening earlier and they said America voted for a change. America did vote for a change, I believe. But I don't believe that I heard anybody in America, at least not in my congressional district in Pennsylvania, or across Pennsylvania, who said they wanted to vote for higher taxes. I am very concerned.

As you mentioned, they changed the rules. We had the rules in place where we had to have a three-fifths majority to pass tax increases. They have reduced that to a simple majority. That obviously means they need only 218 votes. The Blue Dogs were talking tonight there are between 40 and 50 members of the Blue Dogs. I hope they hang with us as we try to push the agenda to keep the American taxpayers, keep the American people with those tax cuts in place.

Again, Mr. DAVIS, thank you very much for coming down tonight.

Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee. Thank you.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, it is now my pleasure to yield time to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. NEUGEBAUER), who again comes from a business background, somebody who has raised a family and brings a businessman's common sense here to the legislative process.

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. Well, I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania, and just like him, I haven't been in the State legislature. I have been a small businessman all of my life.

What we know about small businesses is that they are the number one job creator in America. As we heard the gentleman say awhile ago, over nearly 7 million new jobs have been created in this country in the last 3½ years. Quite honestly, most of that has been from small businesses all across this country.

One of the things that a lot of people don't know that have not had their own business is that small businesses are also big taxpayers. What they do not also realize is that in some cases we ask our small businesses to pay more taxes than we do other folks. That is because our small business people, in addition to income tax, have to pay self-employment tax.

The way you build a business in America is that you do it by taking money that you are making and reinvesting it in your business, and that is the way you grow your business. It is these growing businesses in America that have been growing America.

When I first got in the home building business, I had a young man who was a plumbing contractor, and he too was starting his new business. And he was starting it with basically one truck

and a helper. So when we started together, I had a small building business and he had a small plumbing company. What I watched my friend Bobby do over the years is build his business one truck at a time. He would work hard and pretty soon he had built up his business and he had to go buy another truck. You know what happens when a plumbing company buys another truck? They have to hire what? More people. And pretty soon he worked hard and he had to buy another truck. And you know what happened when he bought another truck? He had to hire more people.

But Bobby couldn't have bought those trucks if he hadn't been building his business, having money and capital in his business to be able to go to his banker and say, you know, I am building a business here and I have equity in my business. But what happens is the American Government says, oh, Mr. Small Businessman, you are making money, so we are going to reach in there and in some cases take half of that small business's money. So that causes the business to grow at half the rate as it could if it wasn't paying exorbitant taxes.

I would say to the gentleman from Pennsylvania, as you know, it is not just Big Government taxing, but it is the regulation that also our small businesses all across the country are worried about. When you add onto small businesses not only the carrying of a tax burden, but all of the burdens of regulation that we put on these small businesses, and on top of that you put a lawsuit environment in this country that on any given day a small businessman can lose his business, I say to my friend that small businesses are about to be entered onto the Endangered Species List.

□ 2145

Because, quite honestly, we have policy in this country that is not friendly to small businesses, the very businesses, the very people that have built this great Nation. And so when I hear folks on the other side of the aisle talk about we have a plan, well, I hope that plan is not to continue the trend that they have done in the past, and that is taxing small businesses out of existence. And you get a little nervous when they change the rules in this House that, as the gentleman said a while ago, that instead of taking three-fifths of this body, it only takes a simple majority to increase taxes.

Now, I do applaud our friends, the Blue Dogs, for one of the things that they said tonight, and that is that we do need to do something about deficit spending in this country. And I am ready to join across the aisle with my friends and say, let's do that by addressing spending.

If you really want to do good things for America in the future, you don't do it by taxing our small businesses out of existence. You do it by making America a more fiscally sound country. You

ask the American Government to do the same thing that these small businesses do. They are not able to, whenever they need more money, to go get it from somebody else by just reaching in. You don't go to a customer after you finish the job and say, "you know, what, I told you it was going to be one price, but I am going to charge you another price." You don't keep your business very long. So I want to join our friends to do that. But I do not want to join our friends on a path of taxing because I would tell you, in 2003, the unemployment rate in America was 6.1 percent. Today it is 4.5 percent. More people are employed today in America than any other time in the history of this Nation. More people own homes today than any other time in the history of this Nation. This is a prosperous time. And we got here by leaving the decision on how people spend their money to the people who make the money and not big government. Big government doesn't grow America. Americans grow America.

I thank the gentleman for having this time tonight, and I look forward to continued dialogue with my colleagues as we really talk about making sure that our American businesses don't end up on the endangered species list.

Mr. SHUSTER. I thank the gentleman from Texas. And when you talk, I think a lot of folks here in Congress, I think, forget about the stories that you talk about, the plumber who starts out with a truck and all of a sudden he has enough business, he buys two trucks, then three trucks. And that is what small business in America has been doing over the last couple of decades. That is where most of the jobs are created in this country, in small business by that plumber or that person who has an idea that works hard and puts together a plan and goes to the bank and borrows some money. And I know when I first went into business back in 1990, I bought an existing business, borrowed a lot of money, went into debt, worked hard. And something that I learned in college in accounting is that cash and profits aren't the same thing. And a lot of people, I think they say, and I realized that lesson, I learned it in accounting, but it really didn't make an impact on me until my first year I had a profit in business and thought, oh my goodness. We had a great year. And then I realized that I had to pay this tax bill, but all my cash was tied up in my inventory and improving the physical plant and doing things to make business continue to grow. But I didn't have the cash. So I had to keep the debt up; had to figure out how to get that money to pay taxes. So it really puts a tremendous burden on small business when you have a high tax burden.

And, as you pointed out, American business, small business, is really the backbone of this country. So I appreciate the fact that you are another small business owner and that you,

like myself, didn't serve in the legislature before, and you bring that perspective of a small business owner, of a business owner of someone that has been out there meeting payrolls and creating jobs in this economy.

It is now my pleasure to yield to another great Texan, Mr. CONAWAY, from Texas, who is the resident CPA in the House tonight. So I am sure we can learn a few lessons from him. So with that, Mr. CONAWAY, thank you.

Mr. CONAWAY. I thank my colleague for doing this hour tonight. And if I really want to put the colleagues in the House to sleep, we can talk about Internal Revenue Code sections and those kind of things. I will have you dozing off quickly.

Mr. SHUSTER. But I would ask the gentleman at some point to talk about cash flow and the difference between profit and cash because that is an awakening process.

Mr. CONAWAY. Exactly, something that most everybody understands.

When I came to Congress, actually, my first race was against my good colleague, RANDY NEUGEBAUER. He and I campaigned against each other and, quite frankly, campaigned the way Republicans ought to campaign against each other, and that is why you should vote for me, and he stuck to why you should vote for him. And one of the reasons that I thought folks should vote for me was that I thought the small business mind set or experiences were underrepresented in Congress. Now, I hadn't done any empirical research. I just made that up. It sounded good. I thought, from having watched the way things going on out here, I just thought it was the case. But RANDY won the first one. He was a small business guy. He won that first race, and then I was fortunate enough to win a race, and we now serve together. And I suspect he has found, like I did, that that was a lot truer than I had even thought about; that there really is a real lack of appreciation of how hard it is to make a buck.

Not to denigrate anybody's path to this place, but I think folks who have worked in the real business world, who have, as you said, met payrolls and been responsible for both sides of a budget; it is easy to budget if you are in government and all you are worried about is how much you spent because you know that you can collect it from somebody. You have got a sheriff someplace that will go collect it if need be. We have got a big gun that we will point at folks and take that money away from them.

But in business, you have got to worry about both sides. You have got to figure out how to do some service or put together some product that you can sell to somebody else for a profit. And then you have got to hold your costs down and all those kinds of things, all those decisions that go into that.

I had 32-plus years in business as a CPA. I had a, from a variety of clients,

from really big clients to really small mom-and-pop shops.

We have got a colleague that is going to talk in a little bit that is a doctor. One of the closest things that I had to being a doctor-like experience and telling somebody they have had a terminal illness was each year when I would have to go to my dad, who ran a small business in the oil field service company, and tell him what his taxes were going to be. I dreaded that like the plague because it was my fault. I was his accountant. And even though the Congress and the Internal Revenue Code were done by Congress and implemented by the Internal Revenue Service, I was the bad guy. I had to go tell my dad that he owed more money in taxes than he really wanted to pay. And he would constantly say, well, how do I not pay those taxes? How do I get out of doing that?

I heard an interesting phrase the other day that fines are a tax on criminal activity; taxes are fines on successful activities.

Every time we spend a buck in here, and we spend a lot of bucks, \$2.7 trillion, I try to not lose sight how hard it is for us to, for whoever that taxpayer out there that we collected that buck from, how hard it was for them to make that money.

I live in West Texas where oil and gas is a big deal. And part of my background is working as a rough neck on drilling companies for drilling rigs. And when we spend money, I think about that rough neck working morning tower for a drilling company. In the winter, it is cold and miserable and wet and nasty, and in the summer time, it is hot and dry and miserable. Hard work. I am talking labor. Now we sometimes refer to what we do in this body as work. But folks, this is not work. This is a job. This is something we do. Work is when you are outside doing physical labor. And I have done some of that, and I went to college so I didn't have to keep doing that.

But I think about how hard that person works to earn the money that we then take taxes away from him to help do whatever it is we do. Most of what we do appears important. Some of what we do is not important, and we shouldn't do it. And that is where we ought to be about the process of reducing the amount of money that we take away from people and spend. But I keep thinking about that guy working morning tower and how hard it is for him to earn a dollar so that we can take \$0.20 of it or \$0.50 of it, whatever it is we decide to take in our infinite wisdom from him as a result of his or her hard work.

We will hear over the next 2 years as we talk about this stealth tax increase that is coming, that is either the capital gains rate going up or the various family-friendly things that we did in 2001, 2003, or the death tax that comes roaring back in 2011; we will hear the Democrats talk about, "well, we are going to fix it for the little guy. We are

going to not raise taxes on the small taxpayer and all those kinds of folks." That is a class warfare issue that I think is unworthy of us. As we begin to kind of differentiate between good folks who make money and bad folks who make money based on the amount of money they make, I think it is unworthy of us. Let's try to not do that because successful people are the ones who invest. They are the ones who create businesses. They are the ones that make money that can provide jobs.

The times that I have had to go look for a job, it has been very few, but the times I have gone to look for a job, I have not gone to somebody that was losing money to ask for a job. Only the Federal Government can lose money and still hire new people. Every small business out there, every medium-size business, most big businesses quit hiring people if they are not making money. Only in the Federal Government do we have the luxury of continuing to hire folks when in fact we are in a deficit spending that we have been on in the last several years.

In an attempt to, well, before I start that, I spent 2 years on the Budget Committee and listened to some of our good colleagues on the other side talk, day after day in those hearings about their proposals for PAYGO, their proposals for reducing the deficit, all those kinds of things. Every single one of those conversations, either overtly or as a sub plot to those conversations, was a tax increase. It wasn't about spending less money, because at the same time they were talking about reducing the deficit, they would propose billions of dollars of additional spending within the budget that we were trying to pass. So the idea that we can only fix the deficit by raising taxes is misplaced.

We don't have a tax revenue problem in this Federal Government. We collected a record amount of revenues for the Federal Government in fiscal year 2006, up double digits from the collection record in 2005, which was up double digits from the collections in 2004. We have got a spending problem. And I have got some, a couple of proposals that I want to talk about which may not be exactly on point with what Mr. SHUSTER wants to talk about tonight. But one of them is a "no new programs" agenda. This was a rule to the House rules that, you know, I hate to whine like the rest of us, but we had no input in the House rules. But I introduced a House rule the other day that said, if you are going to propose a new program of some sort, then, as a part of that enacting legislation, you actually have to eliminate another program of equal or greater spending; the idea being that if we have come up with the newest great new idea, that I ought to find somewhere else in the Federal activities that there is a program that is less important than my new one. The idea being is, if I can't find something that is less important than my new program, then what I am effectively

telling the taxpayers of this country is this new program is the least important thing the Federal Government could do. And for goodness sake, why would we do that?

And so the idea is to help us begin to set priorities. Talk is cheap, and we all, both sides, talk about setting priorities and all those kinds of things. But this would help put some teeth in the idea of forcing Congress to make choices between two good things. I am not talking about good and bad. Anybody can make those decisions. But we have got to make choices between two good things a lot of times as to where we spend our money. Families do that. Businesses do that. And all of us have to do that, except at the Federal Government level. So in an attempt to help us learn how to set priorities, this "no new programs" would be a small step in that direction.

The other thing that I have done and I have actually got two of the Blue Dogs to cosponsor, original cosponsors on my savings and appropriations concept. If we come in here, and our experiences so far with the Democrats is that the rule under which we debate things that we are passing has not provided us opportunities to amend them. I mean, it is a closed rule. We did it to them; they are doing it to us. That is just kind of the way it works. But on appropriation bills, those are the one opportunity that we have where the Rules Committee is not in between us and what needs to get done. And with all due deference to my former member of the Rules Committee, this is an opportunity for those of us on the floor to suggest changes in the appropriations process that we think are appropriate.

Under the current scheme, if we amend an appropriations bill to reduce the spending in that bill, common sense would say that that money doesn't get spent. That is not how this system works. That money goes back to the committee and is spent somewhere else. So while we are able to get an amendment that the 218 of us would agree that spending shouldn't occur, it gets spent somewhere else.

So what this law would say is that when that happens, if we are able to overrun the appropriators, and the appropriators legitimately hate this idea, but if we are able to get 218 of us, whether it is, in our case now, it has got to have some Democrats now to help us out, but we are able to reduce an appropriations bill by some amount, that that will actually reduce the 302A and 302B allocations and all of that machination that goes on so that we would actually not spend that money.

□ 2200

It would reduce the deficit or increase a surplus, if we ever got to that particular place. I have got a couple of Democrats who have agreed to cosponsor, so I am encouraged by that, that we can, in fact, begin to work on the spending side of what we have got going on here.

I want to again thank Mr. SHUSTER for having this out here tonight.

When Congress saw fit to increase the section 179, throwing a little code at you, section 179 deduction for businesses or small business deduction where you can immediately expense up to \$100,000 of business property that you put in service, that was a huge boon to small businesses.

It allowed them to immediately write off the cost of having to put new equipment into service, and as Mr. NEUGEBAUER has already said, when his plumber friend bought a new truck, he had to have somebody drive that truck. In all likelihood there was a swamper on that truck so he put two more people to work.

That happened thousands of times across this great country. It was part of that impetus, part of this push to get us out of this recession that we were in 2001, 2002 and 2003, that single piece was a great part of what helped do that. That was directly positive for small businesses, and it is one of those that we continue to extend, but will go away unless this Congress acts to keep renewing it.

One final story. In talking with folks about the death tax back in the district, I tell them that probably the most dangerous week for anyone who has assets and beneficiaries is the week between Christmas of 2010 and New Year's Day. Here is why:

If you have got assets that you have worked hard for your life, but you got beneficiaries, you are going to get those assets when you die, if you are still breathing on January 1 of 2011, then those beneficiaries immediately have a 55 percent partner called the Federal Government.

My advice to those folks is to go ahead and have Christmas with your family, but then you probably ought to make yourself real scarce unless, if the current law stays in place where the death tax goes completely away in 2010, and the Federal Government has no claim on your assets when you die, to January 1 of 2011, when the Federal Government gets a 55 percent claim on those assets. So those of you who have assets, if we aren't able to get the laws changed and effect that, you probably ought to make yourself pretty scarce around your beneficiaries post-Christmas and January 1. Good luck with that.

I would like to thank my good colleague, Mr. SHUSTER, for having this hour tonight, sponsoring it. I hope to participate with you in the future.

Mr. SHUSTER. I want to thank the gentleman from Texas. I think you bring up a very good point on the spending side. As you know, as an accountant, anybody that has been in business, two sides to the income statements, there is revenues and costs.

Costs are important. You have to control your costs. You can't spend more than you bring in. Of course, we have done that over the last couple of years, because we are at war, we have

seen a recession. But the revenue side is equally important, and there are two ways to do it in the Federal Government. We have found that you can increase taxes, which gives you increased revenue for a while, but eventually the economy turns down, and then revenues go down; or you can do as Jack Kennedy, President Kennedy, did in 1960, Ronald Reagan did in the 1980s and we did in the early 2000s, we cut taxes and revenues grew. There are record levels of revenue coming into the Federal Government.

Don't listen to BILL SHUSTER about how it works when you cut taxes. Look at the record, look at the history record, and you will see it is quite clear.

You mentioned the death tax, yes. The gentleman has another point to make.

Mr. CONAWAY. Let me just, on your point, most business, every business, has to decide what they are going to charge for their product or their service. It is one of those key decisions every business manager has to make.

Because if they set their prices too high, they will not sell enough units. Obviously if they set it too low, they will not make as much money as they should. So most times the businesses decide to lower that price in order to get volume up, in order to sell more.

The Federal Government doesn't exactly do that; but the truth of the matter is, if we do raise taxes, you will get a short-term blip; tell people, until that begins to act, in effect a fine on doing well, and having a negative impact on the economy. Businesses have to make that decision, and I think the Federal Government ought to be in that same mind-set as well.

Mr. SHUSTER. That is a great point. It is great to have people like you in Congress to bring that common sense and know what it is like, and what really happens when prices go up and taxes go up and the response you get from people.

You also mentioned that January 1, 2011, the death tax expires. You also have the capital gains tax will expire January 1, 2009. The taxes on dividends will increase January 1, 2009. I think it is record numbers of American people that have investments in the stock market through their mutual funds. Over 60 percent of America has invested. Folks that are getting dividends from those investments are going to be taxed at higher rates.

We are going to again lose the child credit that will be cut in half over the next couple of years, the marriage tax, the penalty will be put back in place. Low-income taxpayers will go from that 10 percent tax bracket up to 15 percent tax bracket if we don't act.

Just to remind the American people that are watching tonight, it is 14,052 days in the countdown for the Democrat tax increase. They don't have to act. All they have to do is sit on the clock, run out the clock. When it runs out, we are going to see over the next 4 years a \$200 billion tax increase.

Another thing you mentioned about job increases, I saw over the last 6 years, one of the sectors in the economy that saw one of the larger increases percentage-wise in jobs was the government, and over 4 percent increase in government jobs. You know, we see that in other sectors of our economy. We have seen many of them increase double digits, but that is one that was discouraging to me to see the Federal Government, when we were at these times when we were trying to cut spending. We need to cut some of that and curtail some of these government jobs.

Mr. CONAWAY. Let me mention one other tax that is out there; we will talk about the national sales tax on another night. But the alternative minimum tax is another tax that we in the Republican majority basically kicked the can down the road a year at a time; this Congress under the Democratic leadership will have to do the same thing because it is a tax increase that is on the horizon that requires Congress to do something or the tax comes in.

We were unable to put a permanent fix in place, and full or fair disclosure. I actually had to pay the alternative minimum tax this year, and it ticked me off.

Mr. SHUSTER. That is like 20 million Americans, or something like that.

Mr. CONAWAY. Yes, and that number grows. So in addition to these taxes expiring on their own, the fix on the alternative minimum tax has got to be removed and/or a permanent fix put in place, which will be quite daunting for anyone to get done, particularly in a Congress, which my sense is they would rather increase taxes than deal with the tough decisions of cutting spending.

Mr. SHUSTER. I thank the gentleman. The last point you make, we talked about it earlier, I think Mr. DAVIS brought it up, they decreased the number of Members of the House that had to vote in favor, three-fifths down to a simple majority. It seems pretty clear to me what they are doing.

Over the last 4 or 5 years, 6 years since I have been in Congress, I haven't seen a budget proposal by the other side that hasn't increased spending significantly, and there are some estimates that in these first 100 hours the proposals that they are putting forth over the next several years are something to the effect of an \$800 billion increase in spending.

Again I think it is quite clear what the Democrats intend to do. We need to stay together as Republicans and join together with the Blue Dogs to fight that.

Mr. CONAWAY. Let me add one point to what you just said. The bill we passed this evening to make the world quote, unquote, a safer place, which I voted against, one, in my view, of the fatal flaws to that is we don't know how much that costs. There were open-

ended blank check authorizations in that bill for so much money and for such time as is needed.

So the first rattle out of the box, the first substantive piece of legislation that the other side proposed and put forward had these open-ended spending issues in there. You know, the cost is not necessarily always the determinative factor, but I grew up in a world where I had to ask what things cost, and I suspect most folks do. I factor that into a cost benefit analysis that we all make every single day.

It is one of those fatal flaws to the very first piece of legislation that our colleagues on the other side put forward today, of substance. The rules we did last week, that is one thing. But today's piece, couldn't score it from CBO. They don't have a clue what we authorized in terms of new spending, new programs, new dollars that we have to take away from good hardworking Americans. I appreciate the time.

Mr. SHUSTER. I thank the gentleman. It is discouraging to see the Blue Dogs here tonight. I think most of them, if not every single one of them, voted for that program. They were talking about fiscal responsibility tonight; they have no idea how much it is going to cost. It is going to be a big cost. They all know that.

But it is my pleasure to yield to the gentleman from Georgia, Dr. PHIL GINGREY, who I know is an old pro at these Special Orders and does a great job. It is something that I think a lot of Americans, myself included, as I was growing up, we tried to put this group together as we talked. We wanted small business people, people from the business background, to be on the floor.

When you introduce a guy, Dr. PHIL GINGREY, and say he is a physician, a lot of Americans like myself in my younger days didn't realize a physician is a small business owner. He is a man or a woman who is running a practice. You call them patients, but they are customers. But it is a practice, and it is a business.

You have to meet a bottom line, and you have to do what many do, the plumber, the car dealer or the computer business operator, you are meeting that bottom line and making sure it is profitable.

Mr. GINGREY. I thank the gentleman. No question about it, physicians are small businessmen and women. I do feel a little bit like a fish out of water with the economic competitors caucus. Most of my colleagues who have spoken here are, indeed, without question, small businessmen and women, and, in fact, of course, Representative CONAWAY from Texas is a CPA.

But as Representative SHUSTER is saying, physicians are small businessmen and women. Even a small practice like the one I was in with the four or five OB/GYN doctors, we probably had 40 employees, nurses, front office people, lab people.

BILL SHUSTER is absolutely right: we had to meet a payroll, we had to provide health insurance, we had to provide benefits. We had to worry about how we are going to have the money to expand and maybe bring in a new partner and grow the practice.

My colleagues were talking about section 179 under the IRS Tax Code that under Republican leadership would increase the amount that could be deducted on capital improvements, bricks and mortar, putting in a new X-ray machine, whatever, from \$25,000 to \$100,000, and to allow that small businessman and -woman to write off an additional \$300,000 worth of capital improvement, investment, job growth, over an accelerated period of time.

That has, Mr. Speaker and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, without question, has stimulated this economy. As I listen to my colleagues in the first part of the Special Order talking about the job growth, the unemployment rate, the increase, the amount of revenue, particularly over the last couple of years, I think we are talking about maybe an additional \$400 billion worth of revenue after these tax cuts that includes low and marginal rates for every single taxpayer, the increase in child tax credit from \$600 a child to \$1,000 a child, eliminating the marriage tax penalty that Mr. CONAWAY talked about, eliminating that death tax.

We have, Mr. Speaker, created 7 million additional jobs since the spring of 2003. When I first got here in the early part of 2003, for months at a time I heard my colleagues on the other side of the aisle talk about, watch, we have lost another 30,000 jobs this month, we have lost another 40,000 jobs this month. Now they can't say that because I think we have gone something like 18 straight months with job growth.

But what I do hear them saying is, oh, these are service jobs, these are minimum-wage jobs. They are not important. I didn't hear that argument when they were wailing away about the fact that we are losing jobs.

We could have said, well, these are unimportant jobs, these are seasonal jobs, these are service jobs. They are not that important to the economy. They are important to the economy, and they create dignity of work and pride and an accomplishment, people putting out a day's work for a day's pay.

□ 2215

So that is really what we have done here. I think that what my good friend from Pennsylvania was saying cuts right to the chase: PAYGO rules as adopted in that omnibus rules package for the 110th Congress that was passed last week is a recipe for making it easier to raise taxes and more difficult indeed, Mr. Speaker, if not impossible, to lower taxes. And that is exactly what these new PAYGO rules do. Because under these rules, as my colleagues

know, you can raise taxes without any offsetting cut by simply going through this process of reconciliation and raise all this entitlement spending, and that is exactly what will happen.

Representative SHUSTER was talking, or maybe Mr. CONAWAY, a few minutes ago about this bill that we just passed in regard to completing the promises of the 9/11 Commission. It doesn't do that; it is an absolute farce to suggest that it does. But there is no question that inspecting every single piece of cargo, every single crate that comes into this country through a maritime port, can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, what the cost is? They totally ignored how we are going to pay for that.

So this PAYGO business, it is not law. It is not in legislation. It does not have the force of that, and our colleagues on the other side of the aisle can simply waive a rule any time they want to in term of PAYGO. So we need to be truthful to the American people.

It has been said during this hour that, in 1960, we had a Democratic President, President Kennedy, and he cut taxes, and we raised revenue; President Reagan did it in 1980; and President George W. Bush has done it in 2001 and 2003. We have not lost revenue because of lower rates and tax incentives mainly for small businessmen and women; we have created an additional 7 million jobs. And, yes, they are paying taxes at a lower rate. Yes, they are getting to deduct certain things to help them be able to grow their businesses. And so you have a lot more people, 7 million, indeed who are paying taxes or paying at a lower rate. But when you crunch the numbers, and I am not a math major, but that is where you come up with an additional \$450 billion. Whereas, on this static scoring system that we get from OMB and CBO, they say, well, because you have cut the rate here and you cut the rate there and you have given \$1,000 instead of \$600 per child and you are finally getting rid of the death tax, over 10 years, this is going to cost \$1.3 trillion. Well, yes, if it didn't work, it was going to cost \$1.3 trillion. But the fact is, it did work. Instead of costing money, we raised revenue, as Representative SHUSTER has pointed out.

But I will guarantee you one thing, Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, if you let these tax cuts expire, and there is no question about the cost to the American taxpayer and it is real, it will be an additional \$2.4 million.

Mr. Speaker, with that I am going to turn it over to the real experts on business. But I appreciate the opportunity of joining them tonight and weighing in on this.

Mr. SHUSTER. I thank the gentleman. And as you pointed out, the PAYGO rules, the decrease from a three-fifths majority to a simple majority to pass tax increases, that should make every American sit up and say, my goodness, the Democrats do plan on raising taxes. But if they still aren't sure about it, I have got just a couple of quotes here.

The incoming chairman of the Ways and Means Committee told Bloomberg News that he cannot think of one of the tax cuts passed under President George Bush that merits renewal. He also told the Congressional Daily when he was asked whether he considered tax increases across the income spectrum, and his quote was, "No question about it." He said, "Everything has to be on the table." "Everything" would mean repealing the 10 percent low income tax bracket, the child tax credit I talked about, the marriage penalty, all of which was passed in 2001 and, of course, the death tax. And my good friend from Texas knows full well what it is going to do to a lot of business owners on Main Street. We are not talking about Wall Street, we are talking about Main Street America and in the farms of the Midwest.

So with that, I yield to my good friend from Texas.

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. The gentleman from Pennsylvania is correct. I think one of the concerns I have about the death tax is, in many cases, it has the potential to rob some of the smaller communities in America from some of the mainstays in their community. I think about the farmer who worked for 20, 30, 40 years putting together pieces of land, making his operation a little bit larger so that he can compete today in a global economy and wants his son, our sons to be a part of that business in the future. But as the gentleman, my good friend Mr. CONAWAY, my neighbor to the south, said: Depending on what day he dies, he may not have any land to leave his sons, or they may have a new partner.

I do a number of town hall meetings as I travel through out my district. I have a very large district, 29,000 square miles, 27 counties. And one evening I was talking to a group of citizens in a little small community, and after that was over, I had a young woman come up to me and say, "You know, Congressman, we have had this ranch in our family for nearly 100 years, and recently my father passed away, and we are faced with the fact that we may have to sell a part of this ranch to keep some of it." And I think about a small auto dealership that the founder of that built up over the years, worked hard, paid taxes already.

I think the egregious thing about this death tax is we have been talking about the taxes that have been imposed on these small businesses over the years, and they work hard and in spite of paying all those taxes, property taxes, income taxes, employment taxes, then at the end, we say, "You did such a great job of building that business, we are going to tax it one more time." And in many cases, it has the potential to put those businesses out of business and take away in some cases a fairly major employer in that community.

So I think one of the things that we have been kind of saying tonight, and my colleagues, is that we are at a

crossroads here, and we have some very important decisions to make on behalf of the American people here for the next few years, and I am concerned, as many of you are, that some of these businesses, if we don't act in a way to be friendlier to small business, keeping many of these tax cuts permanent, and if we don't look at permanently eliminating the death tax, that again we could really penalize these small businesses.

Mr. CONAWAY. Let me just add a little bit to what my good friend is talking about.

In 2011, the portion of your estate that is not taxable drops back to \$1 million. You know, \$1 million sounds like a lot of money, and it is, don't get me wrong. I had a staffer the other day who made the comment that \$12 million wasn't much money. And I said, "Well, who has got a checkbook?" So one of them got out a personal check, and I said, "Tear a deposit slip out of that checkbook." So they tore it out, and I handed it to the staffer, and I said, "Put \$12 million on that deposit slip." And they said, "Well, it won't fit." I said, "Okay, well, \$12 million is a lot."

One million dollars is a lot of money. But in today's environment, with property values having gone to what they are, it doesn't take a super successful individual to get at that \$1 million and much above that when you add in their house and life insurance and those kinds of things. So when the other side talks about the death tax, they typically throw out Warren Buffett or Bill Gates or these other bazillionaires as examples why we need to redistribute that wealth.

The truth of the matter is this tax hits smalltown America. I was at dinner tonight with an individual who had some property west of Fort Worth, west of Aledo, actually, maybe in your district, that 4 or 5 years ago was selling for \$750 an acre. And because of the growth in population, growth of Aledo and other areas, now that land is \$46,000 an acre, and so that family has suddenly gone into a pretty good sizeable estate.

Now, it is their money. They took the risk of owning that property. They took the risk of trying to make a living off that property, paying the property taxes year after year after year on that property, and now the Federal Government in January 1, 2011, becomes a 55 percent partner in that deal.

This is the one tax that I think is just fundamentally wrong. We are always going to have taxes collected in some way or another. We have got to find the minimum amount of money needed to fund the Federal Government, and that has got to be taxes. But the death tax ought to be one that we wean ourselves from and get away from it because it is fundamentally flawed. It is unfair, and it is really one that hurts small America, and it has generational ripple effects. You and I both have constituents who tell us

time and again they are paying for their own property a second and third time because when grand-dad died, they had to borrow money to pay it off. They just got that paid off, and then their dad died and passed it down, they had to borrow money to pay the estate taxes, and now they have got it paid off. So that cycle is just flat out fundamentally unfair.

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. The gentleman makes a great point. Not only does, in many cases, it affect the families that own that property, but in many cases, let's say you have got a heating and air conditioning business here that employs 50, 60 people. And all of a sudden the founder passes away, and the next day the family has to come and say to these employees, "I don't know whether we are going to be able to continue this business or not because we are going to have to borrow a bunch of money to pay the taxes." And in many cases, putting a bunch of debt on a new business or even an existing business requires servicing that debt and has an impact. And so then it is a ripple effect because that tax base that has been in that community for a number of years is in jeopardy, and the commitment and the contribution that that small business has made to that community sometimes disappears.

I think the fact that we said earlier, and I think all of us said, that America was built by these small businesses, small ranchers, doctors, entrepreneurs all across this country, we built this country that way, but we have the danger of tearing it down with a poor taxing policy.

Mr. SHUSTER. I would like to recognize the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee. I think it is vitally important that it is individuals and small business owners and businesses across this country that pay these taxes. And I want to put a personal face on this.

If the majority party allows taxes to be increased, it will cost us nearly \$2.4 trillion in new taxes to American taxpayers. What does that mean to people across America tonight and the people in the First Congressional District of Tennessee? It means that there will be 115 million taxpayers who would pay an average of \$1,716 more each year. It means that 48 million married couples would pay an average of \$2,726 more every year; and it means that 17 million seniors would pay an average of over \$2,000 more a year. It is real people paying real dollars, and I hope the people in this body will remember that as we move forward.

I am disappointed that we changed the rules last week with the majority vote to decrease the amount of people that it takes to increase taxes. I think it should have been left at three-fifths, not a simple majority. I think that was a mistake last week when the majority party did that. I hope they will protect taxpayers in America over the next 2 years.

Mr. SHUSTER. I thank the gentleman from Tennessee.

Our time is running out, but I want to just talk about a real world experience. There is a family, Mr. and Mrs. Smith living in my hometown of Hollidaysburg or maybe even Youngstown, Ohio, or a small town in Florida or California; that person, Mr. and Mrs. Smith making \$40,000 combined income, if these tax cuts are allowed to expire, they are going to pay about \$2,100 more in taxes a year. And there are some people in this country who may think that \$2,100 isn't a lot of money; but for that family struggling in Youngstown, Ohio, \$2,100 a year, if you put \$2,100 in the bank every year, at 5 percent interest return on that \$2,100 and you invested it every year for 10 years, that turns into over \$30,000. That is a good nest egg for that family to put their son or daughter through college or pay a good chunk of that if you are going to a great State school. So these things are serious, they are real life, and I just want to thank all the Members who came down here tonight who come from, whether it is a home care business, as Mr. DAVIS, or CPA or Mr. NEUGEBAUER being a builder and a developer, myself running an automobile dealership, people just like us all across America that have to be concerned about what is going to happen here in the next 2 years. And all Americans need to understand that they have to talk to their Members of Congress and put the pressure on them to make sure that these tax cuts stay in place so that the American people can keep more of their hardearned dollars in their pockets and they can spend it as they see fit and not send it here to Washington, D.C. to be spent by faceless, nameless bureaucrats in many of these agencies.

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30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 45 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to be before 110th Congress. I can tell you that as the 30-something Working Group has been coming to the floor for 3-plus years and talking about what we would like to do if we were ever in the majority, and the American people saw fit to give the Democrats the majority here in this House last November. And we are appreciative and grateful, and I am glad to be here with my good colleague Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

Mr. RYAN is around here on the floor somewhere, Mr. Speaker. I believe he is hiding because of the lashing, or it is hard to put it in words, that the Florida Gators, who, it was reported that it was said that they shouldn't even get off the bus to play against the number-one ranked Ohio Buckeyes.

But I am going to yield to Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, and then we will get into the meat of our discussion, because Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ has a

degree and paper hanging on her wall from University of Florida, and on her car she has Florida tags. I mean, she is a real Gator. I just kind of happen to be from the State of Florida.

But go ahead, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Congratulations.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you so much. We are all Gators today. It is a Gator Nation. And we were just thrilled that the fighting Gator football team came to play yesterday, dominated Mr. RYAN's team, although Mr. RYAN went to Youngstown; so he is not technically a Buckeye, but I guess anyone who hails from the State of Ohio is a Buckeye. And we enjoyed showing the Buckeyes that we belonged in that game, and we are just very proud of our Florida Gators.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. If the gentleman from Florida would yield, I am happy to take my whooping like a man, Mr. Speaker. And let me just say to you, Mr. Speaker, and any of the other Members who may be Buckeye fans, not only was the game horrible, a complete whooping, but then I woke up this morning and the first thing I did was I called Mr. MEEK, and I said, "Mr. MEEK, I had a terrible dream last night. It was awful. Let me tell you about it." And he reminded me that it actually happened. And then our first meeting this morning, I ran into Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, who was in her beautiful outfit that she has on now but also the University Florida Gator glasses, and her Coke this morning had a little cozy on it that was also blue and orange. So she is very humble about her victory last night. And the only thing I can say is that the coach of Florida is an Ohioan, born just a few miles outside of my district. That is all I am hanging on to.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. We will give him that.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That is all I am hanging on to. But it was a great game, and you have got a great coach and a great team, and see you on the basketball court.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, you did take it like a man. We were watching the game together, and it was great for college football and great for all of us here in the country to see the underdog win. And it kind of tells our story here in the U.S. House of Representatives. And I just want to thank everyone on behalf of all of us. But tonight we are going to take a moment because, Mr. Speaker, when we come back to the floor, we have a number of freshmen that are coming in that are new 30-somethings that were elected in this election, and they are going to come to the floor. I believe, and all of us in 30-Something Working Group believe, that we were effective in the 108th and the 109th Congress, communicating with the American people. We want to thank not only the Speaker but also the majority leader, Mr. HOYER; and also Mr. CLYBURN, who was our Democratic leader, now our Democratic whip; and now Mr. EMANUEL for

his good work, who is our chairman of the Democratic Caucus; and Mr. LARSON, who is the vice chairman, for all the support they gave the 30-Something Working Group, including the Members on the Democratic side of the aisle.

We talked about what we would do, Mr. Speaker, if we had the opportunity to get into the majority. And I am happy to report that we talked about putting in standards on PAYGO, making sure that whatever we appropriated, wherever we spend, that we also identify how we are going to pay for it so that we can get away from owing all of these countries money as we owe now. And there is a lot of work that has to be done that the Republican Congress has left us with.

Looking at records like this, \$1.05 trillion borrowed by the President and the Republican majority in the 109th Congress and the 108th Congress over 42 Presidents at \$1 trillion. So all of the charts you see here tonight, Mr. Speaker, will only be resurrected, if I could use that word, every now and then because the charts are going to be talking about what we have done. We did that last week.

Today we implemented the 9/11 Commission's recommendations, all of them, here on this floor. And we had some of our Republican colleagues join us, and we are going to work in a bipartisan way to make sure that we do what we told the American people we would do in our Six in 2006 plan.

Also, I think it is important, on Wednesday, we are going to raise the minimum wage will be raised here on this House of Representatives floor. This House that we talked about time after time again that we would do if given the opportunity. Later this week, securing low prices on prescription drugs, giving the Federal Government negotiating opportunity with the drug companies. Also stem cell research, ethics reform. These are things that the 109th Congress under Republican control, they didn't even do it. And we have done it within the first 100 hours, and we have a lot more that we would like to do. So I would not only like to thank our good friend, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, which our districts neighbor each other in Florida, but Mr. RYAN and Mr. DELAHUNT, Uncle Bill, in his absence.

Mr. Speaker, he apologized for not being here tonight, and I told him, this is the first night that we are on the floor coming back in the majority. And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, as I yield to my colleagues, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and Mr. RYAN, that I know from me and from all of us in the 30-Something Working Group, we are forever grateful to the American people for allowing us to have the opportunity to lead in a commonsense way on their behalf. And it took Republicans and it took independents and it took Democrats and it took the Green Party and it took folks who