

We also make college more affordable by passing a bill that cuts the interest rates on subsidized student loans for undergraduates in half over the next 5 years. This is particularly important, also, for Hispanic Americans, since 50 percent of Latinos, undergrads, receive Federal aid affecting some 205,000 students throughout this country.

We are extremely proud to have done that. The interest rates on those loans for those students is essential, that we can lower them to a level where it has a direct impact on the cost of higher education. We also know that tuition has been increasing. No one knows that better than parents and young people that are going to college.

We set America on the path to energy independence by passing a bill that repeals \$14 billion in subsidies to big oil and gas companies and invests those funds, instead, in clean, renewable energy resources and alternative fuels.

This is just the beginning of the work we are going to be doing. I am really pleased.

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

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

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TOOK BACK THEIR GOVERNMENT

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

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to lend my voice with all of the people who voted for a change for America, but especially to lend my voice with my fellow new Congressmen, the freshmen. I rise because I believe that we were sent here to pursue an agenda for America, to set our country on a new course, a new course which put the public good at the center of our efforts, a new course which said that politics must be in service to the average citizen.

This past November, the winds of change took on a gale force in American politics. American people took back their government. They sent a loud and clear message that the government was here for them, by them and of them. No more, no big contracts. No more legislation written behind closed doors by and for the special interests, no more whittling away the constitutional rights that we were fighting, and no more bridges built to nowhere. No more rubber-stamp administration.

We are going to have an active and engaged Congress that really believes in the principle of oversight, and no more escalating an oil war that we believe is sacrificing innocent young Americans for no legitimate purpose.

The American people voted in record numbers and demanded that their voices be heard. They wanted their government to respond to their needs, and their needs are not the needs of the big oil companies, the big pharmaceutical companies or the Halliburtons of this world.

American people want a new politics of inclusion, of generosity. The American people want a new politics which says everybody counts and everybody matters. The Democrats heard them.

In record time, 100 hours, we made history by passing a people's agenda. Yes, within 100 hours, minimum-wage workers were able to say that they were getting a raise; within 100 hours, lifesaving research, so that people could have a real chance at a cure for their loved ones and themselves. Within 100 hours, real implementation of the 9/11 Commission recommendations, and within the 100 hours we made a real statement about education being affordable for all Americans.

I am proud to be a Member of this new class of freshmen, proud to be a Member of these folks who came here to make a change to put the public interest first. The public interest is a very good idea, and I am very proud to say that I have been a part of it.

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

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

FRESHMEN 100 HOURS

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

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, there are times when the people of this great Nation need and demand things of their government that politics make it impossible to accomplish. This has been the case far too often throughout the last 12 years. Through the last election, the people of this Nation have demanded that this government reexamine and change our priorities and our direction.

The people have asked us to respond to their hopes and their dreams and their needs. They have asked us to realize that there are good citizens of this Nation, honest people who work hard and play by the rules and who nonetheless struggle and live in poverty and toil in obscurity through no fault of their own.

The people have called us to recognize the equality of opportunity, the basis upon which this Nation was founded, the means of equal access to education, equal chances to go to college. The people have demanded that we never squash the hope of science with the politics of partisan personal gain, that we never play games with

the opportunity to save lives. They know that the minute that this great Nation stops being a beacon of hope and a champion of forward progress for the world, that we become something less than what we are.

The people have demanded that we never allow the concerns of special interests to collide with the public good, that there will come a day when the quality of our time will be judged not only on our ability to pioneer lifesaving drugs but our ability to make them available to all of our citizens.

The people have demanded that when you gather a group of our Nation's leading experts and ask them to take a hard look at what we need to do to keep our people safe and make our Nation stronger, that they take on that charge and honor their commitment, that you do everything necessary to implement their recommendations handed down to you; and the people have demanded that the conduct of our public officials be beyond reproach, that the great balancing act of our democracy rests upon a fulcrum of public trust that is fragile as it is vital.

But for the past 12 years, politics has demanded something different. Between the 104th and 109th Congress, 6,900 rollcall votes were taken, and politics prevailed almost every time.

In the very first few hours of the 110th Congress, the people have had their day. The people compelled us to raise the minimum wage, not politics. The people asked us to work to cut student loan rates in half, not politics. The people led us to expand stem cell research, not politics. Concern for those people made it imperative that we implement the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission and that we take away the tax breaks for oil companies that have made their profits on the backs of recent American suffering, that we start a process for real meaningful negotiation for prescription drugs, not politics.

The people move us to make immediate changes in the ethical rules that govern this Chamber. Their commitment to a new day in America, and a new day in Congress made it vital that we restore the public trust. We saw the faces and heard the needs of the people we were elected to serve; and in this first 100 hours, we have acted. We have brought in new leadership that recognizes that this was a Nation disconnected with its government, and they have taken immediate and bold steps to reconnect it.

I would be remiss not to commend the leadership's admirable example for the past 2 weeks.

The people were at the heart of what we have done here so far, and the people will be at the heart of the legislative agenda we champion in the days to come.

□ 1230

Mr. Speaker, these past 2 weeks have been times of great change, historic times that herald an era of American