

DEMOCRATS RECOGNIZE THAT ECONOMY IS IN TROUBLE, VOW TO WORK WITH BUSH TO STIMULATE ECONOMY

(Mr. SIREs asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SIREs. Madam Speaker, across the country more and more Americans are struggling to make ends meet. Unemployment has risen to 5 percent. Home values are dropping and millions of Americans are getting hit with mortgage rate adjustments. At the same time, the costs of health care, groceries, gasoline, home heating oil, and college educations continue to rise. It is welcome news that Federal Reserve Chairman Bernanke is signaling that the Fed will cut interest rates to address the slowing economy. But this is not enough.

Democrats want to work with the President and the Republican Congress in the coming weeks to jump-start the economy and provide sound relief to American families. I would hope that we can all agree that the economy needs a jolt. Democrats believe a fiscal stimulus plan should adhere to three simple principles to be effective: It must be timely, targeted, and temporary.

Madam Speaker, we want to work in a bipartisan fashion immediately to develop a legislative plan based on these three principles so that the stimulus plan can be passed and implemented into law without delay.

SOUND POLICY FOR AMERICA'S ENERGY NEEDS, NOT HOLLOW PROMISES

(Mr. BOUSTANY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BOUSTANY. Madam Speaker, across the country, American families are dealing with high energy prices. Families, especially those at risk due to home foreclosure, illness, and job insecurity face high anxiety about just how high these prices will go. Oil and gas prices soared last year, but this Congress did nothing to address the underlying problem. Some suggest an increase in the gasoline tax, a 40-cent per gallon increase. Now that is a lot of money in southwest Louisiana.

Washington must rein in waste and promote energy solutions to meet our energy needs. This Congress should promote sensible policies that unleash American ingenuity to come up with the next generation of alternative fuels. Washington also needs to work to fix our aging roadways and bridges. But we have a responsibility to cut wasteful spending instead of hiking taxes.

Let's do something positive for the people. We can promote energy solutions and fund necessary repairs for our infrastructure. Increasing taxes is not a solution. Let's make the hard de-

isions, because that is what the American people put us here to do.

ADMINISTRATION'S BUILDUP TO WAR IN IRAN

(Mr. KUCINICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, over the past few years this administration has been beating the drums of war against Iran. There are parallels against their efforts to try to create a war against Iran and the falsehoods that set us on the path to war against Iraq. We know that the United States intelligence community was able to demonstrate that the administration's claims that Iran had a nuclear weapons program were in fact not true.

The January 6 incident at the Strait of Hormuth is still another cause for this Congress to look deeply at the administration's Iranian war buildup, because it appears from news reports that the Department of Defense grossly inflated an encounter that took place in the strait, an encounter that was not like any that had taken place before, and then not only inflated it, but fabricated information that would cause the American people to believe that Iran was demonstrating military aggressiveness.

We really have to get off the path of war towards Iran and start working on building diplomatic relations.

TAX INCREASES HARM THE ECONOMY

(Mr. AKIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. AKIN. Madam Speaker, as we start a new year, one of the things that we are seeing in the economy is signs of stress. The unemployment is rising somewhat, we see the trouble with the housing market, the savings and loan crisis. Over the past year, the Chairman of the Fed, Ben Bernanke, warned that the Democrat tax increases increasingly threaten our economy. Last year, the Democrats passed a \$528 billion tax increase here in the House and proposed the mother of all tax increases, a \$3.5 trillion tax increase, the largest in the history of our country.

That is exactly the wrong medicine in an economy that is struggling. Instead, what we should be doing is we should be returning a portion of that money that people earn so that it can be invested and strengthen the economy and put us back on the road to recovery, just as we did in 2001 and 2002. It's time for us to understand that tax increases are exactly the wrong medicine when the economy is struggling. I hope the Democrats remember that.

TAX BREAKS FOR THOSE SUFFERING THE MOST

(Mr. COHEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. COHEN. Madam Speaker, the Dow Jones Industrial Average has dropped over 10 percent, and all economic indicators indicate that we are in serious financial trouble. This Congress needs to respond on behalf of the American people. Unfortunately, in the past this Congress has responded by giving tax breaks to the wealthiest, and it has created the largest gap in income between the upper 1 percent and the other 99 percent, probably in the history of this country.

We need to work in a bipartisan fashion. We need to work together. The previous speaker was correct: We need to give money back to taxpayers. But they need to be the working taxpayers, who are suffering the most, the people who are now unemployed, not able to pay taxes because they have lost their jobs, or people who need help with food stamps, and people who will immediately put that money into the economy, not the wealthiest who have savings in the hundreds and thousands and millions of dollars and can live on through this and survive it and won't put that money back into the economy.

The tax breaks of the past were mistakes. The spending needs to be for people who are suffering. They are the people who know the hard economic times we have. I read my e-mails on a daily basis and there are many people out there suffering who need economic help now. We need to act in a bipartisan fashion, but remember those who suffer the most.

□ 1015

EMPLOYERS WHO HIRE ILLEGALS

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, during a routine traffic stop, an illegal immigrant named Juan Leonardo Quintero-Perez shot Houston Police Officer Rodney Johnson in the back of the head and killed him. This case highlights the illegal immigrant epidemic in this country.

It seems, however, that Juan Quintero-Perez had already been deported before from the United States. In 1998, Quintero was arrested and convicted of indecency with a child in Texas and then was deported back to Mexico. But Perez was able to return to the United States a few months later because his employer, Robert Camp, sent money to Mexico to hire a smuggler that snuck Perez back to Houston.

Camp knew that Quintero-Perez was an illegal immigrant and a criminal, but Camp hired him again anyway. Camp even rented a home for Quintero-Perez, and then Perez murdered Officer Johnson.