

that this House of Representatives be mindful of the difficulties that the American people are faced with.

Madam Speaker, millions of American people and families are absolutely hanging on by their fingernails. They're on the verge of losing their homes. Many have already. And so much of it has been because of bad policies by their government. It is important for us to understand that, Madam Speaker, so much of this could possibly have been prevented had we moved quicker, had we made different policies.

This is a very sobering time. Two major events happened today. One is, the American people, many are in line at post offices as we speak trying to meet the midnight deadline to pay their taxes. Others are struggling to do so. Others are having difficulty even beginning to comprehend the complexities, the complications of a tax code that even if they sat down to read it, it would take them over 1 year trying to read the tax code, let alone trying to understand it, just the volume of trying to read it.

And Madam Speaker, we in Congress must take into consideration how difficult that is, the fact that the American people, many are not even taking the credits or getting the deductions that they should have because they don't understand it. Twenty-five percent of American families that are entitled to the Earned Income Tax Credit don't even get it because they don't understand how to do it.

Last year, over 65 percent of American families had to get a private person from the outside to come help them with their taxes. That has increased up 25 percent, since just 10 years ago it was 40. And in 1950, it was just 20 percent that did that. The complexity of our tax code is just out of whack. Many are gathered around the kitchen tables right now trying to find out how they're going to have ends meet.

And Madam Speaker, the other phenomenal event in our economy that took place today was the merger of Delta Airlines and Northwest Airlines, making the largest airline company in the world. That is certainly room to celebrate, but it's very important that we be very mindful to both Delta and Northwest to understand the implications of that, to have the sensitivity that there are many thousands of families that are impacted, and that we do not use the word "synergy" to equate with a loss of jobs, but that there are no jobs lost.

We in Congress must have the empathy of putting ourselves into the mindset of the American people, and we must show that we understand the difficulties that the American people are faced with; we understand the difficulties of knowing when they wake up the next morning, their car may be repossessed, they may have a foreclosure notice.

Our policies must be, here in this House of Representatives going for-

ward, to keep Americans in their homes, even if it means coming up with the policies and moving as fast as we can. If we could move with licketysplit speed to save Wall Street, Bear Stearns, and Madam Speaker, I believe that was the right thing to do because, had we not, global markets would have cascaded and we would have had an extraordinary world calamity in the financial markets, but just as aggressively as we moved with those policies that helped Wall Street and Bear Stearns, we must move to help our homeowners and our families.

And then finally, Madam Speaker, the real elephant facing us in the room, the real looming threat economically and financially to this country is our overwhelming debt. Madam Speaker, it is staggering to look at the debt that we are in. Every dime we are spending is on borrowed money. And we have spent, Madam Speaker, as I conclude, in the last 5 or 6 years, more money from foreign governments than in the entire history of this country.

Madam Speaker, that's the state of our economy. And it's very important that we reflect it from the perspective of the American people. And I thank you for this opportunity.

COMPLEXITY OF TAX CODE

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

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, you know, it is said that nothing in the world is certain except death and taxes. And I'll tell you, being a physician in my former life, that sometimes even death is a little less complicated than our tax system.

The complexity of the tax code is a consequence of countless deductions and exemptions that are aimed not at collecting revenue, but steering a social agenda. And the result is a Federal law that is fraught with opportunities for avoiding taxes and full of loopholes to be exploited, all at the expense of fellow Americans.

My criticizing the tax code is as American as apple pie and baseball, and for good reason, because every year Americans spend billions of hours and billions of dollars, and that's not counting the billions of hours that we spend complaining about the tax code. Time is money, and time should be spent growing the economy and creating jobs.

There is a strong prescription for real change in our tax code. We caught a glimpse of it when Ronald Reagan cut the tax code in half back in 1986. As a result of that reform, the economy grew, revenues increased, and jobs were created. The prescription is pretty simple: Flatten the tax, broaden the base, and shift the burden away from families and small businesses.

And we do have a practical and effective blueprint, it's called the flat tax. Back in 1981, Robert Hall and Alvin

Rabushka proposed a radically simple structure that would transform the Internal Revenue Service and our economy by creating a single tax rate for all Americans. Today, several States have implemented a single rate tax structure for their State income tax, and from Utah to Massachusetts citizens are realizing the benefit.

In Colorado, a single rate tax generated so much income that it was reduced 10 years after its implementation. In Indiana, the economy boomed after a single rate went into effect in 2003, and since that time the corporate income tax receipts have grown by 250 percent.

Now, several people in Congress are working on the problem. I have a bill, H.R. 1040, which is a voluntary flat tax. A companion bill was introduced by the senior Senator from Tennessee just this past week. We have bills from DAVID DREIER, the gentleman from California, PAUL RYAN from Wisconsin, all trying to accomplish the same goal, and it is so simple. You have a single rate, you have a single piece of paper. You put in your name, just a little bit of identification data, write in your income, there's a line for personal exemptions, calculate your deductions from personal exemptions and calculate your taxable income, multiply it by a flat rate, subtract the taxes already withheld, and you're done. And what did that take? Not even 30 seconds. No more expensive tax attorney bills, no more hours of stressful research, no more headaches. It is much less costly, saving the taxpayers more than \$100 billion per year. And it would increase tax compliance. The result: Increase in personal savings, and there is a stimulus package that would have an immediate effect on our American economy.

Recent polling by a group called American Solutions shows that over 80 percent of Americans favor an optional one-page tax return form with a single rate. Now, we hear a lot of talk about change this year. You practically cannot turn on the television without some political commercial talking about change. Well, let's consider how change could improve the most complicated of institutions, the Internal Revenue Service. And more importantly, consider how that change could deliver prosperity and return time, the precious commodity of time, to the American taxpayer. Now, that's a stimulus package worthy of everyone's vote.

THE REAL CULPRIT FOR RISING FOOD PRICES

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Madam Speaker, the world is beginning to understand what my constituents have known for far too long, higher food prices and higher