

dropped by \$1,200. These are sobering statistics. The middle class is simply getting squeezed in this country.

After 7½ years of the administration policies, it's not a surprise 99 percent are getting hurt and the top 1 percent are doing better than ever. And now JOHN MCCAIN is offering an economic plan to cut taxes to this top 1 percent by \$127,000.

It is time for a new direction.

□ 1015

EXELON

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

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, Exelon, an energy company which provides electricity to my district in Pennsylvania, recently announced a voluntary goal of reducing, offsetting, or displacing more than 15 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions per year by 2020. This is more than the company's current annual carbon emission total and is equivalent to taking nearly 3 million cars off American roads and highways.

The campaign, called Exelon 2020, will pursue three broad strategies: first, reduce or offset Exelon's carbon emissions by reducing energy consumption and operating to the highest environmental standards; secondly, help customers and the communities in which they serve to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency programs and a diverse portfolio of green products and services; and third, offer more low-carbon electricity in the marketplace.

The voluntary, market-driven strategies such as Exelon 2020 will help to strengthen our clean energy infrastructure, and they should be commended.

MIDDLE CLASS TAX FAIRNESS ACT

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

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, the gentleman on our side of the aisle who just spoke from Illinois laid out the exact situation that's happening in our economy. That's why today I'm proud to introduce the Middle Class Tax Fairness Act, which will allow the average taxpayer to keep more of their hard-earned dollars.

In this slow economy, it's unfair to put the load of taxation right on the backs of the middle class. Middle class Americans are being squeezed by high gas prices, high cost of groceries, high health care costs, high tuition costs, and their paychecks, as you heard, are not keeping up with the rising costs. And in fact, the speaker was right; they're actually \$1,000 less than they were 5 years ago.

Meanwhile, our tax code is full of government waste and unnecessary giveaways to the richest 1 percent.

Today, I am introducing legislation that will restore balance to our tax code and do something unusual: help reduce the national debt. My bill will be a jump-start to this slumping economy. It will double the standard deduction for the next 2 years, providing an annual savings of \$750 to 61 million Americans. It will expand access to the child tax credit and provide relief on property tax.

My legislation allows the middle class to keep their income and does so in a fiscally responsible manner, by fully being paid for.

Madam Speaker, it is easy to offer a tax cut. It's harder to pay for it. Join me.

LIFT THE AMERICAN OIL EMBARGO

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

Mr. CARTER. Madam Speaker, today we vote on a bill to draw down the Strategic Petroleum Reserve by 70 million barrels of oil. The U.S. consumes 21 to 23 million barrels of oil a day. So this is just over 3 days' supply.

The good news is that our Democrat colleagues have finally started to realize that supply is the problem. Seventy million barrels may help slightly the pain at the pump, but so would the billions of barrels of oil in ANWR, offshore, and in shale oil.

Increasing American energy supply is not an ideological issue like traditional marriage or abortion. It's a simple issue of do you support the American people or radical environmental groups.

Sixty-seven percent of the American people want safe, environmentally sound drilling for oil. This is what the American people want. This is what they should have. The only obstacle seems to be Speaker PELOSI and the Democrat Congress.

Americans are counting on Congress to work together and lift the American oil embargo. Americans stand ready to work with the Democrats, as do the Republicans.

POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS OF IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES

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

Mr. BACA. Madam Speaker, I speak on behalf of the 12 to 14 million immigrants in the United States.

Throughout history, America has been a Nation of immigrants. For decades, immigrants have contributed with their heart, sweat, and tears to have the American dream like the rest of us.

Immigrant families continue to pay property taxes in the form of rent, pay sales taxes on every purchase, and most importantly, contribute to Social Security without legally having any

claim to any of it. Yet, there are those who wish to downplay these positive contributions for political gain.

You don't see many local governments turning away taxes paid by undocumented immigrants. However, you do see local governments spending these tax dollars to create anti-immigration legislation that strip away families of basic services.

I urge my colleagues to get past the anti-immigrant myths and look at the facts about the true positive contributions of immigrants.

We must stand firm and pass comprehensive immigration reform.

HONORING CHARLES HOOKER—WINNER OF CHARACTER COUNTS CONTEST IN ELMHURST, ILLINOIS

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

Mr. ROSKAM. Madam Speaker, I don't know about you, but sitting here and listening to these speeches, I'm ready for some good news. And the good news is we are joined today by a constituent of mine named Charles Hooker, who is a young boy who wrote an essay. It's short, it's sweet, it's succinct, and I'm going to read it to you. It is a result of him winning the Character Counts Contest in Elmhurst, Illinois. This is what young Charles says to us.

"If I were Mayor of Elmhurst, I would be fair to everyone by treating everyone the way I would like to be treated. I would listen to the requests of the young and old equally, because they both matter. I would be honest, be fair, and most importantly give credit to anyone who helped make things possible. I would also make sure I communicated well to show I'm trustful and responsible in all things. I am a Christian, and I would represent God in anything I do."

Madam Speaker, as we listen to these challenges that have been outlined today, I think that's a good word for us all, and I offer great congratulations to young Charles.

WE MUST MAKE THE MINIMUM WAGE A LIVING WAGE

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

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Madam Speaker, today the minimum wage will increase to \$6.55 an hour. This is laudable. However, Madam Speaker, if the truth be told, the increase will be consumed because of inflation, higher gas prices, and higher food prices.

Madam Speaker, we must make the minimum wage a living wage. This is why I have introduced the Living American Wage Act, the LAW Act, such that we can have people who work full time always live above the poverty line.