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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. EDWARDS).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 23, 2009.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DONNA F. EDWARDS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2009, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes and each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, for the past year we have been on an economic roller coaster, with scary turns and falls coming ever faster, making the sinking feeling in the pit of our stomachs even worse.

Along the way, the Federal Government, spurred by the most-dire predictions, has taken sweeping actions. Some, like the bailout, I opposed; others, like the Economic Recovery Package of President Obama, I supported.

But action was warranted to help the struggling economy and restore public confidence. Yet we continue to react to part of the problem with partial stop-gap actions.

This week, Congress has an opportunity to deal with the bigger picture and comprehensive solutions as we consider President Obama's budget.

For decades we have been living beyond our means and the environment's capacity to be a dumping ground for toxic waste, and air and water pollution, especially carbon pollution, that is destabilizing the climate, raising global temperature and sea levels, and changing things we rely on, like growing seasons and water supply.

We have been living on borrowed time and borrowed money. The previous administration cut taxes for those who needed help the least, increased spending but avoided long-term investments in education and our infrastructure like roads, bridges and rail.

The day of reckoning is here, accelerated by the global financial meltdown, the causes of which are clearer than the remedies. The sad truth is that the geniuses who figured out how to enrich themselves were clueless about the broader implications. Too much energy, brain power and lobbying has been spent on making money for a few, not on creating underlying economic value for the Nation. We have been left with two starkly different paths: we can muddle on through doing what we have done, only less of it, with a battle over who will take the biggest losses while continuing these past patterns. Given the array of special interests and the history involved, we have a pretty good idea what that path will look like.

The other approach is outlined in the President's budget: tackle comprehensively the challenges of health care, education, the long-term fiscal stability of the United States and global warming and its real costs and danger.

The health care system is the biggest opportunity for savings. We spend more money than anyone else in the world for health care, but ours is a system where Americans are sick more often and die sooner than people in most developed countries and in even some poor ones. It is not just foreign countries that have figured this out, but many American communities provide better health care while spending less money than the Nation as a whole. We as a Nation can do this.

Energy dependence and carbon pollution doesn't just threaten our way of life in the future, it attacks our pocketbook and our communities now. The President's plan will save families money, make America more secure, and protect the planet.

In the middle of the economic meltdown, we shouldn't and we won't raise taxes. But over the long haul, we are going to have to pay our debts and find money for rebuilding and renewing America. There are areas in the budget that point the way, like keeping some portion of the expiring tax cuts on the most well-off and reinstating the Superfund tax to clean up toxic waste.

Finally, there is the question of tackling unnecessary spending. The President points out agricultural subsidies for the rich agribusiness interests, while shortchanging most farmers and ranchers. There is a way to make more rational our support of agriculture. We need to support him as we all face the question whether Cold War weapons that the military doesn't need, and in some cases doesn't even want, are worth the costs to the American taxpayer.

The path contained in the budget will be the first chance for Congress, the administration, and, most important, the public to weave together the elements of change and reform. There are short-term political risks, to be sure. But the long-term benefits are breathtaking, especially when compared to

This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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continuing the short term, business as usual, unsustainable course that has led us to this point of economic and fiscal disaster.

My hope and prayer is that Congress will be able to meet the President's challenge and work with him to refine his bold budget, treat our problems with the gravity they merit, and the public with the respect that it is due.

FRUIT OF THE BAILOUT MANIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Madam Speaker, it is time for a brief history lesson. In the fall of 2008, the Bush administration came running to Congress with an historic ask: \$700 billion with no strings attached to save the country from financial meltdown. At the time I didn't buy it, so I voted against the bailout plan twice. In fact, my distaste for the bailout plan and the unfettered access to taxpayer money that it gave the Treasury Department and the executive branch was so strong that I soon introduced a bill to stop the bailout mania.

It was a simple bill, but it had to be considered by Congress thanks to the way the bailout law had been written. In a nutshell, it would have stopped the second half of the \$700 billion TARP bailout. I introduced it in 2008 and again in 2009. President Bush's request for the second half of the bailout money in early 2009 triggered consideration of my bill. That's when things got interesting.

The week before we considered my bill to stop the bailout, we also considered another bill called the TARP Reform and Accountability Act. Nice name, but what it essentially did was give a tacit thumbs-up on the second half of the bailout and even more wasteful bailouts with taxpayer money of failed automakers. It had some provisions to increase oversight and transparency. But ultimately, it would have expanded the use of taxpayer money for bailouts.

As I look back over the debates from those two days in January and in the ensuing weeks, I found some comments to be rather surprising, especially in light of the news last week about the outrageous bonuses awarded at AIG, a company which received another \$30 billion this month in government bailout cash. The comments and questions from my friends on the other side of the aisle focused on their unwavering trust in the Obama administration's intentions to stop these sorts of executive bonus payments at companies that received bailout money.

During the debate on the anti-bailout measure, my colleague, Chairman FRANK said, "We saw bankers saying I got the money, it's none of your business what we do with it. We saw bonuses given that shouldn't be given. I am confident that the Obama adminis-

tration has learned from that." In his defense, I know that the chairman of the Financial Services Committee does not support these AIG millionaire bonuses, but we can draw a useful lesson from his comments. It's a simple lesson: the Obama administration pledging that there will be no more excessive bonuses does not make it so.

While I regret that my colleague was so gravely mistaken about the Obama administration, I do think that it is important to point out how quickly the new administration's actions have fallen short of its inflated rhetoric.

Let's take a look at some of the other comments made over the past couple of months. Last month, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. JACKSON) trumpeted President Obama's promise to limit executive compensation at bailed out companies. He said, "Today, the President will limit executive compensation for executives of companies that take advantage of taxpayer bailout funds. This is the right thing to do." And in January, Mr. POMEROY of North Dakota defended his vote to give the Obama administration the \$350 billion in bailout cash, "The written pledges of the Obama administration to operate TARP with firm conditions, greater oversight and transparent accountability abide with the conditions passed by the House."

So what exactly did the Obama administration pledge to do? It pledged to ensure that bailed out financial institutions did not go overboard with excessive executive compensation bonuses. Specifically, his National Economic Adviser wrote a letter to Congress on January 12 that stated: "The President-elect is committed to using the full arsenal of tools available to us to get credit flowing again to families and businesses. He will ask his Department of Treasury to put in place strict and sensible conditions on CEO compensation and dividend payments until taxpayers get their money back." He continued: "We will ensure that resources are directed to increasing lending and preventing new financial crises and not to enriching shareholders or executives. Those receiving exceptional assistance will be subject to tough but sensible conditions that limit executive compensation until taxpayer money is paid back."

One of my colleagues, Mr. MCGOVERN, was very encouraged by this letter from the incoming administration. I will read what he said in response to the administration's pledge: "And I should say that the statement by the Obama administration, the statement by Larry Summers, is all very encouraging. It demonstrates a real appreciation of what average people are going through."

I will leave it to the American people to judge how well the Obama administration has stood by its pledge to "limit executive compensation until taxpayer money is paid back," and I will leave it to the American people to judge how well this administration ap-

preciates what average people are going through—unless, of course, you consider people who get million-dollar bonuses for running a massive company into the grounds to be average.

SAFE MARKETS DEVELOPMENT ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DOGGETT. Madam Speaker, with all of the recent talk about unearned bonuses, I want to talk about a bonus that we Americans can give to ourselves and the world. We can do that by approving President Obama's plan to "make clean, renewable energy the profitable kind of energy." Because we can build a clean energy economy by reducing greenhouse gas emissions—carbon pollution—through a market-based system, as the President has proposed, I am today, together with a number of my colleagues, introducing the Safe Markets Development Act.

This legislation will help to ensure that any future market for carbon allowances is not abused by price speculators or undermined by excessive price volatility. This is the first cap-and-trade measure to be filed in this Congress, and it is unique both in responding to concerns about market manipulation, and in its broad support bringing new members and a broader array of interests behind this new idea about how to resolve one aspect of our transition to a cleaner world.

The Safe Markets bill offers an approach that will provide a narrow auction and trading environment for the start-up phase for a cap-and-trade or cap-and-invest system. Experts on commodities markets tell us that price volatility is not unusual with new markets. And certainly legitimate concern recently over speculation in fossil fuel and financial markets must not stand in our way of new clean energy policy.

How does this bill achieve science-based emission reductions? It creates an independent board with strict conflict-of-interest provisions and post-employment restrictions to determine the annual prices per ton of carbon necessary to meet science-based annual emission targets from 2012 to 2020. The Treasury Department would conduct quarterly allowance auctions designed to maintain this price. Under the legislation, the board would conduct an annual review of its success in meeting emission goals in order to adjust for gas prices to ensure compliance with the next year's targets.

Just as a child removes training wheels after becoming comfortable cycling, or tries the shallow end of the pool before moving into the deep end, so too we can gain experience over these first eight years to move eventually to a more traditional cap-and-trade system.

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Like President Obama, I believe that the best approach is one that relies