best people available in place to analyze that, make a decision and move forward.

And instead, he waits a month to get a response from the Federal Government, builds the sand dam, and then they tell him to tear it down.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Congressman, he waited 2 months before he met with BP. Two months.

Mr. AKIN. You're saying the President waited two months before he goes to meet with BP.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. And he should have been there at least within two days.

Mr. AKIN. Well, that's convenient, because then anything that doesn't work you can continue to blame BP. The problem is, there's all this oil all over the place, that little detail.

You know, I agree with you entirely. BP was wrong. What I'm not clear on, was it more of equipment or was it more human. I suspect from what I've heard, it seemed like it was more operator error than it was technology.

But, be that as it may, it seems to me that the only thing that eclipsed the foolishness and the incompetence of BP is the Federal Government response that's even worse.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Well, it really is. And regardless of whose fault it was on the ground, regardless of whether it was a mistake made by the operator or by the driller or by one of those contractors there, the bottom line is that BP's the operator, so they're ultimately responsible. Again, everybody knows that. But this administration was focused on blame and political expediency rather than fixing the problem.

Mr. AKIN. Well, thank you gentlemen. I appreciate your joining me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing us to talk about budgets, but also about the situation in the gulf.

God bless you. Thank you. Good night.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed and agreed to without amendment bills and a concurrent resolution of the House of the following titles:

H.R. 5569. An act to extend the National Flood Insurance Program until September 30, 2010.

H.R. 5611. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the funding and expenditure authority of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, to amend title 49, United States Code, to extend authorizations for the airport improvement program, and for other purposes.

H.R. 5623. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the homebuyer tax credit for the purchase of a principal residence before October 1, 2010, in the case of a written binding contract entered into with respect to such principal residence before May 1, 2010, and for other purposes.

H. Con. Res. 293. Concurrent resolution providing for a conditional adjournment of the House of Representatives and a conditional recess or adjournment of the Senate.

The message also announced that the Senate has agreed to a concurrent resolution of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. Con. Res. 67. Concurrent resolution celebrating 130 years of United States-Romanian diplomatic relations, congratulating the Romanian people on their achievements as a great nation, and reaffirming the deep bonds of trust and values between the United States and Romania, a trusted and most valued ally.

The message also announced that pursuant to Public Law 105–292, as amended by Public Law 106–55, and as further amended by Public Law 107–228, the Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, upon the recommendation of the Majority Leader, reappoints the following individual to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom:

Dr. Don H. Argue of Washington.

TOPICS OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CRITZ). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from California (Mr. GARAMENDI) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, thank you so very much for this opportunity.

I've been here for the better part of this last hour and I've heard some astounding, astounding accusations and things that are purported to be fact. And I'm just going, What in the world is happening here?

To think that the President of the United States is to blame for the blowout is the most extraordinary leap of logic you could possibly imagine. For the last 15 minutes, we've heard about the President didn't do this, the President didn't do that, the experts were not assembled.

That's just not true. If you knew what was going on, instead of just flapping your lips, you would know that, in fact, shortly, very shortly, within days and hours after this blowout occurred, the best minds in America were assembled in Houston and in Louisiana to deal with this.

The fact of the matter is there is a very, very good reason for the moratorium and, in fact, my colleagues on the Republican side here said the reason. They didn't know why this occurred. Was it human error? Was it a fact? Was it a problem on the rig? Was it a problem down at the bottom? They don't know. And, in fact, we don't know today, and that's why we have a moratorium. We have a moratorium because we don't know why this blowout occurred. We have pretty good evidence that the blowout preventer didn't work. We have pretty good evidence that the efforts of the various methods, the standard methods of dealing with the blowout didn't work. We don't know exactly why this well failed. And until we do know, we ought not be drilling in deep water because we certainly cannot afford another blowout.

Now, in 2008, in the Republican administration, two T–38 jets crashed within 2 weeks. The United States Air Force put every one of those T–38s on the ramp and said, You're not flying those airplanes until we know why they crashed. That's called a standdown. It's called a moratorium. So we have a moratorium.

BP's to blame for this. And I must tell you, I am just absolutely astounded by what the Republican Caucus put together that was actually announced by our colleague from Houston, Texas, the ranking member of the House committee, when he apologized to British Petroleum because the President demanded that British Petroleum put together a $20 billion trust fund to pay for the damage.

□ 2230

The Republican policy is to apologize to BP for the President forcing BP to do what was right, that is pay for the damages. That's just but one issue. I wasn't going to talk about this in great length, but I am just coming off listening to my Republican colleagues here. We have to deal with the facts as they really exist.

Joining me tonight is Congressman ELLISON from one of the great northern States in the Midwest. And I think he wants to pick up this issue and maybe carry it a little longer.

Mr. ELLISON. If the gentleman will yield, I do just want to take up this issue of the spill. It is an important issue. And you just mentioned the very frank and I believe honest comments of Representative BARTON, the ranking member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, in which he apologized to BP.

Some people might be thinking, you know, well, he apologized for his apology, so, you know, why don't we just drop it. But it doesn't start with Mr. BARTON, it doesn't end with Mr. BARTON. It actually started with the Republican Study Committee, which creates policy, agenda, and talking points for the Republican leadership. And that's headed by a gentleman who is a Member of this body named Congressman PRICE, TOM PRICE. He is the one, with the help of the committee itself, not just by himself, who released a statement calling the compensation fund that you referred to to help compensate small business people put out of business by this spill, and people who live on the gulf, people who suffered, a shakedown. So this term political shakedown emerges from the very leadership of the Republican caucus.

They say that President Obama is shaking down the British Petroleum, BP. And from that point, PRICE makes the statement, this is before BARTON ever does, but PRICE says, ''BP's reported willingness to go along with the

White House's new fund suggests that the Obama administration is hard at work exerting its brand of Chicago-style shakedown politics. These actions are emblematic of a politicization of our economy that has been borne out of this administration's drive for greater and greater power. It is the same mentality that believes an economic crisis or an environmental disaster is the best opportunity to pursue a failed liberal agenda.'' So this is where the whole shakedown conversation comes.

Then after that, Mr. BARTON, following the party line, doing what the Republican Study Committee has said to do, says, quote, ''I'm ashamed of what happened in the White House yesterday. I think it's a tragedy of the first proportion that a private corporation can be subjected to what I would characterize as a shakedown, in this case a $20 billion shakedown.'' Now, it goes on, but in this statement of apology from BARTON I never heard—and maybe I will leave it to the gentleman—any sort of apology or sympathy for the people who live on the gulf, who make a living there, who send their kids to school there, and who now see their economic life ruined.

Mr. GARAMENDI. If I recall correctly, it's not only the extraordinary economic damage, 11 people were killed in this blowout. Eleven men who were working on that, who had families, who were trying to earn a living were killed as a result of it.

Now, for BP, it wasn't their only accident. They have the worst safety record in the oil industry. So you are quite right, Congressman ELLISON, that the issue of where the Republican Party stands on this, it's not just one member speaking out of turn. It was in fact the ranking member of the committee speaking on the talking points developed by the Republican Study Committee, which is the policy development committee for the Republican caucus in this House.

Mr. ELLISON. If the gentleman would yield back.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Please.

Mr. ELLISON. It didn't stop after Mr. BARTON made his apology, which seemed sincere. After that, MICHELLE BACHMANN, our colleague, says to the BP president about the $20 billion escrow fund, she says, ''If I was the head of BP, I would let the signal get out there, 'We're not going to be chumps, and we're not going to be fleeced.' And they shouldn't be. They shouldn't have to be fleeced and made chumps to have to pay for the perpetual unemployment and all the rest.''

So I mean if you just contemplate that statement for a moment, here our friends on the other side of the aisle just got through talking about how it's BP's fault. That's what they say now. Right after the fund was developed by the President to make sure that victims of this, both economic and physical and others, had a basis of compensation, the Republican caucus's initial gut reaction, which is I think their most sincere reaction, is to say that it's a shakedown, it's to say we're not going to be chumps, it's to say that BP shouldn't have to pay unemployment.

I mean it didn't stop there. Let me add one more before I hand it back to you. Our good friend STEVE KING, Congressman KING from Iowa: ''I think JOE BARTON was spot on when he called it a shakedown.'' So then, no repentance, no remorse. Let me yield to the gentleman.

Mr. GARAMENDI. The thing here, if you would yield for a moment, is where do you stand? With whom do you stand? What side are you on? We just heard an extraordinary rendition of falsehoods, in my view, from the Republican side here that somehow this blowout, this BP accident was the fault of the Federal Government. Hello. Well, the regulations that they were so excoriating are absolutely necessary to prevent this kind of thing from happening.

In fact, the regulations that were relaxed during the George W. Bush administration allowed this company to proceed with minimum safety requirements. And we heard this talk about the governor of Louisiana, and a State that is heavily impacted and tragically impacted by this oil. What is their response plan? Pointing fingers at the Federal Government, which the governor is doing. And at the same time, what is the response plan for Louisiana? It's virtually nonexistent.

The State of California, where I come from, we have a heavy duty response program that goes back 20 years. We make the oil industry pay for it. Does Louisiana have such a program? No, they don't. But they are willing to point a finger. Let's take a look. What is this?

Mr. ELLISON. Well, if the gentleman would yield back, they do have a plan.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Really? What is it?

Mr. ELLISON. Their plan is the taxpayers can pay for it.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Ah, the taxpayers who they were so concerned about a moment ago. They don't want BP to pay; they want the American taxpayers to pay.

Mr. ELLISON. Right. The GOP-BP bailout is that the American taxpayers should pay for the expenses associated with BP's failure to observe its own regulations and the catastrophic consequences that it caused. So that their plan is the taxpayers can pay because heaven forbid we ask a privately held corporation to pay for its own damages.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Is this the corporation called BP that had a $58 billion profit last year?

Mr. ELLISON. If the gentleman would yield, yeah, BP is well heeled and doing fine based on the profits they have made. So I would yield back.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Quite possibly they are so well heeled and have such big profits because they cut so many corners that resulted in the death of I think 13 people at their oil refinery in Texas, and another 11 at their rig in the gulf, the Deep Horizon situation, and who knows how many else around the world. This is the company with the worst safety record because they cut corners. It gives them a fat profit. Now it's time for them to pay.

Mr. ELLISON. If the gentleman would yield; if you observed the safety rules and regulations that are designed to save lives and save our natural environment, it may take you a little more time, and yeah, it may cost you a little money. Maybe you won't have that enormous, exorbitant profit, but you will make good money, and people will be alive so that they can go home at the end of the day, and we will be able to have a Gulf of Mexico that bears some resemblance to the way the good Lord intended it to be.

□ 2240

Right behind you are graphic photographs. I mean, look at that bird right down at the bottom.

I yield back to the gentleman.

Mr. GARAMENDI. This mantra that started from the Republican Party, I think it was the Presidential candidate, if I recall correctly. It was called ''drill baby drill.'' And what we found out was that this drill baby drill results in ''spill baby spill.'' It is a terrible situation. It's not new, though; and it's not unusual.

In the last 17, 18 years in the Gulf of Mexico in these shallow water, deepwater drilling operations, there have been 38 blowouts. None as catastrophic as this. But this is not a new situation. In the Indian Ocean, west of Australia last year, there was a blowout of similar size by one of the international drilling oil companies. And it took them even longer—I think it was over 120 days, maybe a little longer than that—to drill a relief well to finally stop that blowout.

There was another major blowout on the Mexican side of the Gulf of Mexico several years back that resulted in a huge oil spill for a long time, and there was yet another off the coast of Brazil.

This is not new. But what is new is the extraordinary damage that's taken place and the irresponsibility of BP in this particular case where they cut corners, where they did the least that they thought they needed, instead of maximum, to be prepared; they did exactly the opposite. And now we're faced with this catastrophic event.

Our colleagues across the aisle were talking about nothing happening. In fact, numerous efforts have been made, unsuccessful to date. The capping, the effort to activate the blowout preventer, on and on and on. And hopefully in the next couple of weeks we will have one of the relief wells intersecting the existing well that blew out, and we can bring this thing to a stop.

However, we need to recognize that as long as we drill, we will run the risks. And as we run those risks, we also commit even a greater problem for

this planet, and this is as long as we can drill, we will be dependent upon oil, whether it is domestically produced or foreign produced.

This oil is not only contaminating the ocean and the beaches and the marshes; it's also contaminating our atmosphere, and that carbon doesn't disappear. And it also leads us to more dependence upon oil. It's time for us to break that addiction to oil.

Yes, use this catastrophic event to call our attention, to focus our minds on what we must do to break America's addiction to oil. This is not a new effort. We have been at this since the 1970s with the first oil crisis. We have yet to break it. In fact, we've continued the addiction. We must move away from this, and our energy policy must move us in a different direction.

I know you've spent a lot of time working on these issues, and let me put up another one. As horrible as this spill is, we need to understand what the oil industry is all about. The oil industry has been operating in America for about 140 years, maybe a hundred. Since the turn of the last century, 1900, it really got under way. And for a century now, the oil industry—well, let me just ask a question because this is what this asks. Which of these industries receives the most Federal subsidies? Read tax dollars. Subsidies are tax dollars. You want to talk about taxes, my Republican friends? Where do your tax dollars go? Well, let's find out.

It looks like solar panels, right? Okay. Do they get more? Do they get the most subsidies? How about windmills? Well, let's call them wind turbines, the modern word for them, wind turbines. This is an interesting one. It has been around for years. This is using the ocean, the waves and the ocean or the current in the ocean or even in the rivers. And this is an interesting one. This is really a brand-new one. And these are algae, algae-producing biodiesels. Or the oil industry.

Now, my question to you, Mr. ELLISON, is which of these receive the greatest subsidy, read tax dollars, from the public?

Mr. ELLISON. Do we need a drum roll first, Congressman GARAMENDI? I think we know. I'm just going to take a wild guess. The oil industry.

Mr. GARAMENDI. You are a brilliant legislator and a fine arbiter of the question. It turns out you're right. It is the oil industry.

And let's take a look at this.

Our tax dollars: Where do they go? Let's see here. This side is the oil industry, and this is from 2002 to 2008. So we got some numbers up here for fossil fuels between 2002 and 2008. This is the oil and a little bit of the coal: $72.5 billion of direct subsidies, our tax money, being taken out of our pocket and given to the oil industry—$72.5 billion in just 6 years.

So where does it go? Let's see here. Traditional fossil fuels. Oil and coal. There you have it.

Now, on the other side, renewable energy. Well, we have the corn ethanol industry, and they have received about $16.8 billion. And then the traditional renewables, these would be solar and wind and the like, about $12.2 billion. So taken together $29 billion for renewables in the same 6-year period that the oil industry received $72.5 billion.

Now the question of public policy is this: What if we flipped this over? What if we flipped this around and we took the $72.5 billion and spent it on renewables and we can continue a little bit of the subsidy if they really need it, which they really don't—not if you have $58 billion of profits. Doesn't seem to me they need much help. But, okay. We'll just flip it over, and they'll take $29 billion, and we give the renewable industry the $72 billion. What would happen?

Mr. ELLISON. We would be a lot healthier. We wouldn't be burning hydrocarbons and spewing them into the air. Our planet would be healthier. We would see ourselves, our technology, and our creativity would blossom as we subsidize these renewable sources of energy. It would be a good thing.

Mr. GARAMENDI. It would be a very, very good thing. And most economists who look at the international markets and the next great industries don't look to the 19th century energy industry, coal and oil, as being the growth industries and where the jobs will be created. Those economists and futurists who look at these things tell us that the great energy industries of the future are the energy industries of this century, the renewables of all kinds. All that we had up here and even more than I had on that little chart. That is where the jobs will come there.

And our policy ought to be to encourage those industries and those things, the wind turbines, the solar, even the nuclear systems and the rest, that they be built in America.

Mr. ELLISON. Let's not forget about the efficiency. The fact is there are a lot of jobs to be had by retrofitting buildings and conserving the energy that we already have. A lot of jobs, a lot of putting a lot of people back to work in making homes and buildings energy efficient. And you put that together with renewable energy, that is an employment driver. That is an economic driver. That is an environment driver.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Let's bring this issue that you just raised right back to this Chamber in the present moment.

We have voted here three times, I believe, on what are called programs for energy conservation. One of them was called cash for caulkers. We had the cash for clunkers, which really helped the auto industry. And we decided, well, let's try something, cash for caulkers, which is exactly what you talked about. It's about bringing about energy conservation. And in doing that, two good things happened: we're employing people. Taking our tax dollars. Get this back up here. We don't have conservation on here, but if we were to add conservation, taking our tax dollars instead of giving them to the coal and the oil companies, give it to men and women in the communities that are doing the insulation, doing the window caulking.

□ 2250

As that is done, homeowners and renters see their energy bills drop.

What happened on this floor when those bills came up? What is your memory of how the votes turned out?

Mr. ELLISON. Well, I don't remember any ringing endorsement from the party opposite.

Mr. GARAMENDI. My recollection is that the Democratic side said, Let's give people jobs. Let's use the public's tax money to employ people to do energy conservation. The Republicans, to a person, voted ''no.''

Whose side do you stand on? Are you going to take those tax dollars and continue to give them to the oil industry and to the coal industry or are you going to take those tax dollars and put people to work, achieve the energy conservation and allow homeowners and renters to see their energy bills go down?

The Republican Party made a very clear decision on who they stand with. They do not stand with the homeowner. They do not stand with those who could get the jobs. Instead, they voted ''no'' on those three conservation programs that would put people to work.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, they stand with BP against the residents of the gulf and the businesspeople there. They stand with the oil and gas companies, with their subsidies, as opposed to standing with the people who want a clean, green future. They consistently stand against progress. I mean the thing that I find so astounding is that they will come down to the House floor and continue to repeat these things.

Quite frankly, I am quite proud of President Obama for demanding that BP start an escrow fund so that we can have some relief for the people suffering such horrendous hardships on the gulf coast. I think it was an act of responsibility. It was what he should have done. The administration was responsive to this spill, and the administration did get engaged right away. The Congress is holding hearings right now to get to the bottom of what happened, to prevent it and to put policies in place to do something about it. Yet, all along the way, what we are getting are apologies to BP and, really, no help at all.

We are not discouraged, though. Congressman GARAMENDI, you know very well that we are stout of heart. Every time we get a chance to do something for this economy, for consumers, for the environment, the Democratic Caucus is counted on to do it.

Mr. GARAMENDI. You are quite correct.

I am going to go through a list of specific things to help the economy,

but before I go to that, I think we ought to set the stage here. There was a lot of talk in the previous hour about deficits and where the deficits came from.

Mr. ELLISON. Oh, brother.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Oh, brother.

Where did the deficits come from?

Well, first of all, let's understand that public policy doesn't change the moment a President comes into office. There is the continuity of the previous years' policies that stay in effect for a while until those are changed. Even then, it isn't an immediate night to day. It takes a while for the policies to go into effect. So the charts that were shown earlier are just plain disingenuous, if not outright false.

The George W. Bush administration came into office with a significant surplus that was created in the last 3 years of the Clinton administration. I think it was about a $500 million annual surplus that was projected to go on into the future. The George W. Bush administration, together with the Republican-controlled Congress and Senate, did four things that created the deficit that we have today, which the Republicans want to pin back onto Obama and the Democrats. Here are the four things they did:

First of all, they instituted one of the largest tax cuts ever in American history for the wealthiest 10 percent of Americans, not for the everyday workers—not for the people who are out earning salaries day by day or who are earning hourly wages—but for the wealthiest. That is fact one.

Fact two, the prescription drug benefit for seniors was not paid for, and they specifically put in a provision that prevents the Federal Government from negotiating prices with the pharmaceutical companies.

Fact three, two wars were started and paid for with borrowed money—a most unusual event. That is fact three.

Borrowing money, reducing taxes, starting two wars. Right now, those wars have cost us well over $1 trillion, nearly $1.1 trillion.

Fact four, the continuing escalation of health care costs, okay?

Those are the four reasons we have the deficit today. Let me give you a fifth reason.

The fifth reason is the crash of the American economy.

Those all happened during the George W. Bush administration, and they didn't stop the day Obama came into office. We are now changing those policies. For example, the health care reform, which not one Republican in this House voted for—not one—will, over its lifetime, actually reduce the deficit because it reins in the cost of medical care. In my view, it's not enough, but nonetheless, it does that.

Secondly, the other policies have been allowed to continue. Now, the tax policies of the Bush administration will expire. That will help. As for the prescription drug benefit, we are working on that. That was part of the health reform also. The wars continue. Fortunately, the Iraq war is winding down while the Afghan war escalates.

So we have to understand how we got to this place we are today.

How we got there were through the basic policies of the Clinton administration. It left a surplus, a continuing surplus, for the George W. Bush administration. Had they not changed the policies, it is estimated that, by the middle of this decade, we would have wiped out the American debt—period, gone, history—but, no, they changed the policies, and now we are saddled with this debt.

The crash. The crash of this economy was caused by reckless action on the part of Wall Street, by reckless, irresponsible action on the part of Wall Street, basically driven by the grossest greed you could possibly imagine. There were all kinds of inducements to homeowners to engage in mortgages they could in no way possibly pay.

I know that you are faced with this in your community. There was action taken on this floor not more than 5 hours ago—and we will be coming to that in just a moment—but share with us the experiences in your community about mortgages, about all of the problems of the housing industry, about the crash, and about what has happened in your community.

Mr. ELLISON. If the gentleman will yield, that is so right. When you look at this whole financial crash, it is a chain of events, and it starts out in the neighborhood.

There is something that we need to talk about, something called a ''yield spread premium.'' What that is is the amount of money that somebody selling a loan can get if somebody steers you from a loan you may qualify for to a high-cost loan. So there are a lot of people who might have qualified for prime loans but who were literally steered.

Then you had another development, something called a NINJA loan—no job, no assets. Yet you could get money to buy a house. Then there is something called a ''liar loan''—now, that is a curious thing to call a loan—because it was stated income. You could just write down whatever you said your income was, and there was no verification of that income. Then, after you got into these loans, they had terms and conditions, like prepayment penalties, so that, if you wanted to get out of this loan and get a fairer loan, you really couldn't do it unless you paid somebody off down the line.

So people got into these loans. They were being sold. The people who made those loans really didn't need to make sure they were well underwritten. It didn't matter if any of these folks could pay the money back, because they would simply sell that paper on the secondary market.

Now, what was the effect in the neighborhood? The effect in the neighborhood was, once the housing values began to flatten and decline, people couldn't pay them. Once they couldn't refinance because they had negative equity in their homes, they couldn't make the payments, and they ended up getting foreclosed upon. It happened in neighborhoods all across this country. California, your State, was hit hard as well as Florida and Arizona. Yet, even in my State of Minnesota, we were hit very hard. People started being foreclosed on, and short sales began to happen. Property values began to decline, and neighborhoods began to go in the wrong direction.

□ 2300

And so there was a lot of difficulty right there on the front line. The front line was foreclosure of homes, abandoned properties, high grass, dead dogs. Expenses to the local government. Because if you have a house where people are paying property taxes, that's coming into this local government. But if you have an abandoned property, that's an expense to the local government. More pressure on local government budgets, intense difficulty, tough times on Main Street.

I yield back to the gentleman.

Mr. GARAMENDI. The gentleman is absolutely right. I know I see this in my own district, and in fact in my own neighborhood and in the families of my staff. We have on my staff families who have lost their home; who have had to do the short sale; who got into these mortgages that they couldn't possibly pay. They had these readjustments. All of those things. Now what was causing that? It was Wall Street. Wall Street was making it happen by creating these collateralized debt obligations, by the fancy financial manipulations. And why were they doing this? So they could make a big profit. And they did.

Now, today, on this floor today we took up the Wall Street Reform Act and Consumer Protection Act. And it's very, very interesting how the Republican leader characterized the effort that the Democratic Members of this House and the Senate have made to address the excesses of Wall Street. This is the most substantial reform and adjustment of the horrendous Wall Street practices that took this country to the very edge of an extraordinary Depression. And yet our Republican colleague—let me just get this chart because it is so interesting.

Mr. ELLISON. If the gentleman will yield while you're getting the chart. You know, Mr. Speaker, Congressman, you would have thought that America didn't lose 2.8 million homes to foreclosure last year, listening to the Republicans. You have would have thought that Lehman Brothers and Bear Stearns and Freddie and Fannie and all these huge Wall Street titans didn't go down the tubes and cause a depressed market and hurt the economy. You would have thought that we didn't have 10 percent unemployment. You would have thought that there was nothing but responsible behavior, and all of a sudden the Democratic Caucus

is just trying to take over the banking system. We were really in a magical world here on the House floor. But, thank goodness the House Democrats, led by BARNEY FRANK and many others, were putting the things in place to preserve our economy.

Mr. GARAMENDI. You said something that caused me to pull up a chart that I wasn't going to use. The financial meltdown nearly bankrupted the world. Not just America, but the entire world's economy came very, very close to a total meltdown. What it meant to mom and pop back home, what it meant to their 401(k)s that instantly became 201(k)s was this: $15 trillion of wealth destroyed in the last 18 months of the Bush administration. Say whatever they want on that side but the fact is that's what happened. What's happened since then is we put into effect the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and we're beginning to see the stock market come back, we're beginning to see the wealth return. The fundamental problem still remains in the housing industry, and that we have to address.

Once again, all of the legislation dealing with the mortgage markets, all of the effort to try to rebuild the housing industry has been done by the Democratic side. We have had no help from the Republicans. Just say ''no'' is their mantra. The result is that we push forward with great difficulty. The Senate is a major problem for us because you have the power of one senator over there that can stop things. But, nonetheless, we pushed forward with an effort to try to restore the housing markets with various plans and mortgages. And today it's time for us to come to what happened today.

Today, on the floor of the United States Congress, the most far-reaching, most important revamp of the financial industry in this Nation's history since 1936 took place, and it was a vote on the Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act. In that very important piece of legislation there are several sections that deal directly with the housing market, outlawing—outlawing, making illegal the kind of liar loans, the kinds of revamp and mortgages that were the genesis of the problems. Also, in the housing market, holding brokers responsible. Holding them accountable. Holding the banking industry accountable for what it does and setting up a consumer protection agency.

Now, this is something I understand. I was the insurance commissioner in the State of California, elected statewide twice—1991 to 1995, and again 2003 to 2007—and I built a consumer protection agency. It's absolutely essential. The capitalistic market is driven by profit motives. Now, wise companies understand they've got to take care of consumers. But the profit motive drove this Nation and this world right to the edge. You need a countervailing power. And the consumer protection agency in this bill would do it by setting out a series of regulations to protect consumers and allow consumers to speak out, to get assistance, and to get help. It didn't exist—only in the insurance marketplace—which was regulated previously by the individual States. But not in the financial and banking markets.

Now when the Senate acts, which hopefully they will do in the next couple of days, we will have a bill going to the President that will be the most important reform of the financial markets in more than 80 years now. It has to be done. Otherwise, we're going to slip right back to where we were. This is not big government. This is wise government. This is the kind of government that we need to set the boundaries.

Think of it this way, Mr. ELLISON. NFL football. Now you play that in Minnesota, don't you? What's that team in Minnesota?

Mr. ELLISON. The Minnesota Vikings.

Mr. GARAMENDI. The Packers.

Mr. ELLISON. The Packers, they're next door.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Okay. We've got the Packers playing the Vikings. They do that on occasion, don't they? Imagine that if the sidelines were erased and imagine if the referees were put back in the locker room. What would happen?

Mr. ELLISON. I think you would have a lot of injured players. You'd have a really funny outcome. People wouldn't trust the outcome. Maybe teams would stop playing because they would believe that the rules didn't matter any more. And certainly you would give an incentive to the biggest cheap shot artists on the field, the people who are willing to do the dirtiest things—the clipping, all of those things—they would prevail.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I played football for the University of California in a bygone era, and of course we would never engage in such a thing if the referees weren't there. But that's the analogy of exactly what happened in Wall Street. The regulators were absent during the Bush administration. They simply left the playing field. The referees left the playing field. They put the rule books aside and it was Katie bar the door, because anything was allowed.

This bill that we voted on today puts tough new regulations in place, regulates this market, and puts in place the referees, strengthens the Securities Exchange Commission.

Mr. ELLISON, please.

Mr. ELLISON. I was just going to say, as an old football player yourself, didn't good refereeing make for a more competitive game? Didn't that allow competition to really flourish? You could find out who the better team was if you had a well-regulated football game. Is that right?

Mr. GARAMENDI. Absolutely true. Similarly, we have a well-regulated financial market, which we will when this bill is finally is signed, then we will. The point that I want to make is this, and that's why I brought this thing up: Where do you stand? Where do the Democrats stand? We clearly voted today for a major overhaul of the banking industry, the financial industry, and the mortgage markets, to put in place strict rules and regulations. That's where we stand—to protect consumers with the consumer protection bill.

Where do the Republicans stand? Well, why don't we just quote the Republican minority leader, whose name I won't mention, but let's just say he represents the Republicans in this House. He is their leader.

□ 2310

So in an interview with a newspaper in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, he said that this bill was a nuclear weapon to kill an ant. I have got the exact quote here. Maybe I should just read that. I don't want to misquote him because what he said was so outrageous.

Let's see. Oh, that's the Social Security which we ought to come to here in a moment. And Social Security, just touching on it, he said, ''We ought to raise the Social Security age to 70 so we can finance the Afghan war.'' Oh, wait a minute. Did you really mean that, Mr. Leader?

He said, ''This is killing an ant with a nuclear weapon,'' when referring to the Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection bill. ''Killing an ant with a nuclear weapon.'' Well, I'm sorry, but it is a clear indication of where the Republicans stand. They're clearly standing with the big banks. And on the Senate side, in the last 2 days, the financial regulation to pay for this was going to be paid for by the big banks. But the Republicans in the Senate said, No, no, no, no, no. You can't make the banks pay for the regulation. You can't make the NFL football team pay for the referees. No, no, no, you can't do that. What you've got to do is to make the taxpayers pay for regulating the banks.

Whose side are you on here? It's perfectly clear, when you look at all of these, whose side you are on. When the minority leader, the Republican leader, says, The effort to rein in Wall Street and protect consumers is killing an ant with a nuclear weapon, well, I'm sorry. Wall Street is not an ant. The five, six biggest banks control about 70 percent of all of the financial markets. These are not ants. These are gigantic anteaters, and we're the ants that they're eating. So we've got to get this straight: Whose side are you on?

The financial meltdown, the biggest downturn since the Great Depression, 8 million jobs lost. It's not an ant. This is my neighbor who lost his job. This is the homeowner who lost their home, and this is the unemployed person that's begging for our help in continuing the unemployment insurance because this economy has not yet turned around. These are very, very serious things.

There are a couple of other things we really ought to get here. And if you can work with me on this, we talked earlier a little bit about health care reform. It's not Big Government. In fact, health care reform is exactly very similar to the reform in Massachusetts which was authored by a Republican Governor who went around this Nation taking great credit for it until it became a national model. This is really insurance reform. It's not a takeover of the health care industry, not at all. And it's not anywhere even close to socialized medicine.

In fact, the public option is not in the legislation at all. It is a reform of the insurance marketplace. It's the kind of reforms that allow my 23-year-old daughter to stay on my health insurance rather than becoming uninsured. It's the kind of reform that allows the young baby that's born with an illness to be able to get insurance. It's the kind of reform for a 50-year-old individual who has lost their job to be able to buy an insurance policy at a reasonable rate. It's the kind of reform that ends the discrimination that every single woman in this Nation faces when it comes to getting insurance. If you were a woman in America prior to this health care reform, you had a preexisting condition that could, and probably would, keep you from buying a policy.

Those discriminatory actions by the insurance companies are over as a result of this reform.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, as a woman, you certainly would pay a lot more than a man would of comparable age and condition. The fact is that there's a string between all of the things that we've talked to tonight. We started out talking about the oil spill. We moved on to talk about financial reform. Now we're delving into health care, but there's a string connecting them all. One is that the Democratic Caucus is consistently on the side of the consumer, of the investor, of the small business person. And the party opposite, the other caucus, is consistently on the side of the corporate giant, the huge well-moneyed lobbyist, and the people who stand to gain from the status quo. This is a consistent stream.

And so you continually ask the question, Congressman GARAMENDI, Whose side are you on? This is a fair question. The question must be answered that the Democratic Caucus is on the side of the people. The party opposite is on the side of the powerful, the well-to-do, the large giant corporate entities. And this is something that I think Americans have got to try to put their hands around, that there is a party who is going to be the one to say, We're going to restrain Wall Street; we're going to make them play by the rules; we're going to enhance the functioning of the marketplace by making sure that there are referees on the field and not in the locker room.

And this string is a consistency. It ties us together as a consistent, coherent theme and a message, that the Democratic Caucus is on the side of the American people.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you so very, very much for making that clear. You go through all of these pieces of legislation, and the Democratic Caucus is there. On the other side of the aisle, on the Republican side, they're standing with Big Oil, big banks consistently, and the big health insurance industry.

Now, let me make this point perhaps more clear, and that is, the Republican minority leader not only said that we ought to take on this issue of Wall Street reform as though it was some sort of a nuclear weapon killing an ant. He also talked about health care, and he said that if the Republicans take control of the Congress after this next election, if they win enough seats after this next election, they are going to do everything they possibly can to stop the Patients' Bill of Rights and other health reforms.

They are out to repeal the reform that Americans desperately need so they can get affordable health insurance. They want to kill those reforms. They want to turn back women's opportunity to get an insurance policy and say, We don't care whether you have a preexisting condition; you are at the mercy of the health insurance company. If they deny you, that's your problem. You shouldn't have gotten sick in the first place. If you are a 23-year-old, you will lose the ability to be on your parents' benefits.

That's what the Republican Caucus wants to do is to repeal all of the efforts of consumers and to build into this system a method of keeping us healthy.

So, okay, whose side are you on? There is a string here. There is a logic to all of this. One more thing—and I couldn't believe this when I heard this, and it just came, I guess, in the last day or two. Now, Social Security is an insurance policy. You and I pay into Social Security. As Members of Congress, a certain percentage of our pay goes for Social Security, and so it is with every other person in America who is working legally. They are paying into Social Security.

Mr. BOEHNER, the Republican leader, has said that what he wants to do is to increase the retirement age from 65 to 70 and use the savings to finance the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. And I'm going, Excuse me, wait a minute. That's my insurance policy. That's my mother's insurance policy. That is the insurance policy of the working men and women out there, and you want to take it away to finance the Afghan war. I don't think so.

But that's once more sign, a signpost—we're following a path here—a signpost of where the Republicans stand. Big business, ending Social Security; and in fact, their budget, put out by the Republican Study Committee, their budget called for the end of Medicare, the privatization of Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security.

□ 2320

That's their policy. If that's what the public wants, then those folks are going to win this election and they're going to come and they're going to control this House and they're going to try to do it. I think this would be a serious problem for every American. Medicare, Social Security privatized? I don't think so.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, if the gentleman will yield, I want to say that, in my opinion, Social Security is one of the greatest pieces of legislation this country has ever seen, and so is Medicare. These programs are very important because they signal that we really are in this thing together and that we're not going to let our seniors descend to the level where they're eating dog food or making choices between medication and a meal. But it's going to require an aware population to get it, that, you know, there are real things at stake here, big things at stake here.

And the question keeps being asked: Who's side are you on?

Why don't you go through some of those critical things?

Mr. GARAMENDI. Let's just go through this. Who's side are you on? Democrats supporting jobs and bills. We talked about the Cash for Caulkers and other programs and the jobs bill, every single one of them opposed. No jobs bills.

Unemployment insurance. People are losing their unemployment insurance because of the Republican Party. What are they going to do? The economy hasn't come back. They're going to lose their jobs. They're going to lose their home. We're going to start another downward spiral.

We talked about the health care effort. Not one Republican voted for the health care bill. Excuse me. One in this House. One Republican voted for the health care bill.

Wall Street. We talked about Wall Street reform. Republicans vote against it; the Democrats vote for it.

We talk about the Consumer Protection Agency. The Republicans are opposed to it; the Democrats support it.

We talk about small business reforms which are in this bill and in other bills. The Republicans consistently vote against small business, the increase of the Small Business Administration.

We can go back through the major bills that this House has voted on. The American Recovery Act, known as the stimulus bill, Republicans voted against it.

You look at the energy and climate to break our addiction to oil. Democrats vote for it; Republicans vote against it.

You look at the Wall Street reform and the Consumer Protection Act. Democrats vote for it; Republicans consistently and in en bloc vote against it.

You talk about the gulf oil spill, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The Republicans blame the government and want to apologize rather than the instigator of the problem, BP.

On Social Security, the Republican leader wants to extend the age to 70 in order to get Social Security.

You talk about health care reform. We've discussed that already. The Republicans vote against it. They want to repeal it. They get into power in this House, they're going to repeal the reforms.

And unemployment and jobs, every single jobs bill they vote against. Every effort we have made to put people to work, whether it was in transportation—and that is in the American Recovery Act—or in the current jobs bills, keeping teachers employed, we want to employ teachers. They talk about the next generation, yes. But you don't educate that next generation, we're in trouble.

All of these things add up and it is, as you say, there's a string, there's a path, there are road signs here. Who's side are you on?

The Republicans have consistently sided with Big Oil, big health insurance companies. It's time for us to recognize the difference.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, I just want to say the gentleman, I think, is absolutely right. And I just want to say this as I think we're coming down to the final moments.

Mr. GARAMENDI. We are.

Mr. ELLISON. Look, the Republicans had their chance, and we are still reaping the bitter fruit of what their leadership has brought this country. They had 12 years between 1994 and 2006 in the Congress, and then they had 6 years with a Republican President. In that time, they did nothing about reforming Wall Street, though they had two Houses and the Presidency. They didn't do anything about reining in these banks. They didn't do anything about reforming regulation. They did nothing on health care.

And now they have the audacity to want to say, We want the wheel back. Yeah, we drove the car into a ditch, but we want the wheel back. We want to drive again. And you know what? It just can't happen.

I yield back to the gentleman.

Mr. GARAMENDI. The final point is this: In the 8 years of the George W. Bush administration, about a million net jobs were created. In the last 8 months to 9 months, more jobs have been created than in the entire George W. Bush administration. Now, that's a fact. Read it any way you want.

We're on the right road here. We want to continue that path.

Mr. ELLISON, thank you so very much. And it's good to know that the Packers are your team.

Mr. ELLISON. No, the Vikings. I like the Packers, but more, I like the Vikings.

Mr. GARAMENDI. But remember, in an NFL football game, you need a referee, and on Wall Street, you need a referee also.

ISSUES OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for half the time remaining before midnight.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, well, we heard from CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, rather interesting. Got a nice quote. Director Elmendorf announced that, in part of his statement he said, the gloomy, long-term picture is not an argument for rejecting additional spending now to bolster the economic recovery. Indeed, he said, ''Enacting cuts in spending or increases in taxes now would probably slow the recovery.''

If you read the charge for CBO, it's a little bit gray. But when you have an organization that can't seem to get right what the projections are for the costs, when you can't get the costs right for what is requested, as we saw with the health care bill, as we saw with so many things they projected, they have been hundreds of millions, billions, hundreds of billions of dollars off over time, and yet the Director's going to come in and tell us that enacting spending cuts are going—well, they could jeopardize, possibly slow the recovery.

And it's been great to hear my colleagues talk about all the jobs that have been created. We know, for example, in the last month 431,000 jobs, new jobs have been created by this administration. And you really do have to give the administration credit for most of the jobs that were created last month, because when we got the numbers, of the 431,000 jobs, 411,000 of them were census workers. Great news. Unfortunately, those jobs are going to be gone just in a matter of a very few months. So there's 411,000 jobs.

And it's true, President Bush took office after the 2000 census had been completed so he didn't get to create 411,000 jobs in 1 month, as this administration has, for census workers. Unfortunately for him, the economy experienced the most incredible blow at a time coming off the dot-com bubble of the late nineties. The economy was hurting, and then 9/11 happened. And if it had not been for the tax cuts, we would have been surely in the midst of a great depression, perhaps like the 1930s. So the tax cuts helped stimulate the economy, helped get things going in a good way.

The problem is that once the Republicans not only had the House and Senate, like they did from 1995 to 2000, not only did they balance the budget—and the President doesn't do that. The Congress has to do that. But not only did they balance the budget in the Republican Congress, but they also reformed welfare, and for the first time since the beginning of welfare, after a welfare reform that the Congress did, and I think President Clinton vetoed it and then once they had the votes to override the veto the second time he didn't, he went ahead and signed it. Now he's quite proud of it because, out of that welfare reform, the fact is—and I saw this on the chart that was presented back in 2005 at Harvard, of all places.

□ 2330

I got the impression many of them were shocked. But when you looked at single women's income since welfare came into existence, when adjusted for inflation, their income was flatlined over that 30-year period. After welfare reform, they were pushed, basically pushed out of the rut, out of the rutted mess that the Federal Government had created for them and not allowed them out of. The welfare reform actually pushed them toward reaching their God-given potential. And so for the first time since welfare had been created in the 1960s, single women's income, when adjusted for inflation, started going up. And it continued.

But now, after Republicans got both the White House, and House, and Congress, they found out it was kind of fun to spend when you had a President that wouldn't veto anything. And then you had a President that was sending over requests for more money than conservative Republicans really were comfortable with, and they would compromise, and it would still be more money than both should have spent.

There is apparently this giddiness that occurs when one party has the White House, House, and Senate like we have seen the last year-and-a-half. And even in the House and Senate in 2007 and 2008 we saw a great giddiness and just runaway spending like the country had never faced until the last year-and-a-half. And so when I hear about all these great jobs that are being created, more jobs in the last year-and-a-half than were created in the whole 8 years, I think they forgot to say what the President and Vice President always include, created and saved. Because when you say you saved a job, that means it's impossible to ever prove that. And it's impossible to disprove that.

You know, it's like that old story about the guy who says, ''What is your job?'' He says, ''I keep elephants from running in this house.'' He says, ''Well, there aren't any elephants around here.'' ''That's right, I'm doing a great job, aren't I?''

Well, it's the same kind of deal. You know, they've saved, probably can take credit for saving every job in America if they want to, and I am sure at some point they will get to based upon the claims that are being made these days. But it's an interesting time.

And what we've also seen today was the passage of the financial deform bill. I was hoping for reform, but that's not what we got. And I know so many of my colleagues across the aisle have good hearts, good minds, and the best of intentions. But as we saw with TARP, many people on both sides of the aisle, and what we have seen since then, since this President took office, when this President says let's get this bill passed, then they can basically come up with 2,000 pages that only foolish idiots like me would try to read.

And so what they're left with, if you don't try to get through the boring