

war, not a war of violence. We are losing this war. Addicts continue to suffer needlessly every day. Those who would benefit from medical marijuana are continually forced to violate the law or to live their lives in pain.

We can do better as a Nation. Many States are leading the way, and we at the Federal level need to pursue the direction that has been followed by an increasing number of States, and we need to regulate the use of marijuana in a way that is compassionate, that discourages usage among minors, and we need to make sure that we have a health aspect in dealing with addiction where it exists.

WHEN AND HOW WILL AMERICA GET BACK TO WORK?

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

Mr. HUIZENGA of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise and come before this body to talk about something that I think is a key question that the American people have. We are dealing with a lot of weighty issues these days—Afghanistan, Libya, the debt ceiling, the Tax Code and tax reform—but I believe the key question that we have before us is and the key question that the American people have for us is:

When and how will America get back to work?

Mr. Speaker, it's far more than just creating a bill and labeling it "job creation bill" or a whole package of those or a stimulus package of government spending that, frankly, hasn't worked and even admitted to and joked about by the President recently when he said those shovel-ready jobs and those shovel-ready projects maybe weren't so shovel-ready.

No, they weren't.

But it's far more than just creating a bill and labeling it "job creation." It's about creating an atmosphere for private sector growth.

You see, Mr. Speaker, the private sector creates prosperity, not the government sector. The government sector can give a job, but the private sector creates wealth and creates prosperity, and it's not just in our Tax Code and how that's being applied; it's also in the regulatory atmosphere that we present to those job creators.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that this House is trying to inject some reasonableness into a system that has gone awry. Whether it's the EPA creating out of whole cloth regulations that we have not dictated should happen or whether it's the National Labor Relations Board coming up with hurdle after hurdle for these job creators, this administration has continually overstepped the bounds of reasonableness, and it's our job, Mr. Speaker, to rein that in. You would think with 429,000 new jobless claims last week—let me repeat that—with 429,000 new jobless claims we would try to more aggressively

create a better climate and change that atmosphere. I can tell you we're trying to do that here in the House. We just need some partners across the other side of the Capitol and in the administration as well.

Recently, the House Republicans had an opportunity to meet with the President at the White House. My good friend and chairman of the Small Business and Job Creators Caucus, of which I'm a member, my friend from Wisconsin, REID RIBBLE, got up and indicated to the President that we need to do three things for success.

One, we need to have consumer confidence. That means, whether they're the people up in the balcony or those who are watching on TV right now, with the money that they have in their pockets, they feel confident enough that they're going to have a little extra, that they can go out and spend some money on an appliance or on a car, which is very important for those of us from Michigan, or maybe on a vacation. We need to have some consumer confidence, and they don't have that right now.

The other thing is we need to have credit available to those small business creators, those job creators, who are out there, who are cash-flowing, who are continuing to make those tough decisions to stay in the black, but they're now finding out that they can't access credit because of the unreasonable regulations that the Dodd-Frank banking bill has put in front of them.

Lastly and thirdly and maybe most importantly, we need certainty. We need a stability that has not been there for a number of years now. We need stability in our Tax Code. We need stability in our regulations. People basically need to know what the rules of the game are so that they can make long-term business decisions to again create those jobs. Now, Mr. Speaker, that's one of the reasons why I support the House's plan for American job creators, and I encourage you to go to my Web site "Huizenga.house.gov" to see more about that.

Again, it's not just about a bill that's labeled "job creation." It's about an attitude that we need to have. In this package, we know that we need to remove redtape and the excessive regulations that are out there. We know that we need to expand American domestic energy production. That's a "must do" for us. We need to fix and streamline our Tax Code. We need to expand new markets abroad for the goods that our manufacturers make.

But again, Mr. Speaker, it's not just a bill. It's an attitude. We need to have an attitude of, "Yes, we will work with you to help create those jobs," not, "No, it doesn't matter what your question is. The answer is 'no.' We are not going to help."

□ 1050

That, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, has been the dominant attitude of this administration and of this government, and it's time that we change that.

IT IS TIME TO FOCUS ON NATION-BUILDING HERE AT HOME

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. The United States' objective in Afghanistan was to root out, destroy, al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, and their Taliban hosts. That job is done. Afghanistan has been superseded now as a haven for terrorists by tribal areas in Pakistan, Yemen, and Sudan. The inter- and intratribal disputes in Afghanistan are rooted in ancient history, and 12 to 36 more months of a large U.S. troop footprint is not going to resolve centuries-old conflicts among the Afghan tribes. There never has been, there never will be, a strong central government in Afghanistan.

So I disagree with the President's plan for a snail-pace partial drawdown of U.S. troops over the next few years. We should do it much more quickly and leave only a residual force to prevent a terrorist takeover. There were only a few thousand troops there when we drove out the Taliban and when we pursued Osama bin Laden. Unfortunately, we lost an early opportunity to capture and kill him because of mistakes by then-Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

But that being done, the President did say something last night with which I strongly agree. He said, America, it is time to focus on nation-building here at home. I couldn't agree more. I've been trying to do that for the last 2½ years but running into roadblocks down at the White House when I try and rebuild the Nation's transportation infrastructure.

Now, let's just think for a minute. We're borrowing and spending \$120 billion a year in Afghanistan, both to support our troops and to engage in nation-building, building them schools, building them highways, building them bridges, while our own schools, our own highways, our own bridges are crumbling and collapsing; \$120 billion borrowed and spent in Afghanistan, what could we do with that here at home?

We could begin to address the backlog of 150,000 bridges on our national highway system that need repair or replacement; the \$70 billion backlog on our transit systems for basic capital maintenance, let alone new investment in new transit systems to more efficiently transport our people; to deal with the 40 percent of the pavement on the national highway system that's substandard; to deal with congestion in our major cities and our ports; to move freight and Americans more effectively.

And in addressing that with \$120 billion that we're borrowing and spending in Afghanistan today and instead spending that money here at home, we could put over 3 million to work, not just construction workers. People say to me, well, Congressman, I don't work in construction. It's not just construction. We have the strongest buy-America requirement in transportation of