

the government? What's wrong with the Congress? Why can't you people get along? And it's very difficult and embarrassing to tell them that you really need all parts of the government working together, pushing the boat forward and rowing in the same direction. And when you have somebody that's already said that their primary mission as Members of the United States Congress is to get rid of the President, how that is interpreted legislatively is it means that the President cannot offer them anything that would look like he's accomplishing something positive because it would interfere with their primary goal, which is not economic growth, not jobs and not helping people out when they need a hand up, but it has to show that we want to get rid of Obama. And you can see that even the candidates that want to fill his job, they're not talking about what they're going to do, but the whole campaign is against the President.

Now, some people believe, as those on television, that for all practical purposes we should not expect that we'll be able to give assistance to our various communities throughout the country because the campaign has started, and so therefore no legislation is going to pass. That's just not so, and you don't have to wait until an election.

We haven't been sent down here just to please our voters for what happens in 2012. Each and every day, you have a right—and an obligation—to call the person that you have sent down here to Washington. And if you haven't, someone did. Everybody has a Member of this House and two Members in the other body. Why can't you pick up the phone to tell them that what they do in this year before the holidays and what they don't do is going to make a big difference in terms of how you vote when that opportunity comes? So you can put the pressure on.

And I might add this too. It is not just the voters that have this obligation to help those that are lesser among us, it's not those that are waiting for a little help, but the Republicans say that the only way you get the help is to cut back in health care, is to support the Keystone oil pipeline. All of these things, people don't go to sleep at night wondering about a pipeline. They want to know are they going to get any help from their government. And the issues really don't affect the very, very rich. They affect the very, very poor and those in the middle class that are being pushed into poverty where one out of five kids in the United States of America is born into poverty.

I am suggesting that this is not just a plea for economic justice or equity in how we tax people, but it is a moral issue that we should be hearing from our clergy. I'm not talking about Democrats and Republicans. I'm talking about Matthew, where Jesus said it's how you treat the lesser among us as to how you're going to be judged. And it's not just the Bible. It's not just

the Old and New Testament. It's the Koran. It's the Torah. It's Muslims. It's Mormons. It's Christians and it's Jews. It's there. And it would seem to me if our clergy missed this wonderful opportunity before the Holy Spirit, not to tell us what to do but to tell us what they think is the right thing that we should be doing.

And so, as we move into the holidays, please don't think that we've got the other side convinced that they should give relief for unemployed people who paid into a system and who lost their jobs through no fault of their own. Please don't think that they want to protect Social Security and that they want to protect Medicaid and Medicare. No. That's our job to do it. But it's your job to remind us that we have this obligation to do it.

And so you're right if you stop us in the street and say that we've lost credibility—all of government, the President, the candidates for President, the Democrats and the Republicans. But what about you? Will you be able to say that you joined in this effort? Will you be able to say you made that telephone call or visited that office? I hope you do. And you can count on many of us that are waiting for that type of support. We need it.

Thank you. God bless America.

HOUSE HOLIDAY HUMBUGS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Maryland (Ms. EDWARDS) for 5 minutes.

Ms. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, as families prepare for the holidays, many will gather to watch some of our favorite holiday movies. In my family, we always enjoyed watching "How the Grinch Stole Christmas," tuning into "A Christmas Carol," and one of my favorites, "It's a Wonderful Life."

Well, Mr. Speaker, it won't be necessary to visit the local Redbox or scour the TV Guide listings or order the movies on Netflix. Americans across this country can tune in to C-SPAN and watch our own version of the Grinch and Ebenezer Scrooge and Henry Potter, our House holiday humbugs right here on the floor of the House of Representatives.

The American people can only hope, however, that they can redeem themselves, our holiday humbugs, the way these characters did. But I fear that's not possible.

Yesterday, House Republicans brought to the floor a payroll tax credit and an unemployment insurance proposal trimmed in controversial riders and deceit. The holiday humbugs, the GOP leadership, decorated the payroll tax credit and unemployment insurance bill with a controversial Keystone pipeline rider to sweeten the deal for their caucus. But that wasn't enough. The majority gilded the proposal with cuts to essential health care reform funding, a freeze in Federal employee pay for yet another year, and a cut in the length of emergency unemploy-

ment insurance and blocking the administration from moving forward on environmental protections that will help our families breathe, drink, and live more healthfully.

Now, today, we heard from the House holiday humbugs that the big problem facing the unemployed that House Republicans tried to fix yesterday was drug testing for the unemployed.

□ 1040

Well, Mr. Speaker, the problem for the unemployed isn't drugs, it's a job. And in the absence of a job, it's an unemployment check.

So for the holidays, my Republican colleagues put on their list a proposal that would dip further into the pockets of low and middle-income families that buy health insurance in the new health exchanges. And during this holiday season, at a time in our Nation's economy when consumption has grown by only 5 percent since June 2009, our Holiday Humbug proposal by Republicans would cut holes in the pockets of millions of our Nation's consumers.

The legislation passed in the House yesterday would freeze the compensation of 2.65 million Federal employees all across this country, Federal employees who are consumers, Mr. Speaker. So while the special interests and the Wall Street fat cats and the big oil companies are enjoying their large Christmas bonuses, Federal employees who have already contributed \$60 million in forgone pay for deficit reduction will be required to give up even more.

The Republican plan hits struggling families even harder. In fact, the bill passed yesterday by our holiday humbugs eliminates 40 weeks of unemployment insurance. The funding for this program not only helps families check off items on their Christmas list—things like rent, things like childcare, and things like groceries—but the funding brings money back into the American economy. In fact, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that every dollar of benefits spent on unemployment compensation generates about \$2 of additional economic activity. That's money directly into our economy.

The Republican proposal passed in the House yesterday would eliminate over \$22 billion in economic growth and result in the loss of 140,000 jobs in 2012. That's what happened in this House yesterday. My colleague, SANDER LEVIN from Michigan, recognized that the legislative "holiday gift" that the Republicans thought they were providing the American worker this Christmas is just one big lump of coal. Their proposal would leave millions of Americans out in the cold this holiday season while imposing additional barriers to receiving assistance and diminishing the protections of unemployed workers.

Throughout the day yesterday the holiday humbugs kept trying to point to places where we could compromise.

Well, the American people are asking: Why not simply compromise on a clean extension of the payroll tax credit for 160 million workers and unemployment insurance? Why not ensure that 160 million hardworking families can benefit from the average of \$1,000 they will receive from the payroll tax credit—again, right into the economy.

Yesterday the Republican majority decided they would rather risk raising taxes and digging into the pockets of families all across this country. Well, Mr. Speaker, not even Scrooge could do what we saw on the floor yesterday. In the end, our holiday humbugs—the Grinch, Mr. Scrooge, and even Mr. Potter—learned that there is redemption. It's time for our House Republicans to do the same. I urge the majority to instead bring to the floor a sensible and thoughtful piece of legislation to extend unemployment compensation and the payroll tax credit.

REPUBLICAN AGENDA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. FUDGE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FUDGE. Mr. Speaker, after a year of attempts to eliminate Medicare and obstruct any kind of jobs bill, the Republican agenda is clear: eliminate the deficit at any cost, including at the expense of our most vulnerable, while adversely impacting our economic recovery.

More than 1.6 million American children were homeless at some point in 2010. These are children under the age of 18 living in emergency shelters or in shared housing, and many are living on the street. Now, in 2011, the number of homeless children continues to increase. There are more homeless children today than after the natural disasters of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The recession's economic devastation has left 1 in 45 children homeless, millions of Americans are out of work, and we have pushed unemployment rates to levels not seen in decades.

We continue to see poverty soar. In 2010, nearly one in six Americans was living in poverty. As poverty surged to its highest level since 1993, median household incomes declined, which is why it is maddening to me that we in Congress can't agree or even come to a point where we can agree to compromise on policies that will help struggling Americans.

In the 49 weeks since the Republicans took control of this House they have failed to pass a single bill to encourage job growth. They pledged to focus on economic recovery, but they have failed to deliver. I have sponsored four jobs bills in the last 6 months, but none of them has been brought up for a vote. What the majority has done is try to advance their own political agenda. Their priority is clear: eliminate the deficit at any cost on the backs of the most vulnerable.

This year, Republicans proposed a budget that would privatize Medicare

and make Medicaid a block grant, sacrificing care for our seniors, our sick, and our poor. The Republican budget slashed more than \$6 trillion—with a “t”—over the next decade from Medicaid, SNAP, Medicare, and many other programs supporting low- and middle-income Americans. The majority suggests these drastic changes while leaving in place tax cuts for the wealthiest and \$40 billion in Big Oil tax loopholes.

The majority's budget would devastate poor communities and middle class Americans. It pushes seniors into the hands of private insurance companies and forces them to pay more out-of-pocket expenses. What we need is a bold approach, Mr. Speaker, to maintaining these programs rather than finding ways to defund or derail them.

Almost 6 million workers have been unemployed for a year or more in this country, so we know there is a strong need to extend unemployment insurance. What we've seen this week makes me skeptical. Here we are at the end of one of the most unproductive congressional sessions we've had in recent history. In this end of the year drama, Republicans play the role of the Grinch who stole Christmas.

Yesterday, the House passed a bill that slashes unemployment insurance by 40 weeks in the States that are hardest hit, including my own home State of Ohio. If signed into law, beneficiaries without a high school degree would be denied insurance unless they use the benefits we're giving them to pay for getting their GED. The bill also allows States to force recipients to take drug tests.

In 2010, unemployment benefits kept 3.2 million Americans—including nearly 1 million children—from falling into poverty. I don't even want to imagine the magnitude of the problem if we fail to extend unemployment insurance now.

During this holiday season more than ever, Americans feel there is no way out. Last week, a woman in Texas, who was originally from the State of Ohio, killed herself and shot her two children because they were denied SNAP benefits. One of those children has died. Mr. Speaker, this is desperation, homelessness at its worst.

THE END OF THE IRAQ WAR: WELCOME BUT TRAGICALLY OVERDUE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, since the spring of 2004 I've stood here in this very spot 415 times to call for an end to foreign wars and the start of a new, smarter approach to national security. In most of those speeches my tone has been one of insistence and beseeching. Seldom have I been able to echo good news or declare a sense of accomplishment, but Mr. Speaker, today is different. As the President will reaffirm

in a speech at Fort Bragg today—and it moves me almost beyond words to say this—the war in Iraq is finally over.

After 105 excruciating months, after so much heartbreak and despair, after so many shameful episodes—such as the “Mission Accomplished” banner, Abu Ghraib, the outing of Valerie Plame, and so much more—our troops are finally coming home from Iraq, all of them.

Much credit goes to President Obama for making good on his promise. When he was sworn into office, there were 142,000 U.S. servicemembers deployed to Iraq; by the time the calendar turns in 2012, there will be zero; zero.

□ 1050

But this day would not have come unless some very brave people had spoken up for peace at a time when the polls and the conventional wisdom said that President Bush and his Iraq policy were unassailable.

I've been proud to work in particular with my friends, Congresswoman BARBARA LEE and Congresswoman MAXINE WATERS, in establishing the Out of Iraq Caucus. Many of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle stood shoulder to shoulder with us, including our late friend, Jack Murtha, whose opposition to the war represented a major turning point in the Iraq debate.

Of course, no one displayed more courage than the heroic men and women who served in Iraq with honor and selflessness. They present the best our Nation has to offer. I only wish that their elected leaders had served them better over the last decade.

But, Mr. Speaker, we must be careful. We must be careful about turning this into an occasion of triumph or celebration. The end of the Iraq War is welcome, but tragically, overdue. Too much has been lost in precious American blood, in badly needed public treasure, and in our moral core as a Nation. The end of this war comes too late for nearly 4,500 Americans whose parents, spouses, children, and friends will miss them desperately this holiday season and every other day of the year.

Many thousands more are home from Iraq with broken minds and bodies, with scars they will carry for the rest of their days. We must keep our promise to them to provide the benefits that they so need and deserve.

I don't know how we atone for the deaths of thousands upon thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians. Our military occupation in Iraq is over, but our bilateral engagement with Iraq most certainly will go on. There is still plenty of human need in Iraq, and we must have an obligation to help alleviate that.

It is critical that the United States be a peaceful and constructive partner with Iraq, investing in development, providing the civilian support that will empower its people, and strengthening its democratic institutions. Now is the moment. Now, more than ever, we must move to a smarter security in Iraq.