

lawmakers, just to make it look good, have to pay \$50 annually to join.

We don't know who those lawmakers are, although we do know that 60 percent of the lawmakers in the entire United States of America are members of ALEC. The taxpayers are probably the ones who pay the annual membership fee with which the members are then connected to corporate interests by way of ALEC committees, and these committees produce the model legislation that is then introduced by these same member legislators in their respective legislatures.

That was the way that the so-called Stand Your Ground law—but it's really a "shoot first, ask questions later" bill—began. That's how it started in Florida. It was an ALEC-produced bill. It has now spread to one-half of the States in the United States of America. Twenty-five States have adopted similar laws despite the fact that self-defense has always been a defense available to people who find themselves in that situation.

But the reason why they did this is because they wanted to produce more handgun sales. It's nothing but about money. The NRA and the corporations that sell firearms through the retail outlets across the Nation are benefiting, but we have people dying in the streets because of these weapons.

Now that is one question. There is another committee that has been set up by ALEC, and it deals with the private prison industry. Mr. Speaker, the United States imprisons more than any other nation in the world. We currently incarcerate approximately 2.3 million people.

America's high incarceration rate is not fitting for a Nation which is routinely touted as the greatest in the world. Although high incarceration rates hurt the United States as a whole, it definitely benefits the private prison industry. In 2010, the two largest private prison companies, CCA and the GEO Group, received nearly \$3 billion in revenue that's taxpayer money.

The for-profit prison industry is driven by the corporate members of the American Legislative Exchange Council, ALEC. ALEC is a secretive organization that has advocated for harsh sentencing and detention laws that lead to mass incarceration. It provides State legislators with model legislation, and each year ALEC members introduce these bills in State houses across the country. This gives unparalleled access and authority to ALEC's corporate and legislative members, undermining the will of the people and the power of the ballot box. Private prisons have vested interests in maintaining and maximizing their profits.

□ 1040

They are not concerned about public safety or rehabilitation or reducing recidivism. Those principles directly conflict with their bottom line and mantra, which is more prisoners and more money.

Mr. Speaker, I will again be back to continue to discuss this issue. I discussed it yesterday. Today is another day. I think the American people need to know what is going on in the politics of America. If we don't do something, we are all at risk for losing the rights that we as citizens are supposed to possess: government of, by, and for the people—not for special interests.

ADDRESSING FAILED ADMINISTRATION POLICIES

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

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, the failed policies of the Obama administration continue to drag down the economy. The policies of stimulus programs, bailouts, crony capitalism, the Department of Justice investigating only what they choose worthy to be enforced, bowing to Saudi kings, going to China hat in hand asking for more money have brought down the economy.

Indeed, the unemployment rate, which the administration says is 8.2 percent, that's not accurate at all. They simply got it down that low by omitting a whole lot of unemployed people from the unemployment category. There's about 4 million people who have given up looking for a job, and the Obama administration doesn't even consider them as being unemployed.

In my opinion, there are four things we can do to address this, and we need to do it on a bipartisan basis. I have reached out to the White House. I will continue to. And even in an election year, it's far more important to put America first and party second.

The first thing we need to do is pass a budget. Right now, the national debt is over 100 percent of the gross domestic product, a \$15 trillion national debt and a \$15 trillion economy. Indeed, we are on the road to Greece. For every dollar we spend, 40 cents is borrowed.

The United States Senate, under HARRY REID, has not passed a budget in 3 years. That is the constitutional duty of the legislative branch of government. The House has done so. The House passes a budget. We had a great debate 2 weeks ago. We had a budget offered by the Democrats, one offered by the Progressive Caucus, one offered by the Congressional Black Caucus, one offered by the most conservative caucus, one offered by the Ryan Budget Committee. We had a great debate, and we passed a budget.

Now, the Senate doesn't like that. I understand that. Footnote: we even offered the President's budget, which increases the debt \$1.2 trillion—another \$1.2 trillion—and not a single vote from NANCY PELOSI to JOHN BOEHNER, not one vote for the President's budget. The same thing happened in the Senate last year.

But I understand the Senate doesn't like our budget. They don't like the

President's budget. But where is your budget? You have got to pass it. And if you would pass a budget in the U.S. Senate, we can hammer out our differences between the House and Senate. Indeed, both parties will have to give; both bodies will compromise. That's always been the case. But it would send a huge international signal that America, the economic leader of the world, is serious about getting our hands on our debt. We are leading the way instead of falling to the demise of Greece, Spain, Portugal, and so many of the other troubled countries.

So the first thing we need to do to change our economy around is to pass a budget.

The second thing to do is to look at regulatory burden, which is stifling new jobs, and instead of government bureaucracies going to the small businesses with this "I gotcha" attitude—we know you hate people; we know you hate consumers; we know you want to pollute the air; we know you want to poison the food—maybe the Federal Government regulatory agencies should go into the small businesses and say: We recognize what you're doing right; we want to encourage it. And where you're doing wrong, we're going to discourage it; and if you don't address it, we will fine you. But don't go to every business in America assuming they're guilty of something besides creating jobs and delivering goods and services to people.

So we need to ease up and find the balance in the regulatory burden.

Thirdly, we need to drill our own oil, and we need to encourage the new technologies of horizontal drilling, fracking, and all the great promises that are out there. We need to look at the example of Williston, North Dakota, which has brought its oil production from 200,000 barrels to 600,000 barrels in less than a year's period of time. Indeed, America could perhaps become an energy exporter. Not only would that be an economic boon, but the national security advantage of it would be an unbelievable sea change in the world stability today.

Fourth and final, we need to have tax simplification. How many Americans within the sound of my voice fill out their own tax return? More and more people are turning to accountants and lawyers to figure out what the heck we owe Uncle Sam every April 15. And when you pay an accountant \$300 or \$400 or \$500 or \$1,000 to figure out what you owe Uncle Sam, that's a tax in itself. Businesses spend lots of time avoiding taxes. We need a tax system that's certain, that's clear, that's concise and fair so that everybody understands it and everybody pays their fair share. Indeed, tax simplification would help turn the economy around.

So, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, Democrats and Republicans have the moment right now to change the economic direction of America by passing a good, solid budget; by having balanced regulatory reform; drilling our

own oil and having a good energy policy; and, finally, tax simplification.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 46 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

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AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: Dear God, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

Bless abundantly the Members of this people's House. During this season of new growth, may Your redemptive power help them to see new ways to productive service, fresh approaches to understanding each other, especially those across the aisle, and renewed commitment to solving the problems facing our Nation.

May they, and may we all, be transformed by Your grace, and better reflect the sense of wonder, even joy, at the opportunities to serve that are ever before us.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. LANKFORD led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

REMEMBERING THE VICTIMS OF THE OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING

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

Mr. LANKFORD. On April 19, 9:02 a.m. central time, my city will stop for a moment of silence. We'll stop and we'll reflect for 168 seconds. Family and friends will stand on the green grass in the shade of the Survivor Tree and will read the names of all 168 victims of the April 19, 1995, bombing at the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City.

While the State of Oklahoma remembers, I would like to ask the Nation to also pause for a moment and to remember the service, the lives, and the families of those that we will never forget, to thank again the rescue workers that rushed into a building that they had no idea how stable it really was, and to remember again the survivors of that day.

In the days ahead, our community will visit the 3-acre memorial site. Tens of thousands will participate in a memorial marathon. Oklahoma families will again stop, discuss, and remember with their children April 19, 1995. I would like to encourage the Nation to do the same.

REPUBLICAN BUDGET BREAKS PROMISE TO AMERICA'S SENIORS

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

Mr. CARNAHAN. When I entered public service, I promised I would never forget those Americans who built this Nation. They educated my generation, passing on a better, stronger country than they inherited.

Nearly 50 years ago, Congress passed Medicare, and President Lyndon Johnson signed it, with former President Harry Truman and Bess Truman sitting at his side. America promised that if you worked hard, we would not forget you in your golden years. We promised that health care bills would not drag seniors into financial ruin.

The Republican budget breaks that promise. It tells our parents and grandparents to fend for themselves, and it ends the Medicare guarantee. The promise that I made, that this country made, and that I demand this Congress uphold, is that we treat seniors like national treasures and not national burdens. The Republican budget fails that promise to America's seniors.

NEW IRS AGENTS

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, last week, the President announced plans to divert \$500 million to the IRS for the purpose of hiring new IRS agents to promote the President's health care government takeover bill. This fact reveals that ObamaCare is not a bill designed to improve the quality of health care but instead raises taxes and creates more burdens for individuals and small businesses, destroying jobs. House Republicans remain committed to fighting for the total repeal of ObamaCare, then to promote commonsense free market health reforms preserving the doctor-patient relationship.

Additionally, I am grateful for the efforts of Tom Von Kaenel, who is in Washington today. Tom is the founder of the Sea2Sea, an organization providing assistance to our military personnel, veterans, and their families by helping them transition back to civilian life. In order to raise awareness for the cause, Tom will spend the next several weeks biking across the United States, duplicating his biking this spring across the United Kingdom.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

THE FUTURE OF MEDICARE

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

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, on Monday I met in western New York at the Cheektowaga Senior Center, where the discussion centered around the future of Medicare. Prior to the creation of Medicare in 1965, only 50 percent of seniors had health insurance because they were seen by insurance companies as too risky. Today, Medicare is a lifeline to affordable prescription medications and accessible preventative care for seniors across the Nation, including over 100,000 beneficiaries in my district alone.

Now some want to change the program to instead give our seniors a voucher that forces them to go out into the market on their own to try to obtain insurance. Our parents and grandparents deserve better. Medicare provides one of the most important guarantees in our society: the guarantee that if you are an older American and you get sick, you will get the care that you need without going broke. This is an American promise worth fighting to protect.

□ 1210

SUPPORT THE RESTORE ACT

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