

over \$5 trillion. Interest rates are up as a throttle on economic growth.

Unemployment is up, surely, in America's heartland. According to the Census Bureau, working families fell even farther behind in the past year as they have every single year since this president took office. President Bush's own Census Bureau reports that the median income of working age households fell by another half of a percent last year.

According to the University of Michigan, consumer confidence hit a 9-month low in August, and authors of a confidence report say the gap between rich and poor in the United States is quite different than anything else observed in the prior half century. Truly America is in uncharted economic waters.

According to The New York Times, for the first time since World War II, though productivity is up by our people, real wages have failed to increase for most workers at a time when the overall economy was even growing. Even though President Bush and Secretary Paulson might claim the American people are better off, working people know better. They trust their real life experiences, not White House press releases.

The reality for America's families is that high gasoline prices, higher natural gas prices, rising health care costs, credit card debt increasing and borrowing against home equity have topped out. They are eating away at disposable income, and everywhere they turn, many middle class families are getting squeezed.

Job losses due to more outsourcing and foreign competition have left working families wondering, what does the future hold? Does work have a value in America anymore?

The median hourly wage for American workers has declined 2 percent since 2003 despite their increased productivity. The Economic Policy Institute estimates that real median income for households headed by someone under age 65 has declined 5.4 percent since President Bush took office. Is anybody here in Washington paying attention?

The net result, according to the New York Times, is that wages and salaries now make up the lowest share of the Nation's gross domestic product since the government began recording the data in 1947. But yet corporate profits represent the larger share of gross domestic profit since the 1960s.

There is a little imbalance there. The Times quoted a report from economists at Goldman Sachs. The most important contributor to higher profit margins over the past 5 years has been a decline in labor's share of national income.

Our mother used to ask the question for the super wealthy and the super rich, did they ever fill up? When is enough? How many homes? How many

cars? How many chauffeurs? How many trips? How much do you really need? How much? So the bottom line on Labor Day 2006 is this: The strong economy that President Bush and his Secretary of the Treasury keep talking about has benefitted big business, but it has clearly bypassed the vast majority of the American people. It is time we change this Congress.

It is time we have people here in Washington who again represent the vast majority of the people of the United States who believe in hard work, who want to follow the rules, and they have a right to live a better way of life for investing themselves in the beliefs of this country and for putting their lives on the line for it. Mr. Speaker, America, this Congress, and, frankly, this President simply have to do much better.

GAS PRICES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, right now in my district in rural North Carolina, folks are very concerned about the high cost of fuel. I rise tonight to call on this Congress to take action now to help the people who are suffering from this very serious crisis, not only in my district and State, but really in this country.

Gas prices are higher than they have ever been in the history of our country, and rural Americans are getting hit particularly hard. Our farmers are watching most of the profits from the crops that they harvest go back into their fuel tanks or their tractors and their equipment.

Our school districts in rural North Carolina are having trouble keeping the buses on the road. Rural Americans as a whole feel a greater pinch from these outrageous fuel prices. They have longer commutes just to get to the grocery store, to the doctor's office and to their church on Sunday.

Yet, while Americans are struggling to make ends meet, big oil companies are making record profits.

I support legislation to crack down on price gouging of gasoline and fuel. I also believe that it is our duty in this body to find alternatives to what has become a dangerous reliance on foreign oil.

As the co-chairman of the Democratic Rural Working Group, we have introduced H.R. 5372, the Biofuels Act of 2006. This is legislation that will help bring Americans a step closer to energy independence.

Today, we have the technology to solve our energy crisis. Other countries are already making significant progress and are far ahead of the United States in their energy independence. Countries such as Brazil already

use over 80 percent ethanol and biodiesel, and they are 100 percent energy independent.

The Biofuels Act would increase production of vehicles that are E85 compatible and provide the tax credits to service station owners who update their equipment. We have the ability to turn soybeans and cellulose into biodiesel and ethanol. What we don't have is the infrastructure to maximize our ability to use these fuels.

Instead of the same old giveaways to big oil companies, the Republican leadership in this Congress should allow a vote on the legislation that we have introduced, H.R. 5372. Other countries have accomplished their energy independence. Americans can, too. Now is the time. The answer to our crisis of energy is growing in our fields.

NATIONAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CARTER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, we have had a month here in August where we have gone back home and talked to folks back home and visited with them, and we are moving forward on issues that are vital to America. But nothing is more vital to the United States of America than its national security.

So I rise this evening to discuss with my colleagues and my neighbors the view that I am a little concerned about and want to talk about on the issue of national security. National security, the term itself, has a broad umbrella. It has an umbrella that we have a lot of historical experience to look at.

I am an old history buff. I like history. I study history. I think we learn lessons from history. I think when we forget history, we forget lessons we have learned, sometimes the hard way.

So, tonight, I want to talk a little bit about the national security of the United States today and compare that national security to a little bit of our history, and then also to discuss a little bit about what our response is, how we are now viewing our lives that we live in this country in light of national security. Now, national security means, are we secure as a Nation in the scope of our world, which means we have to think about our own common defense, promoting our own general welfare, the things that our founders talked about. That is part of it.

National security is securing our Nation's borders, and this debate has been ongoing now in this Congress for quite some time concerning our Nation's borders, and we may talk a little bit about that tonight.

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But I think that anyone who establishes a nation, and of course I believe