

constantly on the New York Public Library computers? His response was they clean their hard drives at the end of the day. Interesting point.

Another issue we heard at the time of the PATRIOT Act had to do with roving wiretaps, a tool I believe you, as a prosecutor, used over the years, and that we use in drug cases against organized criminals. We use that type of method. When we talk about using it for counterterrorism purposes, it seems as if we were creating some new structure. Do you want to address that.

Mr. MCCAUL of Texas. Reclaiming my time, this issue goes well beyond what the gentleman is referring to. This issue goes to our capability to intercept communications from foreign terrorists in foreign countries. Again, I think the American people would like to know what al Qaeda is saying when they conspire to perpetrate something like this. They would like to know what Osama bin Laden is saying, and what his lieutenants are saying.

I claim my time is starting to run out.

Mr. DENT. Quickly, the bottom line is we should be listening to this foreign-to-foreign communication of people who are not American citizens who are suspected terrorists because you want to prevent what happened on 9/11 of 2001. For some of us, it was quite personal.

You mentioned what happened in 1993. My cousin spent the whole day on the top of that building, the South Tower, spent the entire day on the roof after what exploded in the basement, the garage of that building.

□ 2100

You know, he was there, also, on September 11, 2001. I remember that, too. He was on the 91st floor of the north tower when the plane entered the 93rd floor. Everybody above him was killed.

And for many of us it's personal. But if we have information, actionable intelligence, I would certainly hope that our counter terrorism officials, that our intelligence officials would do everything in their power to prevent such terrible events like 9/11 from ever occurring.

And again, I just want to state one more time that enacting the Protect America Act will help improve our intelligence capabilities, will protect Americans, and it's time that we get the job done. We have a bipartisan consensus to do it. Let's do it. The time for games is over. It's time to get the job done.

I yield back to my friend.

Mr. MCCAUL of Texas. I thank the gentleman.

Before we passed the Protect America Act, the Director of National Intelligence came to us and he said, "I'm losing two-thirds of the intelligence out there." Well, now with the expiration of the Protect America Act, we

can only imagine going back to that scenario. We were going dark in parts of the world. We were losing critical foreign intelligence from our enemy to better protect this Nation from another terrorist attack.

And to put to you, I think, one of the best quotes I've read, it really puts you in the mindset of who is the enemy and what is the real threat to the United States, I'd like to leave you tonight with the following words. And this is in their words, not mine.

"The confrontation that we are calling for with the apostate regimes does not know Socratic debates, Plutonic ideals, nor Aristotle's diplomacy. But it does know the dialogue of bullets, the ideals of assassination, bombing and destruction, and the diplomacy of the cannon and the machine gun.

The Islamic governments have never and will never be established through peaceful solutions and cooperate councils. They are established, as they always have been, through pen and gun, by word and bullet, and by tongue and teeth."

The words that I just read to you are the words found in the preface of the al Qaeda training manual. They are the words of the enemy. That is what the enemy is telling us. We need to win in this war on terror and stop this enemy and protect the United States from this ever happening on American soil again. It is time to pass a bipartisan Senate bill.

#### CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS MESSAGE HOUR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure this evening to have an opportunity to stand in the well of this wonderful House of Representatives on behalf of the Congressional Black Caucus and our Chair, CAROLYN CHEEKS KILPATRICK.

This evening I will be joined by several of my colleagues to talk about the black community, the African American community, and the economy and the impact that this downturn in the economy has had on the African American community.

Before I go to that subject matter, I just want to take a moment. One of the things that we have an opportunity, as Members of Congress, to do is to travel all around the United States, meeting people who say, oh, we watch you on television, we've seen you on television. And the fact is this weekend I had the opportunity to be in Orlando, Florida, on behalf of my sorority, Delta Sigma Theta. And I met one of the finest families in Orlando, headed by Janet McDowell-Travis and her hus-

band, Michael Travis, son Jordan, who is 10 years old, who drew me this really, really nice card, Janet's mother, Vergnoustene, my soror as well, and Janet's aunt, Aunt Romelda. So, I just want to take a moment this evening, Mr. Speaker, to have an opportunity to say hello to that McDowell-Travis family and say to them, thank you so much for making my weekend in Orlando so great. And hopefully I'll have another chance to see you in July, when I come back to Florida for our national convention. Hi, everybody. Hope you're doing well.

Back to the reason that I'm here on floor to talk about the Congressional Black Caucus message hour, the declining economy and its impact on the African American community.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Madam Speaker, let me begin by seeking unanimous consent that my colleagues have 5 days in which to revise and extend their remarks, to allow other Members to have the opportunity to submit their remarks in writing. In fact, I have in my hand a signed statement by my colleague and good friend from the great State of Texas, EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, which I will choose to submit for the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Let me begin with a quote. "At the bottom of education, at the bottom of politics, even at the bottom of religion, there must be economic independence." Booker T. Washington from 1903. These words, spoken more than a century ago by one of our foremost African American thinkers and educators, perhaps might be more relevant today than they were in 1903.

For far too long, the current administration has danced around this issue, hoping that it would go away. But it is time that we state the truth. Our economy is in decline. Today, hardworking African American families are struggling to make ends meet in this slowing economy. Wages are flat, prices are high, and for many, jobs are hard to come by.

These problems are even greater in the African American community. Unemployment rates for African Americans are consistently almost double for white Americans. The median family earnings of full-time African American workers is consistently over \$130 less than white workers who are similarly educated and situated.

The poverty rate for African Americans is almost double the national poverty rate, 24 percent versus 12.5 percent. And more than triple, 33 percent versus 9.8 percent, for children under the age of 18.

Home ownership for African Americans is 48 percent compared to 72 percent for white Americans. And African

Americans are more than two times more likely to have been denied a mortgage, and more than two times more likely to receive predatory loans.

In this most recent research around foreclosures, it has been shown that African Americans who, in fact, qualified for prime mortgages were, in fact, steered to subprime mortgages, predatory loans because the advantage for the lender was greater, they could make more money on the predatory subprime loan than they could on a prime loan.

Minority-owned businesses received only 57 cents of each dollar they would be expected to receive based on the percentage of "ready, willing and able" businesses that are minority owned.

The Congressional Black Caucus remains committed to economic empowerment in the African American community. This includes, but it is not limited to:

One, eradicated employment discrimination and ensuring the employment of a diverse workforce by employers in the private sector and in government, including staff of committees and Members of Congress.

Two, protecting the rights and working conditions of all employees.

Three, providing support to enable people to work, such as child care, transportation, health care, job retraining, and a living wage.

Four, promoting the advancement of African Americans into management, executive, and director positions.

Five, providing equal access to capital for individuals and businesses, and the elimination of redlining and predatory lending practices.

Six, expanding affordable rental and ownership of housing.

Seven, achieving aggressive minority business goals and participation in government and private contracting.

So, tonight you will hear from various members of the Congressional Black Caucus as we discuss the many economic problems facing the African American community, as well as our plans to address those issues.

If I can go back to my experience in Orlando this weekend. I had an opportunity to participate in this wonderful ceremony involving 10 young African American men and women that were juniors and seniors in high school. And the experiences and backgrounds of these young men and women were just fantastic. And one of the things I reminded them of was, no deposit, no return. I talked to them about, we used the expression, birds of a feather flock together, and that eagles do not fly with sparrows. And I suggested to them that they needed to be eagles so that they could fly far above and do more. But even in the midst of all of flying higher, doing more, in an economy like we are experiencing today it would be difficult for these young men and women to be successful.

So, I'm going to take a break for a moment and yield to my colleague and good friend from the great State of California, the honorable gentlewoman from California, Congresswoman BARBARA LEE, such time as she may consume.

Ms. LEE. Let me thank the gentlelady for her leadership and for yielding and for organizing these very important special orders, also, really, for reminding us tonight of much of this unfinished business of our great country, and laying out the glaring disparities that we're witnessing in the African American community; but also, what our economic empowerment agenda is of the Congressional Black Caucus. So, thank you, Congresswoman TUBBS JONES.

Millions of Americans are one paycheck, that is, if they have a paycheck, away from poverty. Now, the numbers speak for themselves. Gas prices are at record levels, averaging, in my district, \$3.73 a gallon, even as oil is traded at over \$100 a barrel and big oil companies are reaping in record profits. Foreclosures have skyrocketed, putting hundreds of thousands of people out on the street. The American dream of homeownership is quickly turning into a nightmare for many hardworking individuals and families in our country.

In my district, in Alameda County, we are projected to lose nearly 4,700 homes to foreclosures due to the subprime mortgage crisis, eliminating \$3.2 billion in home equity value. That's equal to a drop in home equity by almost \$8,500 for each homeowner in my district. Meanwhile, food prices have risen, squeezing recipients of food stamps even as the number of people expected to enroll in the program will reach a record 28 million people in the next fiscal year.

Health care costs are going through the roof, even as this administration is posing massive cuts in funding for Medicare and Medicaid, and African Americans continue to be the hardest hit. As of February 2008, the unemployment rate for African Americans was over 8.3 percent, nearly double the national average of 4.3 percent. Among the African American community, poverty rates are 2.5 times higher than the national average. Even more disturbing, almost 40 percent of African American children under 5 years of age live in poverty. And all the while, African Americans continue to be the target for, as we talked about earlier, subprime loans.

African Americans are three times more likely to have a subprime loan than whites, accounting for 52 percent of all subprime loans. And as the housing market has collapsed, estimates indicate that African Americans alone will lose between 164 to \$213 billion in home equity value during this recession.

It's long past time for Congress to address the burden of this economic

downturn on the African American community and other communities of color and address the ongoing lack of opportunity in minority communities in America. Even in the face of this massive housing crisis and impending recession, growing unemployment and the highest number of applicants for food stamps since the program's inception, the Bush administration wants to cut funding, mind you, cut funding for the most vital programs so that he can continue to fund his failed occupation in Iraq. This is partly due to Iraq, billions of dollars that have been spent, this economic downturn. I personally call this "The Iraq Recession."

At nearly half a trillion dollars, the occupation of Iraq and the resulting Iraq recession has wasted too much of our American treasure, drained too much of our American resources, and most importantly, claimed too many American lives. And we cannot dismiss the toll that this occupation has had on the economic security of our Nation and on the average American family who will feel the impact of these expenses for years to come.

The Joint Economic Committee estimates the total bill for the war through 2008 will cost the typical family of four a full \$16,500. Can you imagine what a family of four can do with \$16,500? This conflict has claimed the lives of more than 4,000 brave members of our Armed Forces and has resulted in injuries to more than 28,000 others.

Five years after the invasion and occupation of Iraq, 47 million Americans are living without health insurance, 47 million. And more than 36 million people continue to live in poverty, at least 2 million of which have fallen into poverty since 2003.

Five years later, it is projected that more than 2 million American families will lose their homes to foreclosure, primarily over the next 2 years. And worse, as the demand is increasing for programs serving children, the elderly and the poor, and those facing the loss of their income, more than half of our States face serious budget shortfalls that will force them to cut back or even eliminate programs that serve the most vulnerable of our populations.

□ 2115

So, Mr. Speaker, we must address the needs and the will of our country by bringing an end to this occupation and to the immeasurable costs that will continue to be exacted on the physical and economic security of the American people for generations to come.

Forty-one years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King was, as he said, "compelled to see the war as the enemy of the poor and attack it as such." Of course Dr. King was referring to the Vietnam War. But his understanding of the relationship between the vast sums spent dropping bombs in a foreign country, and the resulting lack of funding for

programs that relieve hunger and poverty are just as true today as they were back then, especially now with this economic downturn.

A recent survey revealed that 68 percent of Americans believe that ending the war and occupation in Iraq is an important step the United States Government must take to respond to the current economic recession. So we must put an end to this occupation, and we must fund a real economic stimulus plan that expands unemployment assistance and food stamp benefits, provides housing assistance and foreclosure relief for homeowners, and expands Medicaid payments to States through the Federal medical assistance percentage.

We need to pass a real bankruptcy reform bill. I believe this one that we're working on now is H.R. 3609. It's called the Emergency Home Ownership and Mortgage Equity Protection Act of 2007, that will give struggling homeowners a fighting chance to stay in their homes.

We've got to reauthorize and realize that HOPE VI is an important, important housing initiative, and pass H.R. 3524, to finally stop putting an end to predatory lending. And instead of spending billions to bail out Bear Stearns, we should really be investing that money to train our workforce and to expand green jobs and eradicate poverty.

So as we remember 3 years ago, Hurricane Katrina served as a real rude wake up call to the Nation and the continuing inequality that plagues minority communities, especially the African communities in America. Katrina opened the eyes of many Americans about the continuing burden of poverty that often isolates and traps generations of Americans of color, African Americans, in a cycle of poverty and disenfranchisement. So we cannot ignore the legacy of Katrina, nor can we ignore the legacy of Dr. King's words.

So this week, as we approach the 40th anniversary of Dr. King's assassination, let us all make a commitment to honor his vision and his life's work. We must end this occupation of Iraq, and we must enact a real economic stimulus plan, so that the American people can move forward, take care of their families, come out of this downturn and really begin to live the type of life, the quality of life that they so deserve in the wealthiest and most powerful country in the world.

Thank you, Congresswoman STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES, for giving us the opportunity tonight to talk about the real suffering that people are feeling; but giving people some hope that there are many here in Washington, D.C. on the battlefield trying to turn this around.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. I want to thank my colleague, Congresswoman BARBARA LEE, for her leadership, and hope

that she will decide to hang around a little while with me as we go through a few more issues. If you can't, I absolutely understand.

I want to go back to the housing crisis for a moment. The loss of a home is both devastating for the family and the community. For a family, owning a home is often their only piece of the "American Pie." The equity from owning their home is often the only means to secure funding for a new business, college tuition or retirement. For the community, increased foreclosures often turn neighborhoods that once were vibrant into neglected, blighted areas which ultimately raise costs for local governments.

In the State of Ohio alone, 90,000 homes are in foreclosure. In fact, one of the things that we often talk about is that working class families usually pass their biggest asset from 1 generation to the next, and that is a house. So not only are we devastating the income and wealth of this generation, we may well be devastating the income and wealth of future generations.

Predatory lending is the leading cause of the foreclosures across this country. And I need not go on and on about the issue, but let me just point out a few statistics.

The Nonprofit Center for Responsible Lending projects that as this year ends, 2.2 million households in the subprime market will either have lost their homes to foreclosure or hold subprime mortgages that will fail over the next several years. The real dilemma that many of the families face is the amount of mortgage that they own on the home far exceeds the real value of the home.

Additionally, only about 1.4 million of 15.1 million loans analyzed from 1998 through 2006 were for first-time home buyers. Most were refinancing. And all of us got those calls from people calling up, Mrs. Jones, you have a unique opportunity right in your community to refinance your home, and this program is just for your neighborhood. And a lot of people got fooled by those calls. To date, more than 500,000 of those subprime borrowers have lost their homes to foreclosure. An additional 1.8 million are likely to follow as the market deteriorates. That's nearly 2.4 million lost homes.

And predatory lending has expanded its reach beyond mortgage lending. Predatory practices are becoming increasingly prevalent in refund anticipation, auto and payday loans. There were over 12 million Refund Anticipation Loan borrowers in 2003. In other words, anticipating what your income tax checks would be, people borrowed on those tax checks.

Tax preparers and lenders strip about \$1.57 billion in fees each year from the earned income tax credits paid to working parents, according to the 2005 study by the National Consumer Law Center.

And imagine what the new programs are going to be as we come up with these rebates that the President has proposed for working families in order for us to shore up Wal-Mart or Target or one of these other stores. In fact, I think it is pretty scary that we are now going to try and shore up the economy by taking the money of people who have worked hard for it.

I bet that many people are going to pay attention; they're not going to stick it back in the economy. They, in fact, may in fact put it in a savings account or try to make some money on behalf of their families, or pay off an existing debt.

In December, the Congress enacted the Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Act which, for 3 years, stops the tax on phantom income when a lender forgives some part of the family's mortgage in foreclosure. Under prior law, the debt forgiven following mortgage foreclosure or renegotiation was considered income for tax purposes, resulting in a tax liability for individuals and families meaning, at a time when people were down and out, they were then required to pay tax on something that was forgiven by a lender. It was crazy, and thank God this whole Congress understood the impact, and we passed that legislation.

In December, the Congress included \$180 million for housing counseling in the Fiscal Year 2008 Omnibus Appropriations Bill to assist many distressed homeowners who are trapped in unaffordable loans in avoiding foreclosure on their homes.

The Economic Stimulus Bill, which the President will sign this week, increases the FHA loan limits up to \$729,750 to expand affordable mortgage loan opportunities through the FHA for families in danger of losing their homes. This was done because in areas like the area in which Congresswoman BARBARA LEE lives in, housing, middle income housing costs as much as \$800,000 to \$1 million. In Cleveland, an \$800,000 home would buy you a lot of house, but not California.

Both the House and Senate have passed an FHA reform bill which would enable FHA to serve more subprime borrowers at affordable rates and terms to attract borrowers that have been turned to predatory lenders in recent years.

The House has passed a mortgage lending reform bill which cracks down on predatory lending, making sure that consumers get mortgages they can repay, strengthening consumer protections against reckless and abusive lending practices, and giving consumers the ability to seek redress.

I have to say that in 2001 I introduced the Predatory Lending Reduction Act, and this act was focused on mortgage brokers. And the reason I focused on mortgage brokers was because mortgage brokers were not licensed, they

were not required to be registered. They were not required to give notice to a purchaser or a borrower that they were not representing that borrower; they weren't their agent. They were not required to tell the borrower that they were going to get a percentage or a commission on the loans that they made. So you had a lot of mortgage brokers operating out here without any licensing, without any registration, without being required to give notices to, like banking persons, to borrowers. So it was very important for us, and that was included in the Mortgage Lending Reform Act, number 3915.

In October, the House passed the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund Bill, 2895, which establishes a trust fund, at no cost to the taxpayer, to build or preserve 1.5 million affordable homes or apartments over the next 10 years. The trust fund is financed by fees paid by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and by increased FHA loans.

The fact is that we have needed a national affordable housing trust fund for many, many years and finally, in 2007, 2008, we have one that's available.

At this time, if my colleague is interested, I'd like to yield to her for some additional commentary, Congresswoman BARBARA LEE.

Ms. LEE. Thank you. And you know, as I was listening to your very clear presentation, Congresswoman TUBBS JONES, I kept thinking of all of the people who really believe in the American dream, who want to send their kids to college, who perhaps may want to start a small business and who know and recognize that the path to wealth in our country is through home ownership. And now, given that the equity has just about eroded, their dreams being shattered.

You know, most Americans don't play in the stock market. You know, the only way they can acquire wealth is through home ownership. The only way they can live the American dream is through leveraging the equity in their homes to realize some of their dreams. And now, given this fiasco that we're experiencing, so many people will not realize their dreams. And so the legislation that you mentioned and more that are being talked about and introduced, will, in many ways help stop the hemorrhaging.

But, you know, we have to look at this not only in the short-term perspective, but also the long term has to be addressed. And some of this has to do with the deregulation of the financial services industry. And we really need to look at some regulatory reform also in the long haul to make sure that this never happens again. It's almost been the "Wild West" in terms of the financial industry.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. I'd like to thank my colleague. There are just a few more things that I'd like to point out and point to, and if there is an-

other person coming behind me with some, a special order, I would suggest that we should probably be finished in about 15 minutes.

I, first of all, would like to focus in on some of the legislation I've been working on around wealth building, because one of the most difficult things for families in the downturn of an economy is to try and put aside savings. And one of the things that we see happening right now in our country are a number of companies that are closing down, and people are placed in a situation where they are now being required to retire and they're being given lump sum benefits in order to lessen the weight or the impact that the retirement has on them.

And as a proponent of wealth building, I've been working on a couple of pieces of legislation in that area. One of them is the Retirement Security for Life Act.

Last year I, along with Congressman PHILIP ENGLISH, a Republican from Pennsylvania, reintroduced the bipartisan tax legislation that would encourage Americans to select life annuities and ensure requirement security. The Retirement Security for Life Act provides a tax incentive available to all retirees when they elect to receive a guaranteed stream of income for life from their annuity. The bill will exclude Federal taxes on half of the income generated by the annuity, up to a maximum of \$20,000 annually. For the typical retiree, it would provide a tax break of up to \$5,000.

The bill is designed to help Americans who have savings maintain their pre-retirement standard of living. Research indicates that many future retirees, including an estimated 77 million baby boomers, will have difficulty maintaining an adequate standard of living. By providing incentives, the Retirement for Security for Life Act will encourage Americans to invest in their own retirement.

□ 2130

The periodic payments from a life annuity would guarantee income throughout retirement as a complement to Social Security and pension benefits. A life annuity provides beneficiaries with guaranteed lifelong monthly payments. After-tax dollars, such as the proceeds from the sale of a house or small business, can be used to purchase the annuity. Income from employers' sponsored plans that already enjoy a tax advantage, such as IRAs and 401(k)s, are not eligible. This bipartisan legislation encourages Americans to select lifetime annuity payments, thereby generating a steady income for life and helping them manage their savings.

One of the limits that happens when people receive a lump sum is it seems like a lot of money at the time when you receive it, but it very easily wanes

away by the time you lend your cousin \$2,000, your son \$5,000, your aunt or uncle a couple of dollars, and that \$50,000 is gone very quickly. And that is one of the reasons that I'm encouraging our Retirement for Security for Life Act.

Another piece of legislation is called Savings for Working Families Act. This legislation was introduced, and it's H.R. 1514. It provides a tax credit to financial institutions that match the savings of low-income families through individual development accounts, or IDAs. The individual savings in an IDA are matched on a one-to-one basis, up to \$500 per person per year; although, personal contributions into an IDA are not limited. The match only goes up to \$500. It is a unique way and a great way that we could have low-income families begin to understand the importance of saving and receive a match for their dollars.

Thousands of working families across the country currently take advantage of IDA matched savings and asset accumulation. They are run by community-based organizations in partnership with a qualified financial institution that holds the deposits. IDA funds can be used for college and post-secondary education, purchasing a home or starting a small business. Those who save in IDAs also receive financial planning education. Nationally, 500,000 Americans are presently enrolled in 500 IDA programs. In the State of Ohio, nearly 5,000 benefit from 15 IDA programs.

The goal of the Savings for Working Families Act is to encourage low-income families to save.

Cleveland's Save program, which is a program in the City of Cleveland where I live, is a national social marketing campaign that encourages individuals, particularly low and moderate income, to save. It was launched in 2001 in the City of Cleveland. America Saves now has 53 local and State national campaigns which include locations in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; San Diego, California; and New York State. More than 1,000 nonprofit organizations participate. They recently celebrated American Saves Week, which is a new and expanded effort which is aimed at reaching more institutions.

Let me now give any further time to my colleague and friend, Congresswoman BARBARA LEE.

Ms. LEE. Let me applaud you for laying out these very important and very thoughtful bills. Hopefully, people who are listening to the Special Order tonight will understand the importance of them and ask their Members of Congress to support them because they actually should be passed and signed into law.

Also, I think it's important that we recognize tonight we are talking also with regard to the Congressional Black Caucus' economic empowerment agenda, and what you have laid out is central to an economic empowerment

agenda of the African American community throughout our country, but also, in addition, we have talked a lot about the disparities and why we have to have this economic empowerment agenda because we are still faced with many, many disparities in health care and education and economic development.

And when you look at the African American business community and the lack of capital, when you look at the small business administration and the type of problems and difficulties we have had over the years, you can see that, in many ways, many of the initiatives that have begun over the years that would have helped during this economic recession have been just about cut out. So it is about time we go back to the drawing board and regroup and not only resurrect some of the strategies that actually work but come forth with new legislation such as we are talking about tonight.

So, in closing, I just want to thank the Congressional Black Caucus, again under Congresswoman KILPATRICK's leadership, for making sure that the overall agenda of the CBC is put forth every Monday night under Congresswoman TUBBS JONES' leadership, because this is so important. In fact, we were in recess over the last couple of weeks, and I ran into many, many people who thanked us for getting the word out, sounding the alarm, providing the information with regard to what we are doing here because so often, the American people, the public, our communities, have no idea what type of legislation is being proposed to help with some of the burdens that they are forced to bear at this point in our history.

The \$16,500 I mentioned earlier that this Iraq occupation is costing the American people, just think of what they could do with \$16,500. And so I have to say, part of what we have to continue to do is to try to end this occupation, end this \$3 trillion that's being projected with regard to the war in Iraq and make sure that immediately the American people though can realize some benefits from their tax dollars and also make sure that we can expand unemployment compensation and food stamps and just help them survive through this until we can do something big and something that makes their lives much better.

Thank you again.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. I want to associate myself with the comments of my colleague with regard to ending the war in Iraq and the devastation that it has had not only on more than 4,000 families but as well as the economy of America and the infrastructure of America. All you need to do is pick up a paper any day and see that in any city there is a bridge that's fallen down, there's a sewer that's blowing up, there's streets that are in trouble,

et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And I want to close on this particular note.

It is so important to the improvement of this economy and the status of America that we make sure there are good-paying jobs that come back to America. I keep hearing these discussions about, well, there are jobs, and there are not people in America who want to do these jobs. That is not correct. There are good, hardworking people. The people of America work harder than people in any other country. They have less vacation, less time off, and they work very, very hard.

The dilemma that's faced is the offering of jobs that do not pay good salaries; that do not, in fact, provide appropriate benefits. And the people of America are going to want to go to work, and the innovation agenda that was passed last fall in this Congress and signed into law by the President speaks to some of those issues.

And it is so important that we do things to improve the education of our young people so they are better qualified to work on jobs, and that was done through the College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2008.

It is also important that we encourage young men and women to go into the sciences. The statistics show that, in 2000, only 4 percent of the science and engineering jobs in the United States were held by African Americans. Nearly 40 percent of Americans under the age of 18 are African Americans or other minorities. So we need to do more and more and more to encourage young people to go to college to be able to get the kind of degrees where they can get a great job such as we talked about with the children in Orlando in the Eminence Program.

And finally, we need to support and strengthen small businesses. Two-thirds of American jobs are supported, are given by small business, and we need to encourage small business to continue.

African Americans own an estimated 1.2 billion small businesses with annual revenues of more than \$88 billion. Legislation enacted in 2007 included provisions cutting taxes for small business by \$4 billion over the next 10 years. And the economic stimulus package also speaks to those issues as well.

I want to close with this. The Congressional Black Caucus is tirelessly working on issues that are important to the African American community but as to the greater community as well, and the economy is the issue that's in the forefront of everybody's mind right now, regardless of their color, regardless of their background. And this evening, it was our job to point out to America, those of you listening here on C-SPAN, to the issues that are facing the African American community and the economy and to help people understand that, if it hits the greater community in one way, it

doubly impacts the African American community.

And on behalf of my colleagues at the Congressional Black Caucus and our Chairwoman, CAROLYN C. KILPATRICK, I'm pleased to close this message hour out and thank the Speaker, NANCY PELOSI, for the opportunity to present.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, for millions of American families it is becoming more and more difficult to make ends meet. Our economic outlook is grim in light of the recent housing crisis, fluctuating interest rates, and increasing prices. Working Americans are feeling a serious squeeze on their family finances, because for too long, Republicans and this administration ran up big deficits and ignored priorities here at home.

With the economy continuing to decline, African American households are suffering disproportionately. In 2006, African Americans were two times more likely to get high-cost subprime loans. In my district, more than half of loans given to working Americans were subprime; of these loans, 80 percent were African American. One in six resulted in foreclosure; this is unacceptable.

In 2007, the Democratic led Congress passed an increase to the minimum wage, but this does not help Americans who cannot find jobs. The African American unemployment rate has climbed from 8 percent this fall to 9.2 percent in January, with 1.6 million African Americans currently looking for work.

I applaud the Congressional Democrat Leadership for their rapid agreement on an economic stimulus package to aid families across America. While I feel that this stimulus package is a step in the right direction, I am disappointed that there was no aggressive plan for job training programs such as: adult education and literacy, welfare-to-work, and vocational education.

As a senior member of the House Science Committee, I feel it is important to invest in our children's futures. This Congress has led the fight to address access to higher education, enrichment programs in STEM fields, advancement in educational programs for minorities, and spur critical research and development to meet the needs of the country. Education is the foundation to building a better and brighter future for all Americans.

Mr. Speaker, honest, hard-working men and women are struggling to make a decent living as they go about their daily routines. The economic disparities of African American and other minorities are truly hurting this country. I am hopeful that the President will join this Congress to help find long-term, comprehensive measures as opposed to a temporary bandaid to our economic problems.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today on account of travel delays.

Mr. HONDA (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today on account of official business in district.

Mr. KIND (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today on account of travel delays.