

Many people I represent believe government is a wolf seeking what liberties it can devour from the people. Americans don't believe our health should be turned over to the Federal Government and made a budget item. We don't want some government bureaucrat deciding we can't have the pacemaker surgery, just take pain killers. That will not work for America. After all, we're not some nanny state, European-style.

Truck owners and other Americans believe in transparent government, not smoky back-room deals that have an odor of corruption, payoffs, and paybacks. The Americans I know believe in hard work and a private economy that rewards hard work with jobs open to every citizen. They believe in enjoying the fruits of their own labor, and they know how better to spend their money than Big Government. Americans believe in giving people a helping hand when they need it, but don't believe in creating a dependent class of people.

Truck owners don't believe in an elite ruling class of D.C. insiders making decisions for the rest of us. Mr. Speaker, I think most Americans believe in the American Dream which is simply this: freedom. This Nation was founded on freedom, and we don't want the government micromanaging our lives. The Americans I know, especially those that drive trucks, want government to remember the beginning of the Constitution, which says, "We, the people." After all, it doesn't say, we the subjects. And as one bumper sticker on a pickup stated, "I love America. It's government I continue to worry about."

And that's just the way it is.

UNDERSTANDING THE ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, the Joint Economic Committee, which I chair, has just released a report entitled "Understanding the Economy, State by State." The report provides quick and easy access to the major economic indicators for all 50 States in the areas of jobs, unemployment, personal earnings, and housing. It paints a by-the-numbers picture of the current economic reality in each of our 50 States. Every picture tells a story that is at once both informative and sobering.

The report captures the enormity of the economic damage caused by the Great Recession that began in December of 2007, while making clear that the United States economy has improved and begun to grow since the Bush administration left office. And this shows that the last month the Bush administration was in office this country lost

over 750,000 jobs. Nationally, there has been a substantial decrease in the rate of job losses. The economy started losing jobs in January of 2008, increasing at a rapid rate throughout the year. The average quarterly job loss has now declined from a staggering 691,000 jobs lost per month in the first quarter of 2009 to 69,000 jobs in the most recent quarter, yet even that number is unacceptable.

And as you delve into the report, it provides a more localized and precise picture for each State. A chart like this is available for all 50 States. This chart, for example, is for my home State of New York. It shows at a glance the monthly change in private payrolls from January of 2008 to December of 2009. You can see that the unemployment rate in New York was 9 percent in December of 2009. That's up 4.4 percentage points from December of 2007. It has been a bumpy road, but you can see clearly that the trend is now in the right direction.

A scatter chart is also included in the report, and for New York State it reveals at a glance that the unemployment rate is below the national rate, and that total job losses have been smaller than U.S. averages. The economies of the States vary enormously. New York's economy depends heavily on information technology and financial services. Some States that are more dependent on construction and manufacturing have been hit much harder by job losses.

An economic overview and outlook accompanies each State chart. The one for New York provides an estimate from the President's Council of Economic Advisers that employment in New York was boosted by a total of 141,000 jobs through the fourth quarter of 2009 by the investments we made through the Recovery Act. It also shows that real per capita personal income in New York was 43,000 in the third quarter of 2009, down from 45,000 in the third quarter of 2007.

There is also useful information on housing for each State, and it too varies enormously. For instance, the median price for single family homes in New York was \$290,000 in 2008, compared to \$250,000 nationwide. And in New York in November, housing starts increased by 52 percent over October to a total of 18,000 units at a seasonally adjusted annual rate.

You can review the report online at www.jec.senate.gov. The majority staff will continue to update the data throughout the year in order to track the progress our economy will be making month by month. But from this first edition, it is abundantly clear why this Congress is so focused on job growth. Americans are demanding, and rightly so, that we must do all we can to grow the economy and help create new private sector jobs. The hard facts and real-life consequences of the eco-

nomics policies of the prior administration don't make for a very pretty picture right now.

Mr. Speaker, stay tuned. The American spirit of innovation is on the way and individual resilience are ready and raring to go.

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DON'T LET DEBT DEFEAT A GREAT NATION

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

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, soon the Congress will be asked to raise the debt limit of this Nation. This actually happened under the previous administration, and now it's happening under the new administration.

I have not voted, from the time I have been in Congress, to raise this debt ceiling because all this really does is permit our government to borrow more money from foreign governments. I think we all know that we are what is called a debtor nation. We don't pay our bills anymore. We have to go to the Japanese, the Chinese, the UAE, and to many other countries to buy our debt so we can spend more. That is the reason I wanted to come to the floor tonight.

Before we broke for Christmas, FRANK WOLF had sent out to each Member of the House a little pamphlet that says, "Don't Let Debt Defeat a Great Nation." He and JIM COOPER, in a bipartisan way—FRANK WOLF being a Republican; JIM COOPER a Democrat—have introduced H.R. 1557, the SAFE Commission Act, and I want to talk about that in the little bit of time I have.

And I am reading from his publication, Mr. WOLF's publication. "We have amassed massive unfunded 'promises' to guarantee future entitlement benefits that when added with liabilities like the debt, total nearly \$57 trillion. That means every man, woman and child in America owes \$184,000."

I have used this back in my district, and I like to say it this way, Mr. Speaker. When that beautiful baby is born, the first cry out of his or her mouth is a cry of, "Do I owe \$184,000?" Yes, baby, you do owe \$184,000. Every American does.

This could, according to the information from FRANK WOLF, skyrocket to \$21 trillion by the year 2020. How do FRANK WOLF and JIM COOPER, in a bipartisan effort, try to deal with this out-of-control spending? They have introduced, again, H.R. 1557, the SAFE Commission Act. And the actual title on it is the Securing America's Future Economy—SAFE Act.

How does this function? This would create a SAFE Commission. This would be made up of 16 bipartisan appointed

people to be on this SAFE Commission Act, and it would be their responsibility to go through how government spends its money, from the entitlements to the spending on education, transportation, health care, national defense, tax policy, and other items. This commission would come back to Congress, if this should become the law, and then Congress would be required to vote up or down on the panels's proposal.

Now, how this panel would come up with this proposal is they would go around this country and they would hold hearings and listen to the American people—something we have not been doing, either party, quite frankly. We are not listening to the American people. Yes, we are now, and after what happened in Massachusetts a couple weeks ago, the American people are being heard and they've been heard by many of us when we go back home and do our own town meetings. But this commission would have the authority, should this become the law, to say to the Congress, You can't duck these votes. You're going to have to vote up or down. I think this is critical.

I would love to hear the President tomorrow night—I hope somebody has made him aware of this bipartisan effort known as the SAFE Commission, and I hope he would say tomorrow night that he would endorse this legislation and encourage the Democratic leadership in the House and the Republican leadership in the House to get behind this bill.

At this present time, Mr. Speaker, we have 109 Members of Congress who have cosponsored this legislation. I hope my other colleagues will look seriously at what Mr. COOPER and Mr. WOLF have done to try to bring to the American people hope that we can meet our obligations based on the Constitution and deal with this out-of-control spending here in Washington, D.C. that both parties are responsible for.

With that, Mr. Speaker, before I leave, as I do every night on the floor, I ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform, to please bless their families, and I ask God to hold in his arms the families who've given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq.

And, Mr. Speaker, three times, I ask God to please, please God, please God, please God, continue to bless America.

CONGRESSIONAL JOBS NOW CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, the single most important concern for Americans throughout our Nation is the vast and growing rate of joblessness. This is not difficult to understand. Bob Her-

bert asked in a recent New York Times column, "How loud do alarm bells have to ring?"

More than 15 million Americans—more than 1 in 10 people—are out of work. Another 15 million people are underemployed or have quit looking. That means that over 30 million Americans want to work but cannot find the job they want. More people join their ranks every single day. Worse, 4 in 10 unemployed workers have been jobless for 27 weeks or longer.

Yes, we have a jobs crisis in our country, and it's everybody's number one issue. That's why I joined with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to form the Congressional Jobs Now Caucus, to keep the focus where it needs to be. That's why I sponsored bills to create jobs in America to stem our rising trade deficits and to bring justice to Wall Street, which has shut down normal lending across this country, contributing to the jobs crisis.

Job creation is not a Republican issue or a Democratic issue. We are all in this together. Last month, Toledo, a city I represent, lost an additional 1,200 jobs. Added to the yearly tally, more than 38,600 individuals, or 11.8 percent of the city's population, are without work.

The unemployment rate in the adjoining rural Ottawa County, also in our district, is now over 17 percent. Again, these are official numbers which did not include those who have part-time jobs and need more hours or those who have simply given up because there are no jobs to be had.

Job creation is not just an urban issue. The damage has spread to the suburbs of our country, and no one is safe from the jobs hemorrhage. In fact, a recent study by the Brookings Institute, as examined by Mr. Herbert in his article, found that the largest and fastest-growing population of poor people in the United States are in the suburbs.

The number of poor people in our country grew by 5.2 million when President Bush was President between 2002 and 2008, and more than 90 million Americans—90 million; that's a third of our country—are living on less than \$21,834 for a family of four. The alarm bells are roaring.

At the same time, the basic goodness and generosity of the American people remains one of our greatest strengths. Through it all, the American people remain compassionate and caring. Last weekend, a local television station in our region organized a telethon for relief to Haiti. Even with double-digit unemployment and great economic uncertainty, the people of our community opened their hearts to the people they've never seen in a country most of them have never visited and donated tens of thousands of dollars to that end.

For our community and our country, the first alarm bells started ringing

with the empty promises and rapid failure of NAFTA as it outsourced jobs everywhere, certainly to Mexico. The next alarm bell rang every time another trade deal came down the pike that took more of our jobs that used to exist in this country and doled them out to every undemocratic place in the world.

You can't make televisions in our country anymore—not a single one is made here—on clothing, or cars, or electrical parts, or even toys. More and more, even our food is being imported. You mean we are falling behind in even that?

There was plenty of warning, but big business and big money insisted on the right to seek out the lowest common denominator in the most undemocratic places, and they found it in China, in Mexico, in Bangladesh, in Pakistan, in Guatemala and every poor, undemocratic place where penny-wage workers are treated like the expendable pieces of equipment that they work with.

In our country, now we need those jobs because people without jobs can't pay mortgages. They can't pay their health insurance. They can't buy cars. They can't plan for their children's future or even get enough food and clothing to meet their families' needs.

Unemployment also means our Federal deficits rise as people can't pay their way forward. Unemployment and COBRA benefits are running out. State funds are depleted. Our private charities are overwhelmed. The American people need work and they need good jobs. It's really that simple. We simply can't rest until we get our economy back on track and create jobs for everyone who wants to work. I hope it is to this subject—the economy and job creation—that President Obama will direct his address tomorrow night.

We know that under President Bush we were hemorrhaging 734,000 jobs when he left at the end of his term, and though we haven't been losing as many jobs, now is the time during this fiscal year where we need to do more for our people to put them back to work, to use that productive energy to help pull our country forward rather than allow her to continue to fall behind, and that begins with work for every single American who needs a job.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S BUDGET FREEZE

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

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleagues, and I think we are all of one accord when we say we want to see jobs created in this country and we want to see the unemployment rate go down. But the way you do that is the way Ronald Reagan did it when he was President. And he