The boom in FDI inflows is no accident. It reflects the improvement in Turkey's business climate and its growth potential. In World Bank's ''Doing Business Survey'', Turkey has jumped from 91st to 57th place. Turkey's main focus areas over the coming years will be:

(1) implementing the social security reform and introducing a universal health insurance scheme,

(2) streamlining and liberalizing the energy sector, while ensuring supply security,

(3) accelerating privatization with key companies on the agenda,

(4) enhancing the labor market and mitigating the financial and non-financial costs on registered employment,

(5) fighting effectively against the informality,

(6) improving the intermediation role of the financial sector.

I believe, undertaking these reforms will pave the way for a more competitive and more efficient business environment in Turkey. I would also like to remind you that the economic and political reform process in Turkey have gone hand in hand. I am confident that they will proceed hand in hand.

Ladies and gentlemen, a few years ago, we only had a road map. Today, we have results.

Turkey has made significant progress in achieving economic and financial stability over the past few years. We are committed to preserving the gains and building on the success. Turkey is a land of opportunities and we are open for business.

I firmly believe that Turkey provides ample opportunities to reach out to Eurasia and the Middle East. Both Turkish and American private sector entities should consider joint investment and business opportunities that they can successfully embark upon in different regions.

Turkey's close historic, cultural and social ties with the Balkans, South Caucasus and the Central Asia could provide comparative advantages to these joint ventures.

Cooperation on energy will bring a new strategic dimension to our bilateral relations. Such cooperation will also help in further deepening of Turkish-American relations.

To the extent American companies invest in technology in Turkey, their contributions for peace and stability in the region will grow.

Turkey has a flourishing economy. As Turkish economy grows, the opportunities it presents grow as well. I trust that businessmen such as yourselves will seize these opportunities, thereby enabling our economic and trade relations to develop further and for our bilateral ties to become even closer.

Thank you.

□ 1915

THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, in coming today on the first day back in this new session, the second session of the 110th Congress, I wanted to take a little bit of time to reflect on some of the changes that happened in this Congress but also more importantly to look towards the future and look at the priorities that this new Congress is bringing.

It's very apparent that myself and my 43 Democratic colleagues were brought to this House, the reason we were sent here was to change the way business has been done. It wasn't about maintaining a status quo. It wasn't about talking about issues that weren't relevant to their lives. It was very apparent that at least in my district of southern Minnesota that they chose to send a schoolteacher without political experience to Congress to speak about those issues that were most on their minds, to talk about the issues of economic equality, to talk about the issues of true national security, to talk about the issues that were going to impact their children for generations to come.

And in doing so, they sent several loud and clear messages to us. And I think first and foremost, as I'm joined with some of my other freshman Democratic colleagues, it was very apparent to many of us that we were sent here to talk about those issues in a manner that was about effectiveness. It was not about ideology. It was not about espousing to have a firm belief or the firm understanding that we had all the answers. The belief was to work together, to work with the experts, to work with local elected officials and come up with some of the most pressing solutions.

And I think many of us understood during our campaigns and the time that we've been here in Congress, it's not surprising to anyone, and my colleagues tonight will talk about these things, they didn't need to see a poll to understand that Americans were becoming very nervous with the state of the economy.

They were told over and over and over again by this administration that they were living in the best economy America had ever seen, and they would quote facts and figures like the gross domestic product and things like that. And when I would talk to my constituents in southern Minnesota, they would come up with something that was very insightful. They would say, I don't know. It's very possible that the GDP is growing, but that's not filling my gas tank; and, I don't know about you, but college is becoming more expensive; and, I'm concerned about heating oil prices this fall; and, I'm concerned that what's happening with the economy is not moving any closer to addressing those issues that I care most about.

They were concerned about the loss of their jobs. They were continuously told that this global economy and these trade agreements that we were working on would grow these wonderful jobs, wonderful prosperity, and what they continued to hear in the news was global corporations making record profits as we saw real wages for working Americans sink.

They were told that this great awakening of the global economy would be so helpful to them, and then they would open up their gas bills for heating and find out that they were having trouble making ends meet. They were told that this great global economy would bring a lasting prosperity to them, and they were receiving lay-off notices or many of the other ills that had come with it.

I think many of us understood, and not denying that there is a global economy, there is a need for an interconnectedness, but it needs to be based on some solid principles that benefit those vast majority of Americans.

So I think as we get ready to talk about some of those priorities we get ready to talk about what this Congress can do and what this Nation should do to make sure that our economic prosperity is not limited to a small slice of the population, and in fact, it's limited to the slice of the population that quite honestly isn't producing that well.

Americans over the last 5 years have got a record that I think they can be very proud of. Their productivity levels are as high as any Nation in the world. The thing that becomes a disconnect on that is, as that productivity levels went up, their real wages went down. At the same time, they watched CEO salaries and corporate profits reach an all-time high. And that disconnect is breeding that sense of anxiety amongst the public, and I think there's some things that this Congress can do and will do to address those needs and to put policies forward.

I have a couple of interesting statistics that I think Americans should know. First and foremost, on December 21, President Bush, giving a speech on the economy, was clear to stress how strong this economy is. And in fact, his outgoing economic policy adviser said, We just don't see the reason the economy won't continue to expand. Had I been a reporter in that room or a Congressman there, I might have asked, For who will it expand? And the issue or the answer to that is not for the working middle class.

We see 47 million Americans without health care. I think a more telling statistic is this. I came to this Congress as a high school teacher. I was lucky to have years of experience and advanced degrees that put me a little further on the pay scale. Had I been a first year teacher teaching high school in southern Minnesota, I would have started at just around $32,000 a year. My share of the premium for family health care coverage would have been $7,200 a year right off the top of that. And this is an issue that would expand that 47 million into another possibly 50 million that are on the verge of being unable to pay for it.

So we have issues of health care costs. We have issues of energy costs. We have issues of tuition and those types of things. And as this Congress came to session, those are the issues we were talking about, making college more affordable, addressing the issue of moving into renewable energies and passing CAFE standards to make our automobiles reach that level of efficiency that will help working class families.

So, as I'm joined here tonight by my colleagues from across this great Nation, and I might add, a very optimistic group at that and a very visionary group that understand, and the last statistic I will give before letting some of my colleagues join in on this, we had a piece of research that was done by the independent, nonpartisan Congressional Research Service. And they did a study asking what had added to our national deficit, and their conclusion was that 98 percent of that was added by legislative choices, the biggest being tax cuts for a very small percentage that, quite honestly, we were told on theory would generate wealth back into the economy.

The fact of the matter is the tax cuts were not targeted at our great entrepreneurial class. They were not targeted at those people who were going to create jobs and reinvest. They were targeted to people that would continue to build trust funds to pass on to future generations of that very, very thin privileged class.

And because of that, this Congress has got work to do. This Congress and these Members that were sent to this Congress that will speak tonight were sent by their constituents not to talk ideology, not to argue with the other side, but to look at the issues and not come with facts and figures, but to say, Hey, I'm a schoolteacher sitting in southern Minnesota and I'm having trouble making ends meet and I actually could qualify for food stamps. What's wrong with an economy that does that and what can be done to bring back a sense of fairness to it?

I think the good news in this is, if 98 percent of the Federal deficit was caused directly as a consequence of legislation, we've got the opportunity to reverse that. And I'm proud to be standing with three Members that I know have that as a priority, and I'd like to first of all yield to my colleague south of the border in Iowa, Mr. BRALEY.

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the gentleman for yielding and also thank you for your outstanding leadership with this special time we get to share together here on the House floor.

My district in northeast Iowa, the First District of Iowa, is in some ways very similar to yours, my friend, Mr. WALZ's. It's the rust belt of Iowa. It's got a lot of agricultural, manufacturing history, and I think it's a microcosm of what you've been talking about.

We have great manufacturers that I'm fortunate enough to have in my district, companies like John Deere that have been around for years and have stayed in the communities providing jobs and opportunity. But we've also had a tremendous impact on our economy in Iowa this year from our loss of our Maytag plant in Newton, one of those manufacturers that people know as a brand name that used to be on the game shows we used to watch as kids growing up. And then just recently, the Schaeffer Pen Company in Fort Madison closed after over 100 years of being one of those symbols of what American manufacturers can produce.

Those aren't just losses of jobs to people in those communities. The ripple effect throughout those communities in terms of people who move out and leave a void of volunteers who work in community service organizations, who work as mentors to the next generation of leaders that are going to be responsible for leading this country in a great new direction, those are the disturbing trends we never hear about from the President when he's talking about the rosy state of the economy.

And one of the things that brought all of us here to Congress is our sense that the middle class was increasingly being shut out of the American Dream, that the opportunity for our children and the next generation of children to follow them was being limited by economic policies that did not provide incentive for the middle-class entrepreneurs to make risks and create jobs and provide opportunities in their home communities. And what we want to do as a Congress is make sure that our fiscal policies are creating those types of opportunities in our own districts and throughout this country, because that's what's going to make us competitive in the 21st century.

So what I'd like to do at this time is let my friend Mr. YARMUTH, who comes from the great State of Kentucky and has probably a different perspective on what he sees in his home district, share with us some of the things he observes that are directly related to the state of the economy that brings us here tonight.

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. I yield to the gentleman from Kentucky.

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague and thank him for his comments and also Mr. WALZ for his leadership as well.

I will say, no, the situation in Kentucky is not much different than it is anywhere else in the country, and throughout the campaign 2 years ago and before that, as I talked to people in my district and around the State of Kentucky, what I heard was the same message you have heard. You know, we're working harder and harder, we're struggling, we're doing the best we can, and yet we're falling behind. We're not making progress. Our standard of living is not getting better, not improving.

And I know that we don't want to burden the audience with too many statistics, but Mr. WALZ talked about productivity, and one of the most astounding statistics I've heard recently is that 25 years ago, when there was a productivity gain in the United States, workers benefited to the tune of 70 percent of that productivity gain. So for every dollar increase in productivity, workers got 70 percent, owners got 30 percent.

In the current era, that number is down in the 20s. So while American workers are working harder and harder, most of the gain in their productivity is not going to them. It's going to owners. It's going to the corporations, and the workers working harder and harder are not getting the benefit of that.

And we're seeing it day in and day out. And not only that; we're seeing instances in which people who have worked their entire lives, because of emergencies, because of businesses going out of business, are losing their life savings.

I will never forget being at a Catholic picnic one day in 2006 and talking to a man who had worked for Winn-Dixie Corporation. He had worked 28 years for Winn-Dixie, and he had accumulated $150,000 in his retirement plan. Winn-Dixie had gone into bankruptcy. He was left with $30,000. He lost 80 percent of his life savings because of the problems inherent in his corporation, and they had not planned adequately to secure his retirement benefits.

So these have ripple effects. These are stories that are heard by relatives, by friends, by neighbors, and that increases the anxiety throughout society. And this is what I sense that we face in this country today is not just the actual fact of people's standard of living not increasing despite the fact they're working harder and harder, but their faith in the future is declining and faith in the future of their neighbors and their friends because they see the threats to them, and they say what am I working for, what am I trying so hard to accomplish.

Then we had the added specter, as I know one of our colleagues will discuss this evening, of the incredible crisis in the health care system where 50 percent of the bankruptcies that we now experience in this country are due to health care costs and people, again, who have done everything the right way and have lost everything because of bad luck of the draw. They've come down with cancer. They've come down with a serious injury that's preventing them from working.

So as we go across the entire spectrum of American society that's what we find day in and day out. I like to think of government as the way we organize our responsibilities to each other, and in this day and age we do face these very serious choices and very clear choices in how we perceive our economy and what government's role should be.

□ 1930

And the question is, do we reward wealth versus work? And I think this group that was elected in 2006 has a clear position on that; we want to reward work and not necessarily wealth. We want to make sure that when people work harder, they benefit. And we want to make sure that the economy is

fair to everyone and works for everyone. And if we can't do that, then we don't deserve to be representing the American people because we have let them down. And I know that this group is not going to let them down; I know that's why we came here. And I'm proud to be here for that reason, and I'm not going to stop fighting as long as I'm here.

So, I thank all of you for your collegiality and all of your efforts in this behalf. We are part of a great cause for the working families in America, and I'm very proud to be a part of that.

With that, I will yield to my colleague from out west, the site of this year's Democratic convention, Mr. PERLMUTTER.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Thank you, Mr. YARMUTH.

It's great to be standing on the floor with gentlemen who have been elected by the people in 2006 to change the way this Nation is being run, and to provide the hope that we need to deal with the problems you've outlined. And we can do this, we know we can do this. This is a time where we change the focus from the wealthiest 1 percent to the hardworking people of middle America. This is the time for hardworking Americans. And we're going to provide, based on this stimulus package, a package of different approaches to help middle Americans, hardworking Americans, we're going to provide them with refunds so that there will be some money in their pocket, not just in the pocket of the wealthiest 1 percent, but in the pockets of everyone across America. Ronald Reagan used to talk about trickle down. Well, that's not how the economy works, it works trickle up. It's a flood up. If people in the middle have money, they spend it, and that will generate all sorts of new business in America.

We're also going to provide stimuli that will create many new jobs, whether it's in the energy sector. We can improve how we're dealing with health care and increase jobs there. But this is a time when we really are going to change how Washington is conducting business. The President would like us just to focus on the wealthiest. He would like us just to keep things the same. We're not doing that. We're here to provide hope to people and change so that people in their everyday lives know that they've got folks here who were elected to fight for them. And we are going to change things by providing a whole new approach to the economy this year.

We hope to provide a package that will be $100 billion, that's about 10 months in Iraq, that's nothing, where we can help this country really get on a solid footing economically, and then for the long-term future, really develop a whole new energy system that will provide thousands and thousands and thousands of jobs across this country, as well as revamp our health care system that has become such a drag on the economy.

This is a time when we have to look very hard and be realistic about the problems that face us. But when America really turns its attention to something, it changes the future. And that's what this Congress is going to do. That's our job. That's why we were sent here was to change the future and to provide hope to people.

With that, I would like to turn this over to my friend from Wisconsin, STEVEN KAGEN. And with that, sir, would you let us know what you think of this stimulus package that the Speaker is talking about.

Mr. KAGEN. Well, thank you very much, Congressman ED. I really appreciate being with you, not just here on the floor, but many people don't realize that you're my roommate. We've got an apartment. We're working together to pay our rent, we're working together to pay our Nation's bills, and we're working together to build a better nation for everyone.

And before I mention anything about our economy, you have to all be thinking about the Green Bay Packers this weekend. We've got a football game up in Green Bay that we're going to rock the world. We're going to demonstrate not just how professionals can work together as a team in athletics, but we have to imitate them here on the House floor by beginning to work across party lines.

And if you're looking for a good example of how corporate America should be run, look no further than the Green Bay Packers because they will never, ever be outsourced. They cannot be shipped overseas. Why? Because the community owns the Green Bay Packers. Not a bad example.

I'd like to turn your attention to two questions, questions that I think are important for all of us in this class of '06, what some of us call ''America's Hope,'' whose side are we on? Now, does anybody sitting here, standing here having this conversation with America, anybody here sitting in a board room of a major corporation? I don't think so. We're working hard for everyday people who are trying to make it through the day.

The second question is, what kind of Nation are we, what kind of Nation are we when we don't educate our children, when we don't guarantee access to affordable health care for every child in America, for every citizen, every legal resident of this country? Who are we now as a Nation? Now, you don't want to talk much about statistics because it will put people to sleep at this hour of the night, but the Department of Labor has given us these numbers. The Consumer Price Index went up by .3 percent. That's a little bit of inflation, a little whiff of what we're going to get at the end of 2008. The unemployment rate up to 5 percent nationwide; some areas of my district even more. We got the news today earlier this morning that a paper maker in Niagara, Wisconsin, they're going to shut down 320 jobs. That's 320 homes in a very small neighborhood that won't have a bread earner, in Kimberly, Wisconsin, just outside of my district, 120 paper making jobs.

Now, how does it happen in this country at this time, how does it happen when we allow Communist China to target each and every sector of our economy and our manufacturing economy for extinction? They've targeted our steel. And what happened to steel production? It went down here and went overseas. They've targeted textiles. They've targeted auto production. So, what are we going to make in America? Because if we don't make anything, quite simply put, we won't have anything.

The unemployment claims for the month of December, 322,000 jobs lost, people looking for work. What about the minimum wage, $5.85? You can't feed a family on $5.85 per hour. You can't educate yourself and your children.

So, we have got a lot of work to do, not just in the Green Bay football game. I don't know who we're playing, some team from New Jersey or the New York Giants. I wish them well. I hope no one is injured because—well, they do have pretty good health insurance, I hear.

So, we've got a lot of problems that we have to face together. I am very proud and honored to be able to serve with all of you here tonight as we talk about this economic stimulus, as I send it over to my colleague, Mr. ELLISON, who represents the great State of Minnesota. And he is going to, perhaps, allude to the fact that we have to have an economic stimulus that's timely, that's targeted to those who really need it, and temporary.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, Doctor, let me just add my voice and say I love to be on the House floor with my colleagues. You guys are servants of the people of the United States, whether we're from the upper Midwest or Iowa, Kentucky, or all the way out in Colorado, it's a joy to be in the company of people who care about the American working class and are willing to get out there strong to speak up for what working class people need.

You know, this stimulus package is to signal change in a broader sense to make our economy fair and more productive. It's signaling change. One hundred billion dollars is a whole lot of money, but when you think about this trillion-plus-dollar economy we live in, it's not a whole lot by comparison. But it's not designed to solve every problem, it's supposed to spark economic change, signal an overall change in the way our economy is structured so that we can have working class people prosper and grow.

My colleague from Colorado pointed out that it's not a matter of trickle down, it's bubble up. You put the money in the hands of middle-class people, they go out and buy washing machines, they go out and buy food, they go out and buy groceries, they put

their kids in school, and the next thing you know more deals are being done and you see an overall increase in the economy, a rising tide lifting all boats. You take care of the middle class and the rest will take care of itself.

If you give tax cuts to the wealthiest of the wealthy, the very definition of being rich is that you don't need the money. So, what do you do? You don't spend the money. You merge. You go buy some company overseas and then they take advantage of comparative wage differentials and the next thing you know we're exporting jobs. The fact is is that an economic stimulus targeted to people who really will spend that money and really do need that money and can spend that discretionary income will spark our economy. But it will only be a signal of an overall shift of economic fairness that has to do with our innovation agenda, that has to do with increasing the minimum wage, that has to do with decreasing the cost of college loans, an overall economic package that is big and that is structural that has to do with making changes to predatory lending laws, that has to do with our housing markets, an overall package that will take a little more time to implement, but an economic stimulus package that will happen soon and will spark economic growth directly affecting the unemployment numbers that jumped in December, and as Mr. PERLMUTTER correctly points out, directly affecting the increase in the Consumer Price Index as well.

Now, you know, the underlying source of this economy's weakness is the collapse in the housing market. In 1995, what happened to the housing market? Bam, straight to the moon. People thought it would never end. As a matter of fact, people bought houses, some of them subprime. Some of them found themselves thinking, well, if I buy this house right now, get into this subprime mortgage, the increasing housing values gives me wealth; I can refinance when this house is even worth more. But, you know, everything that goes up must come down. And as a matter of fact, when we saw people refinance these homes, they consumed that increased wealth in their house. That helped drive the consumer sector, but eventually these things come down and we are hitting the wall.

People are not making it, folks. We have a negative savings rate in America. Negative savings rate. That means if you get paid on Friday, you're out of money Wednesday night. That means you're hanging on and you're hoping that you can stretch that penny out to get to the end of the week. That means that instead of steak you're eating hamburger and instead of salmon you're eating tuna fish. And it's not funny. It's serious business. People are really, really struggling.

And so the fact is, folks, that we have a negative savings rate and that is why people are turning to the credit cards. That's why, when they get a big purchase, they've got to refinance their homes, although that's tough to do today, and that's why they go to title loans, payday loans and pawnshops. This is what is driving that move. We are drying up the consumer sector.

And I just want to say that we have seen record foreclosures in America, record foreclosures. We haven't seen this many foreclosures since the Great Depression.

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. ELLISON. Absolutely.

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Like all of you, I spent time out of my district during the recess between the holidays and coming back this week. And I was shocked to visit Davenport, Iowa, the largest city in my district, and learn that Davenport leads the country per capita in the number of subprime mortgage foreclosures. And I know that all of you have constituents in your districts that are being impacted directly by the subprime crisis. And although our friend from Wisconsin certainly spent a lot of time talking about the Green Bay Packers, and I know that's heresy in the State of Minnesota, what I thought maybe we could do is share some of the personal stories we've heard from people who are directly impacted by these mortgage foreclosures by the need to convert their spending habits to credit rather than cash because they're being pinched in the middle, and put a human face on the problems we're talking about and why this economic stimulus package is so important.

With that, I will yield back.

Mr. ELLISON. I want to respond directly to your point, Congressman, because I think this is one of the things that in a very palpable feeling way really struck home to me, and that was when I was campaigning back in 2006. I met a gentleman who kind of came to the front door when I knocked on his door. And he came in a very gingerly way; it was clear that he had suffered some kind of injury and wasn't feeling very good. And he said to me, you know, KEITH, about a year ago I was up on my roof because me and my partner make a little more than minimum wage, not that much more than minimum wage, but we were able to get into the house because we got into the subprime mortgage. We got some credit cards that they sent to us that we didn't ask for. But because I didn't have a whole lot of money, I climbed up on that roof to fix it because it was leaking. I didn't want to see more damage happen to the house, we had to patch it. And I, as you might guess, fell off that roof. The guy fell off the roof and sustained some serious injuries. The injuries were too bad, his partner was going to try to put him in the car but he couldn't move him because he was hurting, and it was dangerous, and so he called the EMS truck, Emergency Medical Services. They came to get him. That was about 1,800 bucks right there. He didn't have health care insurance. He put the medical bills on the credit card as long as he could, couldn't pay that; as a matter of fact, paid one credit card, but on the other one he was late. Guess what happened to the interest rate on the credit card that he was on time for? It went up. That's called universal default. So, now he's paying 32 percent interest. He's getting further and further behind. He's not working. His partner is struggling to keep the mortgage paid. They see a reset in the mortgage. Now they are totally up. They are just really in bad shape now, and they are facing foreclosure.

When the man told me this story, he was dry in the eye but I was misty. I couldn't believe, I said, you know, not in America. People who work hard, 40 hours a week every week, cannot be in this situation. It's wrong. And I felt it was my responsibility to do something about it.

□ 1945

So when I stand on the floor to talk about working class prosperity with you here tonight, six Members of Congress, and when I heard our Speaker talk about this stimulus package, I was reminded of what happened when the great President Franklin Delano Roosevelt died. Back in those days, Representative YARMUTH, they used to have the coffin of the President loaded up on the trains. You know what I am talking about, Representative WALZ? And that train was carrying that casket across the country. And there was a man who appeared at one of those train stops where that casket was being carried across the country, and there was a journalist there too, and the man was crying about the President. He was in tears over President Roosevelt. And as you know, he was the President during the Great Depression.

And the journalist walked up to the man and said to the man, ''Sir, I see that you're crying and very emotional over what happened to the President. Did you know President Roosevelt?''

And the man gathered himself, cleared his threat, and he said, ''No, I didn't know President Roosevelt. But he knew me.''

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Absolutely. And as I said, it's very encouraging, and I think it should be, Mr. Speaker, to the American people to see the dedication and the commitment. I know my colleague from Minneapolis has taken a lead role on this issue of foreclosures. And as my colleague from down in Iowa has said, this is an area that no one is escaping being touched by this. Mr. ELLISON may represent a very urban area in Minneapolis, but Mr. BRALEY and I and the rest of us here have areas that are somewhat rural, and we are feeling that pinch. We're feeling it.

One thing I would say is it reminds me, in thinking of the story that you just recalled about President Roosevelt's knowing us, I'd like to give

you a quote from our current President when he was out meeting constituents. And this was out in Omaha, Nebraska, a little while back, and it was with a woman named Mary Mornin. And Mary was explaining, she was a woman in her fifties, a divorced mother of three, including a special needs child. And she was explaining to the President at that time, just several years ago already, of the growing anxiety she had about what was happening. And she mentioned to the President that to make ends meet, she was working three jobs. And the President said, ''You work three jobs?''

Ms. Mornin said, ''Yes, sir, three jobs.''

And the President said, ''Wow, that's uniquely American, isn't it? I mean, that's fantastic that you're doing that.'' And then he laughed and said, ''laughter'' in parentheses here, ''Do you get any sleep?''

And Ms. Mornin said, ''No, not much.''

This President has been so out of touch with the reality that affects most Americans that he can stand in front of them and tell us this is the greatest economy ever. He can stand there and watch as the housing market imploded and the indicators were there and people were asking him to do things about that. He can stand there and talk about this being the greatest economy under his watch full well knowing that the facts indicate he took office with a $126 billion surplus and he has continuously driven us into debt.

We are at a point in this great Nation now that last year alone we spent $406 billion servicing the interest on the debt, not the principle.

Mr. ELLISON. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. I yield.

Mr. ELLISON. How much is your debt for this big debt that he has run up?

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. It's $30,000 for each and every one of us.

Mr. ELLISON. How about little Gus, your son?

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Gus is 14 months. His is $30,000, not counting the interest.

I would just make this point that the President, in the theatrics of the appropriation bills to run this country, held up funding across the spectrum from veterans to health care research to our soldiers' pay increase that he pocket vetoed, all of these things, over $22 billion. And I want you to put this into perspective. What this President has done in his fiscal irresponsibility, which should not surprise a single person in this country given his track record on the private sector and given that he was practicing, as my colleagues have said, a very tenuous principle of trickle down, that took the complexity of the entire economy and shook it down into one mantra. Today as this economy and this Democratic Congress is looking for real solutions for working Americans, the President is concerned about making tax cuts permanent in the year 2011 when they expire. All of the money that we spent last year on higher education, on our veterans, on conservation, and on medical research does not equal the amount we spent servicing the debt. Think what this great Nation can do.

And with that, I yield to the doctor from Wisconsin.

Mr. KAGEN. Thank you very much for yielding. I just wanted to make a more accurate diagnosis of the condition that you are in. Mr. WALZ, it's not $30,000 of Federal debt sitting over your head or your newborn son. It's $375,000 on an accrual basis when you factor into all the debts that we're going to owe to those of us who very soon will be on Social Security or Medicare as we retire.

So you have to begin to accurately diagnose the problem in health care, physically, or an architect has to do it, a plumber has to do it. Let's identify what's really going on here. What is it that has caused millions and millions of manufacturing jobs to jump overseas, to be taken away from the workers that we represent, the families that we represent? Because people back home are asking me, as they are asking you, Hey, KAGEN, what are you going to do for me? The first thing you have to do is identify the two causes I believe are doing this.

First, it's the trade policy. A trade policy that allows corporations to take away our jobs. Listen, Mr. PERLMUTTER, if I go to your home and I take your car and you don't even know about it, if I steal your car, I go to jail. I get punished for stealing, for taking away your property. But if I go to where you are working, if it's a paper company, if it's a steel factory, if it's some auto manufacturer in Detroit, if I take away your job, I get rich. So there is something wrong with our trade policy that allows communist China to compete unfairly using an abundance of what I would call slave labor.

The second reason is we have had a fiscal policy by the Republican administration that has plowed more debt onto everybody. The debt in 2000 on an accrual basis, according to the most trusted man in Washington, David Walker, the Comptroller General of the GAO, was $20 trillion and at the end of 2006 was $53 trillion. From $20 trillion to $53 trillion is a debt no one in this room, no one living today can afford to repay. So we have to repair our trade policies, and we have to come to an end with this policy of borrow and spend and borrow and spend and borrow and spend. We cannot afford to stay on this path.

I believe in large part those are the reasons why we came here to the House to do the people's work and why we are going to speak up every day for the people that tell us their problems. And I will share with you just one story of my constituents.

I went up north to northern Wisconsin. On the way back, I stopped into Two Angels Restaurant in Antigo to see what's going on, to put my finger on the pulse of their community. And there at the counter was a 55-year-old former carpenter, a former carpenter because he has gone through bankruptcy not once but twice because of health care bills. The first time, since he works by himself, he's his own employer, he went bankrupt because he didn't have enough health insurance when he had cardiac surgery, and the second time he had a new heart valve put in. The second bankruptcy he went through, and he went through it twice, was due to an abscess in his brain. He can't think straight. He can't work. And he's counting on us to do something to help him, to guarantee he has access to health care he and his wife can afford. They can't take away his home, but they have destroyed his spirit.

So I think we are here to give hope to everybody, that by working together we will repair not just this idea of borrow and spend with pay as you go, with fiscal responsibility, but also ultimately, and we won't get to it tonight, we have to fashion a trade policy that is not just fair but is balanced.

I yield to Mr. PERLMUTTER.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I think we have got again to realize and understand why the people sent us here to change America, to change the way Washington runs, and they want us to look out for middle America, hard-working people. They want us to look out in the short term, the mid term, and the long term.

And in the short term, you talked about it. We want to provide in a bipartisan way, working with our friends on the other side and with the administration, real relief to millions of people across America. And you described it as timely, targeted, and temporary. Relief that gets right into people's pockets where they can then buy those necessities, whether it's a washer or they have got to fix the sink or whatever it might be, because people, even those that don't run into terrible problems as you described, are having a heck of a time making ends meet. They're working 40 hours. They're working 60 hours. But if there is one bump in the road, a kid who has to have braces or any little thing just sets you back, because everybody is that close, as energy prices go up, as tuition goes up, as health care costs go up. So our job is to give them some relief. And when we do that, that will help the economy as a whole.

Then we have the mid term and long term, the trade policies. But for me in my area, which is primarily the suburbs of Denver, it is middle America. It is right down the middle politically. It is right down the middle financially. It's not rich. It's not poor. It's not Democrat or Republican. It is right down the middle as an independent kind of an area. And they are expecting

of us to turn the attention to them, to middle America, and not just the wealthiest people. And when we do that, we're going to change the face of this Nation again.

JOHN YARMUTH was talking about the fact that as we have improved productivity, the worker, the average guy, hasn't seen the benefit of that, but it's been more of the owner. And that's okay, too, that the owner sees some benefit, but it should be shared across the board, because at the end of the day you have this disparity between the rich and the poor continue to grow, and that's not healthy for any country. This country has thrived and progressed because of the middle class, because of the hardworking people in the middle.

So we have long-term strategies, which would be investments in energy, rebuilding our infrastructure. The speaker comes from the city where we had the bridge collapse. We have too many roads, too many things that have to be repaired in this country, and it is time for us to turn our investments to this country, and lots of jobs will be developed as a response to that.

I yield to my friend from Kentucky.

Mr. YARMUTH. Thank you. One of the things that I want to follow up on what you were talking about was we were sent here to solve problems. And I think one of the reasons that we have gotten into the predicament we're in is because a lot of people in the White House and in this Congress thought that you can govern by dogma. And when people say the free market's infallible or that regulation is bad or government should get out of the way and we hear those kinds of dogmatic philosophical statements, a lot of people bought into those. And what we see time after time, and I guess we are all slow learners in this country, but what we see time after time, whether it's with the subprime mortgage, whether it's with Katrina, or in all sorts of areas, with our health care system, is that dogma doesn't do very well when the rubber meets the road. There are real facts that we have to deal with.

So we come here, and I know a lot of people, when we try to suggest that the disparity between rich and poor has gotten too great or that corporations have too much power, think we are playing at class war or we are trying to pit one part of society against the other. And that's not at all what we're doing. And I hope the audience has understood that everybody tonight has talked about fairness and, dare I say it, balance, and we are talking about the fact that in this country over the last couple of decades the economic pendulum has swung way too far to one side. And the marketplace works where there is some kind of balance in power, and now there is no balance in power because the rules are all stacked against every working American.

So we're not trying to say that corporations are evil. I don't think anybody would say that, or that the rich are evil and that they don't care about the working class. But we have a situation in which that pendulum needs to be moved back to the point where everybody shares in the growth of this country.

So as I look at this group, all of whom are committed to solving problems and not necessarily to advancing a dogma, I think that's what the American people expect us to do and I think that's what we are going to continue to work to do.

I would like to yield to my distinguished colleague and friend from Vermont (Mr. WELCH).

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Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Thank you. I have been listening, partly presiding, but I have been thinking about this question of why is it there is such a sense that we need to do something called a stimulus package, where we are talking about $100 billion going into an economy that is $14 trillion, and it's a modest amount. Why is it that there is such a sense that this stimulus is needed when in fact, by historical standards, unemployment is actually relatively low. We had bad news. It went from 4.7 to 5 percent. But the historical average is well above 5 percent.

The reason there is such anxiety is the reasons my friend from Kentucky and all of you have mentioned, that this has not been a rising tide that lifts all boats. Most people, even those who are employed, have not had wages that have come close to keeping up with their bills, and that has been intensified, of course, with energy, buying gas, buying home heating fuel, paying for your college education for your kids, and medical bills. The story that the Speaker told about that young family with medical bills is painful, but it's true. So what you have had is this economy that is simply not working for average people.

So what do we have an opportunity to do? A stimulus package is something that is concrete. We don't offer it as something that is going to ''solve'' the problem, but it is going to show that there's a cop on the beat. And there is an opportunity, by following the advice of economists across the spectrum, from conservative to liberal, that say that in a time of declining incomes, a stimulus is a mainstream Keynesian approach to giving a shot in the arm to the economy and a boost in confidence.

Now, we do that and do it quickly, hopefully in the next 2 weeks, and we do it together with our colleagues. It's a statement of confidence, and it also, by the way, establishes that where you need to help is with those folks who are paying their bills on the basis of their salary or punching a clock. Then we have the longer term work to do, and that is to right the inequities that have been so systemically applied to have this vast spread between the middle class, low-income folks, and everyone else. It's all these things people have been talking about, credit card abuse, this scheme that was cooked up by Wall Street and others on the subprime mortgage, and even the so-called exceptional mortgages that are below subprime, the way that Wall Street has found to package these and then sell them to, in some cases, unsuspecting buyers, and in some cases, to knowledgeable buyers who thought they could make money; the degradation of any kind of regulatory oversight, when regulatory oversight done right is going to protect average people. The chairman of Financial Services, I think, put it right on regulation. There's only two problems; one is when you do too much, and the other is when you do none at all. It is something that has to be done in order to protect the pocketbooks of everyday Americans.

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Would the gentleman yield for a question about the great State of Vermont?

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Yes.

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. I have made this statement before, that my family wound up in Iowa because of one of the greatest Federal economic stimulus packages in history, something called the Homestead Act. One of my great great grandfathers, George Washington Braley, walked to Iowa from Northfield, Vermont, because of the Homestead Act. My other great great grandparents, John and Nancy, left Ireland during the potato famine and went there because of the Homestead Act. One of the first things they did was found a Presbyterian Church, which they named the Homestead Church because of the importance of that stimulus package in creating opportunity and hope for that generation of Americans.

So my question to you, my friend, is as you look at your State now and the people that you have the privilege of representing here in Congress, what type of real world benefits are they going to receive from this stimulus package we are talking about to give hope and opportunity to the next generation of people from the Green Mountain State?

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. The elements of the stimulus package, as we know, are being discussed, but basically it would be a short-term tax break or check to families; it would be food stamps for folks who are struggling; it would be an extension of unemployment benefits from 26 weeks to 39 weeks for folks who have been laid off from their jobs. So those are some of the things that would help.

It's not just Vermont, as you know, my friend from Iowa. By the way, I am a great fan of the Homestead Act, but if your forebears had not walked from Vermont to Iowa, you might be a Congressman from Vermont right now.

I yield to my friend and class president from Minnesota.

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. I think it's interesting, and the changes that this

Congress has meant to bring, this stimulus package has meant, as all my colleagues have talked about, is of being that short-term, targeted, temporary reform that will put money right into the economy. That is in exact opposition to, I guess, the plan this President has espoused for the past 6 years that has drained money from not only the Federal coffers, but has drained jobs and siphoned them overseas.

I think it's really critical. A couple of points. I think my colleague from Louisville was exactly right when he was talking about the pendulum has swung. The only thing I wished on that is, and I think people need to be very clear about is, there is no natural order to things where that pendulum will come back on its own. The change to make that pendulum come back was the votes that were cast last year for Members, just like this, standing here. Sometimes you have got to reach up and grab that pendulum and get your hands a little bit bloody, pulling it back to where it needs to be.

That is exactly what we are trying to do. But as we are doing this today, some of the leadership on the Republican side of the aisle held a news conference and put forward a piece of legislation that they would do, that they would target to help this situation, to take away the anxiety of working class Americans, to make them feel like they can feed their family, heat their homes, and keep their good job. And their solution? Corporate tax breaks. The only thing in their package, reducing the corporate tax rate.

We all understand the theory that that will allow for corporate America to reinvest in infrastructure, to reinvest in jobs. In theory, it sounds brilliant. In practice, it's going to mean higher CEO salaries and more imports coming from China where they put the factories to save the money on the labor, to save the money on the environmental standards.

So those are the type of things that I think need to be clear, and I hear my colleague from Colorado saying very clear that we were not sent here to bicker, we were not sent here to espouse ideology, but we were sent here with a very clear mandate: Force change. The status quo would say, Continue on with President Bush's tax cuts, give corporate tax breaks. But everyone in this room knows that your constituents, the vast majority of Americans know that is not going to work.

So I am quite intrigued that our colleagues on the other side are going to stick with that. And I don't know if they need to poke their heads outside a little bit more, but that wind of change is blowing very hard and it will sweep this place clean. It will sweep this place clean and put people here who understand those needs, who don't need to go and find talking points to understand how hard it is to send your kids to college, to understand paying a gas bill becomes a major family issue. And it needs to understand that what President Bush failed to realize with Ms. Mornin is, this wasn't a sense of she wanted to be away from her child, working three jobs. She had to be.

And the idea that you should be proud, and we are going to hear more about this, this idea of productivity is a great thing, but in many cases, Americans will work as hard as they possibly can. But the problem with this economy is the return is not coming.

Before I yield to my colleagues, I think this is one thing that we were sent here to reinspire, to get Americans to change their view on this, because I think this is one of the most disturbing statistics that I have ever heard. Now, for the first time since they have been asking this question, since President Bush's Presidency, and during this time period, when asked if their children will be better off than they were, the majority of Americans respond no. They do not believe that the leadership out of this administration or the previous years of Republican-led Congresses have done anything to set a vision for America.

So I don't know if we should be surprised that the solution would be more of the same coming from the other side. The solution that the American people want is not more of the same. It's a change that reflects their values.

So with that, I would yield to my friend from Wisconsin for a few closing words from him.

Mr. KAGEN. Thank you, Mr. WALZ. I certainly appreciate it. I think what people in Wisconsin are telling me in Green Bay and Clintonville, everywhere I go throughout my district, is they want their country back. I was walking in a parade and a lifetime Republican pulled me over and said, hey, Doc, we sent you to Washington because I want my country back. I said, Exactly what do you mean by that? He said, Heck, I want a border I can see and defend. I want my Nation back. Without any borders, we cease to exist. I agree with him.

Several blocks later in that same parade a retired teacher pulled me in and said, Hey, KAGEN, we sent you to Congress because we want our country back. I said, What is this, an epidemic? I said, What do you mean by that? He said, Well, I want my constitutional rights back. I want my government to protect my fourth amendment rights, my rights to habeas corpus.

People want their country back. We all feel it here in Washington. We want our country back. We don't want to take it back; we want our values back. We want a government again that believes in being responsible with our hard-earned tax dollars. Everywhere I go, I ask people in Wisconsin, Hey, I'm working for you. I'm your hired hand. I have got your hard-earned tax money here from your family. Where do you want me to spend it, overseas or right back here at home? And everybody tells me they want it spent at home.

But, Mr. WALZ, this United States dollar doesn't buy what it used to buy. It has been devalued. In Milwaukee we've got Miller and Miller Light beer. Well, we have got dollar light. The gold hasn't changed for millions of years, but it takes a lot more money to buy an ounce of gold. The oil that drives our economy, our fossil-based fuel economy, our oil that we are purchasing hasn't changed in millions of years, but it takes a lot more money today. How much? Almost $100 a barrel. To do what? To drive our economy.

Folks, we have to get our country back, and it begins by working together, no matter what party you're in, to give people hope and confidence that their government can work together across party lines. But we have to be able to see the same problem and begin to work on it together.

This economic stimulus that we are putting together in Washington today, that the Democrats are preparing to work with the Republicans, is great for America. It gives me hope that we can work together across party lines and put together a stimulus package that will help every working family in America. Because what do we have to do? We have to reward work just as we do wealth.

I yield back to my colleague from Louisville.

Mr. YARMUTH. I would just like to add as maybe a closing remark that one of the things in the area of dogma we talk about, or cliches, we want government out of our lives. Everybody hates government until they need government. That is from the richest to the poorest. We know there's a lot of subsidy to the wealthiest people, the wealthiest corporations. They say they don't like government, but they are always coming here to ask for help when it suits them.

This is one of those times when everyone needs government in this country. Everyone needs the stimulus that we are about to try to provide. It's the right thing, it's the smart thing, and it's the moral thing to do. I think that if we can convince enough people on the other side of the aisle, we will strike a great victory for this country and for the American people. I look forward to doing that in the next couple of weeks.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. I just would like to close. I think our friend from Minneapolis, Mr. ELLISON, used the right word; the economic stimulus is a spark. It will help those people who really can use it just make the ends meet that week. Once that happens, that moves an economy as millions of people in unison do that.

So we have a chance to really change the way this economy is headed, we have a real chance to change the focus from the wealthiest 1 percent to the people who are working so hard every day across America. Those people that make this country so wonderful, so great.

I am just glad that the folks from Wheat Ridge and Lakewood and Arvada and Golden and Brighton and Commerce City and Aurora and a number of

other places in my District gave me the chance to come here and help make that change. I think that they are looking for change, and they are looking for hope, and we are going to deliver that.

With that, I will turn it back to the president of our class, the eminent Mr. WALZ.

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. I thank the gentleman. I thank all of my colleagues. I cannot tell you how proud I am to have each and every one of you here, and while all of us believe in the free market, the one thing I know for sure is I believe a lot more in my fellow citizens, and I thank the citizens of Colorado and of Wisconsin and of Kentucky and of Iowa for sending people here who care about those values, who want to get that right.

So with that, I leave in an optimistic state of mind. I leave with the American people, Mr. Speaker, knowing that these gentlemen here are going to direct us in the right direction and truly bring back that sense of equity.

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ISSUES AFFECTING AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to be recognized to address you here on the floor of the United States Congress, as always, and I appreciate this privilege. There are a series of subjects that come to mind that I think it is important for you to consider and for the Members and for those onlookers that are here to consider as well.

One of those issues has been front and center in my mind and in my legislative career as we watch these presidential debates that go on on both sides of the aisle, from the Democrat and the Republican side, and as we watch the caucus and primary season flow across the country, and as America waits with bated breath to see how this emerges, as far as who will be the nominees on either side for the Democrats and the Republicans.

A series of issues that come to mind that stand out to me that I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to consider as you and as others take a look at where they might come down on their particular choice of nominees and the things that are important here in the United States of America, and I would submit this approach, and that is that there are a whole series of issues that are important to us and we talk about them and we debate them constantly. But we often overlook the necessity to prioritize those issues.

I will say there are roughly about 10 big issues out there that get discussed on the parts of Republicans and Democrats as we turn the focus of America towards who will be the next leader of the free world, the next commander-in-chief of the strongest nation in the world, the unchallenged superpower in the world.

Those issues include items such as Social Security reform and health care reform and tax reform, fiscal responsibility. The social programs, education for example, would be another one. How strong should our military be? How do we fight our enemies globally. How to do we get to the point where we can declare one day in this global war on terror against Islamic jihadists? And how do we secure our borders and how do we reestablish the, I will call it the sanctity of this Nation, the sovereignty of America? How do we reestablish that? How do we reestablish the rule of law in this country when we have watched the rule of law and the enforcement of our laws decline over the last 20 years, a little bit more than 20 years, I will say since the 1986 amnesty bill that Ronald Reagan signed and defined as amnesty?

What about the appointments that will be made to the Supreme Court but by the next president of the United States? As most of the pundits have analyzed, it looks like it will be perhaps two appointments to the Supreme Court that will come up in the next term. Those two appointments that are anticipated will change the balance in the court and perhaps have more impact on the destiny of America, and I will say will be the legacy of the next President. There will be big questions such as will Rowe versus Wade be overturned? Will the States be then in a position where they can determine their policy on protecting innocent, unborn human life?

The issue of marriage is coming forward here in this Nation. It is under assault across this country. It happens to be a bellwether issue within the State of Iowa. Judge Robert Hansen overturned Iowa's Defense of Marriage Act. In that decision, he just unilaterally erased the will of the Iowa people and replaced it with his own. That case is going before the Supreme Court. That will be determined.

If the decision of Judge Hansen is upheld, Iowa then becomes the Mecca for same-sex marriage, because there is not a residency requirement, which means then that weekend packages from Las Vegas or San Francisco traveling to Iowa for same sex couples to get married, and then they will go back to their home States to file suit.

These are big issues, Mr. Speaker, the issue of innocent human life, the issue of marriage, the institution, which goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden, and it is transcended and that sacrament of marriage has been preserved since before original sin and it survived the great flood, but it is under assault now from judicial activists. Those, life and marriage, will likely be determined by the next two appointments to the Supreme Court.

And will we have a President that understands that the Constitution means what it says and it means what it was understood to mean, the text of the Constitution means what it was understood to mean when it was ratified by our forebearers, and that each amendment means what it was understood to mean when it was ratified? It is not a living, breathing document, not a changing document, but a document that is a guarantee to the people here in the United States. The next President will make those decisions.

Of all the issues that I have laid out here, including our border security and our national security, which many times are wrapped up into one, and the refurbishment of the rule of law, which I believe is the central pillar of American exceptionalism, all of that is up for grabs in the presidential race that is being played out across America State By State. The world watches. The world watches because it affects them, because we will be electing the next leader in the free world.

Of all of these issues that I have laid out, Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to put those issues down into two different columns. I would label those two columns. On the one side I would label it the column called quality of life issues.

The quality of life issues are those issues that probably don't turn the destiny of America. They will change our quality of life and raise our standard of living perhaps and give us a little better security, but if we get them wrong, we can go back and try them again.

One of those issues that I would put in the quality of life side of thing would be the health care issue. That is about all they talk about over on the other side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker, except for change, change, change, change, and that may be what is in your pocket, Mr. Speaker. But when you don't say what you would change to, you are just going to change from what we are to something else under the presumption that doing something different, even if it is wrong, is better than what we are doing now, isn't good enough for the American people.

The American people are going to want to know what you would change from and what you would change to, what you would make different and why and what is the rationale. That will be a requirement moving into the general election. It may not be a requirement in the primary election, that change.

But the issues in the two categories, the one category which is quality of life issues, and I put health care in there. We can do some things with health care, and I think we should. And if we get some of those wrong, we can back up and we can try again and try to get it right. In fact, we have been doing that for some time, and I expect we will do that for some time. Health care belongs in the quality of life side, not in the destiny side, because it probably doesn't change the destiny of America, but it something that has to do with our quality of life. It is important.