

Americans. Most will use it to pay bills, but hopefully some will help to spend it on the economy. Late last month we passed an energy bill that will help create hundreds of thousands of high-paying green collar jobs, lower energy prices, and reduce our dependence on foreign oil. And to address the housing crisis, we expanded affordable mortgage loan opportunities, strengthened consumer protection against risky loans, and raised loan limits to increase liquidity in the mortgage market.

Madam Speaker, this Democratic Congress is working to create more jobs, jump-start our economy that has clearly stalled. We are committed to addressing those issues that affect America's working class, not just the top 1 percent.

SUPPORT VICTORY IN IRAQ

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, today I have introduced a resolution calling on Congress to recognize and embrace the success we have seen on the ground in Iraq and dedicate ourselves to support these efforts in achieving victory.

I have visited our troops in Iraq nine times. I have seen firsthand the success of the surge. While meeting with General David Petraeus last week in Baghdad, he reported an over-60 percent reduction in violence, with al Qaeda on the defense in Anbar province.

The success our military men and women and people of Iraq have achieved is real. The best way to protect American families is to stop terrorists overseas. The best way to end the war is through victory. We, as representatives of the American people, must put aside politics and recognize what is at stake in Iraq. As my resolution states: "Congress must support the idea that the war in Iraq is not lost" and that it "will do all it can to ensure coalition victory."

In conclusion, God bless our troops and we will never forget September the 11th.

FISA

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

Mr. YARMUTH. Madam Speaker, House Democrats are fully committed to ensuring that the FISA law is focused on giving the intelligence community the tools it needs to protect our national security at the same time protecting the constitutional rights of innocent Americans.

We've already passed the RESTORE Act, which modernizes FISA, to address these two critical needs. Today, congressional leaders continue to negotiate differences between our bill and a bill passed by the Senate earlier this

year. If congressional Republicans were really concerned about our Nation's national security, you would think they would be sitting at the negotiating table ensuring their concerns are addressed. They've been asked to join the talks, but to date they have refused.

And National Intelligence Director Mike McConnell says that the President is holding up the legislation in order to get blanket immunity for the telecommunications industry.

Madam Speaker, congressional Democrats are committed to strengthening our intelligence community to keep our country safe. And we urge Republicans to put aside partisan politics and work with us on this important piece of legislation.

FISA AND THE HOUSE DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP

(Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Madam Speaker, my colleague from Kentucky has just raised an important point, which is that we need to revise the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. But I think he's a little misinformed.

He says that there are bipartisan negotiations going on. The Speaker hasn't even appointed conferees. You can't even have negotiations with the Senate. The negotiations are going on between the Democrat leadership and the conservative Democrats that want to pass a bipartisan Senate bill and have written a letter to your leadership about it.

We are now on day 25 when we have had the Protect America Act expire. All we need to do is to be able to listen to foreigners in foreign countries without a warrant. The Senate bill has unprecedented protections for Americans' civil liberties, more than are in the 1978 law that all of us in this House support. But, instead, the liberal Democratic leadership is blocking the will of the majority of this House.

It is time for Democrats to stand up to your own leadership and demand that the protection of this country is more important than special interest groups that have a hold on the Democratic leadership.

Security must come first.

ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY LEAVES AMERICAN FAMILIES STRUGGLING TO MAKE ENDS MEET

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

Mr. SIRES. Madam Speaker, during these uncertain economic times, American families are struggling to make ends meet.

Consider that oil and gas prices are at an all-time high. Health care costs continue to skyrocket out of control, leaving more Americans either unin-

sured or underinsured. Food prices recently experienced their biggest price increase in more than 3 years. If all that is not bad enough, the U.S. economy lost 63,000 jobs last month. The February jobs numbers are the latest sign that economic growth has virtually stalled.

President Bush has the dubious distinction of being tied with his father as the two Presidents with the worst jobs record since the Great Depression.

Madam Speaker, congressional Democrats are working hard to strengthen the American economy and create jobs. We worked in a bipartisan fashion on the economic stimulus package that will not only help hard-working Americans pay their bills but will also jump-start our economy and create 50,000 new jobs in America.

This was the only the beginning. Strengthening our economy remains a top priority for this Democratic Congress as we move through this year.

URGING PASSAGE OF THE SENATE FISA BILL BEFORE EASTER RECESS

(Ms. GRANGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. GRANGER. Mr. Speaker, today is day 25 since the Democrat majority let the bipartisan Protect America Act expire, leaving our intelligence community without the full range of resources necessary to monitor foreign targets and leaving our country in danger.

It's truly disappointing that the strong bipartisan Senate bill might not be considered by the House before we go into a 2-week Easter recess period. Our intelligence community needs a long-term fix for the gaps in our intelligence laws, not short-term Band-Aids or political holdups.

Senator JOHN ROCKEFELLER, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, after the bill passed the Senate a few weeks ago, said: "This is the right way to go in terms of the security of our Nation."

In the House, 21 Democrats have urged the Speaker to support the Senate-passed bill, and the House Republican conference supports the Senate bill. The support for the bipartisan Senate bill is strong and continuing to grow. Now is the time to act to provide our intelligence community all the tools necessary and to provide important retroactive liability protection that our telecommunications companies deserve when we ask for their help.

I urge the House to pass the Senate FISA bill before we leave this week. Anything short of passage is an unfortunate and dangerous risk.

DEMOCRATIC BUDGET IS FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE BUT ALSO FUNDS CRITICAL PRIORITIES

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

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, this week the House will consider a Democratic budget that will strengthen our economy and make America safer. After years of devastating cuts by the Bush administration, our budget is fiscally responsible, while also ensuring that we invest in the American people's priorities.

At a time of economic uncertainty, the Democratic budget rejects President Bush's cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, while also adding \$4.9 billion for veterans health care.

Despite the President's repeated vetoes of our legislation to ensure that 10 million children have access to health care, our budget accommodates the \$50 billion that would be needed over the next 5 years to make this goal a reality. We're still hopeful that enough Republicans will join us in overriding the President's ill-advised and non-compassionate veto.

Mr. Speaker, the Democratic budget is able to address all of the health care needs while balancing the budget by 2012 without raising taxes.

EARMARKS

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

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, I am the first House appropriator to swear off earmarks and join 32 of my colleagues, including Senators FEINGOLD and MCCAIN, as well as Chairman WAXMAN and Leader BOEHNER. I'm told that Senators CLINTON and OBAMA are considering supporting this effort.

The Constitution put the spending power in the House, and I used this to support my district. But like other powers, this congressional power could be abused; and, increasingly, we approve low- or no-quality spending to win approval for our own community: you get yours, I get mine, and the kids get the bill.

No more for this appropriator. We should ask: Should the taxpayers pay for a \$320 million bridge to connect a town of 8,000 to an island, population 50? No.

Should the taxpayers spend \$243,000 on Chez Panisse to create a gourmet organic school lunch program featuring "Comte cheese souffle with mache salad" or "Meyer lemon eclairs with huckleberry coulis"? No.

Common sense says we should put an end to such spending. I would urge the House to enact the Wolf-Kingston reforms with a moratorium on earmarks.

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PRESS AND PUBLIC ARE NOT BUYING INTO SCARE TACTICS OF BUSH AND REPUBLICANS

(Ms. WATSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, it is clear that no one is buying into the scare tactics created by the President and some Republicans regarding the expiration of the President's Protect America Act. Newspapers around the country are rightfully asking Republicans that if this law were so crucial to national security, why did they oppose an extension of it last month?

The Saint Louis Post-Dispatch called this intimidation and "fear mongering at its most craven." The Oregonian wasn't fooled by the President's political actions, writing: "If the Protect America Act is as crucial as he says it is, then he is taking a terrible gamble with the safety of his country's citizens." The Palm Beach Post recognized that "political distraction" is more important to this administration than the law. They wrote, "The law that Mr. Bush and some Republicans say is vital could have been extended for 3 weeks. Instead, they let it die."

Mr. Speaker, House Democrats are serious about passing a strong FISA law that provides our intelligence community with the tools necessary to protect our national security, and we urge congressional Republicans and the White House to join us at the table.

FISA AMENDMENTS ACT

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

Mr. KUHL of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the FISA Amendments Act, a bipartisan piece of legislation to modernize the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978.

It is imperative that we provide our intelligence community with the tools it needs to conduct surveillance on foreign terrorists without getting tied up in the courts, and this bill would do just that. The Senate passed this bipartisan legislation almost a month ago, but the House leadership has irresponsibly refused to bring up this bill, which is critical to our Nation's security.

I have chosen to cosponsor the measure because I believe that in today's world, we cannot shortchange our ability to confront emerging and ongoing threats. Therefore, I urge the majority to bring this crucial legislation to a vote.

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION NEEDS TO LISTEN

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, if you ask Mr. and Mrs. America who are in the rural hamlets and the urban cities across America, they will tell you whether there is a recession or not. If you ask the automobile dealers, the home builders, if you ask the individuals who are attempting to

put their children through college or even to make ends meet, they will tell you that bad news is already here; 63,000 jobs were lost last month.

I am glad the Democrats are taking the opportunity to strengthen our economy and create jobs. Democratic leaders last week held a second economic forum. The forum convened national experts and talked about how we can create jobs. The New Direction Congress has already passed a bipartisan economic stimulus of which thousands of Americans will be receiving a payment because of the leadership of our Democratic majority. We are helping to create 500,000 jobs. But it is well to recognize that this administration just last month lost 63,000 jobs.

What we need to do is bring our troops home, lower health care costs, and increase health care quality. We need to vote in the CHIP bill and stop the President's veto. We need to ensure that we lower energy prices through alternative fuels by creating hundreds of thousands of new green jobs. We have got to make college more affordable and K-12 classrooms more successful.

We can empower America with our own initiative and our own genius. But we cannot do it if we have an administration that doesn't listen. Sixty-three thousand jobs lost tells the story, and Mr. and Mrs. America say, "wake up and provide an opportunity for Americans." They want the Democrats to lead and to be able to create the opportunity for the economic engine that will save jobs and create jobs.

NATIONAL MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AWARENESS WEEK

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, this week, March 10-17, is National Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week. The goal of this annual event is to raise awareness of this disease for those individuals and their families who are impacted by it.

Every hour in the United States, someone new is diagnosed with MS. It is a chronic, often disabling disease that attacks the central nervous system. Many Americans know a person living with multiple sclerosis, a mother or father, a son or daughter, another family member or friend, or even a colleague.

For me, it was a member of my staff. This brave and strong woman inspired me to get more involved in the battle to live in a world free of multiple sclerosis. As a medical doctor prior to coming to Congress, I'm working here to find sensible solutions for the health care challenges that Americans face. As the cochair of the newly formed Congressional Multiple Sclerosis Caucus, I intend to bring the needs of those individuals into the larger discussion of quality health care.

Mr. Speaker, we must work together to improve access to quality health