Whereas, the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct initiated an investigation into allegations related to earmarks and campaign contributions in the Spring of 2009.

Whereas, on December 2, 2009, reports and findings in seven separate matters involving the alleged connection between earmarks and campaign contributions were forwarded by the Office of Congressional Ethics to the Standards Committee.

Whereas, on February 26, 2010, the Standards Committee made public its report on the matter wherein the Committee found, though a widespread perception exists among corporations and lobbyists that campaign contributions provide a greater chance of obtaining earmarks, there was no evidence that Members or their staff considered contributions when requesting earmarks.

Whereas, the Committee indicated that, with respect to the matters forwarded by the Office of Congressional Ethics, neither the evidence cited in the OCE's findings nor the evidence in the record before the Standards Committee provided a substantial reason to believe that violations of applicable standards of conduct occurred.

Whereas, the Office of Congressional Ethics is prohibited from reviewing activities taking place prior to March of 2008 and lacks the authority to subpoena witnesses and documents.

Whereas, for example, the Office of Congressional Ethics noted that in some instances documents were redacted or specific information was not provided and that, in at least one instance, they had reason to believe a witness withheld information requested and did not identify what was being withheld.

Whereas, the Office of Congressional Ethics also noted that they were able to interview only six former employees of the PMA Group, with many former employees refusing to consent to interviews and the OCE unable to obtain evidence within PMA's possession.

Whereas, Roll Call noted that ''the committee report was five pages long and included no documentation of any evidence collected or any interviews conducted by the committee, beyond a statement that the investigation 'included extensive document reviews and interviews with numerous witnesses.' '' (Roll Call, March 8, 2010)

Whereas, it is unclear whether the Standards Committee included in their investigation any activities that occurred prior to 2008.

Whereas, it is unclear whether the Standards Committee interviewed any Members in the course of their investigation.

Whereas, it is unclear whether the Standards Committee, in the course of their investigation, initiated their own subpoenas or followed the Office of Congressional Ethics recommendations to issue subpoenas: Now therefore be it:

Resolved, That not later than seven days after the adoption of this resolution, the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct shall report to the House of Representatives, with respect to the activities addressed in its report of February 26, 2010, (1) how many witnesses were interviewed, (2) how many, if any, subpoenas were issued in the course of their investigation, and (3) what documents were reviewed and their availability for public review.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JACKSON of Illinois). Under rule IX, a resolution offered from the floor by a Member other than the majority leader or the minority leader as a question of the privileges of the House has immediate precedence only at a time designated by the Chair within 2 legislative days after the resolution is properly noticed.

Pending that designation, the form of the resolution noticed by the gentleman from Arizona will appear in the RECORD at this point.

The Chair will not at this point determine whether the resolution constitutes a question of privilege. That determination will be made at the time designated for consideration of the resolution.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF SENATE AMENDMENTS TO H.R. 1586, TAX ON BONUSES RECEIVED FROM CERTAIN TARP RECIPIENTS

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 1212 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 1212

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to take from the Speaker's table the bill (H.R. 1586) to impose an additional tax on bonuses received from certain TARP recipients, with the Senate amendments thereto, and to consider in the House, without intervention of any point of order except those arising under clause 10 of rule XXI, a single motion offered by the chair of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure or his designee that the House concur in the Senate amendment to the title and that the House concur in the Senate amendment to the text with the amendment printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution. The Senate amendments and the motion shall be considered as read. The motion shall be debatable for one hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the motion to final adoption without intervening motion or demand for division of the question.

SEC. 2. It shall be in order at any time through the calendar day of March 28, 2010, for the Speaker to entertain motions that the House suspend the rules. The Speaker or her designee shall consult with the Minority Leader or his designee on the designation of any matter for consideration pursuant to this section.

SEC. 3. The requirement of clause 6(a) of rule XIII for a two-thirds vote to consider a report from the Committee on Rules on the same day it is presented to the House is waived with respect to any resolution reported through the legislative day of March 29, 2010.

SEC. 4. (a) On any legislative day specified in subsection (b), the Speaker may at any time declare the House adjourned.

(b) When the House adjourns on a motion pursuant to this subsection or a declaration pursuant to subsection (a) on the legislative day of:

(1) Thursday, March 25, 2010, it shall stand adjourned until 10:30 a.m. on Monday, March 29, 2010.

(2) Monday, March 29, 2010, it shall stand adjourned until 10 a.m. on Thursday, April 1, 2010.

(3) Thursday, April 1, 2010, it shall stand adjourned until 4 p.m. on Monday, April 5, 2010.

(4) Monday, April 5, 2010, it shall stand adjourned until 9 a.m. on Thursday, April 8, 2010.

(5) Thursday, April 8, 2010, it shall stand adjourned until noon on Monday, April 12, 2010.

(c) If, during any adjournment addressed by subsection (b), the House has received a message from the Senate transmitting its concurrence in an applicable concurrent resolution of adjournment, the House shall stand adjourned (as though by motion) pursuant to such concurrent resolution.

(d) The Speaker may appoint Members to perform the duties of the Chair for the duration of the period addressed by this section as though under clause 8(a) of rule I.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from New York is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. For the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS). All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. SLAUGHTER. I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous materials into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the resolution provides for consideration of the Senate amendments to H.R. 1586, the Aviation Safety and Investment Act of 2010. The rule makes in order a single motion offered by the chair of the Transportation Committee that the House concur in the Senate amendment to the title and concur in the Senate amendment to the text with the amendment printed in the Rules Committee report. It provides for 1 hour of debate on the motion.

The rule provides the Speaker may entertain motions to suspend the rules; and waives requiring a two-thirds vote to consider a rule on the same day it is reported from the Rules Committee. This requirement is waived through Monday, March 29.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here just a day after having been reminded yet again of the pain of many of my friends and constituents of the tragic February 12, 2009 crash of Colgan Air Flight 3407 and the grief caused to the people of our area.

Yesterday morning, right here in the Capitol, I was privileged to meet with some of the victims' families. It is always a sobering experience to sit down with those brave souls and their efforts to fight for safer travel for the rest of us. Their great fight is a testament to their commitment and passion.

In fact, it is my sincere hope and prayer that once we finish this effort and make changes to the laws governing pilot safety that we can find a way to name it to honor the lost lives of this crash. I suggest calling this legislation the ''Buffalo Safety Act.'' I can think of no better way to mark the lessons we have learned as a Nation about

flight safety than honoring the people who died on that icy, snowy night.

The meeting I had yesterday morning centered on safety proposals and a discussion of how this legislation will eventually be implemented. We also talked with the Federal Aviation Administration about why it has to take so long before simple, commonsense changes can be made to the laws that govern how many hours a pilot flies, how they are trained and who is responsible for ensuring their flight records are not locked away in some box where nobody can assess their skills.

After last year's crash, I could hardly believe it when we learned that the pilot of Flight 3407 had failed five different tests, yet his employer only knew about two of those failures. Shouldn't a pilot's entire flying record be available to their employer? I think so. I know it would make me feel better about getting on a plane.

As you know, I have been fighting for a handful of specific and simple changes to current law. I believe that the regional pilots have to be paid better. Better compensation will help to make sure we get the best people in the cockpit. I was stunned to learn that the first officer of Flight 3407 was paid $16,000 a year. That is less than you would earn at a convenience store. Is that what we should pay people who we trust with our lives?

I am also worried about fatigue. A tired pilot is not at his or her best, and that is not acceptable. My proposal would call for a study by the National Academy of Science on this topic but would go further by tasking the FAA to rewrite many of the standards for pilots.

I would like to see pilots' flight records available so that everybody knows about the problems in their past flying experiences. Again, my plan would mandate that the General Accounting Office review this with an eye toward greater transparency.

I would like to see carrier maintenance of their aircraft, changes made to the cozy relationship that the FAA has with airlines, and some way to put real teeth into the recommendations that grew out of the horrific hearings last spring by the National Transportation Safety Board.

It has been 21 years, Mr. Speaker, since we have revised some of the standards for aircraft rescue and firefighting standards. We are well overdue to update our expectations for all pilots, who, for the most part, are well-qualified, dedicated, and well-trained professionals.

Of course, the legislation that we are debating today is about much more. With this bill, we have essentially combined our pilot safety bill and the FAA authorization in one package.

□ 1045

It is my hope the Senate will do the right thing and allow us to go to conference where we can quickly and appropriately settle upon a compromise that allows us to turn this conversation into tangible improvements.

Besides the safety programs, this bill provides essential increases in aviation funding and safety improvements and invests in the Airport Improvement Program to help overcome congestion and delays.

The amendment we are considering today consists of the text of two bills that already have passed the House, H.R. 915, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2009, and H.R. 3371, the Airline Safety and Pilot Training Improvement Act of 2009.

I urge my colleagues to come together with me to approve this rule. Let us move quickly to pass this amendment and send it to the Senate.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SESSIONS. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman, the chairwoman of the Rules Committee, for extending me time on this FAA Reauthorization Act.

Mr. Speaker, this may not come as a surprise to you or Members of this body, but once again we are here to discuss a bill on the floor that has come to the floor under a closed rule. We continue this process in this House of Representatives despite the promise from the majority that they would lead this floor with open and honest and ethical debate and, once again, this is neither open, and I do not believe it's an honest process if Members of this body are shut out day after day after day after day after day in the Rules Committee, Republicans and Democrats, who cannot come to this floor as a result of the Rules Committee action that we took yesterday. They are not even opening this process up to the Members. I think it's bad for this body, I think it's terrible for the Rules Committee and, even worse, I think, to extend the expectation that we would be open on this floor is a misnomer, and it has been for almost 4 years now.

This Democrat majority has not allowed for one open amendment process this entire legislative session, not one, not one, Mr. Speaker, and that's unprecedented. Last week, as we were up over the weekend Saturday in the Rules Committee for the important health care debate, Members came to the Rules Committee the entire day with over 80 Republicans amendments, presenting ideas, ideas that they had, some which were outstanding bills and some which were small and minor fixes.

Yet at the end of the day, before we voted on Sunday, gleefully the Rules Committee majority, including our chairwoman, gleefully announced all 80 Republican ideas were defeated, all 80 Republican ideas were slam dunk in the Rules Committee. All 80 Republican ideas that Members came to express themselves up on the floor, slam dunk, and gleefully the bill was held as is, no additional outside comment necessary, Democrats have it down. This has happened day after day, bill after bill.

We are here, Republicans on the floor of the House of Representatives today, saying, again, that's not right. That's not the way to run this ship, this is not open, and this is not the process that should be followed.

So I guess that when the Speaker promised we are going to be the most open, the most honest, the most ethical Congress, I don't think she was referencing how she and our chairwoman would be running the Rules Committee or the legislation on this floor. Not only is this rule closed, but it allows for martial law authority, meaning that whatever the majority wants to do, they can do on this floor, all the way throughout the weekend, all the way into Monday.

The Rules Committee continues to shut out Republicans, our ideas, and to circumvent the rules that this committee has traditionally had simply to pursue an agenda. I believe last weekend, as thousands of people were outside trying to have their voices be heard, once again, this body did not listen to them and rejected their pleas, which really begs the question, I think, would the majority each time a bill comes up for consideration eliminate the amendment process from the debate?

Is that what they are afraid of? Are they afraid to debate these? Are they afraid to have Members like the gentleman, Mr. MICA, come and present his ideas, ranking member of the committee, a gentleman who has spent lots of time working with people to make this bill better?

What are they afraid of? Are they trying to protect their Members from tough votes? Are they afraid of the process? What is it that continues this process with not one open rule this legislative session? Oh, by the way, we are in the second session right now, this is the second year.

Today's closed rule is all about the Federal Aviation Administration, known as the FAA, and this is their reauthorization act. This bill would reauthorize the FAA for 3 more years. While U.S. air travel plays a fundamental role in our economy, and making safe provisions, a cornerstone of this legislation, is important, yet there are controversial provisions, including cost increases for passengers, excessive spending and labor negotiations, and job losses. Today I would like to talk about those parts of this bill that were not amended, do not allow for Member contest, for amendments.

Keeping up the tradition of Democratic Party spending, this bill authorizes $70 billion over 4 years. This is a historic level of funding for the FAA, which should come as no surprise from this Democrat-controlled Congress that has already set record levels of deficit and spending over the past 4 years and, once again, aiming for a $1.6 trillion deficit this year, $200 billion worth of deficit last month alone.

This legislation reiterates the 1998 labor agreement between the National Air Traffic Controllers Association and the FAA. This is a terrible precedent to have Congress interject itself in a current labor dispute, especially when it is on the back of the American taxpayer. According to CBO, this agreement is going to cost taxpayers $83 million this year and over $1 billion throughout the 4-year reauthorization. This bill puts funding for other important safety and air traffic control modernization programs at risk. Forget the negotiation—we will just take care of that here on the floor of the House of Representatives.

Additionally, this legislation directs the FAA to conduct biannual inspections on all foreign repair stations. This completely disregards the bilateral safety agreements and invites foreign retaliation that threaten 130,000 American jobs at service stations. Mr. Speaker, why does this Democrat leadership continue to bring bills to the floor of the House of Representatives that threaten American jobs?

We should be all about ensuring that American jobs are taken care of, not putting them at risk. We have seen record unemployment over the last year. As a matter of fact, in the last year since President Obama has become our President, here in several months, we have doubled the amount of people who are unemployed in this country. More and more people are out of work every day directly because of the political agenda and will of Barack Obama and NANCY PELOSI on this floor of the House of Representatives with votes of Democratic Members.

Americans want jobs. We want a progrowth strategy. We want to make sure and should be on this floor talking about being competitive with the world, not here trying to satisfy union concerns and raise taxes and diminishing more jobs and putting them at risk.

Despite the record unemployment and the 130,000 jobs this bill currently threatens, it goes one step further by invalidating all antitrust immunity grants to airline allowances 3 years after enacting their contracts. This will hurt U.S. carriers' competitiveness and threaten another 15,000 jobs.

Mr. Speaker, why would we want to become less competitive with other foreign nations? Why would this Congress want to place America in a defensive position against the things which have strengthened Americans' relationship with other countries and ensured, not just that we would get along, but American jobs in the process.

This legislation also increases the Passenger Facility Charge, known as the PFC for those of us who are regular travelers, up to $7 per flight. That is a 56 percent increase from the current allowable $4.50 per flight charge.

At a time when our airlines, not unlike all other areas of this economy, are struggling, we are now going to stick it to those who are flying to pay for these boondoggle expenses that I believe this Congress is creating. While the FAA says the fees are important to fund FAA-approved projects to enhance safety and security, what it's really all about is being able to pay for this union contract.

You know, these projects also include things like bike storage for passengers that are laid out in the bill, bike storage for passengers on airlines. I don't know about you, but I don't know how many passengers who bike to the airports with their luggage, but that's what we are going to do. We are going to go and make bicycle areas available at airports. That's just a lot of money, and it's a lot of wasted money that does not make sense at a time when we should be making tough decisions, not adding to the expense that is required at every airport in this country.

This reauthorization does very little to improve our Nation's air traffic control modernization program, known as NextGen. Despite concerns and growing congestion in our Nation's airspace, the bill does not provide a dedicated funding source, does not establish an air traffic control modernization board, and does not provide NextGen with needed borrowing authority, authority to be prepared for our future. Without proper funding and oversight, NextGen will fail to properly deploy the congestion in U.S. airspace, which is reaching critical levels, to ensure the safety areas are fully adopted to.

This legislation does include the bipartisan bill H.R. 3371, the Airline Safety and Pilot Training Improvement Act, that passed the House of Representatives last year. This is a step in the right direction for the future safety of airline travel, ensuring our pilots have the appropriate screening and training that is necessary.

Over a year ago, Mr. Speaker, the President promised that unemployment would not reach 8 percent. Over 3 million Americans since then have lost their jobs. That was a promise. We have now reached a 10.2 percent record unemployment rate and continue to hover well above the 8 percent that we were told would be the margin. Congress needs to stop the record spending, needs to focus on creating jobs, not diminishing them, as this bill threatens 130,000 jobs today.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we have the ability to make progress in Congress, create jobs, and grow the economy. America should be called the ''Employer Nation,'' and, instead, this Congress fails to understand how jobs are formed through investment and reinvesting within businesses in this country.

We should work with the investor and the free enterprise system to become the global leader. We should not rely on governments to pull us out of this economic stumble that we are in.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to yield 8 minutes to the gentleman from Florida, who is the ranking member of the Aviation Subcommittee, Mr. MICA.

Mr. MICA. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues in the House, I rise in strong opposition to this closed rule to consider FAA reauthorization legislation. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I am disgusted with this whole process at a time when millions of Americans are without employment, people are having their homes foreclosed, people seeking jobs for more than a year now finding no opportunities, people cutting back across the land in tough economic times.

□ 1100

I am really saddened that we continue to play games with one of our most important responsibilities, and that is providing Federal authorization for all of our aviation programs.

The FAA bill sets the blueprint for our policy, Federal policy, for projects, for funding, for every activity dealing with aviation in this Nation. I am actually sickened by the games that have been played with this.

As chairman of the Aviation Subcommittee, in May of 2003—now listen to this—in 2003, I introduced the current and longstanding last Federal Aviation Authorization bill. Now, I didn't get it done immediately; but by December, in 6 months I had that on the President's desk, and in December of 2007 the President signed that.

Now, the other side of the aisle has had complete control of the Congress, 258 votes in the House of Representatives, 60, until just about a month ago, to do anything they wanted to do to move this country forward, to move our policy forward as far as transportation, infrastructure, job creation, investment in this country, and we are here on the eve of an Easter recess playing games with a major piece of infrastructure legislation. This is sickening.

Yesterday, we passed the 13th extension. The bill expired in 2007. The 13th extension. And, again, the other body had 60 votes to do anything they wanted to. They could have put any terms in there. So we finally get a bill from them, and they play games with that bill and send it over to us, not to consider our legislation, but putting it on a Ways and Means bill.

Now, I went before the Rules Committee yesterday, and I again emphasized the importance of passing this legislation.

I just came from a meeting of the American Society of Civil Engineers who talked about a $2.2 trillion deficit in infrastructure in this country, and one of the major glaring areas that we haven't paid attention to is aviation. Aviation is the pathway, the very means, of conducting business in this country. Whether it's for passengers, who fly two-thirds of all the flights on the planet in this country, it is our doorway to success in economic activity; and still this bill languishes. This is obscene.

We had the opportunity yesterday, if they would have provided an open rule,

to send over to the Senate, the other body, a measure that would have moved this forward and we could have a bill on its way to the President of the United States and moved the policy and the projects and the jobs forward.

Instead, what they are doing—and listen to what they are doing—they are adding on a House bill that we passed last May with job-threatening, job-killing provisions.

What is wrong with this place?

This is serious. People in this country are crying out for economic opportunities, for jobs, for the dreams of Americans. Instead, what are we doing? We are playing games. Now we are sending it back.

If they would have provided us with an open rule—the Senate bill wasn't that bad; the other body's bill wasn't that bad—we could have amended it today and got on with the business of this country, got on with advancing aviation. So, instead, we are going to put provisions in here.

The first provision we put in there is absolutely ridiculous, that is, to get NATCA, the air traffic controllers, to do away with their contracts. Well, folks, they have already done away with the contract. Of course, nobody knows it; but they have already done away with the contract. The air traffic controllers, who now get $166,000 on average, that is their average pay, behind closed doors they cut a deal to give everyone a $9,000 pay increase. Well, you know, you win the election, you pay off your friends. They helped them win the election, so they get a $9,000 pay increase; 15,000 of them, they give a $30,000 pay increase, $45,000 on average, to new hires in air traffic control.

Now, air traffic controllers do a good job. Do they deserve $166,000 on average? I don't think so. They are well compensated. That is 15,500 employees.

Well, I have 22,000 employees that we left behind in FAA in that sweetheart deal, engineers, people with Ph.D.s, people who have technical expertise in safety that I need in that agency. We left them behind so we could play political games. And they put the provision in here that is almost an insult, because they already cut that deal. They have got a provision in here on repair stations. It threatens to kill 130,000 jobs in this legislation—130,000 jobs. They invalidate an antitrust provision. This is what we are tacking on to the Senate bill that came over here, 15,000 jobs.

When we debated the bill on the floor, I stood up, and almost every speaker who spoke I cited how many jobs would be lost in their district or their State or threatened to be lost because of the provisions. Now we are tacking those job-killing provisions back on this bill and sending it to the other body.

It gets worse. You heard some of the things that are in here that do not belong in here that will harm aviation, that will set us behind, that will kill additional jobs; and yet we are playing that game.

So it's a lot of fun, folks, to be here when people are hurting, when people are looking to us for leadership. And what do we provide them? A little Ping-Pong game: Here comes the bill again. There goes the bill again.

Well, I am going to vote ''no'' on this rule. I am going to vote ''no'' on the legislation that follows. Not because I don't want to proceed; I want to proceed. But we need to do it in a responsible fashion.

Mr. SESSIONS. I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. May I inquire how much time remains, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlelady from New York has 24½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Texas has 8½ minutes remaining.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SESSIONS. I once again would like to thank the gentlewoman for the time she has extended to us. And I appreciate the gentleman, Mr. MICA, for being here today on the floor.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that the House is operating an unprecedented restrictive rules process, once again, continuing the 4 years, into our fourth year of this very interesting process to deny Members the opportunity to come and to place their ideas on this floor, to debate their ideas, and a chance to vote on them. I think it is a bad way to run the House.

Every time a rule is up, we get to say, Well, brand-new record. Brand-new record here for the House of Representatives.

I think you heard the frustration that came from a gentleman who has devoted his life, not only his career, to the transportation infrastructure areas of this country, but also the FAA and a lot of initiatives and ideas that he wishes he could have been a part of to make this better. But, once again, our friends on the other side of the aisle refuse to work with the Republicans. They refuse to allow amendments or even a motion to recommit, and then given themselves martial law, same-day suspension authority, and other circumventing activities just to get their job-killing agendas through this House of Representatives.

If it weren't just job killing, it would be simple for the American people to understand, but it is also record taxing and spending. Big Government. Big Government, empowering government-types of rules and bills on this floor. And we oppose that.

If we continue to borrow, tax, and spend down this pathway that the Democrat majority has that we have been pursuing since 2007, we are going to keep finding that not only do we keep losing jobs, but our country functionally will be broke. Not just broken, but bankrupt-type broke. We are noncompetitive, and we are doing nothing to create competitiveness around this world. As a matter of fact, we are trying to play hardball with other countries.

No wonder this President is seen, and America is seen, in the world's eyes the way that we are. We are told that others diminished America's reputation, but what we are doing here today is just another opportunity to go stick our finger in the eye of our friends around the world.

Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed. We heard the gentleman from Florida say he is outraged. All we can do is that which is given to us. We will vote ''no.'' We will vote ''no'' on this rule. We will vote to try and gain some opportunity to where we can have balance back on this floor, and we will continue to stand up and talk about how we would like for this country to be an employer Nation.

We would like to have this Congress aim at its business and what it does, instead of part-time or summer jobs; full-time jobs, employment, and opportunity for the American people. We would like to see this Congress take on the opportunities to say that we recognize that the way we will have jobs is by lowering taxes and giving investors an opportunity, a chance to place their hard-earned money into the free enterprise system where jobs can be built and grown, an opportunity not to have the three largest political agenda items that this Democratic Party, this President Barack Obama and NANCY PELOSI stand for, three major political items that would net lose this country 10 million jobs.

This last weekend as we were up in the Rules Committee, we were talking about the diminishment of jobs or the guess of diminishment jobs in this health care bill, and I stated what I believe was factually correct: around 4½ million jobs would be lost. And one of my Democratic colleagues yelled back, It's only 3 million jobs—only 3 million jobs are expected to be lost by this health care bill.

That is 3 million American jobs today that we are knowingly, willingly, voting to say, That's okay. We don't care about those jobs, because what we want to do is to take care of some 25 million people who do not have insurance coverage and are underinsured on health care today, and yet remaining another 25 million that are out there.

The cost-benefit ratios are staggering from this Democrat majority. It is staggering what we are doing to the free enterprise system, to families, to jobs, to people who want to have an opportunity to have a job, the dignity to take care of themselves. It's staggering to me the amount of debt, the amount of spending that takes place from this Democratic House of Representatives. It's staggering to me to see that this leadership and the votes that are made on this floor of the House of Representatives day after day are from our past and perhaps our future.

We don't even care if we read the bill. We don't care about the process. We care more about our political agenda, a political agenda about making government bigger, about bankrupting this

country, about taking jobs from American people, about the cavalier nature in which this is done.

And then we look at the opportunity as we go through the bill to see that this health care bill, and other bills like we are having here today, simply empower other people, bigger government: 16,000 new IRS agents will be hired simply to make sure that this health care bill is enforced.

It's these kinds of questions, Mr. Speaker, which Republicans and I believe others are raising about the leadership of Barack Obama and the leadership of NANCY PELOSI; and yet we look up and see day after day the votes that are on the floor.

Don't even worry about reading the bill. Let's just get this done: this is why we are having problems in this country. We should open up the process.

□ 1115

We should have open, honest, ethical debates. We should be willing to accept Republican ideas. We should not be gleeful when, Well, we reject it. Eighty Republican ideas. Job well done, Democratic team. Let's slam-dunk those Republicans. Let's not allow their ideas.

Mr. Speaker, for this country to work, and to work properly, it's going to take all of us working together, not just the Democrat majority because they have the votes to slam-dunk Republicans. We believe process is important. We believe ideas are important. We believe that the Republican Party has lots of ideas that we will continue to stand up for. We are an alternative party and we will continue to show up every day faithfully for the American people; faithfully to say that we believe in not only freedom and opportunity, but we believe in the free enterprise system and people to have the dignity of jobs.

And we are going to fight these job-killing Democrat ideas. We're going to fight these taxes and the spending that takes place, and we will make sure that the American people understand this is just another chance today to put America further and deeper into debt. It makes us sick to our stomach when we have to have Members who come and say, I was shut out of this process. No wonder I'm going to vote against this bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Well, Mr. Speaker, in response to Mr. SESSIONS' comments on jobs, I would like to quote from this morning's Dallas Morning News and then submit the article for the RECORD. ''Jobs picture.'' I believe this is the gentleman's district. ''Moody's is forecasting that most Texas markets—including the Dallas-Forth Worth area—will have made up for employment lost during the recession and be adding jobs by late next year.''

''The central part of the country and all of Texas will be among the first to reclaim all of its lost jobs.''

The just-passed Federal health care legislation could add significantly to the employment base, since Texas is one of the States with the highest percentage of consumers who have no health care insurance.

[From the Dallas Morning News, Mar. 24, 2010]

MOODY'S EXPERTS PREDICT TEXAS CITIES WILL LEAD THE RECOVERY

(By Steve Brown)

Texas cities will outpace the rest of the country coming out of the recession.

But that doesn't mean there won't be bumps in the road to recovery, the folks at Moody's Analytics said Tuesday at their annual Dallas economic confab.

There's still some bad news—more woes in store for the battered real estate sector. But Moody's predicts that Texas will find new jobs in health care, high tech and energy.

''This region really does lead the nation in terms of recovery and will be one of the first regions to achieve a new employment peak,'' Steven Cochrane, Moody's Analytics' managing director, told more than 100 local businesspeople at the session. ''The recession was just so shallow here because the housing cycle was shallow.

''Income growth was more stable, and state fiscal conditions are better,'' he said. ''There is a smaller hole to dig out of.''

JOBS PICTURE

Moody's is forecasting that most Texas markets—including the Dallas-Fort Worth area—will have made up for employment lost during the recession and be adding jobs by late next year or early 2012.

''The central part of the country and all of Texas will be among the first to reclaim all of its lost jobs,'' Cochrane said.

The Dallas area is expected to increase employment by about 1.5 percent in 2010 and 3 percent in 2011.

Oil and gas and high tech will be among the sectors that drive job creation in Texas during the next few years, Moody's predicts.

The just-passed federal health care legislation could also add significantly to the employment base, since Texas is one of the states with the highest percentage of consumers who lack medical insurance.

BIG GROWTH DRIVER

''We will probably see this as a big growth driver in all of the South long term,'' Cochrane said.

Moody's analysts aren't bullish about the country's housing market. They expect further weakness this year and a slow turnaround when it comes.

''Foreclosures are at best peaking now,'' Moody's Analytics director Edward Friedman said. ''Maybe it will be another three or for months before they finally peak completely, and we see the true turnabout we need to believe the housing market is headed on the right track.''

That's why Moody's is forecasting further declines in nationwide home prices during the next six months. ''We think another 5 or 10 percent,'' Friedman said.

THE DRAG OF HOUSING

Unlike in most economic rebounds, the housing market will continue to drag, he said.

''The housing sector—isn't that the sector that leads the recovery?'' Friedman said. ''Not this time.''

Moody's estimates that U.S. households have lost almost $6 trillion in housing values during the recession.

''The rebound so far has only been in the stock market,'' Friedman said. ''You are not getting your housing construction rebound.''

Texas home prices aren't likely to see much of a bounce during the next couple of years, the analysts predict.

''Housing isn't a significant driver in the Texas economy right now,'' Cochrane said.

Moody's also has red flags flying over the U.S. commercial real estate market but doesn't think commercial price adjustments will hurt the economy as badly as the housing sector shakeout has.

''Nonresidential construction is pretty far down,'' Friedman said.

''How much further down could it go?''

I would also like to quote from an AP article this morning and then submit the article for the RECORD.

''The Labor Department said Thursday''—that's today—''that first-time claims for jobless benefits dropped by 14,000 to a seasonally adjusted 442,000. That's below analysts' estimates of 450,000, according to Thomson Reuters.''

As you recall, as I do, Mr. Speaker, that at the beginning of this session we inherited the worst recession since the Great Depression, and we have moved steady, month by month, putting people back to work.

The next thing I'd like to report, ''Analysts forecast the Nation will gain more than 150,000 jobs in March,'' and, ''We believe that the trend in initial claims is signaling that . . . job creation is imminent,'' say the economists at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, who wrote that before the Labor Department's report.

UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIMS DROP BY 14,000—MOST OF THE DROP PEGGED TO ADJUSTMENTS IN HOW LABOR DEPARTMENT CALCULATES CLAIMS

WASHINGTON, Mar. 25, 2010.—(AP) New claims for unemployment benefits fell more than expected in the U.S. last week as layoffs ease and hiring slowly recovers.

The Labor Department said Thursday that first-time claims for jobless benefits dropped by 14,000 to a seasonally adjusted 442,000. That's below analysts' estimates of 450,000, according to Thomson Reuters.

But most of the drop resulted from a change in the calculations the department makes to seasonally adjust the data, a Labor Department analyst said. Excluding the effect of those adjustments, claims would have fallen by only 4,000.

The department updates its seasonal adjustment methods every year, and revises its data for the previous five years. Seasonal adjustment attempts to filter out expected changes in employment such as the layoff of temporary retail employees after the winter holidays. The goal of seasonally adjusted figures is to provide a more accurate picture of underlying economic trends.

Excluding seasonal adjustment, initial claims fell by more than 30,000 last week to 405,557.

The four-week average of claims, which smooths volatility, dropped by 11,000 to a seasonally adjusted 453,750, the department said, the lowest since September 2008, when the financial crisis intensified.

Initial claims have fallen in three of the past four weeks, wiping out most of the increase that took place in the first two months of this year. That increase early in the year stoked worries among economists that improvement in the job market was stalling.

First-time claims were elevated last month by severe snowstorms on the East Coast, which caused backlogs in many state offices that fell behind in processing claims.

Many economists say claims need to fall below roughly 425,000 to signal that the economy will consistently create jobs, though

some say it could happen with claims at higher levels. Analysts forecast the nation will gain more than 150,000 jobs in March, partly due to temporary hiring for the Census. The March figures will be reported April 2.

''We believe that the trend in initial claims is signaling that . . . job creation is imminent,'' economists at Bank of America Merrill Lynch wrote before the Labor Department's report.

Initial claims are considered a gauge of the pace of layoffs and an indication of companies' willingness to hire new workers.

The number of Americans continuing to claim unemployment benefits, meanwhile, fell to 4.6 million.

But that doesn't include millions of people who are receiving extended benefits for up to 73 extra weeks, paid for by the federal government, on top of the 26 customarily provided by the states. Nearly 5.7 million people were on the extended benefit rolls for the week ended March 6, the latest data available. That is about 300,000 lower than the previous week. The extended benefit figures aren't seasonally adjusted and are volatile from week to week.

All told, more than 11.1 million people are claiming unemployment benefits, the department said.

I would like to urge my colleagues to vote ''yes'' on the previous question and the rule.

I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question.

The previous question was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 19 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1426

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. JACKSON of Illinois) at 2 o'clock and 26 minutes p.m.

RAISING A QUESTION OF THE PRIVILEGES OF THE HOUSE

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to a question of the privileges of the House and offer the resolution previously noticed.

The Clerk will report the resolution.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 1220

Whereas, the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct initiated an investigation into allegations related to earmarks and campaign contributions in the Spring of 2009.

Whereas, on December 2, 2009, reports and findings in seven separate matters involving the alleged connection between earmarks and campaign contributions were forwarded by the Office of Congressional Ethics to the Standards Committee.

Whereas, on February 26, 2010, the Standards Committee made public its report on the matter wherein the Committee found, though a widespread perception exists among corporations and lobbyists that campaign contributions provide a greater chance of obtaining earmarks, there was no evidence that Members or their staff considered contributions when requesting earmarks.

Whereas, the Committee indicated that, with respect to the matters forwarded by the Office of Congressional Ethics, neither the evidence cited in the OCE's findings nor the evidence in the record before the Standards Committee provided a substantial reason to believe that violations of applicable standards of conduct occurred.

Whereas, the Office of Congressional Ethics is prohibited from reviewing activities taking place prior to March of 2008 and lacks the authority to subpoena witnesses and documents.

Whereas, for example, the Office of Congressional Ethics noted that in some instances documents were redacted or specific information was not provided and that, in at least one instance, they had reason to believe a witness withheld information requested and did not identify what was being withheld.

Whereas, the Office of Congressional Ethics also noted that they were able to interview only six former employees of the PMA Group, with many former employees refusing to consent to interviews and the OCE unable to obtain evidence within PMA's possession.

Whereas, Roll Call noted that ''the committee report was five pages long and included no documentation of any evidence collected or any interviews conducted by the committee, beyond a statement that the investigation 'included extensive document reviews and interviews with numerous witnesses.' (Roll Call, March 8, 2010)

Whereas, it is unclear whether the Standards Committee included in their investigation any activities that occurred prior to 2008.

Whereas, it is unclear whether the Standards Committee interviewed any Members in the course of their investigation.

Whereas, it is unclear whether the Standards Committee, in the course of their investigation, initiated their own subpoenas or followed the Office of Congressional Ethics recommendations to issue subpoenas.

Therefore be it: Resolved, that not later than seven days after the adoption of this resolution, the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct shall report to the House of Representatives, with respect to the activities addressed in its report of February 26, 2010, (1) how many witnesses were interviewed, (2) how many, if any, subpoenas were issued in the course of their investigation, and (3) what documents were reviewed and their availability for public review.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The resolution qualifies.

MOTION TO REFER THE RESOLUTION

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I move that the resolution be referred to the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Massachusetts is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, this is a matter that properly belongs before the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct.

I yield back the balance of my time and move the previous question.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to refer.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on the motion to refer the resolution will be followed by 5-minute votes on adopting House Resolution 1212; and agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 406, nays 1, answered ''present'' 15, not voting 7, as follows:

[Roll No. 187]

YEAS—406

Ackerman
Aderholt
Adler (NJ)
Akin
Alexander
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Austria
Baca
Bachmann
Bachus
Baird
Baldwin
Barrow
Bartlett
Barton (TX)
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Blunt
Boccieri
Boehner
Bono Mack
Boozman
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boustany
Boyd
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Braley (IA)
Bright
Broun (GA)
Brown (SC)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Calvert
Camp
Campbell
Cantor
Cao
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson (IN)
Carter
Cassidy
Castle
Chaffetz
Childers
Chu
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Coffman (CO)
Cohen
Cole
Connolly (VA)
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cuellar
Culberson
Cummings
Dahlkemper
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis (KY)
Davis (TN)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly (IN)
Doyle
Dreier
Driehaus
Duncan
Edwards (MD)
Edwards (TX)
Ehlers
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emerson
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Fallin
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Flake
Fleming
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foster
Foxx
Frank (MA)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Fudge
Gallegly
Garamendi
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Giffords
Gingrey (GA)
Gohmert
Gonzalez
Goodlatte
Gordon (TN)
Granger
Graves
Grayson
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Griffith
Grijalva
Guthrie
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hall (TX)
Halvorson
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Heinrich
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Himes
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Hoyer
Hunter
Inglis
Inslee
Israel
Issa
Jackson (IL)
Jackson Lee (TX)
Jenkins
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam