

lion's den, Mr. Gettelfinger spoke on U.S. banks and investment firms as the foundation of the global system and the disarray they were in. He spoke on the need for the government to jump-start the economy and to address the thousands of Americans losing their jobs and their homes to foreclosures. Mr. Gettelfinger told attendees that President Obama and Congress did the right thing by passing the economic stimulus package and that the plan would put money back into the hands of the American people and would energize the lagging economy. We are seeing all of these things come to fruition today.

Ron Gettelfinger pulled our automobile manufacturing industry from the brink of devastation and saved hundreds of thousands of jobs. By saving the Detroit Three, Mr. Gettelfinger played a pivotal role in keeping the American economy away from total disaster. Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join me today in wishing Ron Gettelfinger the best and congratulating him on his retirement from the United Auto Workers.

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a hero of the American workforce: Ron Gettelfinger. For the past eight years Mr. Gettelfinger has dedicated himself to fighting for our Nation's auto workers as president of the UAW. Many of the fights that Mr. Gettelfinger undertook helped not only his constituency but Americans as a whole.

Mr. Gettelfinger's priorities are not unique to the UAW but are shared by many members of this body, myself included. Whether fighting for single-payer healthcare, labor protections, or investment in America's industry Mr. Gettelfinger had made it his life's work to advocate for the American worker.

I am proud to rise today to honor a fine man on the occasion of his retirement and commend him for the excellent work he's done. Mr. Speaker, it is because of individuals like Ron Gettelfinger that our workforce functions as well as it does.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join our distinguished Dean of the House, Representative JOHN DINGELL, to honor Ron Gettelfinger for his years of service to the United Auto Workers (UAW). Ron recently announced that he will retire after serving as President since 2002, and a lifelong commitment of service to the organization. As President, he worked closely over the years with my regional UAW Directors, outgoing Director Bob Madore and his predecessor Phil Wheeler, on issues important to Connecticut. Ron presided during a time of economic difficulty and a historic health reform debate, and did so with great poise and a never subsiding commitment to the men and women he represented. I once again commend him on his years of service and join with my colleagues in saluting him.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to honor Mr. Ron Gettelfinger, a lifelong champion of the American labor movement and President of the United Auto Workers Union, on his retirement after forty-five years of dedicated service. As a Member of Congress it is both my privilege and honor to recognize President Gettelfinger for his many years of service and his contributions which have enriched and strengthened our country, the State of Michigan, and Oakland County.

In his career, President Gettelfinger has been a tireless advocate for working families and workers' rights. In 1964, he was hired at

Ford's Louisville Assembly plant as a chassis line repairman and a member of UAW Local 862. As a member of UAW Local 862, he was elected to serve as a committeeperson, bargaining chair and eventually president. In 1992, he was elected as the director of UAW Region 3, representing members in Indiana and Kentucky and served in that role for six years. In 1998, he was elected as a UAW National Vice President under then UAW President Steven Yokich. In 2002, Mr. Gettelfinger was elected as President of the UAW International Union, the position he has held until his retirement.

The American auto industry has faced unprecedented challenges in recent years. During this time, President Gettelfinger has provided steadfast, thoughtful, and effective leadership. During his tenure, the American auto companies have faced their greatest challenges since the Great Depression. Following the economic downturn of September 2008, in which irresponsible decisions on Wall Street created an economic crisis for businesses and families across the United States, President Gettelfinger's bold action and leadership was critical in securing the future of the American auto industry. He was instrumental in the forging of a set of sustainable contracts, which have allowed the American automakers to remain globally competitive. President Gettelfinger's leadership has saved hundreds of thousands of American jobs, while upholding the ideals and standards of a hard day's work for a fair day's pay.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today to honor President Ron Gettelfinger for his many contributions to our community and his leadership at the United Auto Workers Union. I wish him many more years of health, happiness, and productive service.

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize retiring United Auto workers President Ron Gettelfinger. Mr. Gettelfinger has dedicated his career to advancing the interests of working people around our country and the world. He has worked for safer and more equitable workplaces and to make the idea that hard work should translate into a good wage and a stable job a reality. His work has also directly benefited my district.

The UAW has represented nearly 5,000 autoworkers at the NUMMI plant in Fremont, California for nearly 30 years. With the UAW's representation, these workers were able to earn a good wage and benefits that allowed them to build solid middle class lives. In turn, they built some of the best cars in the world and won numerous awards for quality and craftsmanship.

Unfortunately, the NUMMI plant ceased production in April. Mr. Gettelfinger and the UAW worked tirelessly to keep the plant open. Since the closure, I've worked with Mr. Gettelfinger to secure job training and Trade Adjustment Assistance for the many workers who have lost their jobs. Recently, Tesla Motors purchased the NUMMI factory and they will be building electric cars there. I will keep working with the UAW and incoming President Bob King to ensure that the UAW is recognized and former NUMMI workers are hired to fill the new jobs.

It has been a pleasure to work with Mr. Gettelfinger. On behalf of the thousands of my constituents that have benefited from his service, I say "thank you."

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Ron Gettelfinger who recently retired

as President of the United Auto Workers. Ron has been President of UAW since 2002, though his ardent support for the American worker extends back to his days as a rank and file UAW member and chassis line repairman at Ford's Louisville plant.

Ron led his members through one of the most devastating economic downturns since the Great Depression. He should be particularly lauded for his efforts to fight for those employees in the auto industry who have lost their jobs in recent years. He worked tirelessly to secure opportunities for and ensure the fair treatment of his members during this time and I thank him for those efforts.

Ron has also been a staunch advocate for expansive and affordable health care in this country. He should be proud of his role in supporting and passing the expansion of SCHIP in 2009 and the historic health care reform package passed earlier this year. When I led the effort in the House of Representatives to oppose the excise tax on health care plans, I was proud to have Ron and his members working side by side with me to protect the benefits of working families in our country.

In my state of Connecticut, I have worked closely with the men and women of the UAW. Whether they are the men and women who work at Foxwoods casino or those helping design the next generation of submarines at Electric Boat in Groton, UAW members are among the hardest working individuals in our country.

I commend Ron for his service to improve the quality of life for so many American working families and I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking Ron for his work and wishing him a happy retirement.

THE ECONOMY AND OTHER CURRENT ISSUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CARSON of Indiana). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. AKIN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. AKIN. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate a moment here to get our charts lined up and to talk about a subject that we have been talking about for some time but which is very much on the minds and hearts of people in America, and that is the situation of jobs, the economy, and the condition of our solvency as a nation, and the challenges to leadership and the way forward.

Now in order to try to get a perspective on where we are, it's helpful to look back a little bit and to see where we have come from. Those of us perhaps who have been paying a little attention to what has been going on over the last couple of years, there have been some changes, changes of a recession that has come, changes in terms of unemployment, people having trouble making their mortgage payments, people having trouble keeping or getting jobs, and also a sense that the economy is not all that it should be. These things didn't happen just by accident. They were a result to a large degree of government policy. Many of the problems that we are experiencing actually

were caused by decisions that were made right here in this Chamber, and some of those decisions now turn out to be not wise at all.

I would like to go back a number of years to part of what created this entire real estate bubble which then collapsed our economy and put us in the condition that we are now. I hope to conclude with some very positive suggestions as to what we have to do to go forward. America is not in someplace that we haven't been before. We're not in over our head, but we're getting close to it. There are things that we can do to mediate and to take care of some of the problems that have been created, but we must act decisively and we're going to have to act immediately.

Going back a little bit, it became popular over a couple of different administrations to allow people who couldn't really make their mortgage payments to get mortgages to buy houses. So what we did was we created a law that actually said to bankers and to people who were going to give people home loans that you have to give loans to people who can't afford to pay some of them, or who may be a bad credit risk would be a better way to state it. And so we had these laws saying that a certain percent of loans have to be given to people who were bad credit risks. Over a period of time, what happened was those percentages were increased. In President Clinton's last year in office, they increased those percentages up. In the meantime, the economy had a series of different things that occurred with Greenspan creating a great deal of liquidity because of the recession in 2000-2001. So what you had was this real estate bubble where a lot of people were putting money into houses, the housing prices were going up rapidly, everybody was flipping these home loans and making lots of money. As long as the music continued to play, everybody was happy. When the music stopped, there were a lot of people without chairs to sit down in. Well, this tremendous bubble that ended up bursting in the home mortgage area was not something that took everybody by surprise. Many people took advantage of it. Many people were hurt very badly by it. But it was not something that people didn't understand was going on. In fact, on September 11 in 2003, which goes back quite a number of years now, President Bush saw this coming; and so he is recorded here in the New York Times, not exactly a conservative oracle, saying that "the Bush administration today recommended the most significant regulatory overhaul in the housing finance industry since the savings and loan crisis a decade ago."

□ 1830

What the President wanted was more authority to regulate Freddie and Fannie because he saw that Freddie and Fannie were out of control. But that's not such an easy thing to do to

control Freddie and Fannie. They were quasi-private agencies that were loaning money like mad to people that wanted to buy houses. The trouble was they had just lost a billion here or there, so things weren't going quite right for Freddie and Fannie.

But Freddie and Fannie had a way to fight back. They had many, many lobbyists in Washington, D.C., and they gave lots of money away to Senators and other political people. So the President is asking for authority to control Freddie and Fannie. The President got the bill through because Republicans controlled the House at the time, got a bill through the House, it went to the Senate. But because the Republicans did not have 60 votes in the Senate, the bill was killed by the Democrats in the Senate.

In the meantime, the congressional Democrats disagreed with the idea of regulating Freddie and Fannie more. And of course Congressman FRANK, who is now the one in charge of this committee, saw it very different than President Bush did. He said, these two entities, Freddie and Fannie, are not facing any kind of financial crisis. The more people exaggerate these problems, the more pressure there is on these companies and the less we'll see in terms of affordable housing. So he did not want to regulate Freddie and Fannie. He didn't see a particular financial problem; he said they're just fine financially. This is the same article, New York Times, September 11, 2003. Of course as it turns out, through the eye of history we can look back and say of course Congressman FRANK was completely wrong and President Bush was right; we should have done something about Freddie and Fannie.

So you start to get this real estate collapse and mortgage problem. So the economy starts to go down and a lot of people blamed President Bush for it. But anyway, the economy starts going down, it's because of this congressional policy of allowing these mortgages to be made to people who couldn't afford to pay. What happened was of course Wall Street took them, chopped the mortgages up into little pieces, packaged it all up into these mortgage-backed securities and sold them all over the world. The whole crisis was compounded by the different ratings agencies like Standard & Poor's and Moody's, giving them all Triple A ratings—in fact, these things were not Triple A at all; they were a lot of trouble waiting to happen.

So the real estate crisis then drug the rest of the financial market into trouble, along with some accounting rules that were so rigid and strict that they couldn't deal with the situation that occurred. Following that, of course, President Obama is elected and the economy is going down. And so he proposes a series of solutions and things that hopefully are going to make things better. Part of his solution, of course, was a whole lot of taxes and a whole lot of spending.

And so his policies started out, first of all—actually, it started out with the stimulus package. The stimulus package was one of these things that were supposed to help us get some jobs. He told us what we were going to do with the stimulus package, we were going to spend—it was originally \$787 billion, but as it turned out it was \$800 billion in the stimulus package. And here's what was said by the President about it. Our stimulus plan will likely save or create 3 to 4 million jobs. Ninety percent of these jobs will be created by the private sector, the remaining 10 percent mainly public sector jobs.

So this looked like a pretty good deal. We were told if you don't pass the stimulus bill, what's going to happen is you may get 8 percent unemployment if you don't pass it. And so because the Democrats were totally in charge, we passed it. The Republicans all voted no. We had seen this before. It was not even a legitimate stimulus package. It was a whole lot of big spending on a lot of giveaway government programs, but it was not going to do anything to improve the economy, we believed. Now we've had a chance to see how did that \$800 billion go? Well, it went to pay the pensions of a lot of States that had been irresponsible and had not managed their pensions properly.

And so now we've seen how that worked. Well, the private sector has lost nearly 8 million jobs since 2008. The government has gained 656,000 jobs—mostly the census-type jobs—and there was very, very little job creation in the private sector. Well, is it because Republicans were such wizards that they could figure out it wasn't going to work? Well, no, we just know something about history. In fact, we would have hoped that the Democrats might have learned from history from the days of FDR, who took a recession and turned it into the Great Depression.

These are the comments from a Keynesian economist in a way, he was somebody that was about the same time period historically as Little Lord Keynes. His name was Henry Morgenthau, he was FDR's head of Treasury. He said, We have tried spending money. We have spent more money than we've ever spent before—this is after 8 years of the Federal Government spending lots of money—it doesn't work. I'd say after 8 years of the administration we have just as much unemployment as when we started, and an enormous debt to boot.

So, so much for the stimulus bill. It wasn't even FDR kinds of concrete and asphalt types of pork; a lot of it was just giveaways to various States that had mismanaged their budget. So that's what happened. So we could have learned. And the Republicans did know that the stimulus bill didn't work, we didn't vote for it. And what was the result of it? Well, we should have learned at least from Henry Morgenthau because here's the results. This is when the stimulus bill was put

in. It was projected that we're going to have unemployment going down. If you pass the stimulus bill, it's going to go down here; if you don't pass it, it may get up to 8 or 9. In fact, we passed the stimulus bill, it gets to 9.7.

If you take a look at the other graphs—I don't know that I have that graph here today—what you find is that the employment in the private sector has been going steadily down and the government employment has been going steadily up. So, so much for the first step of economic policies in the administration. That was followed, of course, by all of these different nifty big tax increases. Now, that says something's wrong when you have a recession and you're doing tax increases.

I'm joined in the Chamber tonight by a fellow that is very aware of how these things interact, has done a fantastic job for his district, and I'd like to invite him to join me in our discussion tonight, Congressman SCALISE, please.

Mr. SCALISE. I'd like to thank my friend from Missouri for leading tonight's discussion about the economic problems that we're facing today in our country. And of course, as you showed those comments from Henry Morgenthau, who was the Treasury Secretary under FDR, who in fact not only pointed out the problems of the massive spending back then, but really was kind of prescient because some of the things he talked about back then are still as relevant, if not more, today because he predicted the problems, he discussed the problems of government spending and borrowing and borrowing and borrowing with no results, and in fact with detrimental results because of the damage it's done. And of course here we are today seeing the results of that same failed policy of history, unfortunately, repeating itself.

Mr. AKIN. We just didn't learn.

Mr. SCALISE. And of course those who are running things right now—the liberals who are not only in the White House, but here in Congress—have not learned the lesson of history. And there is that saying that if you don't learn from history, then you're doomed to repeat it. Unfortunately, we've been trying to prevent history from repeating itself, and yet we're seeing that happen right now.

I represent southeast Louisiana, and of course we are battling this devastating oil disaster—

Mr. AKIN. Maybe I should just interrupt for a moment and recognize, gentleman, you have really studied up on the whole oil spill situation and shown tremendous leadership there. I'm very thankful for the fact that you have stepped into what appears to many Americans and many conservative Congressmen as a leadership vacuum. You have really stepped in, and I'm very thankful for you doing that. I would encourage you to make the connections here.

Mr. SCALISE. I thank the gentleman for his kind comments. All I've been

trying to do is not only represent the people of my district and my State, but also to make sure that the President is meeting his responsibility under the law. And of course under the law in this case, with the Oil Pollution Act, the President himself is responsible for directing the recovery, and the responsible party, BP, is responsible for paying.

BP ought to be paying. The problem is the President is allowing BP to still run the show on the ground in too many different areas, which is not his job. And now something that has really added insult to injury is that the President came out a few weeks ago with this ban, this moratorium on offshore drilling across the board, not focusing on finding out what went wrong on that rig, why the Horizon exploded—and we still continue to battle this oil today. In many cases our local leaders tell me, including just yesterday, our local leaders are spending more time fighting the Federal Government than fighting the oil, which is inexcusable, and it's still going on to this day.

Mr. AKIN. Could you hold that right there for a minute because I think you're on something that I think we ought to be exploring a little bit here tonight, but we do have an item of business.

I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. ARCURI).

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 5175, DEMOCRACY IS STRENGTHENED BY CASTING LIGHT ON SPENDING IN ELECTIONS ACT

Mr. ARCURI, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 111-511) on the resolution (H. Res. 1468) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 5175) to amend the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to prohibit foreign influence in Federal elections, to prohibit government contractors from making expenditures with respect to such elections, and to establish additional disclosure requirements with respect to spending in such elections, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

THE ECONOMY AND OTHER CURRENT ISSUES

Mr. AKIN. Mr. Speaker, I think we were just talking a little bit about the situation in the gulf that's gotten everybody's attention.

My background is engineering, gentleman, and my first reaction when there's a problem is, how do you fix it? That's the first thing I'm saying. What has puzzled me and actually made me pretty frustrated is it seems that the administration is more interested in affixing blame than they are in fixing the problem.

I recall that President Bush took a whale of a beating after Hurricane

Katrina because it took him about 2 or 3 days after he had been rebuffed by the Governor and the Mayor of New Orleans, it took him a couple of days before they sort of got going. And then of course our FEMA didn't respond very well; the Federal response was a bit weak in terms of the magnitude of the disaster. And yet, by comparison, what we're dealing with here in the gulf is it took 50 days for the President to call the head of BP. Now, he had the power, if I'm not mistaken, is it right, he had the power to basically declare that a national emergency, get together a team of people, a fusion cell, get the very top resources in America. They could have pulled that together, they could have processed the different questions, sorted through the conflicting claims and started to put this thing together, put together a series of, We're going to do this, this and this. If this doesn't work, this backup plan is already getting set up.

We could have managed the process. Instead, after 50 days he calls the head of BP and just wants to ream the guy out. Well, BP did a terrible job, but after the crisis started it was the administration's problem to deal with, and I didn't see it fixing the problem. Am I mistaken in that? I mean, that's just an outsider looking in. I'm up in Missouri, we don't have too much coastline up there.

Mr. SCALISE. Well, obviously you've been studying this. I know you, and I have spoken about the problems on the ground, and I appreciate your concern and the interest you have in trying to help us. I wish that the President had that much interest in helping us in the day-to-day problems we're facing. Just the other day I was talking to one of the local fire chiefs who was there on the ground after Katrina, who is there on the ground right now battling the oil, and he said that the level of government dysfunction is higher today—more dysfunction today—than it was during Katrina. A case in point just happened yesterday when this sand barrier plan that our Governor and our entire congressional delegation fought for over 3 weeks to get the President to finally approve. In fact, last week, when the President gave his address to the Nation from the Oval Office, he actually bragged about the fact that he approved this sand barrier plan. Well, yesterday the Federal Government shut it down.

Mr. AKIN. Wait. The President approved the sand barrier plan that we've been waiting a month to get approved, and now it's been shut down by the Federal Government?

□ 1845

Mr. SCALISE. It was shut down yesterday by the Federal Government. Spoke to our Governor's office about it. They basically said it was a Federal agency that shut them down. I talked to the Federal agency today, and they said they didn't shut them down. We went round and round, and of course