January 5, 2011, the gentleman from California (Mr. GARAMENDI) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, it's good to be back, and I hope all of my colleagues who are here tonight thanking as I did with my family and with our constituents back in our districts. We have much to be thankful for. After all, this is America, and this has always been the place of dreams. This is America. It's always been the place where people have found opportunity; where, whatever they wanted to do, they could achieve it; and it's still that America today.

But it's up to us, in the third year of this recession, to restore the American Dream, and there are ways that we can do it. And tonight, together with my colleagues who will soon be joining me, we will talk about various ways in which the Democrats in this House will and have made numerous proposals to restore the American Dream.

I was out in the district for five of the days that we were gone, talking to people. In fact, one fellow who has a book binding company—a man who's 85 years old and is about to retire and for that company employed—a fellow who was talking about the enormous strength of this Nation, and he was sharing the story of himself and his employees and the way in which they came here. And many struggled from very bad situations in other countries, but they came here with optimism. They came here with a true belief that in America you can make it, that if you follow the rules, if you work hard, you can make it. You can have a good life. You can take care of your family.

Unfortunately, for all too many Americans, that's not the case today. So restoring the American Dream is our task, and we can do it.

The President, more than 2 months ago, proposed the American Jobs Act, a portion of it that is a very, very significant tax cut for men and women who are working. Their Social Security payments would be reduced by 50 percent. No longer would they pay 6.2 percent of their wages into the Social Security fund; the payroll tax would be reduced to 4.1 percent—and for their employers, the same reduction—providing a very powerful incentive for individuals to have money in their pockets, about $1,500 a year, money in their pockets so that they could participate in buying gifts for their children. As we look to Christmas, we know there are many, many Americans that are not going to be able to do that.

Mr. Speaker, it's time for us in this House to follow the lead of the President and to give every American worker, 98 percent of Americans, a very significant tax reduction, $1,500, by reducing that Social Security tax. And for their employers, the same. If their employers are up to $50 million of payroll, they can reduce, by 50 percent, their Social Security tax so that that employer has more money to hire people.

That debate is going on in the U.S. Senate today. Unfortunately, here in this House, we've not been able to even take up that issue. We should, because it's part of what we must do to put Americans back to work, to give them a break.

Joining me in this discussion tonight as we talk about restoring the American Dream and about the things that we can do to make that happen is my colleague from the great State of New York (Mr. Tonko). We have often been here. We call ourselves the East-West Team.

It is good to see you back. I hope you had as good a Thanksgiving as I did, and I'm sure you worked as hard in your district as I did during those days. Please share with us, and welcome back.

Mr. TONKO. Thank you, Representative GARAMENDI, and thank you for leading us in an hour of discussion, of dialogue, that is most critical to the economic viability, to the economic comeback of America's middle class.

You talk about some of these incentives that would be addressed through a payroll tax deduction. It's all about empowering our middle class, enhancing their purchasing power, enabling us to enhance that demand out there for products that then obviously translates into job growth; because when we command upward in this country, with more consumer confidence, with absolute increase in purchasing power, there will be a positive outcome.

There's no denying that unemployment is driving the deficit; and if we can turn that around, if we can invest in ways that enhance the middle class, that's good for all strata, all income strata in this Nation. And what's been lost in the logic here for the majority is that the middle class stands to produce gains for everybody, and we saw what happened in the buildup before our entry here into the House.

In the period of the recession, it was all about borrowing, totally, the money that was necessary to spend on a tax cut for millionaires and billionaires. And some would suggest those are the job creators. But what happened was we realized 8.2 million jobs lost, and so that didn't work.

We ought not go back and revisit that formula, because it was not a formula for success. What we need here is to bring about the long overdue employment of the middle class and it is working families across this country that need that assistance today; and, by the way, it works in everybody's favor.

So that's what we're promoting, and it's good to start off with that discussion; because as we move forward, investments are what it's about: investing our way to prosperity, investing