bank examination. By and large, most U.S. banks are having to shrink in size in response to the Fed's pressure, which translates into reduced lending.

We have been going through a period of time in which President Bush and his Secretary of the Treasury at the tail end of their administration started saying this and then President Obama and his Secretary of the Treasury then saying it. They have been saying loan, loan, loan, and then the local bank examiners having been saying no, no, no, and it has been holding us back. This country could be booming beyond belief right now, but we're holding it back in so many ways, and we will never come out and have a full and complete recovery unless that atmosphere changes.

I heard a talk this morning by Governor Mitch Daniels of Indiana, and he said that our employment rate is less than 64 percent now. He says that is the lowest it's been since the era of stay-at-home moms. He said over a third of adult children are now living at home with their parents, which is way above what it has been in the past. In fact, we have an unemployment rate that is far too high, but our underemployment rate is perhaps even much higher. All across this country you have college graduates who are working as waiters and waitresses in restaurants or in other low-paying jobs because they have gotten college degrees and can't find good jobs because we've sent so many good jobs to other countries in recent years and because our regulatory environment is holding this country back and keeping it from booming as it should be right now.

ACCELERATE OUR WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. Speaker, on February 1 of this year, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said that American forces would step back from a combat role in Afghanistan as early as mid-2013. This is a year faster than had been announced only months previously. He also added that U.S. troops would move into an advise-and-assist role to Afghanistan security forces. I know that most everyone who has joined me on this floor this morning would want a faster transition. To be frank, we wish we could have avoided much of this 10-year nation building altogether. I rise today to express my strong support for the administration's decision to reduce our military footprint on an accelerated timeline.

Mr. Speaker, our soldiers, our men and women in uniform, will do and do do whatever it is we ask of them. Indeed, the sacrifices that our soldiers and their families have made have been extraordinary. Just this morning, with Congressman DONNELLY, I met a family who lost their dad, and his son is here who was serving with him in Afghanistan. There is nothing that we can do to adequately express to them our enormous appreciation for their sacrifice.

If we did not have men and women who, at the call of the Commander in Chief, would put on the uniform and report for duty and do what the Commander in Chief and this Congress authorized, we would not have the United States of America. But the obligation we have to the citizens from our districts that are willing to make that sacrifice is to give them a policy worthy of their willingness to make that sacrifice.

It is time that we do all we can to accelerate our withdrawal from Afghanistan. The reason is this: That's what our national security requires.

There was a very valid reason to go into Afghanistan. It was the home of Osama bin Laden. The Taliban gave him sanctuary. Al Qaeda had free hand. Our policy was right when it was started, but it transformed itself into a nation-building policy where our partner has become a corrupt Afghanistan Government that is unreliable, that is squandering taxpayer money, that is not cooperating with the American military.

The question is: Should the American taxpayer and the American soldier be required to do nation building in Afghanistan, particularly when the threat of terrorism is real, but it is not a nation-centered threat? It is dispersed around the globe. The new American policy of counterterrorism, as opposed to counterinsurgency—that is, going after terrorists where they are as opposed to nation building where some may be—is the right direction for this country to go.

Mr. Speaker, the policy announced by Mr. Panetta to accelerate that withdrawal is overdue and it is timely at this point. I strongly support it and urge my colleagues to do so as well.

HIGH-LEVEL NUCLEAR WASTE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I come back to the floor again this week to continue to talk about high-level nuclear waste and its location around the country.

This week really saddens me because, in the weeks past when I've identified the U.S. Senators from the appropriate States, usually I would have more in support of moving their high-level nuclear waste out of their State than who wants to vote to keep it in their State. As I go to Connecticut today and the States surrounding Connecticut, it is really amazing how many Senators have gone on record to say, No, it is okay; we will just keep this nuclear waste in our State for 15, 20, 25 more years.

With that, let's look at the options we have here.

The nuclear power plant that I'm addressing today is called Millstone. It is in Connecticut. I always like to compare it to where the high-level nuclear waste should be, which is underneath a mountain, in a desert in Nevada, at Yucca Mountain, where, in 1987, we passed into law and said Yucca Mountain will be the location for our high-level nuclear waste. It is the law of the land.

How have we done? How much nuclear waste is at Yucca Mountain, this mountain in the desert? We don't have any. We've already spent $15 billion. The waste would be stored 1,000 feet underground. The waste would be stored 1,000 feet above the water table. The waste would be 100 miles from the nearest body of water, which would be the Colorado River.

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Well, let's compare it to Millstone in Connecticut. Right now, Millstone has 1,350 million tons of uranium spent nuclear fuel on site. The waste is stored in pools and in dry casts. The waste is 15 to 20 feet from the water table. It is on Niantic Bay, just off Long Island Sound. Here's a picture. Here's the nuclear power plant; here's the bay. It's right next to the water. And without moving forward on Yucca Mountain, this waste will continue to be stored there 15, 20, 25 more years.

So let's look at the Senators from the surrounding States that border this body of water. We have Senator BLUMENTHAL—new. He said in a campaign interview that he opposed Senator REID's fight to prevent Yucca Mountain, so we put him in the ''yes'' column. Senator LIEBERMAN voted ''no'' in 2002, so we put him in the ''no'' column. Senator LAUTENBERG from New Jersey voted ''no'' on the Senate Appropriations Committee amendment to restore funding, so we put him in the ''no'' column. Senator MENENDEZ from New Jersey has been a vocal critic, and so he's in the ''no'' column. KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND, Senator from New York, we have her as undecided. We're kind of waiting for her to take a position. Part of this debate is to at least get Senators on the record somehow to see where they will be on this position.

Senator SCHUMER—obviously fairly close to Connecticut and New York City—he had voted ''no'' in '02. Senator JACK REED—actually a pretty good friend of mine—from Rhode Island voted ''no'' in 2002. Senator WHITEHOUSE, a Democrat from Rhode Island, we have as really ''undecided.'' Two ''undecided,'' a whole bunch of ''nays,'' and one ''yes.''

So how does that do for our totality of where Senators are at this time based upon the information we have? Well, we have 41 Senators who say we need to move high-level nuclear waste out of our State to a desert underneath a mountain. We have 14 that we really have no public record on. We'd like to see the Senate sometime take a vote and figure out where they might be. And we have 15 ''nays.''