

We had an unfortunate notion dealing with the "axis of evil," where we had an unfortunate, some would say reckless, rhetorical flourish that has sort of lumped together three of the most vexing problems we have in the foreign policy arena with North Korea, Iraq and Iran; and unfortunately, in the course of the last year, we have seen increasing problems because of an inability on the part of the administration to distinguish and have a clear and thoughtful approach to all three of those problems.

We have had a situation dealing with the issue of international terror, which is and remains the greatest threat to American security; and frankly, I think all of us in our heart of hearts has to admit that, as a result of the last year, America is no safer as it relates to terrorism, and in fact, there are questions and ambiguity. We have this great amorphous security agency, and we really have not addressed vexing problems between a lack of coordination between the CIA and the FBI. Now we have got a third entity with more questions than answers.

There was not a call in the last State of the Union asking Americans to step forward. There was not a sense of shared sacrifice and urgency. In the course of the last year, we have been dealing, frankly, with sort of misdirected economic policies, and we will be talking about those this evening.

I see our colleague, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT), from the Committee on Ways and Means who I think has something to say about it. We have the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS), who has some significant information to share about the impact as it has to deal with poor people. The gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) can deal with impacts on children.

We will be dealing with the economy here in the course of our discussion this evening, but I think it important to note that we have got the economy, we have not addressed it; and in fact, the proposals that have been slowly leaked out and trial balloons that have been floated on some of the President's speeches do not give me any cause for comfort as I look at the problem of a State like Oregon, which has the highest unemployment rate in the country.

Nothing that has been proposed to this point is going to do anything to put these people back to work. It is not going to deal with investments in infrastructure and cleaning up the environment that could make a huge difference tomorrow, and there is not anything that speaks to the concerns and the problems of the vast majority of working Americans. We are going to be getting into that later this evening.

Last but not least, I hope to return to a brief conversation about the environment. Certainly, we have seen dramatic events around the world that present the problems we have to global climate change in terms of the economic devastation and that assault on

human health in terms of what is happening to the environment; and sadly, sadly, this is an area that not only have we not had a series of positive initiatives that could make the world healthier, safer and more economically secure, but sadly, in the course of the last year, we have seen a series of below-the-radar assaults on the environment by this administration, which are going to have profound effects for years to come.

I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy in yielding to me, and I look forward to participating with him and our other colleagues in the course of the evening, painting the context for what the American public needs, deserves, anticipates, and contrasting that with what it appears the administration is going to do and certainly what it has done.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments. In fact, in just a moment after a couple more comments on my part, I would like to ask the gentleman to come down in the well and take my place and control the remaining time, but I did want to add a couple of things.

It is astonishing, when we think back about what happened in the 1990s, to see the agenda that the President will roll out tomorrow. What we learned from the 1990s was if we maintain our fiscal discipline, if the Federal Government works to get rid of deficits, to come roughly into balance, that is our best bet for the future. We have lost that interest. The President and the Republicans in this Congress have lost any interest in maintaining a balanced budget and getting rid of the deficits. In fact, there is an exactly opposite trend here.

We learned in the 1990s, we maintain the balance and we invest in people. We make sure we are contributing to their health care, that we are investing in job training, we are making sure people have the skills for the 21st century, common phrase. We do not hear it anymore because what is happening now is we are not investing. We have stopped increasing support for education. It is being flat funded like other domestic priorities, and it does not matter what the area is. In almost every area, we are basically cutting back on investing in people.

At the same time, we are going back to an era of huge, huge deficits, and why? Well, partly because we have had to make an investment in defense and in homeland security, but primarily because, in fact, we are having tax cut after tax cut after tax cut directed to the wealthiest people in the country. That is not what investing in people means. That is not strengthening our workforce. That is not going to strengthen our economy in the long run.

Basically, tax cuts for the wealthy in the long run simply widen the gap between the very wealthy and everyone else, do not allow us to invest in the future of the way we did during the 1990s

with the economic results that we saw in the 1990s and we can see what is happening.

The President will come here tomorrow night, and he will propose a \$674 billion tax cut, again weighted mostly to the wealthy; and I predict almost I think to a certainty that he will also say we have to make the tax cuts that were passed last year permanent, and I guarantee that he will not tell this body and he will not tell the people of this country that that in itself, making those tax cuts permanent, will cost an additional \$600 billion dollar loss of revenue.

We are going to be so deep in deficits for so long that our children and grandchildren will pay the price, and it is hard to understand the morality of borrowing from our kids, borrowing from our grandchildren, forcing them to pay interest on the national debt for decades and decades to come simply in order to satisfy a current desire for tax cuts.

I think it is wrong, and at this time I would like to yield to the gentleman from Oregon, and Mr. Speaker, ask leave that he control the remainder of the time.

THE ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOOZMAN). Under the Speaker's guidelines, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) may control the time.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy. I do think the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN) has sketched an interesting conundrum.

I mentioned the concern I have over what happened in the last year, but he raises an interesting dimension if we reflect back at what happened with previous administrations and previous Congresses 10 years ago.

Ten years ago, men and women in both parties, both the Republican and a Democratic administration, made hard choices to control spending, to not cut taxes even though it is fun, but the first President Bush worked with Congress, put forward a balanced program of some modest tax increase, some fiscal discipline in cutting. It was followed later by both Republicans and Democrats with the Clinton administration, so we got a balanced budget. We were able to turn things around. The economy was booming. Today we are turning our back on that story.

At the same time, the first President Bush, when he was involved in the Middle East with Iraq, painfully, arduously, worked and put together an international coalition of almost 40 countries of allies and some unlikely supporters dealing with that activity; and today, we are looking at a situation where the United States is not anywhere near that position and, instead, is relying on some rather aggressive rhetoric rather than the hard work in the trenches that characterized what happened with the first President Bush and the first Gulf War.

Let me, if I could, I would like to begin by recognizing some of my colleagues that are here. I know the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) has had a special interest dealing with the effects on young people and education. We appreciate her leadership and would welcome comments that she would care to give at this point.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for including me in this, my friend from Oregon, and I would like to remind Americans that one way that we as Americans define ourselves as a Nation is through the Federal budget, and right now, we have to make decisions about our values and our priorities, and we have choices: on the one hand, an unjustified war with Iraq that could cost more than \$200 billion, and I am sure it will, on top of an additional \$670 billion tax cut that primarily benefits the wealthiest Americans, or an investment in our children, an investment in their future.

We have to make these decisions. We cannot do it all because there is not enough money to cover both agendas without plunging the United States and those very same children deep into debt.

As President Bush puts forward his plans in the State of the Union address tomorrow night, I urge him, I urge him to remember that our country's future depends on today's children. Of course, since September 11 we have had to re-evaluate some of our spending priorities, but without investing in our children, we risk ills far worse than those from terrorists.

That is why the wisest investment we can make in our Nation's security is strengthening our children's lives and those of their families, and we can do this. We can do this by preventing war, first off. We must provide for real international security that has alternatives to war as its cornerstone, and we can invest in renewable energies. This will not only make for a cleaner environment. It will also help us achieve independence from fossil fuels, particularly from foreign oil.

Fossil fuels must become a source of the past. We must invest in sources of energy that will provide for the prosperity of our children, the protection of their environment and the security of their future. We must change our national energy policy by supporting conservation and renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, biomass and fuel cells.

We can invest in our future by increasing the child care option, and we must do that by ensuring that working families have access to quality child care.

□ 2015

Children must not be the first to suffer when budgets tighten. If children were our number one priority in this country, then programs to provide for their welfare would be the last programs to be slashed. Instead, we would

be clamoring to help working parents by expanding child care and after-school programs. We would be creating a world-class public education system.

We can provide quality education. We can make sure that teachers are adequately compensated for their important role in our children's lives, because we have a responsibility to do that. And we have a responsibility to fully fund programs for disadvantaged children. We can invest in our future by making health care universally available. The United States is the only industrialized country in this world in which all citizens do not have access to medical coverage. Until we have universal coverage, more than 40 million Americans, nearly 15 percent of the population, will go without. If we choose to make health care a priority, we will provide children, their parents, and America's seniors with universal coverage, including affordable prescription drugs.

While putting a universal health care plan together, we can do something immediately, and that is to increase the number of children in the Medicaid and State Children's Insurance Program, to expand SCHIPs also to include parents of eligible children and low-income pregnant families. We must also seek to provide a prescription drug benefit under Medicare. But these priorities and others that help fulfill our commitment to our families, our seniors, our veterans will only happen when we demand that they take precedence.

Excessive military spending in the past has not made us more secure. American political leaders must acknowledge the truth, that peace and security cannot be achieved through violence. We must never lose sight that real security is an educated, healthy society where everyone benefits from our Nation's abundant resources. And that is what I will remind President Bush as he outlines his agenda Tuesday night. The future of our Nation belongs to our children.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman again for including me in this Special Order.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman's tireless efforts on behalf of children in our society, and focusing our attention and making sure that people on this floor have this constantly brought to their attention. It is really deeply appreciated.

Ms. WOOLSEY. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn to my colleague, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO), a gentleman who has been involved with some tough budget times as a local official and has been involved with a series of schemes here in Congress, and who has never been shy about sharing his opinions about what the appropriate approach should be from his perspective.

I appreciate the gentleman being here this evening, and I am pleased to yield to him now.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Oregon for leading us in this Special Order tonight to discuss the real problems confronting our Nation, which will get, we all fear, short shrift tomorrow night.

The State of the Union is not sound. Millions of Americans and their families are not secure in their homes, not because of some huge new crime wave, not because of the threat of Saddam Hussein or any external threat to our Nation, but because of the deep recession into which our country is falling.

My State has the highest unemployment rate in the Union. We have been dueling with Washington State to be number one or number two for more than a year. There is chronic unemployment, but it is not isolated to our States, it is all across the Nation. We have the highest unemployment rate in more than a decade. We have the most chronic unemployment we have seen in a quarter of a century in terms of the length of time people are out of work before they can find gainful employment.

Tens of thousands of Americans have already extended their so-called extended Federal benefits, and the President has refused to give an additional extension, although there is a huge surplus of taxes that have been paid by businesses and workers sitting in the Unemployment Trust Fund. The President wants to hold onto it to spend for other things, like tax breaks for the wealthy.

Most folks may not have noticed, but the United States Government's Pension Benefit Guaranty Fund is broke. It spent its entire reserves in the last year, and there is a whole huge new wave of corporate bankruptcy coming, with people's pensions at risk, and there is no more money in that fund. But what does the President have to say about this? Well, precious little. He is going to spend the entire Social Security surplus this year on tax breaks and other functions that do not relate to Social Security.

Our States are going bankrupt. They are cutting services; slashing services. Now, the President, I think, will give some nod tomorrow night with his purported economic stimulus plan, but if we look at the plan, the centerpiece is taking away that horrible burden of taxes on dividends on a select group of stocks that pay dividends with the idea of doing away with double taxation. Well, many of the corporations that pay dividends do not pay any Federal income taxes. They have found the loopholes; they are incorporated in Bermuda. All those things the President supports and will not do anything about. So there is no double taxation issue.

Who does the money go to? For the average Oregonian, at \$32,000 a year, they will get \$40. Thank you, Mr. President. Now, the average millionaire will get \$45,000. Now, there are no credible economists who say that this has anything to do with an economic stimulus,

but this is the most expensive part of and the centerpiece of the President's so-called economic stimulus plan to try to put people back to work. Even Alan Greenspan, who is perpetually apologizing for these types of policies, says he really does not think it will do anything to put people back to work or stimulate the economy, and it would be just as good to not do it at all.

When the President was a candidate and we had a booming economy and a surplus, his answer as a candidate was tax cuts. Then when we had a slowing economy and a surplus, his answer was tax cuts. Now we have a devastated economy falling deeper and deeper into recession, and his answer is tax cuts, for a select few.

There are better alternatives. Some of those will be discussed here on the floor tonight. I have discussed those at other times, and I do not have time to go into it now, but there are better alternatives to really invest in this country and its people and put people back to work.

Finally, to the war. Osama bin Laden, who was going to be brought back dead or alive, is alive and is plotting further attacks on the United States. Afghanistan, which was going to be made into a country that would recover and not be made a safe haven for terrorists, has now begun to set up terrorist training camps again. The Axis of Evil, Korea, is building more nuclear weapons, they already have them, and more long-range missiles that can hit the United States. Iran is close to having nuclear weapons. And yet the President and his staff are focused on Saddam Hussein and the horrible threat he poses.

Actually, Rumsfeld, Cheney, Wolfowitz, and all those people came into office with President Bush II wanting to refight the first war. This has nothing to do with 9-11 or any purported ties to terrorists. This is old business, an old agenda by old men, none of whom has ever fought in a war or ever worn a uniform and fought in anger.

So I would hope that the President's State of the Union will not fulfill all of these dire predictions that I have mentioned, but I fear it will. Tax cuts for the wealthy and a war are a nostrum for what fails our Nation and the problems that are confronting us.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's passion and insights.

Another colleague from the Pacific Northwest, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT), has served on the Committee on Ways and Means arm-wrestling with these proposals for a number of years and has particular expertise dealing with health care and the economic revitalization through tax policy.

If the gentleman would be interested in sharing a little of his insights with us in terms of what we can look forward to and what we should look forward to instead.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Well, I want to thank the gentleman from Oregon for yielding to me.

I wish that tomorrow night we were going to have a speech like John Kennedy gave in 1961, when he came and said, we are going to go to the moon. He gave the American people a goal. He gave them hope. He gave them a vision of what they could be as a country. Unfortunately, I am sitting here preparing myself to come tomorrow and not hear any of that.

I wish that the President were going to say tomorrow, when he stands up here behind me, that in 10 years the United States is going to be off their oil addiction; that they are going to break the oil addiction that is killing us. They are going to do the things necessary to get off an addiction. The United States is just like somebody who is on heroin or cocaine in terms of oil. We use oil in tremendous amounts, although we have scarcely any of it left in our own country. The President wants to drill everywhere in sight, but we still are not going to get enough oil from the United States. So we are forced to get our oil from Venezuela and from Nigeria and from the Middle East, and it is not necessary for this addiction to continue.

If the President of the United States would set a goal tomorrow night for us to move to oil independence in the world and begin to push solar and wind and hydrogen cells as a way of solving our transportation problems and the energy needs of this society, we could do it. San Francisco has already started to move. They got burned by Enron, so San Francisco said, this is never going to happen again to us, and they passed a \$100 million bond issue, and they are putting solar panels on every public building in San Francisco.

Now, if the President of the United States said that we are going to do it all over the country, we would absolutely change our relationship to the Middle East. This misbegotten proposal to go to war to get 20 percent of the world's oil reserves from Iraq would be irrelevant. They could do it in San Francisco, yet our President cannot say let us do it in the whole country.

California, every single day, has fall-out of the sky seven times the energy they use in California. All they have to do is catch it and turn it into electrical energy, and they can do what needs to be done. Now, that is true in many parts of the United States. Even in my State of Washington there are areas where this makes good sense.

Now, let us talk about hydrogen cells. People say we are talking about something that is way, way, way out there somewhere. Most people do not realize Honda and Toyota delivered to the Los Angeles mayor hydrogen cell cars within the last 2 months and said, we want you to use these over here and see how they work and what the problems are. The Japanese are, once again, miles ahead of us. They did it with little cars, then they did it with hybrids,

and now they are doing it with hydrogen cells. But our President says, no, we have to stick with that oil, and we have to put it in the gasoline engines, and we have to do the same old thing.

Now, as a psychiatrist, one of the things I learned was that people who do the same thing over and over again expecting a different result, that is really a sign of sickness. We have been doing this for 100 years. We have been putting gasoline in cars and sending up clouds of pollution, which is the second thing the President could be dealing with. If he gave us this goal of energy independence, he would stop the process of us polluting the air and destroying the ozone and global warming.

All you have to see is pictures of glaciers all over this country and north of this country that have been melted by the global warming. It is absolutely without question going on. Yet our President says, no, we cannot have anything to do with that Kyoto Accord, because that would mean we would have to stop using our oil. But I wish the President were coming tomorrow to say to us that we are going to get off that because we are going to do something about the energy and how we are killing the environment.

□ 2030

Mr. Speaker, I heard a story on NPR recently which disturbed me, having been a child psychiatrist for a number of years. Every child born in this century has a 100 percent chance of getting skin cancer if they are not protected because of the destruction of the ozone level; they are being subjected to rays of the sun that is going to make them develop skin cancer.

The President of the United States could do all of this if he could simply say we are not going to go to war to get 20 percent of the world's oil reserves; we are going to go in another direction. We are going to change the direction of this country. Unfortunately, the President of the United States is going to stand up on the podium and beat the war drum for an hour and tell us we must go after Saddam Hussein, and he has never made it clear what we are going for, but it is really about oil.

What makes me sad about what is going to happen tomorrow night is that the American people are going to listen to the speech and think that their only solution is to take Saddam Hussein out; and if we do that, we are going to be really safe. All of the security will be settled; we will be safe forever.

Mr. Speaker, does anybody really think that the American public is going to believe that? I do not. I wish the President would come tomorrow and talk about energy independence.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I think it is interesting to consider what would have happened if such a challenge had been made last year, energy independence, for instance, instead of spending up to \$230 billion on national missile defense. We have already put

an \$8 billion downpayment this year. We are starting work in Alaska which, ironically, is something that is not going to make this country safe from terrorist attacks. If people in North Korea actually have a nuclear device, we are as vulnerable to somebody bringing a motor boat into the Puget Sound, into San Francisco Bay, into New York Harbor.

Instead of moving forward with a challenge like the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) talked about, instead this last year has been characterized by a systematic assault on the environment.

There was a classic cartoon by Gary Trudeau in "Doonesbury" in the Sunday paper which appeared around the country. The text of it that builds the momentum is "For instance, Mr. President, we've produced new rules to speed up logging in national forests, rolled back protections of 58 million acres from roads and developments, eased pollution controls for power plants and factories, rejected new fuel-efficiency standards, sped up permit-granting for power companies, lifted a ban on snowmobiles in parks, proposed 51,000 new natural gas wells, removed limits on coal producers for dumping mountain-top fill in streams, reduced EPA fines of polluters by 64 percent, opened up Padre Island to drilling, halted funding for several Superfund sites, replaced scientists who don't support our views, rejected the Kyoto Global Warming treaty, and much, much more!" Gary is not making this up. This is all part of the environmental legacy of this administration in the course of the last year.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS), the only librarian in Congress and a member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce who has been dealing with questions of poverty, education, and how we get our communities rolling again.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I make an appeal to the President that he lead us in the most profound and comprehensive way and give us hope in his State of the Union address.

At the beginning of this 108th Congress, it is important that we take note of a very important report recently released by the Federal Reserve. The study focuses on consumer finances, and is issued once every 3 years. Among the definitive items in this comprehensive statement is a report that the median net worth for our white population rose by 20 percent to \$120,900 while the median net worth for minorities fell over the last 3-year period by 4.5 percent to \$17,000. Consider the contrast of \$120,900 versus \$17,000. It is a portrait of two economies. It is a portrait of two societies. In the midst of a period of great prosperity, at least 2 of those years we were in a period of great prosperity, just before the economic slow down, minorities were existing with a standard of living close to that of the third world.

In the year 2003 this is the state of the Union for a population that can be no less than one-half of the total. I have not been able to review the report closely and find out what their definition of minority is, but I will do that. But I am certain if minority means all of the groupings that I know as minority, we are talking about more than half the population. I intend to review the report in more detail and see what this category of minority means.

While we casually speak of the expenditure of as much as \$200 billion for a possible war against Iraq, a large portion of our population is sinking deeper into poverty. A war against poverty should be our first priority because this economy, which is sinking into a recession, will cause more hardships if we do not address the war against poverty.

In the State of the Union we hope to hear that there is support for an increase in the minimum wage. We have been hearing about that for several years, and it is still locked into \$5.15. Even if we go to work every day 40 hours a week, Americans will not get out of poverty on that kind of minimum wage.

I hope the State of the Union will talk about job training and employment for mothers being pushed off welfare. It is premature to claim that we have solved the welfare problem by giving people jobs with dignity instead of a handout. There are no jobs with dignity that also pay decent wages out there, otherwise we would not have a 4.5 percent decline among poor people in terms of net worth.

For workers who have never been on welfare, we want to provide jobs and job training, and we need revenue sharing for cities and States because large numbers of municipal and State workers who have decent jobs now are in danger of being laid off and losing their jobs, and that is a further decline into poverty. We need funding for necessary capital projects like school construction which provide real jobs, good jobs, and keep our population working.

We hope and we pray that the vital standard of living issues that we are talking about here will be addressed in the State of the Union address. It is not the war against Iraq that should have priority; it is the war against poverty and the war to maintain a decent standard of living for all of our population that ought to be given a priority in the State of the Union address.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's comments and focusing on what we could be doing, what we should be doing, as opposed to what it appears that the President is focusing on, an economic stimulus package that will create less than 200,000 jobs, which is only 10 percent of the jobs we have already lost in the last year, that will provide the top 1 percent of the taxpayers with 40 percent of the benefits, and will increase the deficit by more than \$900 billion.

Mr. Speaker, I yield next to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), who is

an experienced legislator with an impressive victory which brought him to this Chamber, and a Member who has impressed not only his constituents in Ohio, but also Members here in Washington with the way the gentleman has hit the ground running.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to be here and honored to be here with such a fine group of gentlemen who have spoken so eloquently on the issues that need to be addressed in this country.

Let me touch base on what the gentleman from Washington stated about having a goal and a vision. That is what we all look for when we listen to the State of the Union, and I hope tomorrow we have an opportunity to hear the President share his vision for some energy independence in this country.

Mr. Speaker, tonight I rise to represent the people of the 17th Congressional District in Ohio, the good folks back at home, who I think want solutions, not just rhetoric. Whether it is talking about prescription drugs and seniors really having a need, where they are moving in with their children, their grandchildren, they are making the choice between food and drugs in the 17th District in Ohio, but even industries in the 17th District of Ohio want a meaningful prescription drug plan. We can do this, and I believe we should do this.

The gentleman from New York touched upon education and the Leave No Child Behind Act was supposed to be the answer to all of our problems; but now it seems that the only thing that has been left behind is the money to actually fund the program. I think when we are talking about economic development and salvaging our economy, the best investment we can make is into education.

American workers all over the country, but especially in the 17th Congressional District are also suffering, whether it is unemployment benefits or whatnot, and the President has an economic stimulus package that really is not going to stimulate the economy. That again has been touched upon here tonight. A stimulus package, money invested into a stimulus package, should first stimulate; and second, the money should be spent in the first year.

The President's proposal spends only 15 percent of the money in the first year. That is not a stimulus package; that is a tax reform package. And I think we need to begin to determine if we want to stimulate the economy, the best thing we can do is if we are going to give tax cuts, give them to low- and middle-income people who are actually going to go out and spend the money. The wealthy people will save their money. And with all of the talk of war, we can give them all of the money back they want, they are not going to invest it in an environment where we keep talking about war.

Another investment which I think would stimulate the economy, which

economists have said time and time again, is investments in the infrastructure. For every billion dollars we invest in infrastructure, we create 42,000 jobs. That is a real economic stimulus, and I hope the President will talk a little bit about the Democrats' stimulus package that we have offered.

Finally, I would like to speak about homeland security and how it fits into a stimulus package. If we really want a secure homeland, we need to talk about providing police, providing fire protection, and hazardous material funding to those in the inner cities. Those people have a right as much as everyone else in this country to have a safe, secure homeland, and that is what some funding should be spent on.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the President understands that our Nation really and truly can only be strong if the poorest and the most vulnerable and the workers of this country are strong. That is what we hope to hear tomorrow night.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman joining us and the gentleman's focus on the plight of prescription drug coverage for our senior citizens. It continues to be, I think, an outrage and a shame that poor American senior citizens pay the highest prescription drug prices in the world. It is in this context that we are moving forward dealing with the economy, with the weakest economic growth in 50 years, over 2 million private sector jobs eliminated since this administration started, 2 million more employees out of work, the median household income being down, and the inequality gaps growing, and States facing huge deficits and having to cut programs. Then we are given an economic program on the Federal level which will actually reduce State revenues for the majority of States and not meaningfully deal with the problems that our States are facing.

I am hopeful that this Congress at least will respond to the efforts of the Democratic minority here in the House to make sure that we fully fund our commitments to State and local governments, local governments being the first line of defense against terrorist acts here at home.

□ 2045

Promises to local governments have been left unfulfilled.

I am pleased to turn to the gentleman from California (Mr. HONDA), my colleague who has finished a distinguished career in the California State Assembly and who is now adding his voice here in our Nation's Capital dealing with the needs of the people of California and around the country.

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman very much for yielding, and I appreciate the introduction and the work that he is doing today and this evening.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the state of our Union, and let us talk plainly on what is going on today.

Today 8.6 million Americans are looking for work, but unable to find it. In my district of Santa Clara County alone, over 80,000 Americans are unemployed. Since President Bush took office, 1.7 million jobs have been lost.

Today too many of our Nation's schools are crumbling and are crowded. The average public school in America is 42 years old. In California alone, 87 percent of schools report a need to upgrade their buildings and other repairs that they need.

Today 40 million Americans do not have health insurance; 7.2 million of them are children. While these numbers dropped in 1999 and the year 2000, they rose by 1.4 million in 2001.

Today serious crime is up 2.1 percent, the first increase in 10 years.

Today 1.3 million more Americans are below the poverty line, the first increase since 1993. Requests for emergency shelter have increased by 19 percent, the largest annual increase in the demand for homeless shelter since 1990.

Mr. Speaker, it is thus no surprise that 67 percent of Americans are worried about the economy. While the war against terrorism remains a major priority, it cannot replace our commitment to meeting our Nation's other domestic priorities.

Unfortunately, the Bush administration's economic stimulus plan does little to stimulate the economy now. Instead, it does too much to weaken our economic future, producing deficits of over \$1 trillion. The centerpiece of the President's plan, the elimination of taxes on dividend income, will do little to help working families and small business, which are the backbone of the American economy. In contrast, Democrats have put forward an effective, fast-acting stimulus plan that would create 1 million jobs this year.

Mr. Speaker, while the President continues to pitch his flawed economic plan and continues to downplay the state of our economy, Democrats will continue to focus on a swift economic recovery and fight to put education and health care ahead of unfair large, huge tax cuts.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, and I appreciate his focusing on the program that has been advanced by the Democrats in the House of Representatives. It is an immediate economic stimulus plan that will create 1 million jobs this year. It would put money and purchasing power in the hands of consumers, provide relief to 3 million laid-off workers. The House Democratic plan proposes a \$300 tax rebate now for every working taxpayer, tax breaks to help small businesses and encourage business investment, and a 26-week extension of unemployment insurance. It would provide money to the States to deal with their fiscal crises, dealing with homeland security, transportation, and health care costs. All told, this Democratic plan which would put more on the table this year would cost far less than that of the President. We look

forward to being able to carry this debate forward in the aftermath of this important week here in Washington, D.C.

I appreciate the courtesy, Mr. Speaker, of being able to be here on the floor this evening.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. BECERRA (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.

Mr. BOSWELL (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of official business.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today and the balance of the week on account of family reasons.

Mr. SHAW (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today and the balance of the week on account of personal reasons.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. JOHN) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. STRICKLAND, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WATSON, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. FOLEY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. FOLEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. WHITFIELD, for 5 minutes, today.

SENATE BILLS REFERRED

Bills of the Senate of the following titles were taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 121. An act to enhance the operation of the AMBER Alert communications network in order to facilitate the recovery of abducted children, to provide for enhanced notification on highways of alerts and information on such children, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary in addition to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

S. 141. An act to improve the calculation of the Federal subsidy rate with respect to certain small business loans, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Budget in addition to the Committee on Small Business for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.