

out now when they need it the most, we will reap a huge return in our investment.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. ALEXANDER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. ALEXANDER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

AMERICA'S TRADE DEFICIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, the Commerce Department has just reported the latest economic news and the trade deficit figures, and the story is not good. America's trade deficit in March surged sharply, reaching the second highest monthly deficit in history. This means thousands more lost jobs. This chart illustrates the increasing number of jobs we are losing every year due to the imbalance of our trade accounts.

In March, exports exceeded imports by over \$43.5 billion, just that month, and the main culprit was oil. To feed our addiction to oil, American consumers paid out in March \$9.1 billion alone for imported petroleum. Do people really understand what is happening? We are transferring wealth out of the United States and into foreign hands. For every dollar of imported petroleum, we are giving Saudi Arabia, 7½ cents; Mexico, 6½ cents; Canada, 6½ cents; Venezuela, 6½ cents; and Nigeria, 2½ cents for every single gallon of gasoline we use. In a year, this results in billions of our dollars being transferred in income to dictatorships. Over a decade we are talking about trillions of dollars of wealth transferred abroad.

As my colleagues can see, much of this money is going to prop up corrupt oil regimes, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Nigeria, Colombia. Just imagine if America achieved energy independence here at home instead of sending \$9.1 billion more out of America in March. We would be investing \$9.1 billion in the economic future of our own communities, every single month, in new jobs, new fuels, new energy technologies right here at home.

Again, in this Congress I am the sponsor of the Bioenergy Independence Act, which currently has 16 cosponsors representing 10 different States. Despite all the events of recent months, the Bush administration has no policy for weaning America from its dangerous and growing dependence on foreign oil. Quite the opposite. The Bush-Cheney administration is of the oil companies, by the oil companies and for the oil companies. The oil companies have eliminated the middleman and put their own people in the Department of the Interior, in the Department of Energy, and, indeed, in the

Vice President's residence and the White House.

The Biofuels Energy Independence Act of 2003 would authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to make and guarantee loans for biofuel production, distribution, development and storage. The goal of my legislation is energy independence for America. Energy independence is essential for our economic future and our national security.

I do not want to depend on unstable foreign sources of energy. We should use our own domestic sources. The power is growing in the fields of Iowa, Illinois, Ohio, coast to coast, and farmers need income from the market, not from the government.

I do not want to support dictatorships, and I know the American people do not either. No longer will we depend on corrupt foreign powers such as the House of Saud or the Obasanjo administration in Nigeria or Chavez in Venezuela. Instead, we will empower our own local communities and revitalize our agriculture economy, which is on life support now in the form of government subsidies.

At the same time, we will build a stronger economy. From coast to coast, we will create American jobs and American businesses for American companies, used by American consumers, and we will lower this job-killing trade deficit which gets worse every month and the job deficit it is creating coast to coast.

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After the trade numbers came out yesterday, the chief economist at Wells Fargo said this: "I don't know how long we can maintain this type of red ink year after year decade after decade without causing substantial damage to the dollar and our economy." Many of us in the House have been talking for years about the dangers of this growing trade deficit.

We are quickly approaching the moment in history when foreign interests own half the outstanding debt of our country, and we now pay them over \$400 billion a year in interest: the leading country, China, followed by Japan, followed by Saudi Arabia. \$400 billion a year in interest to them every year is as much as we spend on the Department of Defense. It is huge. Imagine if we could help give that money to the State of California, which is in bankruptcy, the State of Ohio, all the States in our Union that are so short on funds.

Achieving energy independence by relying on homegrown sources of energy will help America avoid the danger that an ever-increasing trade deficit poses to America's economy and our future.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHOCOLA). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DAVIS of Alabama addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TEXAS LEGISLATURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, in the last 2 days, many Americans have been intrigued by the story of 51 Texas legislators breaking a quorum in the Texas legislature by traveling to Ardmore, Oklahoma. Many may wonder why those legislators, whom I consider profiles in courage, would take such an extraordinarily drastic step. People such as Representative Pete Laney, who several years ago, when President Bush first learned that he would be the President-elect to the United States, was the Speaker of the Texas House, the Democrat that then President-elect Bush asked to introduce him to the Nation. He was a bipartisan Speaker, a great Speaker of the House. Mr. Laney, along with 50 others, are in Ardmore, Oklahoma.

I think the issue, to a large degree, revolves around the principle of congressional redistricting. For those that do not understand that process, once every decade, after a census is taken, each State must go back through its legislature and redraw congressional district lines so we have equal populations in districts across the country. In 2001, the Texas legislature failed to do so. So as is the case, the Federal courts step in and draw those districts.

Let me mention the facts. Fact number one: prior to this year, no legislature in the last 50 years in America has redistricted more than once in a decade unless ordered to do so by the Federal courts.

Fact number two: the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that the Texas congressional districts, drawn just 2 years ago, are, in fact, constitutional. The fact is those districts are fair. The Republican ticket in Texas in this last election carried 20 of those 32 congressional districts. No one can argue that is not being fair to Texas Republicans.

Fact number three: Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott, a Republican, recently gave a report to the legislature saying it is not legally necessary to do congressional redistricting for the second time in 2 years because the law simply does not require it.

Fact number four: Why are we even dealing with this push for congressional redistricting for the second time in 2 years in Texas? Well, our majority leader in the United States House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), said it very succinctly. He said, "I am majority leader and I want more seats." Forget the fact that the U.S. Supreme Court said the present seats are constitutional. Forget the fact that no legislature in 50 years has redistricted twice without a court order to