

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

do so. Forget the fact that 20 out of 32 districts of our congressional districts were carried by the Republican ticket. Mr. DELAY said, "I am majority leader. I want more seats."

Fact number five: the Speaker of the Texas House, now Mr. Tom Craddick, has violated the fundamental right, in my opinion, of Texas Republicans, Democrats, independents, and all of our citizens to have an effective voice in determining the future of their communities, their congressional districts.

Why do I say that? Well, to begin with, the only sham hearings that they had basically began at 9 p.m. one night, on a Friday night a couple of weeks ago, went through the night, until 6:30 a.m. the next morning. The fact was that during that time at the Texas capital many of the doors were shut. So in the dark of night, behind locked doors in the Texas capital, we had the hearing to give the people of Texas a voice on what their map should be. And the fact is the maps the Republican leadership laid out at that time in Austin were not even the maps that were seriously being considered to pass through the Texas legislature into law just a few weeks later.

That brings us up to Mother's Day. Last Sunday, when most Texas families, myself included, were honoring our mothers and spending time with our families, that was not the agenda of Mr. DELAY, Mr. Craddick and their forces. They had a different agenda on Mother's Day. They were finishing the final touches of a map that no one in Texas had seen: no mayors, no city council members, no State legislators, perhaps with an exception of one or two Republicans, and no business leaders. No one had seen this map.

That map showed up for the first time on Mother's Day afternoon, this past Sunday, on the Texas legislative Web site. And guess what Mr. DELAY and Mr. Craddick's plan was? It was a slick one. I give them credit for that. It was to force that map through the Texas House of Representatives starting at 10 a.m. the next morning, this past Monday morning, the day after Mother's Day.

Thank goodness for those 51 legislators who stood up and stopped the Texas Mother's Day massacre plan. They stood up for the voice of all Texans, and I salute them.

"COLUMBIA" SHUTTLE DEBRIS COLLECTION EFFORT

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

Mr. TURNER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Joint Resolution 222, commending those individuals who contributed to the debris collection effort following the Space Shuttle *Columbia* accident.

Mr. Speaker, on February 1 of 2003 the peaceful skies over my district in east Texas were shaken by the last mo-

ments of the fateful mission of the Space Shuttle *Columbia*. The people of east Texas looked up and saw a shower fall from the heavens on a clear blue sky morning. Once again we had lost our sons and daughters on the new frontiers of space. The entire Nation grieved the loss of seven brave astronauts: Commander Rick Husband, Pilot William McCool, Specialists Mike Anderson, Kalpana Chawla, David Brown, Laurel Clark, and Ilan Ramon.

In east Texas, mourning our loss also came with a mission, a heartfelt commitment to recover the debris of the shuttle and the remains of her crew. The volunteer firefighters, police and sheriffs offices acted with speed and professionalism to secure the areas where the fallen craft had come to rest.

As the enormity of the task unfolded, men and women in east Texas volunteered to watch over the remains of the *Columbia*, knowing that the safety of future shuttle missions depended on gathering evidence to determine the cause of this tragedy. Thousands of volunteers worked in canteens manned by the Salvation Army, local churches, and charities supplying the workers with food and drink donated by local businesses.

Across the Nation, and especially in east Texas, compassionate citizens offered prayers and support and held memorial services and vigils. During the 3 months following February 1, over 14,800 personnel from 133 Federal, State, and local agencies, and thousands of ordinary citizens volunteered, spending countless hours searching over 500,000 acres and recovering over 65,000 pieces of the shuttle.

Two men, Charles Krenek of Lufkin, Texas, and Jules F. "Buzz" Mier, Jr. of Arizona, lost their lives when their recovery helicopter crashed in the forest of San Augustine County. Their names may not be recorded in the history books along with the astronauts, but their service to our country must not be forgotten.

I am proud of our east Texans who worked day and night in the recovery effort. Their commitment and dedication to carrying out their task with the dignity and respect the astronauts and their families deserved was an inspiration to all Americans.

In the wake of the tragedy, east Texans responded with the best our Nation has to offer; and I know our entire country, as well as the families of those so closely affected by this tragedy, join us today in expressing our gratitude and appreciation to the thousands who joined in the recovery of the *Columbia*. A grateful Nation will always remember.

TEXAS LEGISLATURE

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

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague and good friend,

the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BARTON), was here a few minutes earlier. I was hoping to have a good exchange on either his time or my time on the issue of redistricting.

I know a lot of people nationwide, maybe even in Texas, wonder why it is such a big issue. I guess to start with this is the first time in 50 years that we know of, in at least 50 years, that there has been a reopening of redistricting based simply on partisan purposes after the census has come out. Typically, in my experience in the Texas legislature, in 1981 as a State legislator and in 1991 as a State Senator, we did not want restricting bills on the floor of the Senate or the House because it was so divisive. But again, here in 2003, we are getting ready to do it again in Texas.

This is setting a standard not only for Texas but for the Nation that I think we should take a step back and look at. I think it is wrong. Again, whether it is Democrats or Republicans doing it, I think it is wrong. It just happens that in Texas it is the Republicans that are reopening this in 2003. We could see the same things happening in States that are controlled by Democrats. I do not think it is good public policy.

The problem we have, particularly with what has happened in the State capital, is that there were no public hearings outside our State capital. In 1981 and 1991 in Texas we had redistricting hearings all over the State. I participated in them, particularly in 1991 as a State Senator because I was on the subcommittee of the committee of the whole of the State Senate to hear that testimony outside of the State capital; to hear from people in the neighborhoods who could not go to Austin. That helped to draw a plan, which I think has caused the problem with the one they are considering now and why we are seeing 53 members of the Texas House leave the State to break the quorum.

This plan divides communities, it divides an urban area in Harris County, City of Houston, and it spreads it almost throughout the State. It runs the district from Houston to Austin and Houston to east Texas, from Houston to Beaumont, Port Arthur. And maybe if they would have had these public hearings, they would have realized that you do not split those communities.

But I am here in support of those 50-plus Democratic members of the Texas House who I consider Texas heroes who have put their political lives on the line to ensure that the rights of all Texans remain intact. I want to personally thank the State representatives in my area, Rick Noriega, Jessica Farrar, Joe Moreno, Senfronia Thompson, and Kevin Bailey, along with many other State representatives, Pete Gallego from west Texas, Richard Raymond from south Texas, and too many that we cannot name here in 5 minutes.

Let me talk a little about the tradition of breaking a quorum in a legislative body. In Congress it is something