

And then we do things that breaks the camel's back. Just a few days ago, I wrote a letter to the Department of Labor when they were closing the door on comments about their overtime regulation that would cut into the overtime of hard-working Americans. When I said to my constituents, Can you believe it, that they are going to give you time off, that you do not know when you will get the time off, instead of overtime?," they were outraged. We put an amendment on the floor to prevent that. Lo and behold, it was defeated.

This Labor-HHS bill is absolutely the worst, Mr. Speaker. We needed to vote it down. We did not vote it down. We need to throw it out and start working for the American people.

The unemployment rate jumped to 6.4 percent in June—highest since April 1994. The 6.4 percent unemployment rate is the highest unemployment rate since April 1994—nine years ago. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics data released this morning, the national unemployment rate jumped to 6.4 percent in June from 6.1 percent in May. The 0.3 percentage point jump was the largest month-to-month rise since the September 11th terrorist attack.

The unemployment rate was 6.8% in Texas for May 2003—that is higher than the national average. The Number of Unemployed Has Now Reached 9.4 Million. Similarly, the number of unemployed rose to 9.4 million in June from 9.0 million in May. Just in the last three months, the number of unemployed has shot up by 913,000. Furthermore, 9.4 million is an increase of 59 percent in the number of unemployed since January 2001.

African Americans have cause for real concern because the African American unemployment rate for June 2003 is 11.8%, up from 10.8% in May 2003. There are now 1,971,000 unemployed African Americans.

Since President Bush was inaugurated in January 2001, the economy has lost a total of 3.1 million private-sector jobs—with the economy shedding another 31,000 private-sector jobs in June. Indeed, since the beginning of the year, the economy has shed an additional 307,000 private-sector jobs. It is truly astonishing that more than two years after the recession began in March 2001, the economy is still losing jobs.

No President since World War II has seen job losses during his tenure. President Bush seems destined to break this record. More than halfway through his term, he has lost more than 88,000 jobs per month. The poor economy under the Bush Administration has had a particularly devastating impact on the Nation's manufacturing sector—a sector that historically has provided an important underpinning for our economy. In June itself, the economy lost an additional 56,000 manufacturing jobs. Indeed, overall, 2.4 million of the net loss of 3.1 million private-sector jobs since January 2001 have been in the manufacturing sector—a staggering statistic.

The unemployment rate for African Americans jumped to 11.8 percent in June—up from 10.8 in May, and significantly higher than the 8.2 percent rate back in January 2001. The unemployment rate for Hispanics stood at 8.4 percent in June—similar to the 8.2 percent in May but significantly higher than the 7.5 per-

cent in April. Back in January 2001, the Hispanic unemployment rate was 5.9 percent.

In June, the number of those unemployed for more than 26 weeks was 2.0 million—up by 106,000 from May. The figure of 2.0 million is more than triple the number of Americans unemployed for more than 26 weeks in January 2001—when it stood at 648,000.

Despite the fact that the recession began more than two years ago, the job market remains remarkably weak. The average length of a job search is now 19.8 weeks—about five months. Indeed, the average unemployed worker has applied for 29 different jobs. It is estimated that there are more than three unemployed workers for every available job. Back in January 2001, the average length of a job search was 12.6 weeks.

In January 2003, House Democrats unveiled a responsible economic plan for creating jobs and jumpstarting the economy. According to economists, the Democratic package would have created more than 1 million jobs in 2003, without increasing the long-term deficit—by putting money and purchasing power in the hands of consumers, giving tax breaks to small businesses and encouraging business investment, and providing adequate help to cash-strapped states in order to avoid tax increases and service cutbacks at the state level. Unfortunately, the GOP-controlled Congress ignored the Democratic plan and instead enacted a fiscally irresponsible \$350 billion tax cut package targeted to the wealthiest taxpayers—a package that will create enormous long-term deficits, not jobs. Furthermore, the GOP tax cuts will starve key investments to promote economic growth, such as education and infrastructure, and will leave middle-class taxpayers paying a greater share of all taxes.

MILITARY DEATH GRATUITY IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2003

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOOZMAN). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, to my left are photographs of just a few of the men and women that were killed in Iraq and Afghanistan in the last year and a half. And the reason I came to the floor is because we passed the House in a very bipartisan way legislation to bring some tax relief to our men and women in uniform, and I came to the floor because the other body has not taken this legislation up.

I happen to have a bill, H.R. 693, it is called the Military Death Gratuity Improvement Act of 2003. A lot of people do not know this throughout this country, but every time a man or woman in uniform, whether it is wartime or non-wartime, is killed, the family gets what is called a death gratuity. Quite frankly it is not enough, but it is \$6,000 that is given to the family. In 1991 they raised the death gratuity from \$3,000 to \$6,000, but they failed to take the tax off \$3,000. So therefore at the end of the year the family who has lost a loved one fighting for freedom to protect us and this great Nation will probably get a tax bill from the IRS. And I must say, Mr. Speaker, I think it is abso-

lutely unacceptable that this Congress would allow the family of a deceased man or woman in uniform who has died fighting for this country to get a bill from Uncle Sam saying they owe a tax on a small amount of money, \$6,000.

So I wanted to come to the floor tonight because I have three bases in my district, Camp Lejeune Marine Base and Cherry Point Marine Station and also Seymour Johnson Air Force Base; and I have a great affection for our men and women in uniform, all services, not just those that I named, the Marines and Air Force, but all. And, again, I think that as we debate these large issues here in Washington, and they are very important issues no matter which side of the political aisle one is on, the least we can do is to take this tax off for the family who has lost a loved one fighting for freedom in Iraq, fighting in Operation Enduring Freedom, and I just hope that the other body, Mr. Speaker, very soon will pass this legislation, not just the bill I put in, which is part of a bigger package, but we need to make sure that in the year 2004 when the families who have lost loved ones receive their tax bill that they are not going to see a tax on the death gratuity that was given to family.

So, Mr. Speaker, I must say as I begin to close that my staff, and I want to compliment my staff, we have a photograph outside my office of everyone that has died in this fight for freedom in Operation Freedom in Iraq and also those that were killed in Afghanistan. So I hope, and again I am being repetitious but I do not apologize for it, that the Senate will do their job and make sure that the family that receives not only the notice that their son or daughter has given their life for this great Nation but also to make sure that at the end of the year that family does not receive a notice from Uncle Sam that they owe a tax on \$6,000.

So, Mr. Speaker, I close the way I do all over my district. I ask God to please bless the men and women in uniform. I ask God to please bless the families of those who have men and women in uniform. And I ask God to please in his loving arms hold the families who have lost loved ones dying for freedom, and I ask God to please bless the House and Senate that we will do what is right in the eyes of God. I ask God to bless the President, that he will have the strength and the wisdom to lead this great Nation. And I ask three times, God, please, God, please, God, please continue to bless America.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the most important issue of prescription drug cost. As a former nurse,

I am committed to making sure that seniors have the drugs they need to stay healthy without having to make painful choices between buying groceries or paying rent or getting prescriptions filled or even paying their utility bills.

As the Medicare issue continues to be debated in Congress, I have always supported what is best that I felt for working people of America. I understand that Medicare provides for so many who have provided so much to our Nation and continue to do so, and I believe sincerely that Medicare should have a provision to work with the pharmaceutical companies, to get discounts just as the discounts are received prior to the senior citizens turning 65.

In a study conducted nationwide, Advance PCS found that the average person over 65 fills about 20 prescriptions per year compared to about three per year for a person in their 20s. This study shows that average cost per prescription for a person in his or her late 60s is about 45 percent higher than the average cost per prescription for a person in their 20s. Brandeis University reported that the percentage of elderly spending more than \$3,000 annually on medication more than doubled from 1997 to 1999, from 3.7 percent to 8.6 percent. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the over-65 population will increase by an average of 304,400 people each year between 2000 and 2005. According to Families USA, the average cost per prescription for seniors has already risen during that time in the past 8 years by 48 percent.

It is for these reasons that we must address the high cost of prescription drugs for our seniors. Unfortunately, legislation recently passed in this House does not entitle seniors to any particular drug benefit plan. Instead, the Republican-backed Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act of 2003 provides only a standard benefit and is merely a suggestion for what private plans might offer. This plan provides no assistance for prescription drug cost between \$2,000 and \$5,600 per year, and nearly half of all of our seniors have prescription drug expenses over \$2,000 annually.

Democrats know that the American seniors have waited long enough for relief from the Nation's skyrocketing prescription drug prices. Unfortunately, we are not giving our seniors an affordable and dependable plan with no gaps in coverage. Instead, the Republican leadership has chosen to hijack the democratic process yet again by blocking our party's attempts to provide a commonsense prescription drug benefit through the Medicare program. By shutting down opposition, rather than allowing an open debate, the Republican leadership is making it clear that they are afraid to compare their sham prescription benefit plan to the Democratic substitute. When the plans are put side by side, the American public sees that the Republican

plan fails to provide any substantive benefits. The public will see that their plan's benefits are so insignificant that it would not be worthwhile for many middle-class seniors to enroll. The Republican plan does nothing to curtail the exploding drug prices because of their ties to the pharmaceutical industry, and that is a matter of record that can be checked.

Providing affordable prescription drug coverage should be an issue that transcends partisanship. The American public should be outraged that the Republican leadership is playing politics with the health and well-being of millions of our seniors, and I hope the voters will remember their shameful abuse of power when they go to the polls next November.

CLEAR ACT OF 2003

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

Mr. NORWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share the tragic tale of a New York mother's brutal attack, why it should never have happened and what can be done now to ensure that it never happens again.

Mr. Speaker, just this past December, a man and woman were sitting in a New York City park when they were suddenly surrounded by a gang of young men. The gang kicked and beat the woman before dragging her along the nearby railroad tracks, forcing her into woods where they threatened to kill this 42-year-old mother of two and repeatedly raped her. Mr. Speaker, it was a vicious, shocking, horrific crime. But, Mr. Speaker, it was a crime that should never have happened.

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That should have never been allowed to happen in the first place. The reason it should have been prevented is that the five males charged with carrying out this heinous act were living in the United States illegally. Even more unbelievable, four of them had criminal pasts and had been in the hands of law enforcement authorities, two actually having served jail time. But instead of being immediately deported, as the law says, they were released back on to the streets, back into our society, allowing them then to commit more crimes.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, this is just one story of many stories, stories of crimes that should have been prevented, of victims that should have never been. These stories are a reflection of our immigration law enforcement system in our Nation that is badly broken and in need of immediate repair. It is a system that provides little or no coordination between Federal, State and local officials, is badly outmanned, and results in safe havens for common criminals who roam the countryside instead of safe streets for the law-abiding citizens who call this home, and needlessly and increasingly endangers the very

homeland security of the United States at a very critical time in our Nation's history.

Mr. Speaker, today in America there are almost 400,000 individuals who have been ordered deported, but are instead hiding out in our communities. Of these, roughly 80,000 are criminal aliens, and I am not talking about running a stop sign, I am talking about violent criminals. That means there are 80,000 illegal aliens with criminal convictions that are on the prowl, thanks to our broken immigration system.

So what great force does our Federal Government provide to enforce the immigration laws of our Nation and account for the 400,000 illegal aliens with standing deportation orders, or the 80,000 of those who are criminal aliens? Just 2,000 folks who work for the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Mr. Speaker, as they say in north Georgia, these folks have just got more than they can say grace over. These 2,000 men and women work hard, they are good people, but, as the numbers suggest, it is not a fair fight, and this is not a realistic goal, if we intend to enforce our immigration laws.

Mr. Speaker, it is time we got serious about fixing our sad immigration law enforcement system. This week, after much thought and work, I introduced the Clear Law Enforcement for Criminal Alien Removal Act. We are going to call it the CLEAR Act of 2003. It is a bill that would finally give assistance and motivation to those 2,000 agents in the field by granting local and State law officers access to data, clarification of the jurisdiction, and appropriate funding and training to help them. Finally, it gives clarification and teeth to the laws already on the books, and order and accountability to a system that has been lacking in much of that for far too long.

Mr. Speaker, we have an opportunity here, I believe, to finally insist that this country enforce the laws that are on our books. We are a Nation of laws. I believe that. I believe that is what makes America great. But for us to say that we are going to enforce our laws against 400,000 illegal aliens that are out there with deportation orders, or the 80,000 that are criminals, or the 4,000 that come from countries friendly to al Qaeda, or the 10,000 or so that are needed for questioning by our national security agencies, at a time when we are concerned about terrorists, we simply absolutely must do something about this, and the CLEAR law will do that. I encourage my colleagues to look at our bill and hopefully cosponsor it.

IMPACT OF THE BAKU-TIBLISI-CEYHAN PIPELINE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOOZMAN). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.