

Commerce reported that the economy grew by 4.8 percent over the past 3 months, which is the fastest rate in 3 years.

As Republicans finalize our plans to extend the 2003 tax cuts, I urge House Democrats to abandon their tax-and-spend plans. Instead of playing the politics of obstructionism, they should join Republicans in implementing meaningful tax reform.

In conclusion, God bless our troops; and we will never forget September 11.

COVER THE UNINSURED WEEK

(Ms. SOLIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of the goals of Cover the Uninsured Week. Nearly 46 million Americans, including more than 8 million children, are living without health insurance. More than one-third are Latinos, 20 percent are African Americans, and about 19 percent are Asian Pacific Islanders who lack any form of health care insurance. In California, one out of five uninsured is a child under the age of 18.

Many current health proposals offered by Republicans will do more harm than help people living in districts like mine. Association health plans which ignore our State regulations are not working for families. Health saving accounts will do nothing to improve the well-being of our families in districts like mine.

Instead, Congress should be taking action to ensure that no child has to skip needed health care examinations. We should ensure that working families never have to choose between going to see a doctor and putting food on the table. We must work to eliminate racial and ethnic health care disparities.

Together, minorities comprise about 46 percent of the uninsured population. All these groups represent only 24 percent of the U.S. population. However, insurance coverage is an important predictor of whether individuals obtain health-promoting and life-extending services.

ASTHMA AWARENESS DAY

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, today is Asthma Awareness Day 2006.

On Asthma Awareness Day, May 7, 2003, there were only 20 asthma-friendly States in the United States. Even more limiting, of those 20, only nine extended protection even further to anaphylaxis medication, like epinephrine auto-injectors.

Today, historically, 47 States protect for asthma and 38 for asthma plus anaphylaxis, and the final three States have legislation pending to allow students to carry their medication.

Mr. Speaker, this is a tremendous positive turnaround in just a few years for our children. I am pleased with the momentous progress we have made in our Nation's capital and statehouses.

I encourage all of us who work here or visit the Capitol today to stop by the Cannon Caucus Room from 11:30 to 4:00 and learn more about asthma. Get screened, take the test, and let us enjoy another successful Asthma Awareness Day.

TOUGH BORDER SECURITY NOW

(Mrs. MILLER of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, the situation at our porous borders is absolutely in a state of emergency. We are all hearing this message from our constituents in a variety of ways. This morning, I wanted to share a very clear message that I received from one of my constituents.

A constituent of mine actually sent me this brick in the mail. On this brick it says, "Since the U.S. Government seems to be struggling with the illegal immigration problem, I thought I would send you the means to begin solving the problem. This brick is sent to support stronger border security."

Mr. Speaker, the American people are demanding action. Last December, this House passed a very good border security bill that would in fact put this brick to very good use in building a security fence on our southern border.

The debate in the other body is now turning toward amnesty for those who have come here illegally, and that is the wrong direction for America. We cannot offer amnesty or expanded opportunities for guest workers until we deal with the problem at hand.

I urge the U.S. Senate to listen to the people, to look at the bill that was passed by this House in December and, as this brick says, support stronger border security.

60-DAY FUEL TAX HOLIDAY

(Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, we are now just about 3 weeks away from the Memorial Day holiday, and a gallon of gas in my district costs \$3.38. Look at this photo from home, \$3.38 for unleaded, the cheap stuff. It is now cheaper to buy a fast-food lunch than it is for people in Riverside to drive to Anaheim.

Before the Memorial Day holiday, let us give America a fuel tax holiday: 60 days with no gas tax.

I will be the first to admit this is a short-term solution to a long-term problem. But the American people should not need to suffer the pain at the pump simply because this Republican-led Congress has forsaken its ob-

ligation to address our country's energy crisis.

Last week, ExxonMobil announced it had made \$8.4 billion in a quarter, the first quarter of this year. Now why should the Federal Government give handouts to a company that made \$8 billion in 3 months?

I urge my colleagues to support this revenue-neutral bill. It gives money back to the taxpayers, it stops the needless oil company giveaways, and it gives consumers relief when they need it the most.

□ 1030

LET'S KEEP AMERICA GOING TO WORK

(Mr. CARTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, this morning, and every morning in my memory, members of my district, Americans all across this country and my colleagues in the Democratic Party went out and got in their cars, started them up and drove to work or drove to school. They wouldn't have done that if there hadn't been gasoline or diesel in those automobiles. And yet, the Democrats have been opposing refining capacity, opposing pipelines, opposing drilling in ANWR, opposing going to the reserves that we know are available if we will just drill the wells and produce the petrochemicals that are necessary to keep this country running.

The reason we have got the problem today is obstructionism to solve the problem which is, let's put gas and diesel in our tanks so we can keep America going to work.

RECORD PROFITS FOR OIL COMPANIES

(Mr. KUCINICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KUCINICH. Everyone knows the oil companies are posting record profits. Oil companies are blaming everyone but themselves for large gas price increases. The consumer is being gouged, and oil companies continue to avoid their responsibility.

The most recent data for the Nation shows the average price of gas is close to \$3 a gallon. Gas prices increasing; wages across the Nation dropping. Gas prices hurt even more because folks have less money to pay for them. You know what is going on? People are actually going into their change jars to go to the gas station to be able to pay for the increased cost of gas. Some people are hocking their jewelry to be able to pay for the increased price of gas.

Price gouging is occurring as the oil companies are reaping profits close to \$300 billion since 2001. Time for a windfall profit tax. Time for a bill, the Gas Price Spike Act. Over 50 Members of

Congress want a windfall profits tax. That is what the oil companies understand. When we get that up to 100 co-sponsors, then the oil companies are going to start backing off, because right now, their foot is on the accelerator. They are looking at \$3 a gallon, \$4 a gallon, \$5 a gallon.

We have to stand up for the American people, and that is what we are here to do.

A NEW APPROACH TO ENERGY PROBLEMS

(Mr. JINDAL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. JINDAL. Mr. Speaker, the Nation's energy prices continue to rise. Families and businesses are feeling the pinch. We are paying the price for decades of extra taxes, poor energy policy, curtailed exploration and a lack of new refineries.

The Nation needs to take a new approach to our energy problems. We need to break our dependency on foreign sources of oil, which leaves us at the mercy of foreign powers. To do that, we should increase domestic energy production.

My bill, H.R. 4761, gives States control over the waters off their shores and encourages them to increase energy exploration by giving them a share of the revenues generated.

We should increase our development of alternative fuels, taking advantage of renewable resources, like using corn and sugar to produce ethanol or soybeans to produce biodiesel.

Finally, we should help developing nations like China and India curb their exponentially increasing consumption of oil and natural gas, which is driving world prices higher.

India, in particular, is looking to develop nuclear power for domestic, commercial use, and we should work with them. This is a good deal for both countries. India develops its own self-sustaining nuclear power sources, which will limit their need for oil and natural gas. We get a reduction in the demand for world energy, lowering prices in the process.

Clearly, the energy problems facing us are too big to use yesterday's thinking.

THE "DO LESS THAN NOTHING CONGRESS"

(Mr. COOPER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of problems mentioned on the House floor today. We should be aware that this House is doing a very poor job of addressing any of these problems. Why? Because this is one of the laziest Congresses in all of American history.

We are scheduled to meet this year fewer days than any Congress since at least 1948. And that is even before I was

born. So far, we are in the 123rd day of this year, and yet we have only had 26 voting days in this body. That is a shame.

This Congress is simply not doing its job under Republican leadership. They are the ones that set the schedule. Harry Truman called that Congress of 1948 the "Do Nothing Congress" of 1948. How do you do less than nothing? Sadly, the American people are about to find out, thanks to our friends on the other side of the aisle.

COMMENDING STANLY COUNTY NATIVE AND AMERICAN IDOL CONTESTANT KELLIE PICKLER

(Mr. HAYES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, today I want to congratulate Albemarle, North Carolina, native and "American Idol" contestant Kellie Pickler for pursuing her dream and using her God-given talent to sing. Kellie is returning home, but she consistently received some of the highest vote totals of any of the other contestants. And it is easy to understand why. Kellie's charm and talent clearly defined her success each week as Americans tuned in to the most popular show on television. Kellie will be returning home to Stanly County and North Carolina a true idol to many for her performances, her extraordinary singing voice and the grace she personified in front of millions as she represented her community, family and friends.

Kellie, we wish you the best. I know that great opportunities lie ahead for you.

MEDICARE DRUG PROGRAM

(Mr. LIPINSKI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, in less than 12 days, seniors face a critical deadline. By May 15, they must sign up for a Medicare prescription drug plan. After this date, they will pay a permanent penalty of 1 percent for every month that they wait to join, a penalty they will pay on top of their premium for the rest of their lives.

I have held more than three dozen seminars across my district to help seniors navigate through the overly complex program, and they keep calling asking for more help. They are understandably confused by the more than 60 different choices that they have. The least we can do is give seniors more time to understand their options so that they can make their best choice.

To do this, Congress must pass the Medicare Informed Choice Act which would delay the late enrollment penalty, prevent beneficiaries from losing their employer-based coverage and allow seniors to switch plans if they

make a mistake. More than 70 percent of seniors are asking for more time. It is long overdue for Congress to listen and make sure that seniors have a prescription drug plan that works for them.

CAPTURE OF MICHAEL BENSON

(Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, as a Member of Congress and a parent, to thank the many law enforcement officers whose hard work resulted in yesterday's capture of escaped child sexual predator Michael Benson.

I would also commend John Walsh and the viewers of "America's Most Wanted," who helped make Benson the 888th criminal apprehended after being featured on the show.

However, I stand here today deeply frustrated that obstructionists in the other body are using procedural gimmicks to block passage of the Child Safety Act, which the House first passed overwhelmingly more than 8 months ago.

Mr. Speaker, this act will help our children keep safe from predators like Michael Benson, and I urge the other body to quit obstructing and pass this vital bill.

RECOGNITION OF NAVAL AIR STATION WHIDBEY ISLAND

(Mr. LARSEN of Washington asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the Department of Defense for its recognition of Naval Air Station Whidbey Island as a model military installation for the country. Base Commander Captain Syd Abernethy and the Island County community will accept the Annual Commander-in-Chiefs Award for Installation Excellence on Friday.

This award recognizes the hard work and exceptional efforts of the people who operate NAS Whidbey, and I praise that team effort, from the men and women on the ground to those in the sky. They make this installation run.

The community and the residents of Oak Harbor and Island County play an integral role in protecting and promoting NAS Whidbey. It is their support year after year that makes NAS Whidbey great.

NAS Whidbey has emerged as a national center of electronic warfare and anti-submarine warfare operations. These missions will be pivotal to creating the type of military the Department of Defense wants to build in the upcoming years. NAS Whidbey will likely have to accommodate tremendous growth in the future, and this award shows that the team and infrastructure are in place to do the job.