

annualized rate of 3.5 percent last quarter, propelled by a dramatic rise in what? Exports. We have been exporting goods and services from the United States, and that has played a big role in the GDP growth.

These are excellent numbers, Madam Speaker, and they demonstrate the strength and vitality of the U.S. economy. But to really understand what they mean for individuals and working families, we have to delve in a little deeper. We have to look at the broader context and the bigger picture. Let's focus on the issue of wages.

As I have stated, earnings are on the rise. This is obviously extremely important to working families trying to make ends meet. But even more important than growing wages is growing purchasing power. A bigger paycheck is meaningless if the government increases taxes and takes a bigger portion of that paycheck. That is why Republicans have focused so heavily on the issue of tax relief.

Because of the tax cuts we have passed in 2001 and 2003, after-tax income is up nearly 10 percent. That is extra disposable income that Americans have to pay college tuition, get their car fixed, or take a family vacation.

It is extra income, Madam Speaker, that Americans would not have without the tax relief that Republicans provided. Now, the cost of consumer goods also plays a major role in a family's purchasing power. That is why keeping our economy open to imports is so important.

A tariff on inexpensive clothes from Bangladesh, for example, is a tax on the American family. A tariff is a tax. A tariff on affordable furniture from China is a tax on the American family. What is more, tariffs and other protectionist barriers constitute a regressive tax because they hit and hurt working families the hardest.

It is not Italian leather bags or antique Belgian furniture that gets slapped with tariffs. It is the low-cost everyday items that families need to buy. The more we open up our economy, the more we increase the purchasing power of Americans who need it most.

Wages are rising, and that is essential. But we must remember that increased wages cannot be accompanied by a reduction in the purchasing power of those wages through greater protectionism and higher taxes.

Republicans have pursued an agenda of economic liberalization and embrace the great benefits of globalization. As a result, we can look at the question of whether everyone is growing in prosperity. And we can answer the question with a definitive and decisive, yes, they are.

Madam Speaker, I call on my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to continue on this path. I call on them to reject any calls to reverse the course to saddle Americans with greater taxes and cut off their access to the goods

they need at prices that they can afford; to reject any efforts to impose the regressive taxes of protectionism. Our economy cannot afford it, Madam Speaker, and we must recognize that those who are struggling most can afford it least.

#### SUPPORT FOR INCREASED SCHIP FUNDING

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Madam Speaker, today I rise to call upon this Congress to assist States facing overwhelming shortfalls in funding their State health insurance programs.

In 1997, Congress created the SCHIP programs to help States provide health care coverage to the growing number of uninsured children throughout the United States. Ten years later, more than 6 million children have been enrolled in this program. They are going for annual check-ups to the doctor, and they are getting their prescription medications that they need. And they are also receiving care when they are extremely sick.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, this program's success is threatened by inadequate funding, and hundreds of thousands of these children stand to lose this health care coverage they have grown to rely upon.

Federal funding has failed to keep up with the program's expanding enrollment. An inefficient allocation of these funds means some States are sitting on more than \$1 billion of SCHIP funding, while 14 States, including my own State of Georgia, face severe shortfalls on the order of hundreds of millions of dollars.

This inadequate funding has forced some States to consider stopping all SCHIP medical services. Without help from the Congress, Congress will be unable to continue to provide health care for the 300,000 children enrolled in its Peachcare SCHIP program. Without increased Federal funding, these children will no longer receive their immunizations. They will no longer get their teeth cleaned, or their eyesight checked. And worse still, they will not be able to afford emergency room care in the event of a tragedy.

Madam Speaker, terminating coverage for these children would lead this country further away from decreasing the number of uninsured children in the United States. Congress must act expeditiously to allocate Federal funding to those States facing SCHIP shortfalls. It must reauthorize the program to ensure that all six million enrolled children continue to receive health care.

It must increase Federal funding so that more uninsured children can be enrolled in this program and get the health care that they deserve. I look forward to working with my colleagues from Georgia and other affected States

to rectify this increasingly dire situation.

#### CHIEF ERNIE MENDOZA

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

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, peace officers are a noble breed, daily risking their lives to protect and serve the rest of us. They are what separate the evil of the lawless from us.

Two weeks ago on a dark, cool misty Texas night, Needville, Texas, Independent School District Chief of Police Ernie Mendoza, was coming home from his job. He had been supervising a basketball game at one of the local schools. As chief of police of Needville Independent School District, it was his job to protect students during school and during events.

However, on the same road was 29-year-old construction worker Guillermo Paniagua. Guillermo was drunk and driving his pickup truck. He was headed toward the chief's car. And within moments Guillermo's truck crossed the center stripe of the road, slammed head first into the chief of police's vehicle. The crash instantly killed this dedicated police chief.

The chief had devoted 25 years of his life as one of Texas's lawmen. It was something that meant a lot to him. He was proud to serve his country as a peace officer. He was a 1983 graduate of the Waco Police Department where he worked in this small central Texas town.

Then he moved on to the big city of Houston, Texas, where he worked with the Houston Independent School District Police Department, one of the Nation's largest school districts. And then in 1996 he accepted the position with the Needville ISD Police Department where he became chief of police.

ISD police officers have the responsibility to protect children and teachers while they are in school. They maintain law and order and discipline. They keep the kids safe from day to day. And Chief Mendoza was one of the best. He strived to be a positive role model for the kids he protected, and he made peace officers look good.

He took the time to talk to kids and was well liked throughout the school. But it all ended a mile from his own home and the indifference of a drunk driver. Like most drunk drivers, Guillermo had only minor cuts and bruises. He was not injured. But those bruises did not keep him, the coward, the killer, from running from the scene in the darkness of the night.

He was quickly captured by the Wharton County, Texas Sheriff's Department, and now he faces first-degree felony murder charges, and failure to stop and render aid.

You see, when you drink and drive and kill somebody, that is a felony, as it ought to be. Chief Mendoza's wife and four children are now deprived of