And on the dais to my colleague's right, there are several terms inscribed in that dais, but on my far left the term ''union'' is inscribed. And that's really what I think we have lost track of and lost awareness of in this country, that we are part of something that is very special. But it is a union. It's not 300 million individuals out on their own.

And we had an interesting hearing the other day in the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and basically the subject was on the subprime mortgage crisis, but it was also related to CEOs' salaries. And I'm not sure it was quite a good idea to combine the two, although they do provide kind of a stark contrast in which many of these companies, namely, Countrywide, had lost lots of money, and yet the CEO had left the company and was still making millions of dollars, $37 million he left the company with.

But we also had the former chairman of Citigroup, the CEO of Time Warner, the former CEO of Merrill Lynch; so we had some of the giants of American industry there. And the topic of discussion kept alternating between the subprime mortgage crisis and also the question of CEOs' salaries. And it occurred to me, as we went through this discussion, that many of these CEOs make tens of millions of dollars a year in compensation, much of it related to stock options that they are given, so their compensation ultimately is related to their stock price.

And as the conversation went on, it finally came my turn to ask questions. And I addressed these giants of American industry, and I said, I can see how in a comparative market situation that the CEO of Citigroup, which is a $35 billion company, may be worth $10 million a year in salary. I don't have any complaint about that. And even if you lose money in a particular year, I mean if it hadn't been for the talents of the CEO, you might have lost more money; so maybe that was justified.

But what the American people see is CEOs making tens of millions of dollars, at the same time feeling, if not knowing explicitly what's on that chart, that their standard of living, even though they are working as hard as they have ever worked, is not improving. And if they are working for one of those companies at a relatively average position, while they are working hard, their standard of living is staying the same and the CEO's salary is increasing.

And we all know the data about the disparity between CEOs' salaries and their employees' salaries. It's gone from an average of 30 times in the early 1970s to now 400 or 500 times. And it doesn't matter whether you lose money; they still make these huge salaries. And I asked them, When you have these meetings in your compensation committees and you're deciding and discussing the salaries of your CEO and your upper management, is there ever a conversation or have you ever heard of a conversation that related to how you might improve the lives of your employees, how you might stabilize the communities where your businesses are, how you might help to make this country a better place, or is all the conversation related to how you get the stock price up?

And the retired chairman of Citigroup said, very candidly and honestly, No, we only talk about share price. I said, That's a very unfortunate disconnect between what I think we all think is the objective, the ambition of this country, this Union, which is to make life better for everybody, to create jobs, to have everybody realize the American Dream, and yet our largest corporate citizens are only thinking about how they raise their stock price.

And I wonder, and I hope to be able to pursue this conversation with other CEOs of big corporations as I serve my terms in Congress, Do you ever talk about raising your standard of living of your employees? How do we get their wages up? How do we improve their benefits? How do we improve their health care situation? How do we stabilize that community and what can we do? And I know there are companies out there who are great corporate citizens. I have some in my own district who do that.

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But if you don't have the corporate mentality that thinks about the same goals that the American people have, then we have a problem in this country. And I am not exactly sure how to go about it. But I know that the policies that are represented by our colleagues on the Republican side and by this been White House have been ones that say, we're going to do everything we can to facility that strategy of letting those companies do whatever they need to do to jack their stock prices up, and meanwhile we hope that it helps everybody else.

And I think that our budget says that we are not going to rely on just an abstract hope. We are going to take steps to invest in the American people, to put money in education, to put money in health care and to put money in infrastructure that will allow those people to make sure they improve their own standard of living.

So, we are going to have this debate for a long time. We will have it in this particular context in this budget debate, but as we go forward in this Congress, and in future Congresses. And I look forward to it because I think that the American people want us to do everything we can to help them realize their individual ambitions, and, again, to make ourselves a better Union.

So with that, I would just like to ask my colleague if he has any closing remarks, and then we will let everyone go home.

Mr. KAGEN. I appreciate your comments. And I have learned a great deal just working with you here in Congress. And I appreciate your sacrifice of leaving your business and your life in Kentucky to work here in Washington even as you live back in Kentucky, as I work here in Washington and live in Wisconsin.

I will just remind you what we both agree on. We need to have not just a budget policy, but a tax policy that rewards work more so than wealth. Because what you see with this graph is that the people that are being rewarded are the wealthy who are not necessarily working as hard as people.

Now whose side are we on? We do not sit in a boardroom. We are standing on the workplace floor. We understand the pain and feel the stress that ordinary Americans are going through and families are making it just a tough time every single day. The policies that we are putting forward have to be people first, and our budget must not only be balanced, but we have to balance the other deficits that we face. We have a budget deficit, and we have a savings deficit. We have to become, once again, a Nation that saves money and not just spends money. We have to lead the way here in Congress.

And I look forward to working with you in the years to come and certainly in the next several weeks as we pass a budget here.

Mr. YARMUTH. I thank my colleague. And as I close, I just what to repeat what I have said to many people, and that is that it is such a great honor to be in this wonderful group of people, men and women, elected in 2006, because most of us came to Congress well past the age of 50. We came because we had done what we wanted to do in our professional lives or our business careers, and we said we wanted to make a difference.

We weren't here because we expected to spend 25 or 30 years in Congress. We didn't want to be professional politicians. We came because we wanted to see what we could do to change the direction of the country. And nobody is a better example of that than my colleague from Wisconsin, and I thank him for joining me tonight. I look forward to further discussions as we move forward.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. MITCHELL (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for March 10 and 11 on account of family obligations.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today and the balance of the week on account of family illness.

## SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. BURGESS) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)