

stem cells, iPS. That has to become, iPS, a household word.

THE MAJORITY MAKERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. YARMUTH) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. YARMUTH. Madam Speaker, it's a great honor for me to be here tonight to join with many of my colleagues from The Majority Makers, the Class of 2006, which brought change to the Congress, and now hopes to join with President Obama to bring change to the country. We're here tonight to talk about the challenges facing this country that are manifold, the incredible, unprecedented nature of our situation, the opportunities that we face, because every challenge comes with opportunities, and also to talk about the budget that President Obama has proposed to this Congress, because it is a budget that takes us in a very different direction in this country, echoing and reinforcing his theme of his campaign, which was to bring change to the country. And it's also the motivation for all of us who came to Congress in the Class of 2006.

□ 1730

You know, I have the great privilege of serving on the Ways and Means Committee and also on the Budget Committee. Over the last 2 days, we've heard Secretary of the Treasury Timothy Geithner and OMB Director Peter Orszag talking about what the situation is in the country—the economic challenges we in the world face—and also what the Obama administration plans to do about them in asking for our assistance. Two things have been very clear in listening to both of these two gentlemen, who are new to their jobs, in listening to the new administration and also in listening to our colleagues on the other side of the aisle as they're responding to the initiatives of the administration.

The two things are: One, that they like to take potshots at the budget, which is fair game, because this is, after all, sometimes a partisan exercise. Also, the ideas that they bring to the debate are really no new ideas at all. As a matter of fact, listening to Republicans talk about the economic situation and their suggestions for how we move forward is kind of like listening to the coach of the Detroit Lions saying, "hey, use my playbook," after they just went 0 and 16. I don't want to pick on the Detroit Lions, but that's really what it sounds like because they bring no new ideas to the table.

That's what is so impressive about this team that President Obama has assembled and about the budget that he has brought to the Congress and to the American people. It is a budget that is full of new ideas and of new approaches to very old and very difficult problems.

So, as we're here tonight to talk about where we've been and where we're going and where we need to go in this country, I just want to mention the fact that Prime Minister Gordon Brown was here today. The theme of his address to the joint session of Congress was—and he has mentioned the expression many times—"faith in the future." That's really what we're trying to bring to this country, faith in the future, because that faith has been destroyed over the last decade in the United States, and that's what we are so committed to doing, and I think that's what the Obama administration is committed to doing as well, to restoring faith in the future, because that is also what has driven our country, our people, our businesses, and our institutions, which is that we believe there is a better time facing us, a better time ahead, and we have taken those steps. We have worked as hard as we can and have used our ingenuity to realize the future that we all aspire to. So I look forward to the discussion tonight as it's always a pleasure to be with my colleagues.

I would like to yield, first of all, to someone who has been a consistent participant in these discussions we've had, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. KLEIN).

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. I thank the gentleman from Kentucky. Thanks for your leadership on the issues, as we know, we have been really faced with as we move into this next congressional session.

It was interesting. A week ago, most of us were at home, speaking to people in small businesses, speaking to homeowners. Many of us do Congress on Your Corner, which is an idea where we just meet at the local supermarket or local drug store or local 5 and 10 and just have a chance to talk to people about what they're really thinking about right now and how we can solve these problems that our country is looking at. You know, it breaks down into three things:

One is: What can we do to stimulate the economy? What can we do to generate consumer interest and business interest? Because, if we produce more, people will buy more and demand will go up, all those kinds of things. What do we do about the mortgage crisis? It's not just the people who are sort of in foreclosure. There's a very large number of people who are at jobs where maybe they're earning \$50,000.

I was just at a car dealer's the other day, and they were telling me that the owner of the company came to the 140 employees and asked them to vote on whether they wanted to reduce their salaries. He, himself, the owner, had taken no salary in the last year, but he literally asked them if they'd be willing to take less compensation in order to avoid people being laid off. They took a vote and they did it. The reality is someone who's earning \$50,000 may be earning \$40,000 or \$35,000, and someone who is willing or is able to pay \$750

for a mortgage maybe now can afford \$600.

Well, there are simple solutions to that, and I'm very gratified that Congress is moving forward. The Obama administration has put out a number of proposals which, I think, need quick movement because they're just commonsense, and they make sense.

Everyone understands it's not in the best interest of a street for a home to be foreclosed on on that street. The better way to deal with that is to keep that person in the home. If the person is earning a little less than he was earning before, or that \$50,000 to \$35,000, and he can afford \$600 versus \$750, well, it's simple enough. Take the difference and defer it to the end of the mortgage or amortize the mortgage 40 years instead of 30 years. Get the payments to where the person can still afford to stay in the home and can take care of that home and can have a roof over his head. Add value to the community versus having that home boarded up and having it depress every other property on the street.

That's the kind of work that we need to encourage the banks to work on with our local community folks, with our homeowners, and those are some of the proposals that are out on the table today. I think those are the kinds of things that I've been hearing from our communities. We need to know that the government is working on encouraging banks and on finding incentives to get the banks to work with us.

Of course, other than the stimulus, which is already in place—and it's going to begin to filter into the communities over the next number of weeks—the last thing, of course, is fixing the banks in a way that they will lend to small businesses. I know we're going to talk about that tonight because we're a country of small businesses. We understand that's the lifeblood of our communities—to create jobs, to create wealth and to support local communities. I know that there are a number of ideas we're going to discuss which will help get those small businesses back on track because we know that we need to get the banks to help out with that.

So, with that, I'll turn it back to the gentleman. I'm looking forward to this good discussion on how we're going to move forward over the next number of days.

Mr. YARMUTH. I thank the gentleman from Florida.

One of the great things about having these discussions is we get perspectives from all over the country, not just from different, more conservative, more aggressive districts but, rather, geographically and demographically. There are a lot of important perspectives that help shape the context of this discussion.

I would now like to yield to my colleague, the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ALTMIRE).

Mr. ALTMIRE. I thank the gentleman, and I thank my colleagues for

joining us tonight in this important discussion.

I want to focus on the President's budget and, in particular, on what is different about this budget in that the President has looked in a comprehensive way at our economy, not just at the crisis that we find ourselves in today, at this moment in time, but also at how to get ourselves out and where we want to be a year from now, 5 years from now, 10 years from now. We all understand that.

What the President has done with his budget is include within it segments of our economy that have been ignored in budgets over time—things like health care, like energy and like education—because what we understand in this Congress is we cannot move forward as a nation; we can't solve our economic problems, and we can't move this country forward and continue as the pre-eminent Nation on the planet in this global economy unless we reform our health care system, unless we find a way to get ourselves off of our addiction to foreign oil and unless we continue to improve the quality of the education available to all students in this country and make education more accessible so we can continue to be competitive in the global economy.

What we have set before us is the realization that every family, every business and every individual in this country is impacted by the cost of education, by the cost of energy and by the cost of health care, and we are going to talk about those issues tonight and certainly going forward.

I want to focus specifically on health care. The President has laid out an ambitious agenda, and he has done something that is unique. He has allowed Congress to have a say in it in a way that has not been the case in previous health care discussions. The President has said, "These are my priorities, and while I'm willing to work with the 435 Members of the House and with the 100 in the other body, let's work with the American people," because, in heart, that's what we are. We are Representatives. Let's put together a plan that can solve this crisis that we face, not just with our economy but in the health care system.

So what are some of the things that we hear when we go back and we have Congress on Your Corner?

Well, when we talk about the cost of health care, I often hear people say, "Well, why are you taking my money? I'm happy with my insurance. I'm covered. I have a job. I'm fine." Somebody will say, "Why are you taking my money and giving it to somebody else who doesn't have health care? I understand that that's a problem and that that's unfortunate, but why are you spending my money on them?"

What I try to explain to people is they're already paying for the costs of that person's health care. The most obvious example that you've heard many times is, when that person needs health care, he goes to the emergency room,

which is the least effective, the most costly and the most inefficient setting that you can possibly get for primary health care. So we're forcing them into that setting to begin with, and they get covered, and they get reimbursed, if you're the hospital, because that's our money. If you go to the hospital, the reason an aspirin costs \$10 is because of the cost shift that takes place. When you have someone show up who doesn't have insurance, the hospital or provider will shift that cost to somebody else. That's an obvious way.

What people don't think about is that your State taxes are higher because of exploding Medicaid costs all around the country. States are forced to pay for the Medicaid program. They shift that to the costs of the State taxpayers. Think of the delivery chain, the supply chain. At every level, health care costs impact the cost of the consumer. You've heard many times with regard to the auto industry, which is certainly struggling right now, that \$1,500 from the price of every car made in this country is due to the health care costs of the automaker.

Think about that. For every good and service that the American people buy on a daily basis, there is the cost to manufacture it, the cost to ship it, the cost to store it, and the cost to sell it. In every segment of that supply chain, there is a component that adds a premium for the cost of health care for the employers and for the employees who are involved in that little piece of the supply chain.

The salary and wages of the American people are lower because of the health care costs of the employer's, because they're offering health care to their employees. Therefore, the salaries are lower. We as an American people are already paying in a variety of ways for the people who don't have health insurance. We hear about the 47 million Americans who lack health insurance. We also need to remember the tens of millions more who live in fear every day of losing their coverage. They are one accident or illness away from losing everything. Less than half of small businesses in this country are able to afford to offer health care to their employees, less than half, because of the double digit increases that we've seen year after year after year.

This is simply an unsustainable course that we're on, but rather than looking at this in isolation as one problem that's separate from the economic situation that we face, the President and this Congress are going to work together and are going to look at those items together, along with energy independence and along with education, in a way that we haven't done before in taking a comprehensive look at it. These are the things that we're going to be talking about moving forward, and these are the things that this group is going to continue to discuss in these forums.

So I thank the gentleman from Kentucky, and I look forward to continuing the debate.

Mr. YARMUTH. I thank the gentleman.

I just have to add one thing because I think what he has done has brilliantly answered one of the charges that's always leveled about government action and its involvement in health care, which is, "Oh, we don't want socialized medicine."

What Mr. ALTMIRE has so intelligently recognized is that, whether it's in an organized way or in a disorganized way, we do socialize the cost of medicine across society. Right now, we do it in a very disorganized way, which, unfortunately, leads to both the inefficiencies, the added expense and the fact that many people fall through the cracks and are not covered. So I thank him for his comments.

Now I would like to yield time to my good friend from Colorado (Mr. PERLMUTTER).

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Thank you, Mr. YARMUTH. It's a pleasure to be here with all of you tonight to talk about what's going on in Congress and about a change that's coming in this country—a needed change, a change from the direction that was taken in the prior 8 years.

I don't have to tell anybody in this room or anywhere else across the country that somebody drove the car into the ditch, and we've got to get that car out of the ditch in terms of the economy—in terms of the financial and housing systems across this country. We are grappling with an economy that's struggling at best and with a deficit that we've inherited from the Bush administration of well over \$1 trillion. What are we going to do about it?

The first thing you have got to do is stabilize the financial and housing markets. Those two things are being done through recapitalizing the banks and by giving them the ability to stay on their feet. The housing market we need to stabilize, and the administration has a complete program as to how to do that:

One in terms of interest rates that good and creditworthy borrowers can take advantage of like they haven't been able to take advantage of in years and years and years. I mean solid loans that aren't fly-by-night, phony baloney types of loans but 5 percent interest rates available to good and creditworthy customers.

Second, for people who find themselves in markets that are difficult, where the prices of the houses have dropped but they're paying their way and they're struggling, there is an ability for them under the administration's proposal to refinance so that they, too, can take advantage of low mortgage rates that are available today. For those who have been laid off or who are otherwise having trouble with their homes and their mortgages, there are other avenues available to them.

So, first, we have got to stabilize the marketplace. That's happening. Second

and more important is rejuvenating and invigorating the economy. We did that 2 weeks ago with the President's major recovery act.

□ 1745

There are components in that of investing in America like we've never done before or we haven't done for years and years and years.

And that investment costs money. There is no question about it. Whether you're a family or a business or a country, there are times you have to invest. And we have invested, and those returns we're going to see in a new energy economy, in a change in how we deal with our health care system and rebuilding our infrastructure. Those returns are going to be long term, but they are jobs today. Jobs in America today. Jobs that we need desperately from coast to coast.

The third piece in getting this country back on track and changing its direction, and getting that car out of the ditch is to restore confidence in both the economy and the financial systems. And we are working to see which regulations, which laws that were eliminated that should be reinstated, and which laws or regulations have compounded the problem and should be eliminated so that we can restore confidence, reinvigorate the economy and stabilize the markets.

All of this is going to be done starting with a tremendous deficit in this country but reducing it by half over the next 4 years in a fiscally responsible fashion.

There is a lot of hard work for us here in Congress, but even more hard work for people all across this country. But this country is capable of doing it, has done it time and time and time again, and we will get the car out of the ditch. We've got an administration and a Congress that is dedicated to doing that. And so we will change the direction of this Nation and get it back on track.

With that, to my friend from Kentucky, I yield back.

Mr. YARMUTH. I thank my friend, and I'd like to ask a question of the gentleman from Colorado who has done such incredibly important work on the Financial Services Committee and on these issues of which he spoke.

One of the things that we face, I know in terms of the housing situation, is that we have a very different situation from place to place in the country. We know certain areas of California and Nevada and Michigan have suffered to a far greater extent than many other areas. And in some of these areas, where housing values have not declined as much, and some other ones, I know some of the citizens wonder, "Why should I worry about helping the people in California or Nevada? What's in it for me?"

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. YARMUTH. I'm asking the gentleman a question.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. That's a great question because, in Colorado, we sort of went into the downturn of the economy before the rest of the country, and we've been climbing out. We had a much smaller drop in property values, our employment rate has been higher, but if the job layoffs were to continue, we would be falling into the same ditch as the rest of the country.

So for somebody from Colorado, the ability to maintain and build jobs—good energy jobs, health care jobs, jobs in rebuilding our highways, our transit, our electric grid—that will keep my State from driving into the ditch. So we're focused more on the jobs piece, but obviously having a strong and healthy financial system, as well as a housing market, is key as well. So this affects all of us, and we've seen it kind of roll across the country.

So even if in Colorado we have it better off today, we want to keep it that way. We don't want it to fall farther behind. So all of us are in this together.

Mr. YARMUTH. I thank the gentleman.

It now gives me great pleasure to introduce my colleague from the great State of Tennessee (Mr. COHEN).

Mr. COHEN. I appreciate the opportunity to join with my colleagues and the Majority Makers Caucus on this March 4, 2009. It's been 76 years since Franklin D. Roosevelt took his first oath of office. March 4—which was then in past history when the President took office—March 4, 1933, and he said, "The only thing the American people have to fear is fear itself."

President Roosevelt took office after President Hoover, and Mr. YARMUTH discussed some things that were about the Detroit Lions, and you don't have to go back as far as the Detroit Lions. You can look to what the Republicans said about Mr. Roosevelt's attempts to bring us out of the Depression. And they caused the Depression, President Hoover and Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau of that Congress. And President Roosevelt brought us out of the Depression. He created work programs that put money in the economy and put people to work. And he made a major difference. He transformed this American economy.

Once again, the Republican responses are similar to what we saw pre-1933. They're similar to what we heard in 1993 when President Clinton was looking at bringing about a balanced budget and the Republicans said that wouldn't work. And the Republicans have said many of the same things about this proposal depending entirely on tax cuts and entirely on the same type of issues and policies that have gotten us into the ditch that we're in now.

The fact is we need to move forward and the leader of the Republican Party's philosophy is none other than Rush Limbaugh. And Rush Limbaugh has said he wants this American President to fail.

Now, I can understand people wanting to have power for their party, but when you want a newly elected President of the United States—with a tremendous majority vote and majority support in this country—to fail, you are basically suggesting that the United States of America should fail. Because if President Obama fails in this most unusual time, when economic crisis has gripped this country—we're in a recession that is, in fact, probably is a depression, but we've kept the linguistics of a recession—you're suggesting that the American economy and the American Government should fail.

With the Republicans up here talking constantly against what President Obama has done and voting against it lockstep in the Recovery and Reinvestment Act, we saw a party that's not only being negative but is being, in my opinion, un-American. They've offered not new ideas but negative thoughts to question anything that's being done. They offer only the old and failed tax cuts.

We had the privilege today to listen to the Prime Minister of Great Britain, and he said, and I may quote: But sometimes the reality is that defining moments of history come suddenly and without warning, and the task of leadership then is to define them, shape them, and move forward to the new world they demand. An economic hurricane has swept the world creating a crisis of credit and of confidence. Credit and confidence. History has brought us now to a point where change is essential. We are someone not just to manage our times but to transform them. Our task is to rebuild prosperity and security in a wholly different economic world where competition is no longer local but global, and banks are no longer national but international.

What Prime Minister Brown said, and said so well, is besides the fact that we have to restore confidence—and that's what I hear from every economist that I talk to is that's one of the problems right now is the American public needs to have confidence.

We came out of the Great Depression. We've come out of smaller depressions, recessions, and we'll come out of this one. But we won't do it with naysayers saying that it won't happen and this plan will fail and not offering an alternative.

And it's a worldwide problem. And what Prime Minister Brown said to us is basically his government and the governments of the world are doing the same thing that our government is doing and doing it together in a united front: stimulus packages, reforming banks and making sure that we can go into a new economy and create jobs.

The President's plans create new jobs by going into broadband and extending broadband into rural areas and inner cities to create jobs and give people access to the Internet; seeing that health care costs are controlled, which is taking a larger and larger percentage of

our budget and threatens American industry that has to bear those costs, while, in most other countries where they have national health care, the government bears it and not the industry. And we're competing against foreign producers who don't have that as part of their costs, so it's a disadvantage that we have. And General Motors and Ford and Chrysler have that disadvantage.

But we're trying to control health care costs, and we're trying to invest in education. We're putting more money into Pell Grants and giving people an opportunity to get better jobs to compete on the world scale where it is global and not local for competition for jobs. Investing more and more in science.

And in the previous discussion to this hour, we heard people on the Republican side talk about science. They talked about stem cells. We put over \$10 billion into the National Institutes of Health. I was really pleased that happened. I'd offered an amendment to do something similar, and it was passed by Senator HARKIN on the Senate side.

That's going to be putting scientists to work finding cures for the illnesses that they were talking about but refused to fund: heart disease, cancer, Alzheimer's, AIDS, diabetes, Parkinson's. Those illness can be cured or treatments can be found if we give enough opportunity for scientists to do their studies, and the National Institutes of Health is the organization from which those funds come.

There have been so many falsehoods put out about this bill, and I would like to share a few with the American public here. One is—and I found this most interesting. The Republicans have claimed that under this bill—and many people have probably heard this—that each job will cost \$275,000 per job. Paul Krugman, a Nobel Prize winning economist called that a “bogus charge.” He said, “Why is it bogus? Because it involves taking the cost of a plan that will extend over several years creating millions of jobs each year and dividing it by the jobs created in just one of those years. It is as if an opponent of the school lunch program were to take an estimate of the cost of that program over the next 5 years and divide it by the number of lunches provided in just one of those years and asserts that the program was hugely wasteful because it cost \$13 per lunch while the actual cost of lunch was \$2.57.”

There have been so many false figures put out and accusations concerning different programs in the bill and the different economic plans that have been put forth by the Obama administration.

We know from Larry Summers and others that stimulus moneys need to be timely, targeted, and temporary. And they voted against giving the people who are on the front lines, the Purple Hearts of this recession, more extended unemployment compensation. They

voted against giving States moneys for Medicaid when we know we're going to have more and more need for Medicaid because more people fall in that category and can't afford their health care. And they voted against extending people food stamps, and those moneys, particularly food stamps and unemployment, are the most timely.

Those people are in desperate need, targeted to those who will spend it immediately because they don't have resources otherwise, and temporary because it's a short-term amount of money that's expended. And those people spend it immediately. They won't spend it on their condos and vacation vistas that they might go to someplace else, but they will spend it in their neighborhoods and their communities. And they'll be taxed, sales taxed immediately and put money into State and local governments who need that money to provide law enforcement and other services.

So, Mr. YARMUTH, my friend from Kentucky, and the other sophomore Majority Makers I have joined here, I think we need to think about Franklin Roosevelt and the only thing we have to fear is fear itself. That was kind of what President Obama talked to us about in his State of the Union and addressed us about when he was sworn in. A confidence that this country is a great country and this government will overcome the obstacles that we face, though they be great, and we will be the greatest country on the face of the Earth in the 21st century as we've been in the past.

But we need to think in new ways. We need to invest in new sectors to provide new jobs and to give our people the resources and tools they need because we're a great people. And I think you can usually see history repeating itself. You see it being repeated here with Franklin Roosevelt, that Congress; President Obama and this Congress.

Thank you, sir.

Mr. YARMUTH. I thank my friend.

I want to tag along a little bit about the tax discussion because, it's interesting, there's an old saying that when all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail. And what we've seen out of our colleagues on the other side is the only policy that they even think about when it comes to the economy is tax policy and the need to cut taxes.

The Republican-run Congress, controlled Congress, in 2001 and then 2003 cut taxes. Most of that tax cut went to the very wealthiest people in the country. That tax cut was scheduled to expire in 2011. And now that the President's budget would allow those tax cuts to expire for the very wealthiest Americans, those making over \$250,000 a year, our colleagues on the other side want to say we're raising taxes, which is not true at all.

□ 1800

In fact, the way I look at it is, if you go to a store, and the store says we've

got 40 percent off today and you happen to miss that sale and you go back the next day and it's back to regular price, you can't say the store raised prices, you just missed the opportunity. Well, in this situation, the wealthiest Americans did not miss the opportunity, they took full benefit of those tax cuts for the last few years. Meanwhile, the great disparity between the wealthiest Americans and everyone else continued to grow to unprecedented levels. And now that this President—and I assume this Congress—will say, let's restore some more fairness to the tax code, let's let those tax cuts expire, the rich can pay marginally more than they have been since the Bush administration cut taxes, and now they're complaining that that's a tax hike, which is frivolous.

Mr. COHEN. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. YARMUTH. I would yield to my friend.

Mr. COHEN. Is it accurate to say that 95 percent of the Americans—and nobody with an income of a quarter of a million dollars a year or less—would see a tax increase and, in fact, would get a tax cut under this plan?

Mr. YARMUTH. That is clearly the effect of the President's budget, and it was clearly the effect of the recovery plan that we passed recently. And I think it was well justified. And I think the American people appreciate it and understand that—they know a tax cut when they see it and they know a tax hike when they see it. And 95 percent of the people in this country will see their paychecks increase, and they know that that's not a tax increase. So I thank the gentleman.

Now it gives me great pleasure, we've been around the country from Florida to Colorado to Tennessee and Kentucky and Pennsylvania, now it gives me great pleasure to introduce my colleague from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY).

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you for organizing this colloquy.

As Congressman COHEN said today, this Chamber earlier today was a place of a historic event where the Prime Minister of England, Gordon Brown, addressed the people of our country as well as both Chambers. And he, I think, did a magnificent job about, number one, talking about the economic crisis that we're in in global terms, the numbers in terms of lost jobs—lost wealth that has taken place over the last 6 months is historic and staggering—but reminded us that the focus has always got to be on the impact, person by person, in terms of jobs that are lost.

In this country, where we have lost, as of the end of January, 3.6 million jobs, because of our health care system being tied to employment there is an added blow that families suffer when there is a layoff, which is that people are confronted with the almost impossible choice of maintaining their health insurance by paying for COBRA premiums—which in a State like Connecticut, for an individual that is

about \$6,000 or \$7,000 a year, \$12,000 for a family—or letting their health insurance just lapse.

One of the things that was included in the Recovery Act—and it has now been 2 weeks since the President signed that measure in Denver, Colorado—is that we have seen, I think, Member offices, have a chance to sort of see our constituents vote with their feet in terms of the interests that they've expressed about different components. And in my office, certainly, the COBRA subsidy, which was a measure that was included in the Recovery Act—again, a historic effort by the government to step in and provide families with 65 percent of the premium costs if they are laid off—again, something that has never happened in any prior recession or economic downturn—is the piece of the Recovery Act that's gotten the most traffic in terms of phone calls and inquiries into my office.

I'd like to, again, as Prime Minister Brown indicated, share a story in my district of a guy, Tim Jensen, he's a reporter for a small weekly newspaper, got laid off last September. He's one of these guys that would show up with a camera and a pad and pen at any event, supported every parade, community event, veteran ceremony. And unfortunately—as we know, the newspaper business has suffered along with many, many other industries in our country—he lost his job in September. To compound that, as I indicated, he had to foot the bill for COBRA extension, and to compound that even further, he was diagnosed with cancer later this fall. So now he's in a desperate Hobson's impossible choice of whether to maintain his health insurance, depriving his family of literally food on the table, or give up his health insurance at a time when he literally has a life or death need for medical treatments. The Obama plan, which is to provide a 65 percent subsidy for people like Tim Jensen, is literally a life saver. It is going to provide him and his family with the means to maintain that health insurance coverage and avoid, again, just a total catastrophe for him and his family.

And it does tie in to the issue which I know we've been talking about here today, which is the impact on the public finances of this country. The fact of the matter is that people who do lose their health insurance end up being a public cost later down the food chain of our health care financing system, either in the form of uncompensated care in the emergency room if there is a health care crisis, or they lapse and end up in a publicly financed program like Medicaid or some form of public assistance program for single adults, which many States operate. It is far more cost effective and rational to provide those individuals with a subsidy to maintain their existing health benefits while hopefully they will transition back into the workforce rather than to just completely abandon them, which unfortunately was the system prior to

passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

So, again, a measure which will provide the individual, which Prime Minister Brown talked about, which always should be our focus, will benefit not just that individual and their family, but also our overall system of public finances and health care coverage; again, hopefully just an appetizer in terms of the main course of health care reform, which this administration is, again, beginning to unfold with the release of its 2010 budget, and a Congress that is ready to roll up its sleeves and go to work in terms of all the key committees.

So this stimulus bill, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, has many, many components to it, which we've talked about over the last few weeks or so and will continue to do so. But clearly, the COBRA subsidy, a new, unprecedented effort by the government to step in and help unemployed workers—which are, sadly, going to increase at least in the short term—

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. COURTNEY. Sure, I would be happy to.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Well, Mr. COURTNEY, one of the things that you've made the point so well, and Mr. DREIER, when he and I were arguing about the stimulus bill 2 weeks ago, is the immediacy of this, the urgency of this. The time to act is now, not 10 weeks from now, not 20 weeks from now. I mean, your friend's life was on the line. Mr. DREIER's friend, it was a tragedy because of job layoffs and a number of other things. So Mr. DREIER, explaining it as somebody on the other side of the aisle, but still wanted to vote no.

And what I've seen—and not to really pick on the other side because it's time for us to move forward in a positive way—their position is, just say no, we like the status quo. This country can't afford the status quo any longer. We need to move quickly, we need to move with purpose, and we need to move now. Because whether it's to maintain or create new jobs, provide COBRA where jobs have been lost, maintain State government—backfilling them so we keep the teachers and the firefighters and the policemen and the maintenance workers employed in this difficult time—or to assist people who have suffered, we've got to move now. And this Congress and this President are moving now.

Now, my friends on the other side don't like it, but their old ways—and I'm pointing to the record deterioration of the budget—have just driven us right into the ditch. I said that before. We have to turn this around. And so we will, under the President's approach and the congressional approach, reduce what was a record deficit that we've inherited by almost half or more, doing so in a way that creates new jobs, creates a new energy economy, creates a health care system that works, and at

the same time assisting people who have fallen on hard times. So I just appreciate working with all of you to get going on these problems and to turn this around.

I will now yield back to my friend from Kentucky, or to my friend from Connecticut.

Mr. COURTNEY. Just to sort of close the note there, which is that, as difficult and challenging as the time we're living in for individuals like my friend I just described, or the macro picture, the fact of the matter is we can do this. As the Prime Minister said, we have to maintain our optimism, and we will, because that's the nature of our country. And we're going to get through this and fix this problem. And thank God we've got a President who's ready to work with this Congress and get this country turned around and moving in the right direction.

With that, I yield back to Mr. YARMUTH.

Mr. YARMUTH. I thank my friends. And I think one of the things that is so impressive about this budget that we have had submitted to us is it is unique in so many ways and it is trend setting in so many ways.

I would like to yield once again to my friend from Florida (Mr. KLEIN) to talk about how this budget may differ from budgets we have seen.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Well, I thank the gentleman for the discussion today. Because I think if we think about how we plan our family budgets, whether it's sending your kids to college, whether it's planning for retirement, if you're in retirement, making sure that the investments you have, even in difficult times like this, will pay for the expenses that you have, these are all things, it's all about certainty, and it is about trying to know where you will be and plan for the future. I know a lot of small businesses I talk to, they want to know for sure about how they will be in a position to plan their capital budget, cover the expansion, make the investments in their equipment and things like that.

So one of the things we've been working on is this budget. And the budget of course is the plan for this next year's fiscal spending of our government. And of course there are a lot of fixed expenses, there are things like, everything from prisons to roads to our military and defense and veterans, which are so important to us, particularly at a time when we are fighting two wars and we are creating a new generation of veterans. So as they come home, as this Congress has demonstrated, we will make sure that anyone who wears the uniform gets the benefit of making sure that this country stands behind them and their families for all the necessary care that they need in the future, as well as jobs.

But for the rest of the country, this really is a question of times when we do plan the necessary future vision. And I think what President Obama has

offered to many of us that I think is really visionary and exciting—and we're seeing this in the blueprint or what we call our budget—it's a focus on education, it's a focus on health care, it's a focus on energy. Each one of these is a crucial component of moving our economy forward.

Education by far—and I've believed this for a long, long time; my mom is a teacher, she is a public school teacher, she has taught second grade. She absolutely instilled in me the notion of how important education is. And as one of the first people to go to college in our family, it really has given me the opportunity to do things that have allowed me to serve in Congress. But more importantly, education is the best investment as a country that we can make. And between the stimulus plan and the budget, there is investment in college education. In President Obama's speech last week he talked about having every person who wants to be able to get a college education get one.

We see our competition around the world, whether it's Singapore or China, other places, the engineering degrees and other degrees that are coming forward; that's an investment in their future. Well, we have a great education system and a great university system, and community colleges and apprenticeship programs and vocational programs, all of these need to be nurtured and supported. And every student who wants to go to school—and every adult who wants to go back to school, particularly in a time like this—needs to have that support because that will turn into a very high productive economy.

Health care. We know health care is just the Pacman eating up the costs in our economy, not just for government, not just for Medicare and Medicaid, but for private businesses. I know that when I was in a business, we had about 75 employees. Every year—and I know many of the people who are on the floor here understand this from their businesses or people at home understand this—every year you go back and have that conversation of what it's going to cost to renew your health insurance; double-digit increases every single year—whether there has been an experience of sickness or anything in the business, that's exactly what happens, double-digit increases. So you have to make decisions; do you cut back? Do you pass off more of the costs to your employees? And at some point in time businesses say I can't afford it. And we want to give them the opportunity to provide that type of health insurance because it keeps their employees healthy. We don't want people showing up at the emergency room.

So this budget has an investment of changing our health care system to make it more efficient, better quality of medicine. And one of the ways they do this is bringing our health system into the 21st century with health technology. And this is something really

simple. Think of when you go to your doctor's office, and your doctor, and all his good medicine and good advice he's given you, he writes down the information about his observations and your evaluation on a chart in pen, in many cases—not all, but many of them still do—and that's because their systems have just not kept up with. It's not a fault of the doctors, it's just that the systems have really not kept up in this business. Now, every other business in the United States, we pretty much are on computers. Well, you still see large racks of files in a doctor's office. So, God forbid if something happened, let's say I'm at home and I have my personal doctor, and that doctor has my little chart. And he takes some tests, my heart and all the cholesterol and all the normal things, and I get sick as I'm traveling—let's say I'm up here in Washington, D.C. Well, I may go to a doctor up here, and guess what that doctor starts with? Zero. Nothing. No file, no nothing. And if he wants to get information, he has to call and maybe have somebody Federal Express or some type of courier of the record up to Washington and maybe has to take tests all over again. It just adds tremendous cost into the system instead of having a very simple—with privacy, of course, secure—but a simple system to have all of the technology of health care. Plus, certainly the quality of medicine can be improved on as well; I know many of my doctor friends tell me that all the time.

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There is an investment, an incentive for doctors and providers, hospitals and others. This is just common sense. Again, if we can save money it can result in better quality of medicine.

Lastly, of course, is energy, and I know many of us in this Chamber, Democrats and Republicans, most Americans, understand that we have got to get a grip on our energy policy and stop sending billions and billions of dollars to countries that are not our friends but, in many cases, our enemies. We complain about Venezuela and Hugo Chavez, rightfully so, he is very anti-American, and he is a threat. And what do we do? We send millions and millions and millions of dollars daily over to Venezuela and buy their oil.

Well, that makes absolutely no sense to me and, I think, to most Americans. Well, it's not just Venezuela, it's all the Middle Eastern countries and plenty of other places. The sooner we can get into a mode where we can develop alternative energy, and whether it's wind or wave or solar or any combination of electric powers out there, and obviously there is coal and nuclear—and there are probably some answers as we focus our technology on some of those things as well to figure out the solutions to those problems—any number of ways that we need to make this country energy independent.

What President Obama does, and I certainly support, and I know most

Americans do, is to really get our attention focused and make the kinds of investments necessary to get us into alternative energy. For energy conservation, electric grid, make sure that you are home, for example, with a new technology.

I had a small businessman in my area that came to me and said he has created a device which can now purchase and store electricity at the least expensive hours of the day. We know that at nighttime there is a low demand for power and you could, if they start pricing it that way, you could buy it less expensively. Boy, that makes a lot of sense, and then you can actually get more capacity out of our existing electric power plants, common sense. And these are the kinds of things that President Obama and many of us as Americans understand are the kinds of things that we need to do.

So the gentleman from Kentucky, I am actually very excited about the kinds of things that are in this budget. Well, sure, we are going to work on some and make them a little better. Maybe some won't work out, but I think there is a blueprint here for the future, it's a blueprint that will get our budget back in line, put people back to work, make the quality of our education, the quality of our health care, and certainly an energy policy that will put us into the future. This is the kind of leadership that I am really excited about.

Mr. YARMUTH. I thank my colleague, and I think that is truly one of the special things about this budget, is that it is forward-looking, it is visionary, and it doesn't rely on the tired actions of the past.

And, furthermore, it's such an honest budget. For the first time it is totally comprehensive, so that we don't keep things off the books like we have kept the expenditures for the war in Iraq and Afghanistan over the last 8 years. It puts expenses for those activities in the budget, projects them. It also includes items for anticipating disasters like Katrina or other natural disasters we know are going to occur but we never put those expenses in the budget.

So this is fully transparent, it is comprehensive, it is honest and, again, it is forward-looking, and that certainly is something that I think the American people, as time goes on and we discuss this budget, will appreciate that it is large. There is no question about it. We are spending unprecedented amounts of money and we, unfortunately, are facing some pretty substantial deficits.

But if we stick to this test, the odds of our not just recovering from our current situation, but from setting the foundation for an incredible era of growth and progress in this country, are greatly improved because of this new agenda advanced by the Obama administration.

So, as we get toward the end of our hour, I would like to recognize my friend from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN) who

has also played an important role in one aspect of meeting the challenge of this current situation, and that is an element of the housing problem that he has been particularly instrumental in dealing with.

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, Mr. YARMUTH.

Tomorrow we will have a vote in this House on a housing bill, and many have said that not only do we have to have confidence in our economy to have it come back, but we have to cure the housing problem first, which has been one of the main problems in causing us to go into this economic recession and the malaise that some say the economy is in and, indeed, it is.

One of the things we are doing tomorrow with the bill is to permanently make FDIC insurance for banks and credit unions \$250,000. That was something that we proposed in the first TARP and we were able to get that passed temporarily.

That permanent amount of money will secure American investors' deposits in banks and assure people they have confidence which they need to have and will have in the banks to know that their money is safe. That's important for our banking system to make it solid and for our constituents' deposits to make them secure.

The bill will also change and allow, for the first time, something that has been long in coming, the opportunity for people who might have to file chapter 13, bankruptcy, not a pleasant subject, not an easy subject, not an easy process but an ordeal where one has to go and show to the bankruptcy judge their need for help, all of their assets, their expenses, and be put on a plan for approximately 5 years on how they would have to spend their monies. And they have to have approval from the court over their finances.

In that process one can have the loans that they have made on a second home, on a farm, on a family farm, on an airplane, on a yacht, just about every type of property, modified by a bankruptcy judge to make it affordable to the person going into chapter 13 bankruptcy. The judge can reduce the principal down to the secured amount, can extend the terms, can lower the interest rate, but the judge has not been allowed, since 1978, because of an act of Congress, to modify a person's principal residence, which is their most valuable possession—maybe not in a monetary fashion but generally it is, at least in a spiritual way.

And in this particular crisis, to allow people to modify their mortgages on their personal residences, is similar to what people can do with secondary homes, vacation homes, yachts, airports, family farms, et cetera. We allow people to stay in their homes to solidify their neighborhoods, to keep houses on the tax rolls, to keep neighborhoods solid where if your neighborhoods aren't solid, you have increased crime, increased vermin, increased problems, and maintain hope for people in their neighborhoods and in their homes.

This will be a first-time activity. We have worked with all elements in this Congress to come about with amendments, there will be a manager's amendment tomorrow, to make it to where it is a last resort, to guarantee that the monies, the people won't be allowed to enter into the bankruptcy or have their mortgages changed unless they meet very strict criteria and provide that relief that we need to help this housing market succeed.

So we help the banks tomorrow and our financial security, really not the banks but the individual depositors with the \$250,000 FDIC insurance, and we help individuals in their homes with the opportunity to stay there and help neighborhoods.

I think this is landmark legislation, and I know that it's been extended to Vermont and Kentucky as well. I thank the anchor of our hour and the former president of this class, the distinguished and honorable gentleman from the former Conference U.S.A. city, Louisville, Mr. YARMUTH.

Mr. YARMUTH. I thank my colleague and thank him for his work on this very important piece of legislation that we will be dealing with tomorrow, which will be another important component to get the ship of state back on course and to get our economy moving again.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome and recognize our distinguished colleague from Vermont (Mr. WELCH).

Mr. WELCH. Thank you. I have been listening to some of your comments, and I just want to make a few remarks about the budget. We all know that we have an economy that's facing the biggest challenge since the Great Depression, and what this budget is attempting to do, and a lot of work getting from where we are to where we need to be, is, I think, very simple. It's about trying to revive the middle class.

You know, when you think about the recent history of America in the 1960s, when LBJ took on the challenge of trying to eliminate poverty and was successful in reducing it substantially, it was the right goal. The middle class paid.

And in the past 10 years, and even more, the policy has been, essentially, to lower taxes for very high-income folks, also provide deregulation for corporations, and it has resulted in a significant transfer of wealth. The top 1 percent of our country has enjoyed the greatest explosion of wealth since the 1920s, and, in fact, who paid for that? It was the middle class.

So the middle class paid for the programs that are essential, and I support it, that benefit the poor. The middle classes paid for the programs that were very, very generous to the quite wealthy, and it's the middle class who, in the end, is getting squeezed. This country has always done its best when it has had economic and political policies that have given an opportunity for people who are poor to move their way up into the middle class and for the

middle class to sustain itself and to grow and prosper.

And what the Obama budget attempts to do is redirect our energies and our policies towards rewarding work and rewarding and enhancing the middle class.

Now, if we are going to be successful, we actually do have to pay attention to deficits, and it's a contradiction, so it seems, that on the one hand because of our fiscal situation we have to invest. We also have to commit ourselves to a health care policy that's going to make health care affordable, and to an energy policy that embraces the challenges of a new energy economy as something that can create jobs much. And we, as Democrats, who are supporting a middle class budget also have to embrace the absolute commitment to root out any waste and any excessive spending.

Mr. YARMUTH. I thank my colleague for his contribution.

I would like to conclude this hour of discussion from the Majority Makers, the class of 2006, that as this Congress proceeds and as we work with the Obama administration to set a new course for the country, to lay a foundation for growth and prosperity, a return to prosperity in this country, we look forward to further discussions.

And I think the most important thing we can say in closing is that to repeat the words of Prime Minister Brown this morning, who said, who kept mentioning, "faith in the future." That's what we are about, restoring faith in the future for the American people, and this will be our main mission over the next 2 years as we proceed to help every American realize his or her ambition for a better life.

OPPOSE OVERSPENDING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the honor to address you here on the floor of the United States House of Representatives, and it is always an honor to address you, Mr. Speaker.

I have spent some of the last hour listening to my colleagues, whom I appreciate voicing their opinions as well. I would like to take up some of their issues at the beginning, and then I will roll it into the subject matter of this next hour that I have.

But first of all, when a statement was made by the gentleman from Tennessee that Rush Limbaugh wants Obama to fail, he didn't say that, Mr. Speaker. He can't be quoted anywhere as he wants Obama to fail or President Obama to fail. It wasn't his intent at all. You have to listen to what he actually said.

He said he wants his policies to fail. That was a message that's clear. It's been reiterated over and over again across the media and this country, Mr. Speaker. So I have to come here and