

are hit with more new taxes. What is the plan to protect small business from bearing the brunt of new taxes for this health care idea?

Madam Speaker, these are seven of the questions I have been asked by the people I represent, and I would hope the President could address some them and questions by other Members of Congress.

Madam Speaker, does anyone really believe that big government can do a better job of running health care? It is a glittering illusion to think our health care problems can be solved by more expensive, big-bureaucratic government. We do need reform, but a government takeover will only add to the problems we have now. We need to fix what is broken, not break what already works.

So, Madam Speaker, since our President is an innovator of new communication ideas, I respectfully submit that a townhall meeting between the President and Congress might just be the way to cut to the chase in this health care debate and allow the President time to answer the questions of the American people.

And that's just the way it is.

THE AMERICAN ECONOMY IS THE ISSUE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Madam Speaker, our economy is the issue. Today, the World Economic Forum released its annual Global Competitiveness Report. Switzerland has now replaced the United States as the most competitive economy in the world. The United States fell out of first place due to its weakened financial markets and macroeconomic instability.

This, Madam Speaker, is another wake-up call for our country, if anyone is listening. Due to the global economic crisis, precipitated by irresponsible U.S. financial institutions, nations throughout the world continue to struggle managing their financial futures.

Let's take note of an important fact: Switzerland maintains a positive trade balance, not a trade deficit. In 2008, Switzerland enjoyed a \$17 billion trade surplus, a third straight record year. And yet the nation is also now ranked as the most competitive in the world. We have almost a trillion-dollar trade deficit.

Now, think about this: Free trade fundamentalists here in the United States would say that it is not possible, that you can't be competitive while running an enormous trade surplus. Some of them even try to tell us that trade deficits are good.

Well, here in the United States, the free trade fundamentalists would have us believe we have to roll over for the Chinese or anyone else who wants to dominate our domestic market in order

to be competitive. But facts are facts. Switzerland is both the world's most economically competitive nation, according to the World Economic Forum, while enjoying an enormous trade surplus.

Madam Speaker, we have a lot of work to do here in our country and in this Congress to help our Nation regain its world-leading position in the competitiveness ranking. We now rank, shockingly, 108th in the world in the soundness of our banks. Switzerland fell in that category too, down to 44th, but not as far as the United States.

In regulation of securities exchanges, the United States ranked a dismal 47th in the world, compared to Switzerland's third-place ranking.

In property rights, Switzerland was first, and the United States 30th.

In infrastructure, that is, roads, bridges and so forth, Switzerland was first. The United States, 14th.

In math and science education, Switzerland was fifth and the United States 48th.

In infant mortality, the United States ranked 36th. Doesn't that speak to a decent health insurance program in this country?

In life expectancy, we were 30th. In the quality of primary education, 30th.

Madam Speaker, we have a lot of work to do. Our Nation is losing ground internationally. Second place overall isn't bad, but we have to make the necessary investments in our physical and social infrastructure or we will fall even further.

One the authors of the World Economic Report, Dr. Sala-i-Martin, a professor of economics at Columbia, put it this way: "Amid the present crisis, it is critical that policymakers not lose sight of long-term competitiveness fundamentals amid short-term urgencies. Competitive economies are those that have in place the factors driving productivity enhancements on which their present and future prosperity is built. A competitiveness-supporting economic environment can help national economies to weather business cycle downturns and ensure that the mechanisms enabling solid economic performance going into the future are in place."

We have a lot of work to do as a Congress. We need strong reform of the financial sector to restore strength to our banks, not cosmetic changes; we need investments in infrastructure and education; and we need health insurance reform. Our economic competitiveness as a nation and our ability to create jobs hang in the balance.

Madam Speaker, it is time for Congress to take the reins and stop this stampede of greed, to provide leadership that will help our Nation and help our people through these tough times. We want the United States to be a world leader again in job creation, innovation and economic competitiveness. We can do it, but not unless the financial industry is a part of the team, pulling in the same direction,

making our country stronger, not putting us further at risk, and not taking huge bonuses while 15 million Americans remain unemployed.

Madam Speaker, the economy is the issue. The American people know that. The President and Congress have our work cut out for us.

IMPLEMENTING A PROPER U.S. APPROACH TO HONDURAS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my deep concern regarding the most recent strong-arm tactics of the U.S. Government to coerce the people of Honduras into accepting the return of former President Manuel Zelaya into power.

Have some U.S. officials forgotten what democracy really is? Democracy does not belong to nor is defined by one man nor one government. It cannot survive without respect for the rule of law. Yet this has been forgotten.

The U.S. and the international community failed the Honduran people and Honduran democracy as Zelaya violated the constitution and took unilateral actions to extend his hold on power. Our government said and did nothing as democracy came under attack in the months leading up to Zelaya's removal from office. Yet when the Honduran Supreme Court, the Attorney General, the National Congress and the human rights ombudsman took the necessary steps in accordance with the constitutional tenets, then the U.S. and the amorphous international community quickly sprung into action to defend Zelaya and punish Honduran democratic institutions and virtually all of Honduran civil society.

With no apparent regard for U.S. security or political or economic interests, the United States is doing all we can to ensure that Zelaya is put back in charge. The U.S. has terminated millions of dollars in U.S. assistance to the people of Honduras. We have stopped critical counternarcotics cooperation. We have suspended necessary visa services. Last week, the State Department declared that the presidential elections to be held in late November in Honduras will not be recognized unless Zelaya is returned to power.

As the U.S. has been employing its harshest tactics against the Honduran government and the Honduran people, the U.S. has also at the same time eased restrictions on the Cuban dictatorship, pushed for engagement and dialogue with the Cuban, Syrian and Iranian regimes, while failing to hold Chavez and Correa accountable for the blatant violations of freedom of expression and other fundamental rights of their citizens.

The U.S. has crossed a dangerous threshold by announcing, as I stated, that we will not acknowledge the upcoming Honduran elections unless the