

THE AGONY OF THE CENTRAL VALLEY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. DAHLKEMPER). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Madam Speaker, for many months, the Republicans on the Water and Power Subcommittee of the Natural Resources Committee have implored the majority Democrats to hold a hearing in the Central Valley of California to see and hear for themselves the damage that the Federal Government has caused by diverting 200 billion gallons of water from Central Valley farms in order to indulge the environmental left's pet cause, the delta smelt.

After our pleas were met with continued stonewalling, we decided to hold a forum under our own auspices and to invite all members of the California congressional delegation, all members of the Natural Resources Committee and representatives of the Obama administration to come to Fresno to see firsthand what these policies have wrought.

Instead, after we had announced the forum, the Water and Power Subcommittee chairwoman decided to meet on the same day in southern California to extol the virtues of water conservation. Congress has thus made clear its intention to sacrifice the people of the San Joaquin Valley upon the altar of environmental extremism.

Despite heavy rains over the past month, the administration continues to blame a relatively mild drought for the fact that Valley farmers will receive only 5 percent of the water that they are entitled to. This does not explain how, in far more severe droughts than this, Valley farmers have received far greater allocations. Nor does it explain how these massive water diversions can be justified to support the delta smelt if indeed supplies were constrained.

Had the Democrats in the subcommittee come to Fresno, they would have heard and seen the anguish of the people of the Central Valley of California. These water diversions have destroyed a half-million acres of the most productive farmland in America, and they have thrown 30,000 Central Valley farm families into unemployment.

They would have heard the stories of food lines in communities that once prided themselves on being the breadbasket of the Western United States. They would have heard about the frustration of seeing produce imported from China being handed out in these food lines to the very same American farmers who once supplied the very same produce to the entire world.

And they would have seen the anger as the absent Interior Secretary's testimony to the Natural Resources Committee last year was played back, in which Mr. SALAZAR admitted that the Obama administration has the author-

ity to turn the pumps back on, but that it chooses not to do so because that would be "like admitting failure."

There is some good news. This afternoon, the day after our forum in Fresno, the Interior Secretary relented to the extent of releasing 350,000 to 400,000 acre-feet of already allocated water to the Central Valley. Having demonstrated his authority to release the water that Central Valley farmers already own, he now needs to follow through and release the water that is being held hostage to the delta smelt.

Meanwhile, Mr. NUNES of California has introduced H.R. 3105, the Turn on the Pumps Act, which does exactly the same thing that Congress did under far less severe circumstances several years ago for the farmers of New Mexico. Mr. NUNES has filed a discharge petition to bypass that subcommittee and bring the bill directly to the House for a vote. It needs 218 signatures. So far, it has 105, 104 Republicans and one Democrat.

Madam Speaker, I assure you that it is not only the Central Valley that is suffering. The willful destruction of 500,000 acres of American farmland by these massive water diversions, all for the enjoyment and amusement of the 3-inch long delta smelt, is reflected in the rising prices for produce that families are feeling far beyond the congressionally created dust bowl of California's Central Valley.

Nor is the delta smelt doing any better. Despite these massive water diversions, the delta smelt population fell back to the historic low in 2005 and is now well below the high points recorded in the late 1970s. Given these findings, how can anybody argue that the delta pumping restrictions are benefiting the delta smelt?

Madam Speaker, I promised to carry the plea from the many Americans who poured out their hearts to us in Fresno on Monday for Congress to come to the Central Valley and see what their policies have caused. I place their invitation before you.

REBUILDING THE ECONOMY

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

Mr. PERRIELLO. Madam Speaker, I rise today as one of many freshmen who will be speaking during this hour because a little over a year ago, we came in on a wave of change. Many of us came into politics for the first time, certainly to the Federal Government for the first time, because we believed this country needed a new kind of politics, not just a politics of right or left, but a politics of right and wrong. For too long, both parties had failed to rise to the challenges of our time. Energy independence, redefining our competitive advantage—there were so many challenges to take on. And a year later, we are not satisfied.

Tomorrow night, the President of the United States will come and join us here in this body to speak and give us a report on the state of the Nation. Well, the Nation is in pain. Working and middle class families are in pain, and we haven't done nearly enough to show people the results of standing up for the working and middle class.

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There are many things that the change was about, but certainly at the heart of it was a desire for a new era of accountability, accountability for the private sector, accountability for government, and even accountability for consumers and bad decisions that had been made.

But most importantly to this was a need to shift our economic policies from speculation on Wall Street to job creation on Main Street. Changing the name plate on the door from Hank Paulson to Tim Geithner does not represent a change of economic policy. We need to understand what it will take to have actual economic accountability and job growth in this country.

We believe in this House, the people's House, we have taken dramatic steps to put working class and middle class people ahead of the most powerful among us. But the pain continues. In my district over the last 5 years we have seen people's utility rates go up 93 percent by Appalachian Power and others. We get calls every day, 20 percent increases in their health insurance premiums, bank fees, credit card fees, Comcast fees, all going through the roof while the working and middle class pay the price.

We have taken steps here to stand up and say someone is going to stand up for Main Street, demand that accountability and that economic relief that we thought was part of the change. We hope tomorrow night to hear more about your willingness to lead in these areas.

But we also must switch this focus to Main Street because we are in a jobs crisis. We need a wartime-like mentality of how serious this job crisis is. And we took dramatic efforts a year ago that have helped to stop the bleeding, to help turn from some of the most dramatic job losses in American history, certainly modern American history under the last administration, to stopping that bleeding so that we could begin the recovery. But we know much more needs to be done. We are not satisfied.

I hear time and time again the banks are still not lending. If we need to do direct lending, if we need to do more to get the lending going to small and medium-sized businesses, we have to understand that in America's economy today two-thirds of job creation comes from small- and medium-sized business. They may not have the political power and control over both parties in this town, but small- and medium-sized businesses create that job growth. We need to get job creation on Main Street