best—compete and create jobs. There is no silver bullet, but there are solutions that we can work together on starting today. Here are a few:

Tax relief. Small businesses in America pay some of the highest taxes in the world, and the associated regulations are also an enormous barrier to growth. The average tax compliance cost for employees for small businesses is three times what it is for large businesses. We need to make taxes lower, fairer, more predictable and generally more understandable. We will be voting on a bill of this nature sometime this week.

Freedom from government competition. Too many of our small businesses find themselves pitted against their own government when it comes to doing commercial work like landscaping, construction, and engineering. We should require Federal agencies to use the private sector when providing goods and services that are available in the open marketplace. This gives small businesses in our community a chance to work efficiently and create jobs, and this has been shown to save taxpayers money.

Finally, and most importantly, a jobs-based education policy. A major root cause of our long-term unemployment is the changing nature of the global marketplace. We are competing against developing countries like never before. Competition isn't bad, but we need to be better prepared. In order to maintain a high standard of living, we need cultivate the value-added, knowledge-based innovative sector of our economy. This can only be achieved through education and a new focus on the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math, also known as STEM. STEM jobs, on the average, pay 27 percent more than non-STEM jobs. The only effective long-term way to rebuild the middle class is through education. It's been this way since the dawn of time with better-paying, tax-generating jobs that provide at least those basics of the American Dream: a home, a college education for your children, and a dignified retirement.

Mr. Speaker, there are few tasks more important than helping small businesses put our neighbors and friends back to work in America. Let's join to work on pro-growth policies that will enable them to do just that.

Mr. GRAVES of Georgia. I thank the gentleman from New York.

I appreciate your plea there. Let's get government out of the way. Let's let small business owners do what they do best, and that is dream big and work hard.

Next to share with us is Mr. BARTLETT from Maryland. Thank you.

Mr. BARTLETT. Thank you very much for yielding.

I would like to spend just a couple of minutes putting this discussion in context.

I'm from Maryland. I have been there 51 years now, and for 12 years my wife and I ran a small business, meeting a payroll every Wednesday morning. That's pretty good discipline. I wanted to give you some statistics from Maryland.

Now, we're an average, a little smaller than average State. We have only eight Representatives in the Congress. We have something over 5 million people. In our little State, we have 106,441 small businesses. That is a lot of individual businesses. They have between one and 500 employees, and they totally employ 1,105,200 individuals. Now, this is in a little State like Maryland.

It's interesting to see who employs these people. The top three industries by employment:

Over 157,000 in health care and social assistance. This is one of the most rapidly growing segments of our society, which we have to kind of calm down or we won't be able to afford it;

There are over 135,000 employees in professional, scientific, and technical services. And Maryland is probably either number two or number three in biotech in the whole country, so we're proud of that;

We have 133,000 employees in construction. That's down. We used to have more than that, of course, and we hope we can have more in the future.

According to the Census Bureau, of the small businesses in Maryland, 15,717 are women-owned, and they employ 147,751 employees.

I would just like to note that, before the recent increase in employment in Hispanic small businesses, that women-owned small business are the fastest growing small businesses in our country. They are better employers than men. Men and women are different. Our military has a little trouble figuring that out sometimes, but they are different. They are ranked to be better employers by their employees, so let's give a way to women who are entering the small business community.

In addition to this, to these small businesses, in 2009, Maryland was home to 365,492 sole proprietorships. These are small businesses with one person in them, sole proprietorships.

Many of these self-employed small businesses also benefit from the 20 percent small business tax cut in H.R. 9, which is one of the things we are focusing on this evening, because I understand that we're voting on that tomorrow.

A couple of interesting statistics:

Between '05 and '08, small business created a net total of 63,576 new jobs in Maryland, but in just '08 and '09, we've lost 57,433. So we just are barely up in small business now because of how many of those small businesses we lost.

One of the previous speakers mentioned the Tax Code and how we need to make it simpler and fairer. Let's just talk about the Fair Tax for just a moment.

If we went to the Fair Tax—that's a tax on consumption—then let's repeal the 16th Amendment. Don't give the government any chance to ever come back with a personal income tax again. If we did that, we could have a bigger tax revenue with no increase in tax burden, because the tax burden today is not just the tax as you pay, but the $200 billion that it costs businesses and individuals across their country every year to comply with the code.

I don't know anybody out there who wouldn't be happy to roll that compliance cost into the tax burden so that now the revenues will go up with no increase in tax burden. That's one of the things that we need to do to balance the budget. If we just went to the Fair Tax with no increase in tax burden, we'd have $200 billion a year more money flowing into the U.S. Treasury and small business would be a big part of this.

Mr. GRAVES of Georgia. Thank you. I appreciate your words there.

As I wrap up this segment that we have here this evening, I just want to say thank you to the small business owners across America. You have heard great reports from Members of Congress who are with you, who are fighting with you and fighting for you. We just want to thank you, because every day you're getting up and you're going against some of the greatest pressures and the greatest burdens that a government could ever place on you, but you don't give up.

You get up each day. You put the boots on. You go out and you work hard. You take that dream, that idea, that concept, and you build it into reality, and you are building jobs and you are providing for other families. We want to thank you for that.

While the optimism index is getting lower, the misery index is getting higher. I'm here to tell you Americans have not given up. Small business owners have not given up. In fact, statistics show that if just one out of two businesses across this Nation hire one person in the next 12 months, unemployment would be near zero. That's how close we are, because small business owners haven't given up. I want to thank you for that. I want to applaud you for that. Keep up the great fight.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1750

SMALL BUSINESS TAX CUT ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) is recognized for 28 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that, and I really appreciate Chairman GRAVES making it possible for so many of us who care about small business in this country this evening to take a little time to talk about how important it is and what we ought to be doing to support our small business folks all over the country. After all, 70 percent of the jobs that are created historically in the

American economy aren't the big guys. They're not the huge corporations, although we want them to do well and hire a lot of people. But even though a lot of people think it's the huge corporations that are doing all the hiring, it's really small business folks. It's mom-and-pops places. It's people that have fewer than 500 employees. Oftentimes, fewer than 50. Sometimes it's 5, or even 1. These are the folks that historically have created 70 percent of the jobs.

And, unfortunately, I would argue that this administration and the policies that have been implemented by many of the folks on the other side of the aisle, unfortunately, have made it very challenging to these small businesses to be successful and to hire additional employees. And there's a whole range of issues that we're going to talk about this evening. We have limited time, so I'm going to turn it over to a couple of my colleagues.

I would like to first recognize the gentleman from Arizona, DAVID SCHWEIKERT, who's been a leader in trying to come up with policies that will be supportive for small businesses in this country.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Mr. Speaker, to my friend, thank you for yielding me a few minutes here.

One of the reasons I'm standing here is, over the last week we've heard the President talk about what we call the Buffett rule, and the Senate, and its failure to move the Buffett rule—thank heaven. And realizing, for a lot of Americans, they don't understand this is, A, it's absolutely pretend math. But it's also meant as an absolute attack on the entrepreneurs, on the wealth creators and the people that create jobs and economic growth in this country.

So I thought I would do another one of my clocks to try to help folks understand the reality of the math. Think about this. We borrow about $3.5 billion every single day, which is actually an improvement from where we've been, but $3.5 billion every day. There's 1,440 minutes in a day. So we were trying to figure out how do you explain how little the Buffett rule does to help us in our debt crisis but how much damage it will ultimately do to our economic growth.

And where this came from is 2 days ago my phone rang, and I had a gentleman from my district who was absolutely insistent that the Buffett rule would solve the debt problem. So we made a clock. And here it is. If you think about how much we borrow in a single day—that $3.5 billion in a day—how much would the Buffett rule, with our math, how much of that day would it cover of the debt? Remember, 1,440 minutes in a day. It would cover 3½ minutes of borrowing in a day. It's fantasy.

So why does the left, why does this President engage in this sort of political theater? Maybe because it's good politics. But it's really crappy math.

And here's the reality of our future, and this keeps coming back, and why we so desperately have to do those things to get our small businesses to start hiring and growing. But we here in the Federal Government, we here in Congress, are going to have to deal with a reality that's coming at us like a freight train. This year, 63 percent of all of our spending is Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, interest on the debt, veterans' benefits. In 4½ years—so the 2017 budget—75 percent of all of our spending will be what we call the mandatory—the entitlement.

It is consuming us as a people. Your government is very quickly becoming a health insurer with a shrinking army. We need the President to stop pushing policies that attack our job-creation engines. The fantasy of things like the Buffett rule may be great politics but it's not good for this country.

Mr. CHABOT. I thank the gentleman.

Reclaiming my time, the gentleman mentioned the Buffett rule. And maybe I'll talk about that as well very briefly here because I think the gentleman from Arizona did a great job in showing that this is really all about politics, is all this so-called Buffett rule policy is.

There's a gentleman named Charles Krauthammer who happens to be, I believe, one of the smartest, most interesting political commentators or pundits in the land. I saw him talk about the Buffett rule and what a farce it is the other evening, and he illustrated it a little bit differently but it's the same type of illustration. One that brings it, I think, down to Earth.

He had the numbers run on this from a very reputable organization. And if the dollars were collected on the so-called Buffett tax for the next 250 years—so the next 250 years this tax is collected—and he commented that that is longer than the Republic has been in existence, the United States of America. This is longer than our existence. So you collect it for the next 250 years. Do you know how much we would actually collect from that relative to the deficit, which is what this is supposed to do, pay down the deficit? It wouldn't cover last year's deficit alone. So not one year of the Obama deficit would be covered by the so-called Buffett rule if we collected it for 250 years. So it's nothing but pure politics. Don't be fooled by that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as small businesses across the country fight to make ends meet and stay out of debt, the Federal Government continues to dig itself into a hole with its exorbitant spending habits. Small businesses are burdened with massive regulations brought on by ObamaCare. They're further plagued by the threat of tax increases—significant tax increases—next year, should the relief from the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts be allowed to expire. And that's what some people, particular those on the other side of the aisle, would like to happen. They would like the tax cuts to go away. In other words, if tax cuts go away, taxes go up. And this wasn't on the very wealthy. It was on virtually all Americans—middle class folks, people that take advantage of the child tax credit, and a whole range of people in the middle. And yes, at upper income levels as well.

So a lot of folks would be hit very hard with this, particularly small business folks, because the so-called wealth in this country, many of them are small business folks. Again, as I mentioned before, 70 percent of the jobs in this country are created by those folks. So if you're trying to bring the unemployment rate down, why put additional burden on the people that are actually creating the jobs?

Mr. Speaker, tax issues are the single most significant set of regulatory burdens for most small businesses. A recent NFIB Research Foundation study—the NFIB, by the way, is the National Federation of Independent Businesses—found that 4 of the top 10 small business problems were tax-related. Just this week, struggling families and businesses were forced to give the government more of their hard-earned money to satisfy the hungry appetite of government bureaucracies.

Mr. Speaker, enough is enough. Confiscatory tax rates and fiscal irresponsibility have got to come to an end. Small businesses across the country are fighting to keep their doors open and keep their lights on. It's shameful for the Federal Government to expect these hardworking taxpayers to foot the bill for GSA excursions to Las Vegas and inept corporate schemes like Solyndra while the backbone of our economy, which is the small businesses, continues to suffer. After all, American small businesses are responsible, as I said before, for 70 percent of the jobs that are created in this country. Why do we want to continue to make life so difficult for them? Why are they the target for the left in this House so often?

The America I know is a Nation where hard work creates opportunities for success. After all, that's what our forefathers were seeking in the first place. At the founding of our Nation, small businessowners came to this land to escape excessive taxation and cumbersome regulation. These were families of farmers and builders, traders, inventors, and merchants. It's disheartening that today it's our very own government that's creating the job-killing taxation and regulation.

Our economy is still struggling to rebound from the worst recession since the Great Depression, and we must support the engine that will propel America forward. This engine has always been fueled by hard work and an economic climate that rewards success.

When I'm back home in my district in greater Cincinnati, I make a point to frequently meet with small businessowners to talk about their successes as well as their struggles. I too often hear that the burden of taxes and regulations, coupled with great uncertainty, is keeping these businesses

from growing, and in many cases forcing many of them to close their doors altogether.

That's why I'm a cosponsor of H.R. 9, the Small Business Tax Cut Act. If passed, this legislation would amend the Internal Revenue Code to allow American businesses a tax deduction of 20 percent. This is common sense. It's a fair bill that would help small businessowners to keep more of what they have earned to invest in expansion and hiring. That's the important thing—hiring Americans who now need those jobs.

□ 1800

We still have over 8 percent that are unemployed. I urge my colleagues to support this critical legislation that will be a shot in the arm to small businesses across the Nation. If there are any of my colleagues that would have any additional things they would like to say, we would welcome them at this time.

May I ask the Speaker how much time we have remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Ohio has 16 minutes remaining.

Mr. CHABOT. One of the other issues that we haven't covered too much here, and let me talk about this very briefly, is the impact that the high cost of energy, gasoline in particular, what kind of difficulty that's causing small businesses across the country, because I hear this all the time from my small business constituents. It's not surprising that energy prices, and gas prices in particular, have been going up so much. They're double—the gas prices alone at the pump are double what they were when the Obama administration took over, and that's most unfortunate.

But it's really not surprising when you consider the person that President Obama appointed to be the head of energy in this country. The chief mind about energy and what we should do about it is the Secretary of Energy, Steven Chu. Steven Chu a couple of months before President Obama appointed him to that position said that it was his goal, what we ought to try to do, what we ought to strive for, is to raise the price of gasoline in this country, energy costs, prices of gasoline, for example, to European levels. Think of that.

Now they've got approximately, it depends on the country you're talking about, but it's around $9 a gallon—they do liters over there—but it's about $9 a gallon. Now we're not there yet, but, unfortunately, we're well on our way. It's approaching $4 back in my district in Cincinnati. Here in Washington, just the other day, I had to fill up, and it was about $4.50. So we're not quite there yet, but we're approaching that. It's just unbelievable that we're in this state.

But really I guess it shouldn't be surprising when you consider that the person that President Obama put in control of our energy policy here in this country said that it was his goal to get energy prices up to European levels. As I say, unfortunately, we're well on our way.

Those gas prices, that's what the delivery trucks have to pay, the small business folks that are delivering things to towns, or getting products from other manufacturers. When they come in, they cost more. So they can't charge the consumers as much; or if they do, they drive those consumers away. So it's a vicious circle. We need to get energy prices down in this country, and, unfortunately, they're on their way up.

Another, I think, terrible mistake that this administration has made is to basically shut the door on the Keystone pipeline. This is oil sands from Canada, our friendly neighbor to the north. Our largest supplier of petroleum, by the way, is Canada. And this is a pipeline that would mean a significant number of jobs here in the United States, tens of thousands of jobs. And if we ever needed jobs, we know it's now. And those are good-paying jobs. Many of them are union jobs. But the President has decided that, no, we're not going to make this decision until maybe after the election. So tens of thousands of jobs are at risk here.

Canada has been pretty clear about what they're going to do. If we're not going to accept the oil in our country and build the pipeline, it's quite likely that they'll go ahead and build the pipeline through Canada to British Columbia and ship that oil that ought to be going to the U.S. to China, who is one of our biggest competitors in a lot of ways. And if you know anything about China, the environmental controls that they have over there are far weaker than what we have in the United States.

So if your goal is to make sure that you're protecting the environment—and that's what many of the President's allies, the really radical left-wing environmentalists who are fighting against the Keystone pipeline—if you buy their argument, what they're saying is they want to protect the environment by not having that oil come down here and be refined in the gulf. But the controls we have here are much stronger than what they are over in China. So you're not protecting the environment at all or climate change or anything else if you're going to allow them to spew out what they usually do in China when they handle refining and manufacturing oftentimes and a lot of other things.

We all know how the administration supported an organization like Solyndra and how much tax dollars were wasted there. And it goes on and on. So the energy policy in this country by this administration is impacting consumers. It's impacting you and me and anybody who goes and fills up at the gas pump nowadays. But it's also adversely impacting small businesses and job creation.

Another way that this administration, I believe, has made a mistake which is causing these high prices is to continue to keep off limits much of the Outer Continental Shelf. The gulf, the moratorium, was disastrous for jobs in the gulf region after the spill down there; and, yes, it should have been investigated very thoroughly. But a lot of those oil derricks ended up leaving that area. They couldn't hold out with that cost, the expensive capital costs over 6 months' period of time, so they ended up off the coast of Brazil, for example.

And the President famously said, We'll be happy to buy your oil, Brazil. Well, we can look at oil all around the world, but we ought to be self-sufficient. And the President said he was interested in being energy self-sufficient in this country, but his policies are anything but that.

So he continues to put off limits much of the Outer Continental Shelf. We had the disaster in the gulf, and ANWR up in Alaska the administration has continued to put off limits. Now, we need to do all these things in an environmentally safe manner. And we have the ability to do that now. But, again, this administration has shut this down. That's affecting all of us in higher and higher gas prices. So it's long overdue for this administration to take a look, a long hard look, at what their policies are doing to the country and to reconsider this, to allow us to go after oil that we have available to us, clean coal, natural gas, and a whole range of fuels that we have here in this country so we don't have to be buying that from countries that oftentimes don't have our best interests at heart.

It sends a lot of money over to regions and countries where, unfortunately, a lot of terrorism that has endangered the world and endangers us has come from. So those dollars aren't always spent in a way that's going to help the United States. So, it's time for the administration to turn its policies around.

Mr. Speaker, without further ado, I will yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1810

HIGHER EDUCATION AFFORDABILITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to spend some time on the floor this evening. I will be joined by other colleagues, we anticipate, to talk about an issue which is front and center for millions of families all across the country.

As my poster next to me indicates, there is actually a very critical deadline that's approaching this country in terms of the issue of higher education