

new economy, Bloomberg recently reported that 95 percent of wealth generated since the Great Recession went to the richest 1 percent—95 percent went to 1 percent. In real terms, 9 out of 10 people control less wealth than they did before the crash.

In 2012, the top 10 percent of earners took home more than half of the U.S. total income. This is the highest level ever recorded. Income and wealth haven't been this concentrated since before the Great Depression, and we are beginning to rival the gilded age of the late 19th century.

A recent Gallup poll shows that the concerns about inequality have moved beyond academia and into the public consciousness. According to Gallup, two out of three Americans are dissatisfied with income and wealth distribution in the United States, including 54 percent of all Republicans and 70 percent of Independents. The same poll found that many Americans now worry about their ability to find future opportunity, and only 54 percent believe that one can get ahead by working hard. What does that say about the American Dream?

Justice Louis Brandeis once said:

We may have democracy, or we may have wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we cannot have both.

Letting a generation of Americans remain underemployed, underpaid, and despairing about their future creates a dangerous cycle of economic and social destruction, and it damages democracy. Nations whose citizens believe that the game is rigged against them are not beacons of democracy. Civic culture corrodes, and space opens for divisive and extreme politics. We have seen that here at home. The new Pope, Pope Francis, recently lamented that the world's inequality is quietly undermining social and political institutions. He gets it.

Last week, the President highlighted how our Nation's wealth and income gaps have become too large to continue to ignore. Congress cannot continue to stand idly by. I urge my colleagues to consider the many bipartisan proposals that would jump-start growth for all Americans. We need to be investing in this country's crumbling infrastructure. My own Put America Back to Work Act, which would reauthorize Build America Bonds programs, would give local government another tool to jump-start the economy and infrastructure projects.

Generations of Americans, starting with our Founders, made their way to America's shores, attracted by the promise of opportunity and the belief that, through hard work, they could get ahead. Unfortunately, that dream is at risk today.

I urge my colleagues to join all of us in preserving opportunity for all Americans, and prevent our Nation from becoming a nation of stark divide between the haves and the have-nots.

#### A GOVERNMENT THAT GOVERNS LEAST GOVERNS BEST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. BARR) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BARR. Mr. Speaker, in his State of the Union address last week, the President described an economy in which income inequality has deepened and upward mobility has stalled. Unfortunately, in many respects, he is right. The poor are worse off today than we were when President Obama took office. Nearly 7 million more Americans live in poverty today as compared to 2008.

A record 47 million Americans receive food stamps, 13 million more than when President Obama assumed office. Median household income has fallen over \$2,000 in the last 4 years. Seventy-six percent of Americans live paycheck to paycheck, and the percentage of working-age people actually in the workforce has dropped to the lowest rates in 35 years. A full 92 million Americans are not part of the labor force. They are either unemployed or not even actively looking for work. They are so frustrated with the Obama economy, they have just given up. When taking into account marginally attached workers—workers who are unemployed but want a job and workers who have part-time jobs who want full-time jobs—the jobless rate today is over 13 percent.

Mr. Speaker, 5 years after this President took office, the state of the Union is not strong. But instead of admitting that his policies have failed, the President offered more Big Government and more class warfare. But, Mr. Speaker, a lack of government isn't the problem, and class warfare isn't a solution. The President says we need to raise the minimum wage and extend emergency unemployment insurance yet again, for the 13th time in his administration.

We should stop thinking small in this country. We are Americans. We should think big. We don't need minimum wages; we need maximum wages. We don't need more unemployment insurance and government dependency; we need jobs and self-sufficiency. The best way to combat income inequality, to restore upward mobility in the American Dream and create a healthy economy is for Washington to get out of the way, whether in the doctor's office, in the job market, or at the gas pump.

That means replacing ObamaCare with patient-centered reforms that will lower the cost of health care without growing government. It means cutting wasteful spending and making reforms to put the Nation on a path towards a balanced budget. It means comprehensive tax reform that rewards work, saving, and investment and allows individuals, families, and businesses to keep more of what they earn. It means rolling back provisions of Dodd-Frank that allow bureaucrats to take away choices, financial services, and products and limit access to credit and take those away from the American people.

It means unleashing the energy potential of the United States by ending the war on coal and approving, immediately, the Keystone pipeline. And it means giving the poor a hand up rather than a handout, giving them a job instead of a government check, and giving them the skills they need to escape dependency so that they can achieve their God-given potential.

We can do all this. We can restore the American Dream, and we can restore opportunity and economic growth. And I stand ready to work to get America back on track.

#### BLACK HISTORY MONTH: THE NATIVE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF ALABAMA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in honor of Black History Month and the countless contributions and sacrifices made by notable African Americans to this great Nation. I also stand before you to proclaim the month of February as a time of reflection for Alabama's Seventh Congressional District.

In honor of Black History Month, I thought it would be befitting that we pay honor and tribute to the native sons and daughters of Alabama that have made significant contributions not only to the great State of Alabama, but to this Nation. As representative of the Civil Rights District and a beneficiary of the sacrifices of so many, I have committed to sharing the stories of these extraordinary men and women throughout the month of February so that their contributions will forever be recorded and referenced in our Nation's history.

□ 1030

Today, I again begin with a tribute to Virgil Ware, 13, and Johnnie Robinson, 16. These American heroes and Birmingham natives lost their lives within hours of the historic bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church on Sunday, September 15, 1963.

While many of us have heard the heart-wrenching stories of the four little girls that perished in that bomb, many aren't aware that on that same day, Virgil and Johnnie were also victims of unspeakable and senseless violence.

Virgil Ware was born on December 6, 1949, in Birmingham, Alabama to James and Lorine Ware. He was the third of six children. One of his surviving brothers, Melvin Ware, describes Virgil as a special child who was exceptional in his educational endeavors. While his brothers were preparing for social gatherings, Virgil could be found reading a good book or perusing the encyclopedia. A few months before his death, the eighth-grader expressed to his older siblings that he was looking forward to joining them at the local high school next year. Before Virgil's