

EXTENSION OF UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

(Mr. McDERMOTT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, a constituent in my district named Virginia received something very special this Christmas. The gift, if we could call it that, came directly from the Bush White House and the Republican leadership. Pretty impressive. It arrived on December 23 and stayed through the holidays. It was a notice saying her extended unemployment benefits would end soon. Merry Christmas, Virginia. Eighty-two thousand other Washington residents face the same fate in the first 6 months of this year.

It does not matter whether there is money in the account or there is a jobless recovery underway, we realize last month we got 20 jobs in the State of Washington, 1,000 in the whole country. Virginia and thousands of other average Americans will remember this Christmas for a long time as the Christmas when she was forgotten by the Republican leadership and the White House.

Tonight, the President will be upbeat. I just gave my colleagues the State of the Union in one household in my district. Virginia is anything but upbeat. She is frightened, she is angry. She calls it unconscionable. We ought to call it disgraceful.

I call upon the President and the Republican leadership to recognize the ordinary Americans and support them by immediately passing an extension of unemployment benefits. Eighty-two thousand people in my State will remember.

THE PRESIDENT'S POLICIES

(Mrs. MILLER of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, tonight President Bush will offer his optimistic vision for our great Nation.

President Bush has been a remarkably strong leader in trying times. He inherited an economy headed into recession and took very bold action. He cut taxes for every American and softened the blow of tough economic times. He extended prescription drug benefits and coverage to our Nation's seniors who depend on Medicare. He was faced with unprecedented terrorist attacks that threatened our freedom. He did not sit back. He did not appease, as some have advocated. Instead, he took the fight to the terrorists, and America now has the initiative in the war on terror.

The President's policies are getting America back to work. His policies will further grow our economy and create jobs. His policies will expand edu-

cational opportunities for our children. His policies will work to ensure that quality health care is available to every American.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of our great President and look forward to hearing his positive views for our Nation this evening.

EXTENDING UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

(Mr. LEVIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I could care less about the moon. I want a job. That was said to me by an electrician during our recess. He is one of 1,200 members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in the metropolitan Detroit area out of work. He is one of 8.9 million Americans, and there are another 4 million Americans not classified as unemployed but who are out of work.

The long-term unemployed in this country reached a 20-year high in November, but this House and the President have refused to extend Federal benefits. They expired December 20.

Ninety thousand people run out of State benefits every week. In this country, America, Americans deserve more than continued silence from the President of the United States. Let us hope he speaks to this issue tonight.

KASHMIR

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I recently returned from a trip to Pakistan and India.

I would like to commend Prime Minister Vajpayee of India and President Musharraf of Pakistan for the ceasefire in Kashmir and for their courageous leadership and peaceful dialogue in addressing an issue of deep importance to both nations.

During my visit, I had the privilege of visiting a camp for internally displaced people in Azad Kashmir. The suffering that the people on both sides of the Line of Control have endured is horrific: land mines, bombings, deliberate rape of women and other human rights violations, all this in the midst of a land of great beauty.

It is time for the tragic suffering to end. All sides in the conflict need to immediately cease using rape as a weapon of war. All sides need to allow children to receive an education. Until the issue of Kashmir is resolved peacefully, the stability, security and economic viability of South Asia and the international community are at risk.

I urge the U.S. government to fully support the current positive steps between Pakistan and India to bring a peaceful end to this long-running conflict.

THE PRESIDENT'S BIG IDEA

(Mr. WYNN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WYNN. Mr. Speaker, good afternoon. Happy New Year. Welcome back.

Last year, the President's advisers decided that in 2004 the President was going to talk about big ideas. Good, that is what Presidents are supposed to do, but then the President decided what we ought to do is go to the moon and Mars and cost the taxpayers \$1 trillion. We have explored the moon in 1969 and 1970. It is a rock. We have seen pictures of Mars. It is also a rock.

It seems to me the big idea is to help the working families in America. This economy has lost 3 million jobs under President George Bush. Two million workers have been unemployed for more than 6 months; 1.4 million workers have exhausted their unemployment benefits but still have not found work.

A big idea would be to put people to work like Franklin Roosevelt did. Another big idea would be to provide health insurance for all 41 million Americans who do not have health insurance. Health insurance costs for those who have it are rising, and pretty soon more people will not have it. That would be a big idea. Health insurance. Funding medical research to fight cancer and AIDS and ending poverty and hunger would be big ideas that we ought to be pursuing in the 21st century.

Instead, when the President's big idea is to go to Mars, it seems to me he has lost contact with the American people. Democrats have big ideas, making America a better place in which to live.

THE PRIORITIES OF AMERICA

(Mr. BELL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because I am deeply concerned with the state of our Union. I share the concern of many that we are heading in the wrong direction in this country.

We need to focus on creating jobs, but tonight we will hear about extending tax cuts for the rich in a mythical economic recovery that has created no new jobs. We need to focus on protecting Social Security and Medicare for a new generation, but tonight we will only hear about a thinly disguised plan to dismantle those vital programs and place our sacred covenant with America into the hands of corporations and pharmaceutical companies seeking profit at the expense of working men and women.

Tonight, we will hear more empty promises on education and literacy when we should focus on the President's own No Child Left Behind program which he and the Republican Congress continue to refuse to fully