

interstate as highway patrol and sheriff's deputies close overpasses and hold people back in half-mile cordons. The President will not see them. The dutiful national press corps, with credentials issued by the White House, will be subjected to a similar fate, never meeting the folks who really live there. The motorcade will lock in its guests, ushering them to Owens College, where tuition has just been hiked by 9 percent. An invitation-only audience will await. The White House is staging photo ops and messages less than 6 weeks before Ohio's primary on March 2. But taxpayers and not the President's brimming campaign coffers are paying for Air Force One on this visit to the heartland in Ohio.

So let this message go forth. The President has the worst jobs record since the Great Depression and Herbert Hoover: 2.7 million Americans are jobless. In December, only 1,000 new net jobs were created nationwide. 300,000 Ohioans are out of work. Their unemployment benefits and health insurance are evaporating. College tuition across our State is skyrocketing. The average graduate ends up a debtor with \$17,000 in debt as they begin their careers. 1,300,000 Ohioans have lost their health insurance, nearly 80,000 more than when this President assumed office. Since 2001, another 167,000 of Ohio's manufacturing jobs have disappeared. High tech, ballyhooed to have been our salvation, has been on a precipitous decline with hardware and software jobs being outsourced to India and China.

America and Ohio are being emptied of our wealth-producing jobs. Our trade deficit is at record levels. In 2003, imports exceeded exports by \$484 billion. NAFTA has hurt us deeply. These are not just numbers. These are people. Each billion dollars in trade deficit costs us 20,000 jobs. Hoover in Canton is gone, as is Dixon Ticonderoga in Sandusky and Acuity Lighting in Vermillion which is closing; Campbell Soup in Sidney; GE in Bucyrus; Goodyear Tire in Greenville; Honeywell in Elyria; International Paper in Cincinnati; Lucent Technology in Columbus; Mr. Coffee in Glenwillow; Philips Electronics in Ottawa; and now Electrolux just across the border in Michigan.

When the President visited our region on September 6, 2001, I respectfully handed him a letter on Air Force One inviting him and President Fox to travel with me to meet the thousands of workers in Ohio who were losing their jobs to NAFTA and their Mexican counterparts who are also sliding backwards. He never bothered to answer. I mentioned this to him at the White House Christmas party that year and asked him about a reply. He winked and joked, and this is a quote: "The letter must have gotten lost in the shuffle." He did not ask for another.

Is it any wonder the heartland fires are burning? The trade deficit is not mashed potatoes. Jobs lost to Mexico, China and India drag down our Nation's

economic growth by nearly a third and every year of the Bush presidency it has worsened. The President will speak in Wood County, Ohio's largest corn-producing county, and my hope is he will urge new ethanol and biodiesel production to offset rising petroleum imports from foreign countries. They equal 60 percent of what our Nation consumes, the highest ever.

As gas prices in northwest Ohio just topped \$1.65 per gallon and the per barrel cost of oil now at over \$35 per barrel, do we not want America to transition to energy independence? Since 50 cents of every farm dollar earned today is Federal subsidy, what a gigantic job-creating gift the President could give to Ohio and to America by helping launch us on energy independence.

Mr. Speaker, when the fires burn in the heartland, we know America will feel the heat.

Since 50 cents of every farm dollar earned today is federal subsidy, let's put it to work to remedy the nation's chief strategic vulnerability—reliance on imported crude, a key component of our trade deficit. Promoting bio-fuel independence would create vast numbers of new jobs here at home, far more than Mars exploration or the billions being spent for Iraq rebuilding.

Ohio is plagued by deficits due to the poor economy. Declining revenues have used the state to raise taxes—fuel taxes, sales taxes, cigarette taxes, property taxes. Whatever federal tax relief the Bush Administration might have envisioned has been eaten up by rising state taxes. Even with Mrs. Bush's Reading campaign, our local libraries suffered state cutbacks, had to close down services, and were forced to seek a local levy to sustain normal hours.

The public sector isn't the only pressure point either. Ohio bankruptcies broke a record with over 10,500 last year, and the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corp just announced a troubling \$11.2 billion deficit threatening the solvency of our nation's private retirement plans. This is serious indeed.

Each year of the Bush Presidency, his budgets have ballooned the federal deficit. 2003 goes down as the worst red ink in history!

The bipartisan Concord Coalition calls the Bush budgets the "most irresponsible" ever. Our national debt has now broken \$7 trillion, and we are adding \$2.03 billion to the debt each day. This poor management threatens the long-term solvency of Social Security and Medicare.

The International Monetary Fund has warned that these net financial obligations, heavily floated through borrowing from foreign countries, pose "significant risk for the U.S. and the world." The U.S. economy as a whole will end up paying 40 percent of its total earnings in a few years, to pay interest on this "unprecedented level of external debt for a large industrial country."

It doesn't have to be this way.

For 8 years, Congress and President Bill Clinton labored to balance annual budgets, on a track to pay down the long-term debt.

Now the President will come to Northern Ohio to talk about jobs and a \$120 million national new job training initiative. Ironic since Ohio, due to abysmal Republican manage-

ment in Columbus, still has failed to obligate \$242 million in job training and transition funds for which I have voted, the second-most of any state in the nation. Ohio is under watch and being fined for poor performance in federal job training efforts. These dollars were meant to help unemployed workers gain a foothold in this economy. I hope that during his visit, this President will join me in my efforts to recapture these funds for Ohio's workers despite an inept State government. Ohio's workers could use his help.

In Ohio, we are grateful to be a battleground state in Election 2004. Ohioans seek good jobs with good wages; health and retirement benefits that can't be taken away; affordable education for youth; and prescription drugs under Medicare for seniors. We seek respect for veterans, in theatre and afterwards fiscal responsibility and energy independence.

Every citizen must ask the question in this Presidential election year: Am I, and America, better off now than we were four years ago?

When the fires burn in the heartland, we know America will feel the heat.

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

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

OREGON ISSUES AND THE PRESIDENT'S STATE OF THE UNION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WU) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WU. Mr. Speaker, the most important thing the President can tell Oregonians tonight is what he will do to improve our struggling economy. All Oregonians hope for an improved economy that creates new and high-wage jobs. But the President must not let his hopes and expectations for future economic growth blind him to the current plight of the thousands of Oregonians who are out of work today. The unemployment rate in Oregon is a shocking 7.2 percent. But this is not a naked statistic. This is people losing their homes, losing their health care, losing their ability to send their children to college and a better future.

I was on our solid light rail system recently and I met a gentleman who came up to me and said, "Congressman, I have two master's degrees and I have been working in high technology for almost 20 years. But I've been without work for 18 months and I've lost access to unemployment benefits." To show compassion for that man, Oregonians and Americans across this country, the President must and should call for an immediate extension of unemployment benefits. For unemployed Oregonians, it is these benefits that keep their kids in college and prevent the loss of a home, a car or vital access to health care.

Too many Oregonians know the heartbreak of a jobless economic recovery. To create new, high-paying jobs,

we need investment in Main Street as well as Wall Street. I have sponsored legislation to give small businesses incentives to invest and grow, and I hope that the President will tell us tonight how all Americans can prosper together and not just the large corporations and the fortunate who are their shareholders.

Mr. Speaker, the key to economic success begins with education. The President needs to keep his promise to truly leave no child behind by committing tonight to providing the resources that America needs to have the best public school system in the world. Also, we must make college affordability a national priority. Recent tuition increases have put college out of reach for too many Oregon and American families. I will be working on the Committee on Education and the Workforce to make college more affordable and accessible.

In closing, we must work together to address the most important issues facing our Nation, extending unemployment benefits, investing in Main Street small businesses, and providing the best education possible to all Americans.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. LEVIN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCDERMOTT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CONYERS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

STATE OF OUR UNION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon with my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus to discuss what I hope President Bush will address this evening in his State of the Union message. Specifically, Mr. Speaker, I would like to place President Bush's speech in some context which I believe America should use in evaluating the President's address.

We can all agree that the President will give a good speech. He has prac-

ticed, he has rehearsed and he will do a good job. However, I hope that his rhetoric will match actions that will benefit all Americans and benefit all Americans soon. It was just last year that the President stood in this hallowed hall and set forth a number of priorities that were to guide this Nation throughout 2003. I, along with the rest of the Nation, listened very intently to the President searching for some affirmation in his speech of the principles that have successfully guided our constitutional democracy thus far. The Founding Fathers of the United States understood that governments are instituted to secure the God-given rights of all men and women to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. In 1976, the late Senator Hubert Humphrey said, "The moral test of government is how it treats those who are at the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the aged; and those who are in the shadow of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this administration has miserably failed that test. As stewards of the government, we have a moral responsibility to ensure that the poor are granted the same access to opportunity as the rich; the sick are afforded the medical attention needed to restore health; and that the scourge of racism and discrimination is forever dispelled from our national identity.

Mr. Speaker, I submit that the true measure of our Union is the state of the least among us. So long as there are 9 million Americans looking for work, 43 million Americans without health insurance and nearly 2.5 million American men, women and children without a place to call home, then America has not reached her full potential. We need leadership that demands equity, parity and equality. We need leadership that is progressive and forward-thinking. And, Mr. Speaker, we need leadership that delivers results to all of the American people.

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The American people deserve bold leadership, the demands of frank and honest discussion of the issues that are at the center of people's lives.

Just yesterday, we celebrated the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King, and I have noted so often we listen to the "I Have a Dream" speech; but one of the things that he said is that every citizen should demand the full, the full, the full measure of their citizenship. In other words, what he was saying was that this Nation owes every citizen certain rights and at the same time every citizen has a duty and responsibility to this Nation.

Since the President's last State of the Union Address in 2003, our Nation waited in vain, Mr. Speaker, for the President to recognize the importance of liberty, diversity, and charity beyond the superficial context of a speech. Yes, the President is quick to

say that he is compassionate and conservative. As I have said on many occasions, I have seen much of our President's conservatism. So we are long on conservatism, but it appears that we are very short on compassion. Americans look to the President to set forth policies that would transform these lofty ideals into reality for almost 300 million men, women, and children that reside in our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, a year later, we see that the President has not yet been able to synchronize his conscience with his conduct. Yes, we have a lot of photo-ops, but the photo-ops do not bring a paycheck to that worker in Baltimore who has been laid off for the past year. It does not bring an insurance policy for health insurance to that mother in Appalachia who has no insurance; nor does it bring the \$7.5 billion to our education system where children need computers, children need books, children need better classroom atmospheres so that they can grow up to be all that God wants them to be.

So it was last year, Mr. Speaker, that the President stood before this Nation, as he will do tonight; and there he announced the new initiative to fight the war against global HIV/AIDS with \$15 billion to the global fund. After years of work by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), my colleague in the Congressional Black Caucus, and the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN), our health chairperson, and many of my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus urging the Congress to be more proactive in fighting this epidemic, the Congressional Black Caucus applauded the President's effort.

We are very pleased that he had listened to us 3 years ago. By the way, I might add that it was 3 years ago when the President met with the Congressional Black Caucus; but 3 years later after many requests, he refuses, actually refuses to meet with the 39 members of the Congressional Black Caucus who represent over 26 million people, at least a third of whom are white. And it is interesting that he laid a wreath at the Martin Luther King memorial just a few days ago and then turned right around the next day and appointed Judge Pickering from Mississippi, whom, as a matter fact, every civil rights organization in the country had opposed and he had been opposed by the Congressional Black Caucus; but this President saw fit to appoint a man who had been turned away by the Senate twice.

So we come back to today. A year later we are already underfunding our annual contribution commitment by \$600 million, that is, to the AIDS fund, the global AIDS fund, by \$600 million. It was just this weekend that members of the Congressional Black Caucus met with the U.N. ambassadors from Africa and they talked about how so many of their people are dying; but yet and still, after we agree that \$15 billion should be allocated, we come up \$600