

I am sure the American people are not shocked to hear that Republicans once again sided with the wealthiest in our Nation when they repealed the estate tax last week. Meantime, Republicans refused to join Democrats in providing nearly 7 million Americans a pay raise.

It is truly mind-boggling that House Republicans continue to believe that minimum-wage workers can still get by on \$5.15 an hour. Don't they know if you take inflation into account the minimum wage is at its lowest level in 50 years? Don't Republicans know this is the second-longest amount of time minimum-wage workers have gone without a pay raise? Don't they know that nearly three-fourths of minimum-wage workers are not just taking care of themselves but also a family?

Mr. Speaker, this is totally immoral. In this great Nation it is unbelievable that nearly 7 million people must struggle to this extent to make ends meet. It is only fair we give these workers a raise.

Democrats are not giving up, and we will continue to fight to give these workers their first pay raise in 9 years. It is only fair.

PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY AND ISRAEL

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

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, last night, we watched as Israel launched a targeted operation on the Gaza Strip to recover Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit, who had been kidnapped during an attack by members of Hamas' military wing.

As an independent sovereign nation, Israel has every right to respond to acts of aggression against its homeland and the soldiers who defend it. In the name of peace, the Palestinian Authority must meet the calls from Israel and nations such as France and Egypt to produce the abducted soldier.

Our Nation must stand behind our allies in the global war on terror, support their right to protect their citizens, and call for Hamas to abandon aggression and violence and work for a peaceful solution recognizing Israel as part of a two-nation plan.

HELP SALMON FISHERMEN ON NORTHWEST COAST

(Ms. WOOLSEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I am here today to support the fishers and the fishers' families on the west coast whose livelihood teeters on the brink of disaster as we stand here today.

It is outrageous that it has come to this. It is outrageous that the Bush administration's botched Klamath River policies will shut down 90 percent of

the commercial salmon season and take huge bites out of the recreational and tribal catches.

It is outrageous that fisheries' managers were given the task of deciding between the survival of fishers and the survival of Klamath salmon, without the means to achieve either.

It is outrageous that the Bush administration continues to punish the fishing industry by challenging the court decision that would have returned needed flows to the Klamath River area.

It is outrageous that despite a 60 percent cutback in last year's fishing season, emergency economic assistance has been denied.

And, finally, it is outrageous that without economic assistance this year, many fishermen and their boats will be down and useless for the rest of eternity.

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BAN DUMPING IN THE GREAT LAKES

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

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, this week I am introducing bipartisan legislation to ban dumping in the Great Lakes. Along with my Democratic colleague DAN LIPINSKI, we are moving the Great Lakes Water Protection Act because the number of beach closings in Illinois rose from 213 in 2003 to over 600 in 2004.

There were over 140 beach closings in my district alone last year. Our bill, supported by the Alliance for the Great Lakes, the Sierra Club and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Chicago, sets a Federal date certain to ban dumping in the source of our drinking water. Fines under this bill would support building new sewage control projects to protect the lake.

I want to give a special thank you to a member of my staff, Ms. Kristy Cole, who drafted this legislation. As she leaves the Congress for a Northwestern JD/MBA program, we will now gather bipartisan support for this common-sense environmental reform.

DEMOCRATS OFFER A PRESCRIPTION FOR CHANGE TO FINALLY HELP SENIORS WITH RX DRUG COSTS

(Ms. WATSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, recent reports have shown why the Republican prescription drug plan is not working for seniors. Prices are still going up, and millions of seniors are about to fall into the doughnut hole, a period where they receive no coverage but continue to pay their premiums.

Democrats have long believed there is a better way, so we introduced a Democratic prescription for change.

Our plan would give Medicare the bargaining power to negotiate lower prices with drug companies. The VA is doing that right now, and veterans are paying 43 percent less for their drugs than American seniors.

With all the money we save from negotiating lower prices, we have closed the doughnut hole to ensure that seniors are not losing coverage for a substantial portion of the year. Mr. Speaker, if Republicans are really interested in helping our seniors with their prescription drug bills, they would join us in supporting this prescription for change. It just doesn't make sense to continue with a plan that isn't lowering costs and creates a giant gap in coverage.

STOP INTELLIGENCE LEAKS

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

Mrs. BLACKBURN. The New York Times, you know, the actions of that storied paper certainly are the subject of much discussion. Mr. Speaker, it is a sad discussion, because it is a discussion about those who chose to leak information and those who chose to print that leaked information that is harmful to this great Nation's security.

It is unfortunate, and it does add to the level of distrust of bureaucracy and of government. It is sad. It is disappointing.

The perpetrators of those actions, Mr. Speaker, can rationalize all they want. But the point is this: Those actions, leaking that information, printing that information, make our intelligence community's job a little harder.

They make defunding terrorists and their activities more difficult, and they make our American communities less safe and less secure. It is a sad action, and it is an action with unfortunate consequences.

WASHINGTON REPUBLICANS CAN'T IGNORE FACT THAT THEY CREATED RECORD-SETTING DEFICITS

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

Mr. CLEAVER. Mr. Speaker, I am a Democrat, and I am glad about it. The reason for this joy is over the fact that the party to which I belong is pushing back against this Republican-led Congress and their out-of-control spending. Let us take a look at the facts. President Bush and congressional Republicans have turned a \$5.6 trillion surplus into a \$4 trillion deficit, a change of \$9 trillion.

This is the most fiscally irresponsible American administration. We owe China almost \$150 billion. My hope is that we never have to go to war with them because I don't believe they are going to finance it.

Secondly, it is absolutely unacceptable that the United States is borrowing almost all the money they are using to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan.

NATIONAL SECURITY LEAKS

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in frustration over the recent leak by the New York Times of a vital national security program. In a time of global war, this leak is a disgrace to all Americans and especially a disgrace to those risking their lives every day to keep us safe.

This disclosure raises grave concerns about why some in the media seem determined time and again to simply hand over our playbook to barbaric terrorists. Our ability to emerge victorious in this war on terror hinges on the success of these legal, appropriate and needed programs.

This is a war that more than any other in our history relies heavily on sophisticated data gathering. Giving away these details only empowers our enemy. Freedom of the press is an important right. However, the media must practice responsibility with classified intelligence.

Not just American prosperity is on the line, Mr. Speaker. These counterterrorism programs exist solely to protect the lives and the freedoms of American citizens. It is time that American lives are given greater priority than selling more newspapers.

STOP CURTAILING SALMON FISHING ON THE PACIFIC COAST

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

Mr. WU. Mr. Speaker, this administration has moved to massively curtail fishing for salmon on the Pacific Coast. This is not just an economic effect. Salmon fishing is part of our culture. It is a part of who we are. This closure is not based on sound science; it is based in raw politics. It is allegedly to benefit one spring salmon run on the Klamath River.

But closure of the ocean will not bring the spring chinook back. What will bring it back, according to NOAA's own scientists, is better water management and taking better care of the water base and ecosystem. Closure of the ocean salmon season will not do any of these things.

Yesterday, we met with NOAA officials, and they decided not to even declare an emergency so that relief can be given for the disaster which they created. We are going to take actions today to alleviate or terminate the disaster that NOAA has created on the northwest coast.

VOLUNTEER FIRST RESPONDERS

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

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise this morning to salute the brave men and women in my district and around the Nation who graciously offer their time, compassion and lifesaving skills to fellow citizens in their time of greatest need.

Volunteer firefighters and rescue squad personnel provide essential services to our communities. A Scotland County volunteer, James Rupard, recently made me aware of a mileage reimbursement problem that was causing a financial burden on our local first responders.

The Volunteer Emergency Responder Fair Mileage Act seeks to give our volunteer emergency first responders a mileage reimbursement for use of their personal vehicles that reflects the critical service they provide.

Our volunteer first responders don't have a choice in their driving distance when an emergency occurs. They also don't have the luxury of choosing times or convenience when duty calls. I feel that raising this rate is a way to keep critical volunteers from having undue financial hardship, and it reflects the contribution they make to our communities.

I urge my colleagues to support volunteer first responders in their districts by cosponsoring the Volunteer Emergency Responder Fair Mileage Act.

OUR SALMON FISHING INDUSTRY IS HITTING THE ROCKS

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

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, The Oregonian today printed, the west coast salmon fishing industry is nearly dead in the water, and everybody can see it is going to hit the rocks. But so far, the Bush administration is unwilling to lift a finger.

Mr. Speaker, NOAA fisheries at the local level said it is a disaster. Governors in California and Oregon have said it is a disaster, but NOAA fisheries in Washington D.C. and the Bush administration have said to the west coast, drop dead, we are not even going to look at this issue until February.

By the time February rolls around, fishing families and fishing communities throughout the coast, in my district, in Eureka, Fort Bragg, Fortuna, Arcata, Crescent City, they are going to be out of business. They are going to lose their boats. They are going to lose their homes. They are not going to be able to pay for their kids to go to college or buy insurance.

This is a disaster. The administration is refusing to even look at it. The Republican Congress is ignoring this fact that working families are being displaced, put out of jobs and are going bankrupt.

STOP RESTRICTING SALMON FISHING

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. There is a lot of lip service paid in this Congress and downtown at the White House about family values and small business. Who better represents family values and small business than the fishermen and women on the Oregon and California coast.

This administration has told them we are going to restrict the fishing season to a point where you cannot afford to go out; you can only catch 75 fish in one trip. Nobody can afford to go far out to catch 75 fish, so no one is fishing.

But they won't declare a disaster because they said someone might fish. They admitted no one is fishing. No one can afford to fish. Well, maybe something will happen. The price of fish will go up, go up to what, \$100 a pound? Then maybe they could afford to go out for 75 fish.

This administration is refusing to put its money where its mouth is and deliver and help keep families together, support communities and support small business with a modest amount of disaster assistance. We need a disaster declaration from the White House, and we need it now.

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR ECONOMIC DISASTER ON OREGON AND CALIFORNIA COAST

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, Members of the House, later today, Mr. THOMPSON and Mr. DEFAZIO will offer an amendment seeking emergency assistance for an economic disaster that the Bush administration is creating on the Oregon and California coast, and that disaster is about to strike hundreds of small independent businessmen who fish for a living. These individuals are going to lose the economic support for their families. They are going to probably lose the ability to keep their boats so they can fish if the recovery takes place, and they are going to end up deep in debt.

It is just unfair that this would happen, especially when this is a disaster that was created by the Bush administration. They ought to take responsibility. They ought to be held accountable for their actions, and they ought to provide relief to these hardworking families who are so much a part of our community and our culture and our economy. And they ought to do it now.

The Congress can correct this matter later today by passing the amendment. Unfortunately, we have been put on notice that that won't happen, so we are going to put you on notice. We are not going to relent on this effort until