

auto industry during this downturn. This stimulus is dangerous to your health and the economy.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, the January job numbers told Americans something they already knew. Things are bad. They are bad all over in almost every sector of the economy and almost every section of the country.

In a hearing before the Joint Economic Committee, I asked the commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics if there was any bright spots in the labor report. And he said, and I quote, "No. No good news comes to mind."

These latest job losses add to the overwhelming evidence that we must get a recovery package to the President's desk fast. People are hurting and crying out all across the country for help from the people in this Chamber.

More than 3.6 million jobs have been lost since the recession began in 2007, including the nearly 600,000 jobs shed in January alone. Six hundred thousand jobs is equivalent to all the workers in the State of Maine.

My home State of New York has been especially hard hit. Almost 48,000 jobs were slashed. Familiar and storied names, such as Macy's, Estee Lauder, Time Warner, Bloomberg News, and many others, have laid off employees.

We are now hearing that seven States have already exhausted their unemployment insurance, and another 11 States may see their funds exhausted by the end of 2009.

More than 2 million homes have gone into foreclosure, and millions of other homeowners find themselves owing more to the bank than their homes are worth. Because of lost jobs, millions also lost their health insurance. Many have lost their savings. An estimated \$6 trillion in personal wealth has simply evaporated.

A solution to this crisis requires a bold action and addresses the magnitude of our economic woes, and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan will do just that. The recovery package will create or save an estimated 4 million jobs across a variety of sectors. It will soften the downturn and foster a solid economic recovery that benefits all Americans.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has called for the passage of the Recovery Act. The National Governors Association says that they support the bill. The bill even has the support of most GOP Governors.

The latest Gallup poll shows that 80 percent of Americans believe that passing a new stimulus plan is either "important," or "critically important." Even 66 percent of Republicans told the Gallup pollsters that it is either important or critically important to pass the

bill. Perhaps because they know that America's schools, roads, bridges, and water systems are in disrepair, and this creates a drag on economic growth.

We have an historic opportunity to make the investments necessary to modernize our public infrastructure. We can begin to transition to a clean energy economy that will make us more competitive in the future.

Yes, there are conflicting visions of the perfect bill. Some Nobel Laureates in economics say the stimulus is not big enough. Some would have us do less. But now is the time to put aside whatever differences we might have in our economic theories and put the needs of our country first.

The building where the Joint Economic Committee holds its hearings is dedicated to the memory of Senator Everett Dirksen. On the plaque we pass every day, it reads, and I quote, "His unerring sense of the possible enabled him to know when to compromise, by such men are our freedoms retained. His greatness will forever be an inspiration."

President Obama and the Democrats are ready to embark on a bold, commonsense plan to turn this economy around, to address the fierce urgency of now, and to get this country back on its feet. We urge you to stand with us shoulder to shoulder as we act to put America back to work.

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

(Mr. GOHMERT 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 Texas (Mr. PAUL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PAUL 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 California (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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OSCAR ELIAS BISCET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. This last December 6, 2 months ago, was the ninth anniversary of the imprisonment—the cruel and unjust imprisonment in a cold and damp cell in the most inhuman of condi-

tions—of the great Cuban leader in the fight for democracy and human rights in that enslaved island, Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet. Dr. Biscet is prohibited from even walking in the prison's yard, and he is incarcerated along with common criminals.

Dr. Biscet was released from prison in 2003, for a few weeks, before being rearrested and subsequently sentenced to 25 years in the gulag due to his peaceful pro-democracy activities.

Biscet personifies the opposition to the brutal totalitarian regime Fidel Castro and his brother, who the dictator has now given some additional titles to because of the ailing tyrant's failing health.

Dr. Biscet is an admirer of Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

A physician by training, he began his opposition to the totalitarian regime by speaking out against the regime's forced abortion when there is any indication whatsoever that a pregnancy may have an abnormality policy. Biscet described that policy as inhuman. He was immediately fired from his job at the hospital, prohibited from practicing his profession as a physician, and his wife Elsa Morejon was also fired from her job as a practicing nurse. Within hours, the couple and their son were summarily evicted from their apartment and their physical possessions thrown into the street.

Fortunately, an elderly patient of Elsa allowed the family to move into her house. Dr. Biscet continued peacefully denouncing the totalitarian regime's absolute denial of human rights to the Cuban people; and, because of that, he has been unjustly and cruelly imprisoned for 9 years and counting.

Hundreds of other brave human rights activists are also suffering in the political prisons of the Cuban totalitarian dictatorship for the crime of supporting democracy and liberty and opposing tyranny, including 23 known journalists thrown into dungeons because of articles they wrote that bothered the dictator. No regime in the world has more journalists in prison, with the possible exception of another totalitarian dictatorship in an obviously much larger nation, communist China.

A few weeks ago, the respected international organization, Reporters Without Borders, gave one of those Cuban journalists in the gulag, Ricardo Gonzalez Alfonso, sentenced by the Cuban tyrant to 20 years in prison in 2003, and currently in very poor health, the Reporters Without Borders Journalist of the Year Award. Reporters Without Border is to be commended, Mr. Speaker.

Three other Cuban prisoners of conscience, Aldolfo Fernandez Sainz, Pedro Arguelles Moran, and Antonio Diaz Sanchez, are known to have begun a hunger strike due to brutal conditions they are subjected to. Where is the outrage, Mr. Speaker? Where is the international solidarity? Where is there one word of coverage of this in the world's press?

The reality is that for too many in the world today Cubans are supposed to be content with their lot, to be quiet; to, in the words of one of our colleagues in this Congress recently, to move on. The regime that enslaves a Nation and imprisons hundreds of heroes simply for their beliefs deserves unilateral rewards and concessions, many argue, such as more travel or dollars. But Dr. Biscet and the many other heroes imprisoned in the Castro brothers' gulag will not be able to be ignored forever. They must be freed. And political parties must be legalized, as well as independent press agencies, and labor unions. And free and fair elections must take place in Cuba.

Many of those imprisoned today, Mr. Speaker, will be democratically elected leaders tomorrow. That is what is going to happen in Cuba tomorrow. Today, as they suffer the most unjust of cruel imprisonment, we here remember and honor them and, once again, demand the immediate release of all prisoners of conscience in the Castro brothers' infernal gulag.

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

(Mr. BROUN of Georgia 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 Louisiana (Mr. FLEMING) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

CARTER PRIVILEGED RESOLUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CARTER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, today, in fact less than 1 hour to 1½ hours ago, I rose on the floor of this House to bring forward a privileged resolution asking for the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee to step down or be removed until such time as the ethical problems that have been raised about Mr. RANGEL could be addressed by the Ethics Committee and resolved. I did this out of no malice for Mr. RANGEL; but, rather, I did this and have stated publicly that it is important that we raise the level of the ethics standards of this House to a level that was inspired to us by our Speaker. And, if we raise our level of ethics and each individual in this House takes on themselves to stand up for an ethical Congress, we will have an ethical Congress, and maybe the people of the United States will have a greater respect for the individual Members of Congress.

It should be embarrassing and disheartening to every hard-working man

and woman in this House, and the House is full of hard-working men and women on both sides of the aisle, that the American public view us as unethical and maybe worse.

Our approval rating at one time during the last Congress was at 8 percent. They say if your approval rating is below 20 percent, the only people that still like you are your friends and your relatives. Well, at 8 percent, you have got to worry about your relatives. You may not even have them liking you anymore. To me, I looked at that, and I have been in this Congress now for 6 years, starting my 7th year, I know that there are a lot of really fine people in this Congress on both sides of the aisle and I don't think that they deserve that kind of rating. But, quite frankly, the atmosphere that has been created over the last several years has created an atmosphere where people think that we are evil people. And I don't believe that we are evil people, but I do believe that sometimes somebody has to stand up and say, if it isn't right, it isn't right. And I have decided that I am going to do that. And I think I am going to be joined by others who are going to do it, and I hope eventually we are all going to stand up and say: If it isn't right, it isn't right, and I don't care who did it.

But I want to start off by telling you that what happened in this privileged resolution that I brought forward today, which, if it had gone forward in the privileged resolution, we would have had 1 hour of debate on each side to discuss this issue and come to a resolution, just like maybe a jury would come to a resolution in a courtroom back home, where we would hear what is out there, what has been said on this House floor by Mr. RANGEL, what the evidence seems to be; that we would learn about what is going on, and what would be best for the House under these circumstances. But, unfortunately, a procedural occurrence interfered or intervened.

The majority made a motion to table that resolution. The majority prevailed, as they would be expected to with the sizeable majority count that they have in this House, and so that resolution was laid upon the table; which basically means to the average guy that they stuck it aside and we won't take it up. And that is where it is going to stay, I suppose, just as previous resolutions have been tabled and they don't get taken up.

So I have this hour, and hopefully some of my friends will be by as we go through this hour, and we are going to talk about ethics. And I want to first point out this poster right here, which I would hope can be seen.

The Speaker of this House, NANCY PELOSI, on November 8, 2006, made this statement, which was quoted by the Washington Post: "The American people voted to restore integrity and honesty in Washington, D.C., and the Democrats intend to lead the most honest, most open, and most ethical

Congress in history." That is a 200-plus year history of this United States, and the goal of the 110th Congress, the standards set by our Speaker was to be the most open, most ethical Congress, and the most honest Congress in the history of the United States. That is a big package to carry, there is no doubt about that, but it is a goal that we ought to have. I would argue that, since this speech was made, we have made very little progress down that line.

But something else much more recent to what we are doing right now is what the President of the United States said basically just last week: "I campaigned on changing Washington and bottom-up politics. I don't want to send the message to the American people that there are two sets of standards, one for the powerful people, and one for the ordinary folks who are working every day and paying their taxes." That is a quote to CNN by President Barack Obama, February 3, 2009, just last week. I honor our President for that kind of standard that he sets for his administration and for this government.

There are people who would say: Mr. CARTER, you raised these issues about the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, about CHARLIE RANGEL, for political purposes. You did this because you wanted to attack a powerful leader in the House of Representatives, and this is all about politics.

I will point out that I stated when this all started that I first wrote a letter to Chairman RANGEL and asked Chairman RANGEL if he would address the issue of having paid his taxes, if he would address paying his penalties and interest so this would all go away, so he wouldn't be treated by two standards, one standard for the powerful and one standard for the ordinary person. But I got no response from that letter. A copy of that letter was sent to the Speaker of the House, and I got no response there.

And then you ask, why would I stand up and start talking about this stuff? The New York Times on September 14, 2008 pointed out: "Mounting embarrassment for taxpayers and Congress makes it imperative that Representative Charles Rangel step aside as chairman of the Ways and Means Committee while his ethical problems are investigated."

Now, this is one of the most liberal, Democrat leaning newspapers in the country who is saying there are issues in Mr. RANGEL's past that, in their opinion, the editorial page's opinion, would require that he step down while he is being investigated. And that is all I have ever really asked that he do. It might be for just 2 days, 3 days. Who knows how quickly the Ethics Committee will come out with a resolution. It might be a few weeks. But it would look a standard to the American people that would say: You are right, this is not behind closed doors. This is heads up. They are talking about stuff that is