

**CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS HOUR: JOBS FOR AMERICA -- (House of Representatives - December 12, 2011)**

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The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. *Hultgren*). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. *Jackson Lee*) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I almost don't know where to start. Let me, first of all, indicate my privilege to be yielded the hour as the representative of the minority leader and also to indicate my privilege to discuss some of the issues of the Congressional Black Caucus, which has been a leader, along with our chairman, *Emanuel Cleaver*, and our officers and those of us who have worked on these issues, on the question of jobs for America.

I almost don't know where to start. First of all, let me say happy holidays to my colleagues and, in this season of giving and joy, acknowledge how special a time it is for families to come together.

I do want to start on some of the comments of my friend and colleague from Texas. I am delighted to have him acknowledge that we cannot condemn one faith as it relates to the harm that terrorists desire to do against us. It's important to also note that there are some distortions in the comments about terrorism and in the President's position and the administration's position.

I think it is important to acknowledge that the war against those who will do us harm is not about points; it's not about partisanship; it's not about one-upmanship; it's not about what one administration has done better than the other.

I am very grateful to the men and women in our intelligence community and to the men and women in the United States military and to those who are engaged in homeland security that we have not had a terrorist act of the proportion of 9/11 on our soil since 9/11. There are no doubts of the many threats that have been interjected and stopped, and it's important for my colleagues to understand that.

I am a senior member on the Homeland Security Committee. Tragically, I was appointed to the select Committee on Homeland Security and traveled with one or two Senators, people in the other body, to Ground Zero. When I arrived, it was early enough that one of the rescue missions was continuing. One could see the smoke billowing out of the ashes; and as we visited the board that still had loved ones about whom people were asking, Have you seen my father or my son?, it was a potent message for those of us who are committed to securing the homeland.

[Time: 20:50]

The chairperson for a period was a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, Chairman *Thompson*. He serves now as the ranking member of the committee. He has always chosen to be bipartisan. And over the last week, we joined in a bipartisan hearing with the Senate, Senator *Lieberman* in the other body, Senator *Collins*, and the chairperson now, Chairman *King*, on the question of the potential danger of our military and military bases. In that hearing, no one quarrelled with the responsibility to identify those who would go against our military on domestic soil or how we would address the question.

But it is important to note that I stand here and refuse and reject the labeling of one faith as a faith of terror. I have been in so many different mosques and among so many different groups of Muslims who practice Islam who have rejected those horrible acts.

One cannot challenge the pathway that President Obama has taken or not view it as a pathway that has saved lives. In particular, there is documentation that the last administration, after a period of time, indicated that they didn't know where Osama bin Laden was. It was not their focus. They knew that the country was safe, but they were not looking for Osama bin Laden. Frankly, in the period of time of President Obama's tenure, he has gotten the imam in Yemen, the American citizen imam that was in Yemen who was a part of the inspiration of Major Hasan, who perpetrated the terrorist acts in Fort Hood in my State, the State of Texas. We have intervened in several terrorist threats and attacks, the Times Square bomber. If my recollection serves me well, I think, also, the Christmas Day bombing; that might have been a little bit before that.

We have, in essence, taken out a number of high-target threats to America's security. We have, in fact, with the intellect and genius and with the order of the President of the United States, President Barack Obama, in a very dangerous mission, the Navy SEALs secured and brought to his end Osama bin Laden. A very dangerous mission, a very controversial mission, but there had to be a Commander in Chief that ordered it. So I take issue with the comment that this President has not been vigilant in protecting the homeland.

Any number of us who serve on Homeland Security know that we can always be better and can always work on issues to, in fact, secure--more than secure. But as a member of the Homeland Security Committee, I've watched as our Border Patrol has surged to 18,000. As we have utilized resources on the border, the numbers of those coming across the border illegally have dropped. As we try to be constructive in arguing for comprehensive immigration reform, I have seen a number of responses that would cause me to disagree that this administration has not been vigilant.

And even today, as we are speaking to the President of Iraq, arguments are being made to ensure the evenhandedness of Iraq's behavior and their treatment of individuals in Iraq, dealing with those who are at Camp Ashraf, but, more importantly, our ongoing relationship with Iraq and our ongoing relationship with a very vital region where there are allies like the King of Jordan, allies that we've been friends with, that it is important that we maintain a certain type of demeanor. And, clearly, suggesting that a two-State solution is not viable or the Palestinian people are not real, they're made up, is an outrageous position to take

for any public political person that would rise and ascend to leadership, whether it is in the Congress or in the Presidency of the United States. I could not, not just respond to charges of inadequacy by this administration.

I have served on the Foreign Affairs Committee, I was privileged to have served, and, likewise, being a member of the Homeland Security Committee and serving as the ranking member on Transportation Security and fighting to enhance security measures, more personnel, better training, responsiveness to those who are patted down and go through aviation security, making it fair but yet making it responsive to the nuances and new ideas of terrorists who want to do us harm. Mr. Speaker, it's important that we acknowledge fairness, balance, and that we continue to pray every day for our men and women who are on the front lines, for our intelligence community, for those who are thinking every moment, under this administration, successfully, on addressing that question.

I am here, however, to raise the question of our concerns of the American people that are outside the circle of homeland security and address the day-to-day needs of those who are fighting against poverty, losing their quality of life.

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In a discussion that has been going on and on and on and has a simple answer: Just do it; just do it. But yet we are stuck here on December 12--I have no quarrel with that because it is our responsibility to be here until we get the job done, but I would encourage those who are listening and our colleagues to work in a bipartisan way. But I would also encourage you to call us at (202) 225-3121 and ask us to get the job done fairly, one that is rational and reasonable. Is it going to pass the other body? Is the President going to be able to sign it? Is it going to help the vast numbers of people?

As members of the Congressional Black Caucus, we knew that jobs had a devastating impact on this country, the lack thereof. We know that there are unemployment numbers throughout our communities in some pockets of the United States--in some States, there is double-digit unemployment amongst all population groups. In the African American population, it is a consistent double-digit unemployment. Those of us who participated in the Congressional Black Caucus Jobs Fair throughout the many cities, we saw thousands standing in line for jobs. At a recent jobs fair at the Fallbrook Church in Houston, Texas, hundreds were in line for jobs. In a city that has done fairly well, it is not good enough.

This is a crisis, Mr. Speaker, and the Congressional Black Caucus introduced legislation that would emphasize that jobs are a must--a crisis--and must be passed. We all joined in the resolution introduced in the summer months. We all got on that resolution, that we must do everything we can to create jobs, and we introduced a "for the people" job creation bill and worked on initiatives to deal with that.

Now, let me tell you where we are. Right now, we are addressing this question this week. Now, I have no qualms that this is about 2 weeks before Christmas, a holiday that many celebrate, and the holidays of other faiths are also celebrated around this time, where all families come together. Hanukkah. No matter what

faith you may be, if you are in America, you come toward your family in America. Where our soldiers are--even though many are coming home, many of our soldiers are scattered around the world. I would almost suggest to you that somebody's family member who happens to be related to a member of the United States military may even be unemployed or they may be a worker who is crying out for the payroll tax relief.

[Time: 21:00]

So I have soldiers up for my colleagues to see, and I have some happy faces for my colleagues to see.

And I have another poster for my colleagues to see. It is important that we connect not just to our neighbors but also to realize that our soldiers have family members that would benefit from the payroll tax. There's a happy family right there. They would benefit from the payroll tax if their family members are here in the United States while they are abroad serving this country. That's why I have these pictures here. Let's make it real.

In addition to all those who are working, there are people who are related to these who have taken the oath to be able to say that we are fighting on behalf of this country, your freedom and your justice, justice and equality, and we are fighting, and we believe it is important that they are fighting for us, they are positioned and posted around the world, and that we be serious about the needs of their family members; a payroll tax relief that put \$1,400, \$1,000 to \$1,400 to \$1,500 in the pockets of 160 million Americans, some of whom, as I've said--I don't want to be redundant, but I want to say it over and over again--are related to the very men and women we admire, the very men and women that we admire: husbands, wives, aunts, uncles, grandparents, sons, and daughters of people here in the United States who are now on the front line in many places around the world. Some will be coming home for the holiday season, as the President has ordered troops out of Iraq.

What will they come home to?

And so here's our answer. They will come home to legislation that I believe has passed the Rules Committee that unfortunately does not speak to the emergency and the crisis of what we are facing.

I don't know whether or not my colleagues can see this, but here's a picture of the unemployed. Unemployment is not a respecter of region, not a respecter of race. I've indicated there are high numbers in the African American community, but people are unemployed across America. It's the highest unemployment we have had in long years.

Rather than calling it a crisis, of which it is, where 6 million people will lose their unemployment insurance, this House will now debate a bill that has already been acknowledged that it will have no legs in the other body. It won't get anywhere near being heard or seen. This is a crisis. I think there's about 19 days before December 31, if I'm calculating correctly. It is a crisis, and yet we bring to the floor

the legislation that has already had the lights turned out on it, while people are suffering. Have you heard that? The fiddlers are fiddling while Rome is burning.

Here's a picture of the unemployed.

And the bill has extra policy issues: drug test the unemployed, make them get a GED, job training. I'm all for all of the efforts of job training and GEDs. We should try to do a polling of the unemployed. I'd venture to say many a college graduate, many of them just graduated in 2011 and cannot get a job, I don't think they want to go back to get a GED. I think that is behind where they are.

Drug testing will cost \$25,000. How often are we doing it? Every week when they pick up their check? Mothers and fathers who are trying to make sure that they pay their mortgage, maybe never taken a drug in their life, subjected to drug testing? Policy being done in the middle of a crisis?

So, Mr. *Levin* of the Ways and Means, our ranking member, had a commonsense approach. His commonsense approach was he declared unemployment an emergency, 6 million people about to go over the dam, sinking the ship, burning their house. It's an emergency. Six million people are, if you will, about to go under. It's an emergency.

Why couldn't we have a bipartisan agreement on that? Why do we have a bill with a long litany of to-dos for the unemployed? Has anybody done any research to find out whether or not these people are in need of GEDs or been out of work for however long because of their own fault?

The law clearly states that no unemployment insurance is denied that you are able to get unless you have been charged with misconduct or fraud or something else that pertains to you getting the unemployment insurance.

Friends, what is the definition of insurance? You pay for it while you work. You pay for insurance. You pay for unemployment insurance. You pay for car insurance, insurance on your house. It's insurance. You had to pay for it to get it. If you are getting unemployment insurance, you had to work to get it.

Why are we all these burdens?

Let me put up this little picture, to add insult to injury.

This bill would cut 40 weeks from the duration of the Federal unemployment compensation and allow States to drug test. And we had some comment about-- random comments about people applying for jobs and couldn't pass a drug test or something thereof. Well, let the individual businesses test individuals who are applying for jobs. They can handle it. I've heard that businesses are not hiring people; they're holding onto their cash. So these random comments that are being made are not legitimate. They are making comments that people couldn't pass a drug test at a business. If that's the case, let the business continue to drug test. It has nothing to do with individuals who worked and paid for insurance and now we want to deny them and add a burden to the State, the government, to drug test. It is perfectly well for an employer, which many employers do, to individually drug test on their own clock, their own bill, their own tab.

As I said, under present law, you cannot deny insurance for reasons other than on-the-job misconduct, fraud, or earning too much money from part-time work. That is it. How dare we suggest that we have deadbeats--who are looking for work every day. Where did this scheme come up from?

Here's a man who lives in Minneapolis. His name is Dean. He's watching Congress anxiously. He said he lost

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his job as a marketing director for a mutual fund company in July, meaning his 6 months of State benefits will expire at the beginning of January. If Congress doesn't strike a deal, he will be ineligible for the additional weeks of Federal benefits given to long-term joblessness since 2008. He said he would be willing to do anything to keep the money flowing if he hasn't found work by then.

It's a little bit ludicrous, but this man is so desperate he'll do anything. How do we insult the American public who paid for unemployment insurance, and we want this person to be insulted for no reason, no documentation whatsoever.

[Time: 21:10]

Here's what happens if we don't--two things, one, the payroll tax extension and the unemployment insurance. One, on the payroll tax, 400,000 jobs will be lost, and we will give in to 300,000 of the 1 percent for 160 million Americans who will not get the payroll tax relief of \$1,500. One million new jobs could be created thanks to the extension, versus losing 400,000 jobs. How easy is it? A surtax on 300,000 Americans starting in 2013 and finishing in terms of the payback in 10 years. We've heard over and over again by the 1 percent, many of them saying they don't mind the extra burden. That's a proposal that I offered and that the ranking member had as part of his proposal.

I met with doctors. They are concerned about their Medicare reimbursement. And in this instance, the proposal by the Democrats, which includes Mr. *Levin*, would have fixed the doctors' reimbursement with the war savings. A reasonable way to go. Payroll tax, quickly finished, surtax on 300,000 folks starting in 2013, we'd be able to put between 1,000 and \$1,500 in your pocket. The relatives of all these folks that you've just seen, the relatives of all the folk that we love who have taken an oath to protect us, among many other Americans, would be able to benefit. You just heard the story of Dean. I would imagine that Dean is similar to many others.

The second thing we need to do is the unemployment insurance--3.2 million Americans were pulled out of poverty in 2010 thanks to unemployment benefits. Remember now, you have worked, that's how you get unemployment benefits. I don't know where this GED comes from, but I know they'd be glad to get a GED if they needed it. And we can do that in regular order. Let's pass a jobs bill with training, and I'll tell you about two amendments that I have introduced jointly with Mr. *Cleaver* and Mr. *Towns* of the Congressional Black Caucus.

The number of job seekers who will lose benefits if Congress fails to extend emergency unemployment, 2.2 million; 700,000 newly created jobs will be lost. Can anybody explain to me why we have this bill that has already been cast aside as going nowhere? Absolutely nowhere. The Republican bill will come on the floor, and we will find that we are stuck with not an answer for the people like Dean, for the families that you've seen in this photograph, or the thousands who came to the jobs fair that was held by the Congressional Black Caucus, or the jobs fair that I held in my district, where respectively 5,000 and 8,000 persons came in the middle of this jobs crisis about 2 years ago. There are States that are likewise in a deep pickle of not being able to continue the benefits of some who are suffering.

So as I said, let me repeat it again, Senator *Reid* has already said, will not pass the Senate and will not be signed into law by the President. But let me go on to tell you why. A bill that I believe was passed out of the Rules Committee, solely a Republican bill, with opportunities for us to have come together on these two crises, show the American people in this spirit of giving that we are going to live to fight another day in 2012 and really work to get this done for people who are desperate, literally desperate. But here is what we're doing. The Republican bill requires millions of seniors to pay more for health care, Republicans who are refusing that surtax on the 300,000 wealthiest of Americans. I've already mentioned that it cuts the unemployment benefits for people who have lost work through no fault of their own.

Again, call this Congress at (202) 225-3121, and tell any Member of Congress whether or not you were fired because of your own fault--and still trying to get unemployment insurance. Let us hear from those voices who have lost a job or are not employed because of no fault of their own. What about an individual who said he was hired, he got laid off, he got hired again and got laid off again?

We know in this season of giving we have hired, got about 80,000 jobs that have come from some of the mail houses and retailers, but it still hasn't cut into some who are desperately unemployed.

And then it imposes new limits on unemployment compensation, as I indicated to you, restricting benefits. It violates the bipartisan debt limit agreement, statutory PAYGO and GOP's own CUTGO. We have not had any documentation from CBO that it meets any standards of whether or not it increases the deficit. We are hearing that it increases the deficit. If we could declare the unemployment insurance as an emergency, we would void that particular problem. Would you not think, reasoned colleagues, that the helping of 6 million people to literally keep a roof over their head and their children, is clearly, if you will, an emergency? Helping the families of our soldiers that are around the world? Some laying on their beds where they're injured, some now going through therapy, some now going through the treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder. If one of their family members is unemployed, isn't that an emergency? I'm not sure what we are thinking here.

Increases taxes on working families by forcing large end-of-the-year health care payments. Let me just say, my friends, some of this no one even understands. That's why it should go through the regular order. What is regular order? Hearings, legislation, we debate it, and we vote on it. One of the major insults is it reduces

preventative care. It takes billions of dollars out of preventative care. When we have encouraged Americans to get health care at the front end and not get treatment in the emergency rooms with skyrocketing health care, there is no doubt we have literally just cut it, and reduces Medicare and Medicaid. In some of my congressional districts, it will literally shut down physicians who are dealing with the poorest of the poor, close hospitals, close clinics, because these individuals have no other way. Shut the CHIPS program down, the Children's Health Insurance Program tied to Medicaid. It seems to me that we are not being rational.

It takes away EPA rules that deal with trying to clean the air on behalf of the American people. Unfortunately, can't seem to find common ground.

I want to repeat one point again. Forty weeks are being cut from the lifeline of those who need unemployment insurance. This is the deal that our Republican friends have crafted in order to allegedly put a bill on the floor of this House. Taking the lifeline, taking the rescue rope, taking the floor from the feet of unemployed. Just imagine a drowning man or woman, and a ship comes by, and it simply stares as they go down once, twice, they are screaming life raft, life raft, just a life raft. Just imagine, and the ship keeps sailing and shouts back, I don't think it's an emergency. Keep paddling. Are you sure you didn't get in this water at your own fault? Keep on paddling. That's what this bill does to millions of Americans by cutting eligibility from 99 weeks to 59 weeks and, in fact, suggesting that unemployment at this rate is not an emergency.

[Time: 21:20]

Let me tell you about Ohio. It is among other States with at least an 8.5 percent unemployment rate that will be hit the hardest by this proposal. These States would likely lose 40 weeks, as I indicated, of insurance. And the way this bill is written, the unemployment compensation provisions in total equate to an increase of Federal spending by \$34.2 billion over 10 years.

Let me say that again. The hawks, the fiscal hawks, the folk who've been joining in at the microphone and accusing this administration of reckless spending when we literally stopped the bleeding in this economy and job creation surged in November into December, when we've seen the markets do a little better, none of this we consider nirvana, but we see the movement.

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Now we have our friends committing themselves to spending \$34 billion rather than acknowledging that if you're unemployed and you can't even access a loaf of bread, that you have an emergency.

Forty-six million Americans on SNAP, on food stamps, many in parking lots in front of grocery stores waiting for that supplement to get into their account so they can go and buy food for their children.

What else does this bill have? Eleven riders. As I indicated, enroll in GED, and many other riders that have to do with regular order. It sounds complex, but what



that means is letting the bill go through committee and having us discuss it, maybe putting together an omnibus bill. That could be bipartisan. But now we want to hold hostage the unemployment insurance benefits.

Medicare extensions, this bill averts the schedule 27.4 percent cuts to physician payments. By increasing the payment rate by 1 percent in 2012 and again in 2013, the two years of stable Medicare payment rates would be the most certainty physicians have had since 2004. However, the riders are unacceptable to hospitals. It is going to dramatically impact hospitals. It reduces payments to hospitals by drastically cutting payments from valuation and management services by \$6.8 billion. These services are among the most common outpatient services provided in hospitals.

It cuts Medicare bad debt payments; currently reimburses 70 percent to 65 percent; and 60 percent in 2014 and 55 percent in 2015. They are closing hospitals, literally closing hospitals in poor areas. Other health care-related riders include relaxed restrictions on many other issues that are not good.

This bill attempts to ensure that welfare funds cannot be accessed in a number of places. I might really agree with them, but it's a rider that has a serious problem.

And so, Mr. Speaker, it disturbs me, when we are making work. What does "make work" mean? Making work means that we are going through an exercise of 90 minutes of debate, which I believe may come shortly, and an eventual passage I believe of this legislation. Some have some points in it that might be relevant to some of us in different regions. However, I believe I can get to the same spot in regular order.

I am looking at legislation that can turn some of the profits that come from my region into coastal restoration and to provide for reduction of the debt. I hope there is a bipartisan response to that. Mr. Speaker, that is okay to do in regular order--meaning, having hearings, introduce the bill, let your colleagues debate it and understand it. But to throw this kitchen sink on the floor of the House when people are asking for a life raft is just to see how long we can hang out here, just see how long we can hang out.

I am all about getting a GED. I'm all about improving graduation rates of our students all across America. It's too low as we speak. But that is not the issue for this legislation. The issue is the life raft. It is to note that personal and family savings for many are exhausted.

Let me tell you something that has not been diminished. Newspaper articles suggest that the purchase of luxury items--jewelry, et cetera--is booming. It means that there is a group of prosperous, wonderful Americans who are having a heck of a good time. And I am neither envious or in any way want to criticize those purchases, but that is why the surtax is reasonable because I believe those Americans are willing to experience the benefit of this great country, the opportunity to live in a safe and secure Nation that has democracy and equality which allows them to prosper and to be part of saving their fellow Americans.

Are we conscious of World War II when we were asked that very question? For those who could not serve, every American had a role--working in factories willingly, enthusiastically. They understood the burden, the benefit, and the sacrifice.

Why in the world, when luxury items are flying off of the counters, would we be concerned. One of the issues is that we would be attacking small businesses. No, we would not. It is very difficult to, in essence, find small businesses that are at the \$1 million mark. And so that seems to be an argument that is taken to a new level of understanding. I believe it will be a fair response.

Amendments that we offered in the Rules Committee, which I did, also make sense. We talked about, again, the surtax. We talked about looking at some flexible ways of getting additional income on financial transactions. I talked about an urban jobs-training program--one of my amendments, as I indicated, Mr. *Towns*, Mr. *Cleaver* and *Jackson Lee*, that had to do with partnershiping with the Urban League. I work very closely with the Houston Area Urban League. They are excellent in job training, to be able to go into these hard-to-serve areas where unemployment is double digit and has been for a number of years.

If we're just going to have the kitchen sink, let's add a responsible provision that really addresses job training, that really talks to the needs of job training. Why not do that? We offered that amendment in a bipartisan spirit. Let us partnership with a proven entity, the National Urban League, that could in fact help us with job training around America. And so understanding how jobs are created seems to have alluded this legislation.

I'm reading from a report by the Urban Institute that found--IMPAQ International, IMPAQ International and the Urban Institute found that unemployment insurance benefits the economy, reduced the fall of the GDP by 18.3 percent.

[Time: 21:30]

This resulted in nominal GDP being \$175 billion higher in 2009 than it would have been without unemployment insurance benefits. This is documented. That's why we think it's a crisis and we should just pass it under emergency legislation, which is allowed.

Unemployment insurance kept the GDP \$315 billion higher from the start of the recession through the second quarter of 2010; and, as I said, it kept an average of 1.6 million Americans on the job in each quarter. And at the low point of the recession, 1.8 million job losses were averted by unemployment insurance, lowering the unemployment rate by 1.2 percentage points.

Stand in a line trying to find a job. Some people say it's like finding a needle in a haystack. Listen to the painful stories of people who've not been able to find work.

As I stand here on the floor of the House, Mr. Speaker, I would almost venture

to say that a person who worked who may be presently unemployed and still eligible might be living in their car, might just be living in their car. And here we are, fiddling while Rome is burning. I can't imagine.

Two things we want to do--payroll tax and unemployment insurance--and we've got a whole litany of throw the kitchen sink on the floor of the United States House of Representatives, a bill that is 300 pages long, jeopardizing the lives of children. We've lost some jobs, 7 million since 2007. There are a number of other elements that we could be working on.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to pass a Make It In America initiative. We have enough time. I'd like to pass a major manufacturing initiative so that America begins to make things again, that we begin to redevelop our steel industry so that we would never find a bridge built with steel from China and workers from China.

I believe that we should be collaborative. There is a worldwide economy. We're interrelated, but I believe in doing it from strength. So I think it is enormously important that we spend our time doing something that might draw bipartisan support, actually creating jobs, asking our banking friends why they have \$64 trillion on their books and what's happening to homeowners who are attempting to access these dollars for refinance or home builders who have turned this economy; or why are we allowing housing stock to just sit and not finding a way to provide more dollars for neighborhood stabilization so that occupiers who have been driven to the wall don't have to do what some friends are doing out west--take up residence because they're unnecessarily being foreclosed on, some of whom probably are unemployed.

Do you consider that an emergency, that we have driven Americans to taking houses and taking their homes?

This is not the America that our ancestors sweated to build. This is not

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the America that the turn of the century caused an Industrial Revolution, making us the builder and producer of the world, that saw us turn out the necessary weapons of World War II. This is not that America, that we have people who are in the streets today asking why they have no relief, why they're unemployed, why they're a recent graduate from the Nation's colleges and yet cannot be employed.

That's why I'm here on the floor. That's why the Congressional Black Caucus put forward major legislation to help suggest that there is a way through. There's a way through. Our chairman sent a letter to President Barack Obama urging the administration to deliver targeted solutions to address job creation in American communities with the highest unemployment. We were broad based, including those that include African Americans, but target the highest numbers.

Does anybody remember Presidential candidate, former Attorney General Robert Francis Kennedy that went into Appalachia in 1968 and acknowledged some of these poor pockets of poverty?

Does anyone acknowledge the number of children that are impoverished in the

United States? Has anyone done an overview of the pockets of poverty because manufacturing plants have closed in our Rust Belt?

Well, we initiated the effort to target those who are most in need. None of that is in this bill, the kitchen sink. We suggested nine job creation proposals that would target the most vulnerable communities. We want to give people a second chance.

Remember the lifeline, and the ship just passing by as a hand goes down once, twice, and, yes, a third time. You hear that voice shouting, Are you in the water, because it's your own fault?

We believe we should do something about it. There are more job fairs and town halls to come. Many Members are holding them on their own. And so we've focused on trying to help those vulnerable, the most vulnerable.

How did we get to where we are today? And why are we in the midst of a quarrelsome debate that will not get us anywhere?

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the leadership to come together. Every time we travel home we hear the same thing, and I might venture to say from Democrats and Republicans. They egg us on. We know you can do it, because this body, this democratic body is the oldest democracy. We've lived by a Constitution that says, among other things, that we deserve due process, that there should be no discrimination, that we have the right to vote, many privileges that other nations do not have.

Can we imagine ourselves now, the last waning hours, to have a kitchen sink bill that has no room for success in the other body, and it is hours, minutes, seconds before the person drowns? How do we throw away all these jobs?

Now, somebody would come back to me and say, We have this bill. And I've just answered why this bill is flawed: cutting 40 weeks off of someone who is drowning in unemployment insurance; refusing to discuss a reasoned way to do the payroll tax cut, which is, taking the top 1 percent in a reasoned surtax for 10 years only starting in 2013; cutting seniors' Medicare benefits in this bill, throwing them under the bus; making sure that the unemployment benefits are bogged down with provisions that should be put in a bill.

And it should be documented that we have a problem of drug addicts who are unemployed who have paid into the insurance. Answer the question whether private businesses cannot do their own drug testing, which they have done all along to weed out individuals who may be seeking jobs. Document that people are home who are unemployed just taking drugs that may not be prescription drugs and not looking for employment. I've not seen them. I just want to have somebody come to the floor of the House, submit a document, give me a report that States all around the country are seeing people drag themselves up getting their unemployment check that are undeserving because they're on drugs.

[Time: 21:40]

What did I say, Mr. Speaker, you are deserving because you worked. And the law says misconduct, fraud, or other reasons dealing with those issues is the only reason to deny an unemployment check.

So I think it is important that I leave with a call of reason and to, in essence, make sure that our friends can have a sense that this is the wrong direction to go. Families like those of these soldiers; Americans in hamlets across this Nation far and wide; young people that are 2011 college graduates that we've encouraged to finish their education loaded with debt, having secured loans; families loaded with debt, homes on the verge of foreclosure, people who every day of their life worked; children whose families counted on them for little jobs that they might have tried to get. Some did get them. Certainly these are not the children that the former Speaker of the House suggested are poor and have no record or history of seeing anybody going to work. Certainly that's untrue.

In fact, if they're poor right now, they may be of a parent that worked who's been unemployed for a long period of time. They watched that parent go to work. They probably are watching that parent cry in pain because of the plight that they're in right now.

So I want my friends to know that we should not be playing at this. We should be taking this seriously. We already know that we will have a degree of war savings, and I'm looking at these numbers now. We have spent \$802.3 billion for the Iraq war, \$472.6 billion ongoing on the Afghan war, a lot of money. We will have some savings from the Iraq war.

We could in a bipartisan way address the question of the pained family member, the person that might be living in their car because of the plight of unemployment for a long period of time and needs the 99 weeks. We could address the question of poverty. The largest number of children are impoverished. We could work on making sure that children are able to reach the highest level of education.

We could, in essence, try to be part of the solution by helping to create jobs by introducing a major legislative initiative on job creation such as manufacturing here at home: buy American; make it in America. We could ensure that the government continues to buy American, recognizing that we have many friends around the world. I don't think that there would be any problem with us doing that.

We could stop burdening seniors. We could pass this payroll tax. Let me remind you the unemployment could be done under an emergency, the payroll tax could be done simply by taxing the wealthiest of Americans for a 10-year period. Does that sound simple? And that it is.

We could not eliminate the child tax credit. We could not stop people from receiving benefits by a long list of to-do's. We could not jeopardize States that have an 8.5 percent unemployment rate like Ohio that are desperately running out. We could be the kind of America that Tom Brokaw spoke of in "The Greatest Generation." We could answer that with the idea that the young people that are here today are beginning to build their own story of greatness, and be empathetic and sympathetic to their plight with degrees and no jobs, or maybe they had jobs during the summer and maybe they're at home with parents who are unemployed,

just piling on top of themselves, just one bad luck after another.

So I'm calling upon my colleagues to find a pathway of agreement to look at what we have done in the Congressional Black Caucus, to look at the amendments that were introduced, one finally including studying whether or not this bill that comes to the floor will impact the elderly and minorities in a disproportionate way. That amendment I offered as well--Mr. *Cleaver*, Mr. *Towns* and *Jackson Lee*. Fair, simple amendments.

I can only call upon the good graces of this Nation, the good graces of Members of Congress, the recognition, my friends, that our job, our responsibility is to shed ourselves of the crisis of partisanship, the shackles of partisanship, and be more concerned with the pain of the American people, the fact that they don't have any time to wait, to going back and forth and going back and forth, send it to the House, fiddle around, then send it to the Senate, fiddle around, and then it comes back again. The President's suggested a veto, a one-upmanship.

Who will win while Rome burns?

While the people that we love, family members that some of us even know of, we face the same human conditions

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that all of America faces. I'm sure one Member of Congress will tell you of somebody in their family that is on hard times. This is not to benefit us but it is to bring about compassion and understanding for someone close to us.

So we can just get that compassion and understanding if we can just experience what a democracy is all about, a democracy that has lived and survived for 400 years, an economy that has thrived, that has given people an equal opportunity, that has said you can pull yourself up by the bootstraps, and then recognize that we're saying to America that we don't have that dream for you anymore. That we're just going to slash and burn. We're not going to be fair. We're going to throw States in a condition where they cannot overcome. We're not going to honor our commitment to our soldiers, providing for them and their families.

All we're going to do is to constantly be engaged in partisanship and disagreement.

Mr. Speaker, my time has ended. It is a clarion call for coming together in the American way. I know we can do it, and we can pass a fair, clean unemployment extension and payroll tax for the American people and my friends to my right that we all love and admire.

- [Begin Insert]

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the issue of extending unemployment insurance and the payroll tax cut. If there is a single federal program that is absolutely critical to people in communities all across this nation at this time, it would be unemployment compensation benefits. Unemployed Americans must have a means to subsist, while continuing to look for work that in many parts of the

country is just not there. Families have to feed children.

The American people are relying upon Congress to stand up for them when they need us the most. Now is not the time to take a vacation, go home to our families, and watch as our unemployed constituents suffer through holidays.

The bill being brought to the Floor by my Republican Colleagues does not adequately address the needs of the unemployed.

The plan put forth by my Republican colleagues has provisions to slash the duration of federal unemployment benefits by 40 weeks. Since 2008, federal programs expiring in January have provided up to 73 weeks of compensation for workers who use up 26 weeks of state benefits.

In addition, the version heading to the House Floor would slash an additional 20 weeks of federal Emergency Unemployment Compensation and it would let states reduce benefits even further. It would also impose a uniform federal work search requirement and disqualify high school dropouts not actively pursuing GEDs and millionaires from receiving benefits.

The unemployment reforms, sweeping as they are, may be lost amid other features of the Republican package.

A worker advocacy group recently described the drug testing element the "most disturbing" part of the Republican unemployment reforms. "Devising new ways to insult the unemployed only distracts from the current debate over how to best restore the nation's economy to strong footing and the discussion over how to best support the unemployed and get them back to work."

The requirement to insist that to qualify for benefits that a person has earned should require a GED or a high school diploma will have a negative impact on minorities.

The labor force participation rate for persons without a high school diploma is 20 percentage points lower than the labor force participation rate for high school graduates.

Nationally, approximately 70 percent of all students graduate from high school, but African-American and Hispanic students have a 55 percent or less chance of graduating from high school.

Only 52 percent of students in the 50 largest cities in the United States graduate from high school. That rate is below the national high school graduation rate of 70 percent, and also falls short of the 60 percent average for urban districts across the Nation.

What is needed is job training programs that are funded rather than penalties for those who for a multitude of reasons have not attained a high school diploma or GED.

Unemployed workers, many of whom rely on public transportation, need to be able to get to potential employers' places of work. Utility payments must be paid.

Most people use their unemployment benefits to pay for the basics. No one is getting rich from unemployment benefits, because the weekly benefit checks are solely providing for basic food, medicine, gasoline and other necessary things many individuals with no other means of income are not able to afford.

Personal and family savings have been exhausted and 401(Ks) have been tapped, leaving many individuals and families desperate for some type of assistance until the economy improves and additional jobs are created. The extension of unemployment benefits for the long-term unemployed is an emergency. You do not play with people's lives when there is an emergency. We are in a crisis. Just ask someone who has been unemployed and looking for work, and they will tell you the same.

With a national unemployment rate of 9.1 percent, preventing and prolonging people from receiving unemployment benefits is a national tragedy. In the City of Houston, the unemployment rate stands at 8.6 percent as almost 250,000 individuals remain unemployed.

Indeed, I cannot tell you how difficult it has been to explain to my constituents who are unemployed that there will be no further extension of unemployment benefits until the Congress acts. Whether the justification for inaction is the size of the debt or the need for deficit reduction, it is clear that it is more prudent to act immediately to give individuals and families looking for work a means to survive.

Currently, individuals who are seeking work find it to be like hunting for a needle in a hay stack. For every job available today, there are four people who are currently unemployed. You can not fit a square peg in a round hole and point fingers at the three other people who when that job is filled is left unemployed. Let's be realistic, there are currently 7 million fewer jobs in the economy today compared to when this recession began.

Although according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics the state of Texas continues to have the largest year-over-year job increase in the country with a total of 253,200 jobs, there are still thousands of Texans like thousands of other Americans in dire need of a job.

#### UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

A study conducted by the research firm IMPAQ International and the Urban Institute found Unemployment Insurance benefits:

Reduced the fall in GDP by 18.3%. This resulted in nominal GDP being \$175 billion higher in 2009 than it would have been without unemployment insurance benefits.

In total, unemployment insurance kept GDP \$315 billion higher from the start of the recession through the second quarter of 2010;

kept an average of 1.6 million Americans on the job in each quarter: at the low point of the recession, 1.8 million job losses were averted by UI benefits, lowering the unemployment rate by approximately 1.2 percentage points; made an even



more positive impact than in previous recessions, thanks to the aggressive, bipartisan effort to expand unemployment insurance benefits and increase eligibility during both the Bush and Obama Administrations. ``There is reason to believe," said the study, ``that for this particular recession, the UI program provided stronger stabilization of real output than in many past recessions because extended benefits responded strongly."

For every dollar spent on unemployment insurance, this study found an increase in economic activity of two dollars.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, extending unemployment benefits could prevent the loss of over 500,000 jobs.

If Congress fails to act before the end of the year, Americans who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own will begin losing their unemployment benefits in January. By mid-February, 2.1 million will have their benefits cut off, and by the end of 2012 over 6 million will lose their unemployment benefits.

Congress has never allowed emergency unemployment benefits to expire when the unemployment rate is anywhere close to its current level of 9.1 percent.

Republicans seem to want to blame the unemployed for unemployment. But the truth is there are over four unemployed workers for every available job, and there are nearly 7 million fewer jobs in the economy today compared to when the recession started in December 2007.

The legislation introduced today would continue the current Federal unemployment programs through next year.

This extension not only will help the unemployed, but it also will promote economic recovery. The Congressional Budget Office has declared that unemployment benefits are ``both timely and cost-effective in spurring economic activity and employment." The Economic Policy Institute has estimated that preventing UI benefits from expiring could prevent the loss of over 500,000 jobs.

In addition to continuing the Federal unemployment insurance programs for one year, the bill would provide some immediate assistance to States grappling with insolvency problems within their own UI programs.

The legislation would relieve insolvent States from interest payments on Federal loans for one year and place a one-year moratorium on higher Federal unemployment taxes that are imposed on employers in States with outstanding loans.

## PAYROLL TAX CUT

For 341 days, the GOP House majority has failed to offer a clear jobs agenda. Congress

must not leave Washington for the holidays without extending the payroll tax cut

and unemployment benefits that put money into the economy and promote jobs.

GOP is risking tax relief for 160 million Americans while protecting massive tax cuts for 300,000 people making more than a million dollars per year. That is not fair and balanced taxation.

Extending and expanding the payroll tax cut would put \$1,500 into the pockets of the typical middle class family. This may not seem like a lot to many, but to some, \$1,500 is make-or break money.

- [End Insert]

### GOP Jobs Bill Slashes Benefits, Allows States To Drug-Test The Unemployed

WASHINGTON--Republican leaders in the House of Representatives unveiled legislation Friday would cut 40 weeks from the duration of federal unemployment compensation and allow states to require the unemployed to pass drug tests in order to receive benefits.

Republicans have not cited any data suggesting that drug use contributes to joblessness or that there is an elevated rate of drug abuse among the unemployed. Michael Steel, a spokesman for House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio), said the measure is inspired by lawmakers' conversations with businesses in their districts.

Rep. Jack Kingston (R-Ga.) cited a local business this week when he introduced a stand-alone drug testing proposal. "I had an employer tell me of an overwhelming response for job openings," said Kingston. "There was just one problem: Half the people who applied could not even pass a drug test."

But Kingston's office declined to name the employer or provide any information supporting the claim. When Gov. Nikki Haley (R-S.C.) made a nearly identical claim earlier this year, it turned out to be completely untrue.

Under current law, states are not allowed to deny workers unemployment insurance for reasons other than on-the-job misconduct, fraud or earning too much money from part-time work. The new bills would expand that list to include failing a drug test. Kingston's proposal would require drug testing; the version that party leaders announced Friday would allow states to test if they chose to. The measures come at the end of a year in which dozens of state lawmakers across the country have proposed drug screening for the poor and jobless.

The House drug testing scheme is part of a much broader legislative package that would reauthorize a plethora of expiring programs, including a payroll tax cut and a portion of the existing regimen of federal unemployment insurance for the long-term jobless. Republicans would reduce the maximum duration of federal benefits from 73 to 33 weeks and permit states to cut benefits even further.

The broader bill, which also calls on the president to speed construction of the controversial Keystone XL oil pipeline, sets the stage for a showdown next week before members return to their districts for the holidays.

Dean Haehnel of the Minneapolis area is watching Congress anxiously. He said he lost his job as a marketing director for a mutual fund company in July, meaning his six months of state benefits will expire at the beginning of January. If Congress doesn't strike a deal, Haehnel will be ineligible for the additional weeks of federal benefits given the long-term jobless since 2008. He said he'd be willing to pee in a cup to keep the money flowing if he hasn't found work by then.

``It's a little bit ludicrous, but I have no problem doing it if that's what it takes," Haehnel said. ``They think that's the issue?"

Haehnel, 50, said that each time he's landed an interview, it seems like 200 other people are fighting for the same job. And he said that whenever he's applied for jobs beneath the director level, he's been rejected as overqualified. His wife is still working, but without his unemployment benefits or income from a new job, he said, his family would struggle to cover the mortgage and pay college tuition for two daughters.

In Minnesota, extending federal benefits under the current rules would make Haehnel eligible for another 60 weeks of help (the number of weeks available varies by state). The latest Republican plan would leave him with 33 weeks. Asked if he thinks he'll need the benefits for that long, Haehnel described a man at one of his weekly networking meetings with other unemployed people. That man was on the verge of leaving the workforce.

``He's right around 62 and he's been looking for almost two years, and he's going to file for Social Security," Haehnel said. ``He was a normal guy. It wasn't like he was a drug addict. A normal, hardworking guy who just can't get a job."

END

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