my insurance, you go find yours, we are all paying. As Representative PINGREE indicated, we are paying for that uncompensated care, and I believe that is to the tune of some $56 billion or $57 billion in this country. That is a huge savings that automatically flips over to a benefit if we do wise health care policy reform.

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. You know, in addition, if you actually enumerated the benefit enhancement for our seniors, Medicare stays not only intact; it gets better. We close the doughnut hole, making it easier for seniors to be able to afford and to access the prescription medications that they need.

We eliminate copayments for routine, preventive medical care, including screenings, saving seniors hundreds of dollars a year.

We improve and increase reimbursement payments to doctors who serve Medicare patients, which is a complaint we often hear from our senior citizens, that because of reimbursement rates being inadequate, doctors put a cap on how many Medicare patients they will see. And in some cases they get out of business all together. Obviously, that is not a good thing for our senior population.

This bill addresses all three of those reforms, making Medicare benefits more generous to our senior citizens, protecting the benefit base they have got, and augmenting it. Unfortunately, some of the misinformation spread in the summer would suggest otherwise, creating needless fear and stress in our senior population which relies so heavily on an efficient and effective Medicare system.

Mr. TONKO. Right. And I think the sensitivities that we need to show to these various audiences are hampered when people are including in the discussion items that are simply not in the bill, or fabricating them in a way where they suggest that there are outcomes that would be very destructive.

So this has been a very unique effort because you are trying to share information with your constituents, which I think is valuable. They can constructively build this package with us. And at the same time, you have to dispel the myths and rumors and the misinformation so we can stay on that page of fact not fiction and do what is best for Americans, for all ratepayers and for all sectors of our economy.

We earlier talked about small businesses. When you think of the benefits that come if they can have better bargaining leverage as small businesses, there is a benefit there. Our larger companies and industries haven't seen the growth in premiums that our small businesses have. They are some 18 percent greater than the larger business community.

So what we need to do here is provide that benefit by pooling these resources, allowing for better leverage in bargaining for health care premiums to stay lower. Just with the report today that was issued, we had a growth in the last 10 years, New York State alone, they did a State by State measure, and 105 percent growth in premiums and a 44 percent growth in wages over a 10-year span.

Now, Representative CONNOLLY, I think we can all agree that is not a pattern that we can allow to continue because eventually the well runs dry, people become sicker, and the profit column is swelling for an industry that is standing between choices that should be made between a doctor and a patient.

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Absolutely. I think the numbers you just cited for New York State actually are higher than the national average, and there are regional disparities here in terms of the growth of cost. But what we do know, based on the Kaiser Family Foundation study is that the average increase in insurance premiums over the last decade was 138 percent, far outstripping the rate of inflation and far outstripping, as you point out, the growth in wages and income. As a matter of fact, that was negative.

So there is no lodestone to measure what is happening in health care; but we do know that it is fast outstripping the ability of people's income to support, and it is far and away above the rate of any inflation index, and it is going to be pushing itself beyond the index of affordability in the not-so-distant future if we don't do something in the way of health care reform.

I need to leave the floor, but I want to thank my colleague for his leadership and for providing us a forum for a civil discussion about such an important topic.

Mr. TONKO. Thank you, Representative CONNOLLY, for being a strong voice in this Chamber so as to move us all along that path of progressive reform, for an industry that is representative of every one of $6 in the American economy. If it goes unchecked, in the short span of 30 years, it will be one in $3. That does not make strong sense. It is a situation that will be a train wreck just waiting to happen.

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. It is not sustainable. I thank my colleague.

Mr. TONKO. We thank you for joining us this evening.

As we look at the progress that we can make here, it is important for us to move forward with fact not fiction, for us to instill reforms in the insurance area that allows for catastrophic illness to be addressed so that it does not prejudice against American families that require health care insurance.

We need to move forward so as to provide portability for our American families, especially at a time when we profess that there will be career changes, job changes many times over in the work lifetime of countless individuals in this country, where if you lose a job, you shouldn't be denied your health care. Some 14,000 Americans per day are losing their health care. That is unacceptable in this Nation of plenty.

We can have a better plan. We need to make certain that wellness and prevention are underscored as very valuable, important tools in the kit that speak to the soundness of holding down costs. We do that by not allowing for copayments in that regard. We need to cap those situations that could be catastrophic by making certain that no more than $5,000 or $10,000 per family, some reasonable measure be there, to restrict the payments that are demanded because so many families face bankruptcy.

□ 2015

I know that if our health care measure were approved as represented before the House here, some 1,200 families in my congressional district alone would escape the woes of bankruptcy because of medical expenses.

These are issues that face America each and every day. The business community has been paying stiffly for this sort of lack of reform. Some 40 percent of our business community is reported spending more than 10 percent of their payroll on health care costs. That is a pattern that is only growing worse with time.

And our seniors have been treated unfairly, with concepts like a Medicare part D doughnut hole, situations that find them in a very few weeks into any calendar year paying dearly for pharmaceutical needs that are a life-and-death choice for them. They shouldn't limit or fractionalize what they're taking. They shouldn't avoid the pharmaceutical needs that have been required of them by the medical community.

Those are situations that need to be responded through in this debate that hopefully will be factual, that will be fair, that will be based on soundness rather than fear tactics; those that might divide this Nation unnecessarily, that may impact the chance to really reform a situation that for decades has been talked about.

I applaud the President when he said he wants to be the last President to attempt this effort and fail. He wants to achieve success for the Nation. For decades we have had many an administration push for reform but it has failed because I think there are those who resist change simply to resist it rather than open up to the discussion and the dialogue and the debate in honest measure that needs to be had so as to move forward in progressive format.

Madam Speaker, we of the freshman class thank you this evening for the time allotted. I now yield back the remainder of my time and appreciate the opportunity to discuss what I believe is a critically important issue, that of health care and insurance reform here in America.

ACORN

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

Mr. GOHMERT. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do appreciate the time.

There's so much going on and we've heard so much about community organizations, actually in the last year as we heard then-candidate and Senator Obama talking about community organizations being the way to go. I think it's wonderful—community organizations. I'm a member of a number of community organizations. None of them pay me, though. We do the things we do in the community organizations I've ever been a part of because we care about the community. We have jobs, we work, and then on our own time, without being compensated, we try to help others. We do it through church. We do it through all kinds of civic organizations.

So this whole thing of community organizations has been a bit of an anathema to me, an enigma, a riddle within a riddle; a community organization of volunteers who get paid to do some kind of organization. It's a strange thing.

As we've heard more and more about this group ACORN and the vast amount of money that it has been receiving from taxpayers, it becomes even more of an interesting enigma. Getting taxpayer dollars from the government, over 50 million, from people who are working and also being part of community organizations and churches and charitable institutions and helping their communities, they're working and they're paying taxes and they're also organizing and doing charitable work, and then come to find out their tax dollars are paying a group which has many, many other aspects to it to go around and basically try to undo the type of things they've been doing. It's really a strange phenomenon, ACORN. And from one acorn, we know that many nuts can grow.

As we think about and anticipate the work being done by ACORN, we find out, well, they go out and help people to know what their rights are and sign up for different benefits. I have seen my good friend from Iowa (Mr. KING) show the photograph he took down in New Orleans that had a big 2008 Obama sign in there. Well, wait. Charitable organizations, they're not supposed to be involved in politics. In fact, any other group seems to have the Federal Government come down rather strongly against them if they start engaging in politics. But apparently that applies to others and not ACORN.

I've also been amazed, Madam Speaker, the responses of some within ACORN saying, You set us up. You came in.

Yeah, they came in with a camera and began to ask could they get help to set up a prostitution ring of underage children with illegal immigrants coming in. At some point you would think people of morality, people of ethics who were organizing communities for the good and the uprightness, the righteousness, the goodness, the morality, the really growth within the community would have immediately said, Do you not understand what prostitution does to children? Do you not understand that it robs them of their childhood? Do you not understand how abusive that is to female children and how that destroys their adulthood as women? Do you not understand that you're a parasite if you're living off of young children in a prostitution ring? Or women for that matter. You're a pimp; you ought to be disgusted with yourself, because we certainly are.

We saw none of that in any of the videos. The reaction seemed to be the same: Well, how can we help you to get over and to make money as a parasite? It's like this was a parasitic organization trying to help someone else also be a parasite.

The outrage should not have been to anyone who exposed that kind of mentality within all these different organizations that are a part of ACORN but the outrage should have been, How could this be? How could a group like this be getting hard-earned tax dollars?

I'm pretty sure that most people around the country who have jobs and are struggling would like to have their own money back. I imagine they would like to have that $53 million back if they had known that it was going to be for folks who helped other groups and other individuals conduct illegal activity.

But there was no remorse. You see the video and you wonder, Where is the outrage? You're community organizers and you've got no outrage? Do you have no soul? Well, of course they do, but they don't show it. Is there no still small voice that speaks and says, This is wrong? They're talking about prostitution among children. They're talking about things that are completely against what we believe in in America; everyone fulfilling their great potential and becoming all that they possibly could be. Very tragic. Very tragic.

But then again, we've seen lots of slings and arrows hurled at one Member who was sitting right back here in the House who yelled, You lie. That was inappropriate. That violates the rule. But when you take it in context, the individual that came into this House, as an invited guest into the people's House, had just said that critics of the President's plan were not engaged in, quote, honest debate; that we were using, quote, scare tactics. He said that many of those who were hosting him here were making, quote, bogus claims; that we were making wild claims; that we were engaged in, quote, demagoguery; engaged in distortion, acrimony.

The President said we were cynical and irresponsible in the manner in which we were criticizing his plan. He said that facts and reason were thrown overboard. He said we were robbing the country of opportunity; we were killing the President's good bill. And he actually used the L word right here on the floor just a couple of sentences before the L word was used by our friend JOE WILSON. The President said, It's a lie plain and simple.

When you set that tone, you come into somebody else's house as an invited guest and you set that tone, what does that tell the people around you? You think it's okay to talk like that, to accuse your critics of being like that. You set the groundwork of making it okay to say those kind of things about people who happen to disagree with you.

We've seen the footage of the President telling members of ACORN, You're going to have a place in my administration; you're going to have a stake; you're going to get to participate. There has been plenty of involvement with ACORN. It was not like it was a new entity to the President as it was to many of us.

And so you have to wonder a bit about judgment. If that's the judgment of whom you want to be the stakeholder, of whom you want to give you advice and help you in the administration, then you have to wonder, Well, is that the same kind of judgment being used to pick people who are czars, who have no accountability to anyone but you? Because that seems to be kind of where ACORN was.

□ 2030

So we've got over 30 czars, and they fall into the same category as this lack of accountability. I don't care what group you are, Madam Speaker. I don't care where it is or what's involved when there is no accountability. We know from the Old Testament that the only man in the entire Bible to have been said to have had a heart after God's own was King David and that, when he had no accountability, the man who had the heart after God's own could commit horrible offenses.

Well, you have an organization like ACORN, and there is just complete unaccountability. There's not only unaccountability. We're going to give you all kinds of power. We're going to make you the stakeholder in this administration. We're going to let you organize America to fit your own image. Well, that's a little scary, but when there's no accountability, that's where all of this goes.

So I am pleased to see friends who are also wishing to address this topic. I'll recognize them in a moment.

I see a sign: ''ACORN Goes Nuts.'' As I just pointed out, from one acorn, we know many nuts can grow.

With that, I would like to yield to my friend from Texas (Mr. CARTER), Judge CARTER.

Mr. CARTER. I thank my fellow judge and friend from Texas, first off, for being here to start this, because I was across town, and was fighting the traffic to get back. I apologize for not being here on time, but sometimes things don't cooperate around here like they should.

We're starting off by talking about—and I think you've probably told people

we're again addressing what we've been addressing every week now for probably 12 or 14 weeks. It's very simple that the rule of law must prevail in this country. That means that we have to have rules both of this House, of this Nation and of our States. We have to abide by those rules. The failure to abide by those rules has to have consequences. So we've been talking a lot about internal things that go on with the Ethics Committee and so forth here in the Congress. Now, tonight, we're talking about some things that are in the news that, once again, are under the subject of the rule of law. It puts a bright light on an issue that we really need to be concerned about, and that is the issue with ACORN.

I think, probably, an awful lot of people have seen this video, what we have right here. I know, if they watch Fox News, they've seen the video, but I think now it's being shown on other stations. It's of these actors who pretended to be a pimp and a prostitute, who went to ACORN and asked for their advice on housing and taxes. They were basically given a hand on how to do things—on how to do fraudulent activities, on how not to get caught, on how to beat the system, on how to be able to run a child prostitution ring, and on how not to claim those people as dependents because you don't want people to know about them—all kinds of things like that, things from an agency which is supposed to be there to help people, an agency which is supposed to be law-abiding, which has received $50 million worth of American taxpayer money to help fund that organization, and which is standing in line right now, based upon bills that have already been passed through this House, to pick up another $8 billion—with a ''b''—as a potential that could go into ACORN's hands as community organizers.

This shocking event happened not just at one place but in Baltimore, Washington, D.C., New York, San Bernardino, and San Diego. They all have videos showing this.

Mr. GOHMERT. If my friend would yield for just a moment.

Mr. CARTER. Of course I will yield.

Mr. GOHMERT. With regard to the $8 billion that is discussed for which ACORN may be eligible, actually, if you look at H.R. 3200, which is the health care bill that is out here in the House, there is a provision that requires that the Secretary provides information about the Federal plan and also signs people up for the Federal health care plan. That provision is in there, and I haven't been able to find any kind of limit on how much may be available. It's typical ACORN-type language because it says basically that the Secretary may hire other entities to assist in providing information and in signing people up.

Of course, in the House version, we know there was no enforcement mechanism. If it's ACORN that's paid, it could be $100 billion. We don't know how much would be allocated under that provision to hire people to go out, to spread information and to sign people up. We know there was no provision for them to check on whether the people they were signing up were actually lawfully here. Yet, for what amounts could be spent under H.R. 3200 for ACORN to get them to go out, to provide information and to sign people up without checking their legal statuses, it could make $8 billion pale with that amount.

I yield back.

Mr. CARTER. Reclaiming my time, the only thing is that the $8 billion right now was in the stimulus bill and in some of the other bills, and it's available to be played with right now; whereas, H.R. 3200 has yet to pass this House. We anticipate it might. If there's a party line vote, it might pass this House. You're right. There is additional funding in that bill.

As we talk about this scandal, which is a scandal that has broken on national news, let me point out that the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of this House found that ACORN had committed the following offenses: voter fraud, tax evasion, obstruction of justice, aiding and abetting, embezzlement, investment fraud, use of taxpayer funding for partisan political activity, and Department of Labor violations.

Now, these are all things that have been raised by the Oversight Committee, the named ''Oversight Committee'' of this Congress. So, as we've talked about these various issues that involve the rule of law, what we want to do and what, I think, is necessary for this Nation to do is to—you know, a lot goes on in the dark, but when you put sunshine—sunlight—on an issue, you get to see a clear picture, and that's what we're about here. We're about putting sunshine on the issue so you can see a clear picture. This clear picture is awful. This country and anyone who stands up for this group of people should really be having second thoughts.

So here are some other issues that are listed, and we'll go into these, but I see my friend VIRGINIA FOXX is here.

Would the lady like to claim a little bit of our time?

Ms. FOXX. Well, I would.

I want to thank my two colleagues from Texas for beginning this hour, and I am glad to talk a little bit about this.

I think what you're bringing up in terms of the Committee on Oversight is extremely important in terms of what it has found out. I have found that people have been a little bit fooled in the last week about actions having been taken in the Congress, and I thought I might highlight that issue a little bit.

I know I heard several times on the news last week that the House has voted not to continue to fund ACORN, that the Senate has voted not to continue to fund ACORN and that Congress has voted not to continue to fund ACORN. So I think it's important that we explain exactly what happened last week because people don't have the full picture.

What really happened last week was our friend over in the Senate, Senator COBURN from Oklahoma, put an amendment on the Transportation and HUD appropriations bill. That's what I understand. If I don't get this exactly straight, I hope you two will help me get it straight if my memory is not as good as I'd like it to be. He put an amendment on that bill, an appropriations bill, that said that ACORN would get no more funding through the HUD appropriations bill.

What happened in the House is that we were dealing with a bill which I found extremely offensive—the bill that would do away with banks being able to make loans to students who were going to college and setting up the Department of Education as a banker for students who want to borrow money. What we did was to put an amendment on that bill to say funding would no longer go to ACORN. That bill passed with a large vote, so there are people out there thinking, Okay. Great. We're defunding ACORN. What has actually happened is the defunding of ACORN in one particular category in the Senate and the defunding of ACORN, period, out of the House. Now what has to happen is we have to have language that's exactly the same in both Houses.

So what I explained to some people on the radio show that I was on was, yes, it's an easy thing for Members of the House to vote to defund ACORN. They know that bill is going to go over to the Senate. They know that it's probably not going to be in the Senate version of that bill. If the Senate were to pass a bill related to loans for college students, it would most likely be very different from the bill that passed in the House. The two bills would go to conference. In the conference, very conveniently, the section on ACORN would simply disappear. As I explain to people, that happens all the time. The folks in charge over here let something pass, knowing full well it's never going to become law.

So those who thought that ACORN was going to be cut out of its continued funding from the Congress think that based on the news accounts from last week, but I think it's important that people know that that isn't the case. If they're interested in stopping funding to ACORN, what they need to do is to write their Members of Congress and say, ''I want you to vote to defund ACORN, and I want you to find a vehicle to do that,'' because we can pass lots of bills over here. Then people can go home and brag about it and say, ''I voted to defund ACORN,'' and then it never happens, and they're given credit for it, knowing full well it's never going to pass in a bill that would go to the President for his signature. So I think it's important.

I also want to say that I think ACORN is a symptom of the problems

with the way Congress is now operating. The Federal Government was established to provide for the defense of this Nation, and that's what we are here for. What has happened, particularly since the mid-1960s, is, I guess, many Members of Congress, to justify their being here, thought that the Federal taxpayers were providing a giant piggy bank to the Members of Congress. They thought we could take their money and could spend it any way we wanted to. We've gotten way off target.

One of the reasons that ACORN can do what it has been doing for the last 15 years is that there is such inadequate oversight, because we're simply funding too many different kinds of projects. We need to pull this Congress from where it is now—funding lots of things we have no business funding—back to the essential job of the Congress, which is to focus on national defense. I know it won't be done in this session of Congress because there are too many people of a different philosophy than of the three of us, but I'm hoping that after the 2010 election that we will find more people of like mind with us who will understand the reason we have a Congress and who will say to their Members, You need to focus on national defense. If there are programs like ACORN, community organizations which need to be funded, let's let the local and State governments do that.

With that, I yield back to my colleague from Texas.

□ 2045

Mr. CARTER. Well, I thank the gentlelady for giving a good explanation.

Leader BOEHNER, Leader JOHN BOEHNER, the minority leader of the House has asked NANCY PELOSI for a stand-alone bill that will clearly define no funds go to ACORN from any source. That's going to be difficult.

Ms. FOXX. It's my understanding there is a stand-alone bill. It is up to the Speaker now to call that bill up from committee and then up for a vote; is that correct?

Mr. CARTER. That's correct. There is a stand-alone bill, and he is calling on the Speaker to call it up. If the Speaker doesn't call it up, he is going to ask for a discharge petition so that we can force it to be called up for a vote. If we maintain the vote we got before, then we will have evidence that now this Congress overwhelmingly says ACORN is through.

Although I think you have given a very adequate description of the politics that may be involved in this issue, let's go back to right and wrong, and, unfortunately, you can vote to make things sound like they look right when, in reality, the results come out wrong. I think that's a perfect point.

Ms. FOXX. Would the gentleman explain a discharge petition? I think that would be helpful.

Mr. CARTER. Yes. If you get enough votes to pass the bill that says I want this bill voted on, any Member can file a discharge petition asking that that bill be voted on. If he gets enough people to sign his discharge petition that it would pass, by the signatures on the discharge petition, then it will be called up against the ruling of the majority party.

Ms. FOXX. Would it be safe to say that the true measure of whether somebody wants to defund ACORN is whether he or she signs that discharge petition?

Mr. CARTER. That is true.

Ms. FOXX. Not whether he or she voted for the Republican motion last week.

Mr. CARTER. That's absolutely correct. That is a good point.

Mr. GOHMERT. It would be typical here in Washington also to have public outcry and say we just fixed the problem. We are not going to let ACORN be funded with your hard-earned tax dollars anymore where they go spend it as we have been finding out how it's been spent, when, apparently, there may be a couple hundred related agencies or groups to ACORN.

It's not enough. Now know, if you are treating ants that are just killing everything in your yard, it's not enough to just go take care of the ants in one area; they move right over to another area. And that's what you have got with ACORN. There are so many fingers reaching out into so many other pots, it's going to take a full oversight and lots of investigation to get to the bottom of just how many organizations are tied to this and where all the money has gone.

Now, it's one thing to say, oh, no, we will do an internal audit, which now they have come around to finally saying they will do, but that's not good enough when you are using taxpayer dollars. It's never a good time to do that, but especially now when taxpayers need their tax money more than at any time in decades.

It's not enough to just say we are going to defund ACORN. They can just go right into another entity that they are already related to, still continue to get billions or tens or hundreds of millions of dollars.

It's going to take a full investigation into all the different fingers that reach out there, and what are they doing? I mean, we have seen video on a number of ACORN offices. We have seen the charges brought of a criminal nature against, as a friend from Texas said, voter fraud, tax evasion, obstruction of justice, aiding and abetting, embezzling, investment fraud, use of taxpayer funding for partisan political activity, Department of Labor violation.

We know about those with ACORN, but what about all the groups they are related to? What have they done, and how much money have they got? Those are all things that need to be investigated. We need to get to the bottom of it. Before my friends came in, I was pointing out I have been a community organizer. I have been a part of community organizations that helped to organize community and take people food and help them, take them to voter registration, do all kinds of things to reach out and help, to visit in the hospitals, to just do ministering stuff. But we never had the government pay us to do that. It was all voluntary stuff because we deeply cared about the community.

There is something to be said when the motivation is a paycheck from somebody that's out there working and helping the community and yet their tax dollars are being taken away from them. It would be called theft, except we passed a law to legalize that theft of taking their money away from them, even though they don't want to give it up, and then giving it to groups like ACORN that are going in an entirely different direction and actually working at great odds with the very things that people are volunteering to do with their own time.

Mr. CARTER. Just look at this chart right here. Colorado, vote fraud, multiple counts with convictions. Florida, vote fraud, case pending. Michigan, vote fraud, multiple counts with convictions. Minnesota, vote fraud, multiple counts with convictions. Missouri, vote, mail fraud, identity theft, multiple counts with convictions. Nevada, vote fraud, multiple counts pending. Ohio, vote fraud, multiple counts with convictions. Pennsylvania, vote fraud, multiple counts with convictions. Washington, vote fraud, multiple counts with convictions.

So not only are there allegations of fraud, identity theft and other things, there are people who have been convicted by a court of those offenses. Realize that American taxpayer dollars go to fund every one of those organizations. There are, by the stimulus package and other things we have created, there are multiple grant applications out there in this spider web that Congressman GOHMERT has so adequately described where there are all these offshoots, all these 501(c)(3)s out there that are nonprofits, with nonprofit status, and yet they can push up the money to the mother ship, if you will.

It's a real issue. It's an issue that, quite frankly, a team of very capable people at the Justice Department should be looking into, busting up as much of it as they can. But our job, from what we are trying to do here tonight, is let people see what's there. It's bad. It's awful.

Ms. FOXX. I wanted to point out one more way that the public could hold their Member accountable. We have heard a lot about the issue of accountability, particularly from the President, yet we have seen almost nothing in terms of real accountability measures being put out there.

But as our colleague from Texas pointed out, Leader BOEHNER has said if the Speaker does not bring up the stand-alone bill that he has introduced, he is going to file a discharge petition.

Well, getting to the point of filing a discharge petition takes a long time

and, again, many people will go home and say to their constituents, well, I voted to defund ACORN, but they know full well that that provision in that bill will be dropped out in the Senate or in the conference.

But, Leader BOEHNER has introduced H.R. 3571. It's entitled the Defund ACORN Act. If people want to know how their Member really feels about this, then they should ask that Member to sign on as a cosponsor to H.R. 3571. Then, if H.R. 3571 doesn't get taken up to vote on it on the floor, then they should sign the discharge petition.

Many people have the understanding that all you have to do is have 218 people sign on to a bill and then it automatically comes up for a vote. I have had to explain that to a lot of people that it's completely in the control of the Speaker whether a bill comes to a committee or comes to the floor for a vote. I have been on lots of bills that have had over 300 people as cosponsors and the bills never come up for a vote.

So I would say to any of the public who are watching us tonight, if you want to know, again, how your Member really feels about ACORN, then do that.

But, of course, we understand that much of the—I don't want to call them mainstream media anymore, because I don't think they are the mainstream media. I think the three dominant networks plus one of the cable networks, many of the people who watch that, those channels, don't know anything about ACORN because those media outlets have not been talking about ACORN.

So we have a real problem in this country with selective reporting of things that are transgressions by our colleagues across the aisle. I know that we have lots of data on that. We want everybody to be treated fairly, and we know that many times when there are shortcomings on the part of our colleagues that it never gets reported in the national media except for one or two newspapers or one or two TV stations or radio stations.

Thankfully, more and more people are paying attention to those, so we are getting the news out. And I just wanted to point that out that if somebody is watching and they want to know if their Member is serious about doing something about ACORN and they voted for the bill the other day, then they should ask them to sign on to H.R. 3571 introduced by JOHN BOEHNER, and already cosponsored by, I think, most of us, and also if a discharge petition comes up, to sign the discharge petition.

Mr. CARTER. Let me point out one thing. You made a very good point, Congressman GOHMERT, when you said this internal audit thing isn't going to get it done. That's right. Let's just look at what Government Reform has discovered with the discovery they have done.

First, ACORN has evaded taxes, obstructed justice, engaged in self-dealing and aided and abetted the coverup of embezzlement by Dan Rathke, the brother of ACORN founder Wade Rathke.

Second, ACORN has committed investment fraud to deprive the public of its right to honest services and engaged in racketeering enterprises affecting interstate commerce.

Third, ACORN has committed conspiracy to defraud the United States by using taxpayer funds for partisan political activities.

Fourth, ACORN has submitted false filings to the Internal Revenue Service, the IRS, and the Department of Labor in addition to violating the Fair Labor Standards Act, FLSA.

Fifth, ACORN falsified and concealed facts concerning an illegal transaction between related parties in violation of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, ERISA.

Now, all those things, in addition to what we have discussed, and an internal audit has already been done once with no information released. Basically they look at their own books and say, We are just fine.

We should have a full external audit of the books at ACORN and, quite frankly, I believe the Justice Department or this House should be involved in subpoenaing all the records of all the entities that are involved in this, and we should lay this picture out on the table, which brings us to another issue that I want to talk about.

ACORN, we can talk all day and all night, but there is a new thing out there that our colleague from Texas, RON PAUL, Congressman RON PAUL has brought out, and that is holding the Federal Reserve accountable; H.R. 1207, Congressman RON PAUL's bill that's pending before the Congress and trying to get the Federal Reserve audited.

Congress has given 700 billion in the Bush TARP, 787 billion in the Obama stimulus funds to the Fed. Congress and the taxpayers have no way to independently verify how those funds have been used. The American public wants to know what is happening with that money. The American public doesn't want any more double standards.

Quite frankly, this is a bipartisan bill, because, quite frankly, RON PAUL points out that 1207 is sponsored by Congressman PAUL but has 290 cosponsors already. Obviously there are Democrats and Republicans on this bill. There is going to be a full hearing on this on Friday.

And I think people back home want to know, in fact, I got asked that the whole time I was home in August, and which I, if you recall, had said that on the floor of this House more than once, Where's our money? Where is it? What's happening to it?

The stimulus isn't being spent at a rate we were told it would stimulate the economy. Special projects are being funded. Where's our money?

□ 2100

And, then, what we forget is the Treasury and the Fed can independently pour more money into the economy. And I don't even know the number, but it could approach trillions of dollars.

Mr. GOHMERT. If the gentleman will yield.

Mr. CARTER. I yield back.

Mr. GOHMERT. The question, Where is our money, is extremely important. And another question is, What have you committed us to? We ought to able to know that. You know, the Constitution says that the Congress will be the one who holds the purse strings. They felt like with two Houses that was a good check and balance to holding the purse strings. This many people would be that envious and that careful. That was what they thought.

But I love what our friend Newt Gingrich has said: if transparency is good enough for the CIA, it ought to be good enough for Federal Reserve. Even more so, of course. But the Federal Reserve is committing money, and we don't even know the full extent that they're committing it to. And this isn't like in the earliest days with Alexander Hamilton—and I just recently finished a biography on Hamilton. When they were trying to get the banks going in America in the earliest days, guys like Hamilton were broke, yet you see nowadays we've got Goldman Sachs had their biggest profit in history in the second quarter.

We don't know all the ties there. We know that, apparently, our Treasury Secretary has said it's okay to have someone overseeing the spending of the TARP money as applied to Goldman Sachs, who happens to own Goldman Sachs stock, and he will waive the conflict there. But it's like ACORN: there's so many little fingers going in all these different directions.

We need full transparency. And, goodness sakes, if this government, if this Congress cannot force the Federal Reserve to come clean and be fully accountable, then we're in a lot bigger trouble than most anybody suspects right now.

But I believe my colleagues are cosponsors. I will let them speak for themselves, and yield such time as they may need.

Ms. FOXX. Let me point out, again—and our colleague from Texas has a chart, and I will turn it over to him in a second—but the bill calling for an audit of the Federal Reserve, as you have indicated, Mr. GOHMERT, has 290 cosponsors. That's more than enough to pass that bill. Yet Speaker PELOSI has gone very slowly on holding hearings.

I hope very much that there will be that full committee hearing on Friday. I know that Chairman FRANK has offered to hear the bill; and I hope that will happen, because that's what we need.

It's obvious that a lot of people in this country are very concerned about the role of the Federal Reserve. We're at a stage in this country where we owe more money than we have ever owed in the history of this country.

Our deficit is going to hit almost $2 trillion by the end of this month. Our long-term debt is just so large, it's almost inconceivable to think of. Our unfunded liabilities from Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and what this Congress continues to do, in the control of the Democrats, is spend, spend, spend. Almost every bill that comes up before us is something that will authorize or appropriate money. And they passed the largest budget that has ever been passed in the history of the country.

It's really scary because people can't understand where this is leading. I know that Chairman Bernanke said he would not monetize debt, yet that's exactly what he's doing. The way that things are going in a circle around here, we're borrowing money from ourselves day after day after day, and it is high time that we had a very, very good audit of the Federal Reserve. And I am in very strong support of H.R. 1207, and I'd like to yield to my colleague, Judge CARTER.

Mr. CARTER. Well, what our chart here shows, since 1913 the U.S. dollar has lost 95 percent of its purchasing power. The Federal Reserve has many privileges of government agencies, but many benefits of private organizations.

H.R. 1207 would open the Fed operations to enhanced scrutiny. The Federal Reserve Transparency Act would achieve much-needed transparency of the Federal Reserve. Under H.R. 1207, we would audit the Federal Reserve system and the Federal Reserve banks by the end of 2010. The Comptroller General would submit a report to Congress within 90 days. The report would include recommendations for legislative or administrative action.

On July 30, RON PAUL asked, Why are Wall Street and the Fed so hysterically opposed to H.R. 1207? Just what information are they so anxious to keep secret? Only an audit of the Federal Reserve will answer this question.

When you really get down to it, when it's our money and they have the ability to dump money into our economy by printing it, then with—with the help of the Treasury—then what's so unreasonable for asking for an audit? I think that's a perfect point.

I'll yield back to Judge GOHMERT.

Mr. GOHMERT. I appreciate the point, because you would think it's such a matter of common sense but, as people know, sense is not so common around this place.

It was in fact in a hearing months ago that the Federal Reserve, in an effort to get the economy going, may have pledged as much as $9 trillion to get us going. That's what motivated me to inquire how much money will be paid in for the whole year of 2008 in individual income tax. And I found out the projection was around $1.21 trillion.

When we heard it was trillions that the Federal Reserve and the Treasury was committing us to to get things going in the economy, and we're going to receive $1.21 trillion in income tax, individual income tax for the year, I thought, Wow.

Instead of having two guys over Treasury and the Federal Reserve just obligating, signing this country's life away through all this money here and there, what if they just said, You know what? If you earned this money, instead of paying tax, you're going to get it all back? You talk about making the economy explode.

You don't need a guy over a Federal agency trying to figure out what to do with trillions of dollars we don't have. If you gave the American public their own money back, you would see the economy explode.

Moody's did an independent study that indicated that would increase the GDP more than anything else in one year. Yet we're still playing games months later trying to find out what the Federal Reserve and the Treasury Secretary have committed us to in the way of debt, just to try to, on their whims, get us going.

Now, we know it's made some people rich, like Goldman Sachs, since this big devastation of the economy occurred. But rank-and-file Americans have not found that to be such.

I yield back to my friend from Texas.

Mr. CARTER. Thank you. I thank the gentleman for yielding. And as we talk about all this, we don't want to forget what the President told us when we started out in his new administration: I campaigned on changing Washington and bottom-up politics. I don't want to send a message to the American people that there are two sets of standards, one for the powerful people and one for ordinary folks who are working every day and paying their taxes.

And that's what this group—basically, we have taken the President's charge, and that's what we're doing every first night of the week, talking about helping the President do what he said he wanted to do and what he said he wanted to do in his administration: show that there's no special treatment for one who is a Member of Congress and one who is Secretary of the Treasury versus one who lives in east Texas or one who lives in North Carolina. They all should be treated the same, which brings us to the fox watching the henhouse.

Mr. GOHMERT. If I might, before you go to that poster, reclaiming my time just momentarily, because we've talked about it, I know what you're about to bring up.

On Friday, I met with a gentleman in my district named Mr.—and he said I could use his name—Mr. de la Torre. He said de la Torre is Spanish for ''of the tower.'' And he's proud of his name; he's proud of his heritage.

He has a sheet metal fabrication business and employs four full-time employees and four part-time employees. And when the economy hit so hard and devastated everybody, he did not want to let his employees go because they were good, hard workers. But he could get no loan. He had no money in his account, and nobody would loan him money.

And so being as honest and forthright as he was, he notified the Treasury that, I don't have any money. Nobody will loan me money. I don't want to drop these employees. I want to keep them employed, but I'm going to be late making my quarterly payment.

What the Treasury, the IRS, let him know is, That's too bad. We're coming after you. We want penalty and we want interest. And this man, who was able to keep his employees, his four full-time, his four part-time employees, still employed, but he was just late on his payment. The credit froze up. He couldn't get a loan. He couldn't get a line of credit. He didn't have the money. But he was honest and forthright. And what happened in return? They're after him. They have come after him, and they're threatening to seize anything he's got. That will put him out of business and put his employees out of business.

With that set-up, I would yield to my friend to talk about special treatment for special people that apparently did not include Mr. de la Torre.

Mr. CARTER. Obviously, it didn't include Mr. de la Torre. And Mr. de la Torre was not treated the way the Secretary of the Treasury was treated.

I've been talking about others, but I want to go back to the Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Geithner. The fox is watching the henhouse. He's the guy who's supposed to be watching over our money. Let's see what he didn't do.

He didn't pay Social Security and Medicare taxes for several years. The IRS audited Mr. Geithner in 2003 and 2004, finding he owed taxes and interest totaling $17,230. The IRS waived any penalties on Mr. Geithner. Could it have been because he was in the nomination process for Secretary of the Treasury? I think maybe so. I think so. It certainly wasn't your friend, Mr. de la Torre.

In 2008, they found he owed $25,960. He used his child's time at an overnight camp in 2001, 2004, and 2005 for tax deductions. Sleep-away camps don't qualify.

Recently, he filed $4,334 in additional taxes and $1,232 in interest for infractions including a retirement plan early withdrawal penalty, an improper small business deduction, and the expense of utility costs that went for personal use.

Now, this is the guy that's in charge of our IRS. He is the Treasurer of the United States.

Now we talked about the Rangel rule, where Mr. RANGEL didn't pay his taxes and got no penalties and no interest assessed, which I find extremely curious. Now we ought to look at the Geithner rule. Mr. Geithner had interest assessed, but no penalties.

Now, what makes Mr. Geithner more special than Mr. de la Torre, which Mr. Geithner had to be found out by the IRS? Mr. De la Torre went to the IRS

and said, Work with me. I have a going business. I have issues. I will get my money and I will pay you. And they said, Sorry, Charlie.

□ 2115

Now what's wrong with this picture? What should an average person back in their living room, back home, if they're watching this, think, that we've got special treatment for a man who comes from Goldman Sachs—is that where he came from?

Mr. GOHMERT. Well, he didn't. But he had been the former Chair of the Federal Reserve, which is an elected position by the bankers of that area.

Mr. CARTER. He originally was in Goldman Sachs, wasn't he? I think everybody who has been Treasurer for the last, I don't know, 20 years have been Goldman Sachs people. There's something interesting there, something we ought to look into.

Anyway, I want to know why Mr. de la Torre can't write ''Geithner Rule'' across his tax return and ask them to treat him this way, to let him be assessed with no penalties and interest which would drive him into the poorhouse. This is the kind of question I think the American people want to ask. I think they want to know, because the man they elected President said that he wasn't going to have a world where men and women of power got treated differently than ordinary citizens. That's why we are here. We're here fighting a good fight for what President Obama had promised this Nation would be the agenda of this administration. I think it's time to step up to the plate and start swinging because these fastballs are getting thrown at us. They are coming in high, hard and inside, and we've got to deal with them. With that, I will yield back to Mr. GOHMERT.

Mr. GOHMERT. Well, in conclusion, I think there's nothing that says it better than President Obama did back on February 3, 2009: ''I don't want to send a message to the American people that there are two sets of standards—one for powerful people, and one for ordinary folks who are working every day and paying their taxes.''

Well, unfortunately that is exactly the message that's being sent as the Federal Government and the cronies that have surrounded this administration—they're getting away with all kinds of stuff, getting away with not paying taxes, not paying penalties. They're not producing jobs. They're killing jobs. Mr. de la Torre has a regal heritage. He was proud of that. He is a man of integrity. He wants to do what's right. Those are the kinds of people that make America great, and that is who deserves special treatment, not those who are parasites on the system.

THE 30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP'S HEALTH CARE AND ENERGY HOUR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be here. I will be joined shortly by a colleague of mine from Ohio (Mr. BOCCIERI) and maybe several others to talk about a variety of issues that I think are pressing the country right now and that we want to inform our constituents about and speak to the House of Representatives about. You know, I think it's important for us—and I think every time I've been on the floor in the past year or two, I follow some of our Republican colleagues, and I feel the need to just kind of clarify the record as to how we ended up getting to the spot we're at now.

I realize that in a democracy like this, we always have the opportunity to criticize each other, and I think that the beautiful thing about this democracy is that, you know, we do have the opportunity to come to the floor of the House of Representatives and speak directly to the American people, live on TV, live to all of our other colleagues, and speak in a way that is pretty straightforward. That's a beautiful thing about this country. But if we look at where we are today, and if we look at where we were just 7 or 8 months ago, our economy was on the brink of collapse. Unemployment rates were climbing at unprecedented rates, where we were losing 600,000, 700,000 jobs a month. The stock market had crashed. The housing market had crashed. Our budget deficit just ballooned. And all of this was because of the policies, Mr. Speaker, that we had in this country from 2000 to 2008.

And if it weren't for an election in 2006, we would have went further over the cliff. Those are the facts of the matter, and the facts of the matter are that during that time, the House, the Senate, the White House were all controlled by Republicans. And we got the Milton Friedman, supply-side, Ronald Reagan, cut taxes for the wealthiest 1 percent of the people in the country and hope that health care would get fixed, energy would get fixed, and the economy would get fixed, and then people would get jobs at some point.

Well, it's important for all of us to recognize that we don't have to go to some theoretical schoolbook to figure out if the supply side Republican neoconservative domestic and foreign policy program works. It has been implemented, and it has been an absolute failure on all accounts, by all measures. Our friends on the Republican side now who say, Oh, my God, this health care bill that the Democrats are trying to push is going to cost $800 billion, $900 billion over 10 years. But it's important for us to recognize that it was the Bush tax cuts, that went to primarily the top 1 percent of the people in the country, that cost $2.5 trillion over 10 years. So don't come to us about a health care bill that costs $800 billion or $900 billion, that would end up saving the country a bunch of money in the long run, end up fixing the health care problem, because you were the ones and they were the ones, Mr. Speaker, who were walking in lockstep, following George Bush right over the cliff, $2.5 trillion in tax cuts, primarily to the top 1 percent over 10 years, bankrupted the country.

Now all of a sudden everybody's concerned about the budget deficit. All of a sudden, everyone's concerned about borrowing money from China. What we're saying is, the investments that we are going to make are going to stop health care projections from growing at 9 percent a year and try to bring some justice to the system so that average people can afford health care, so that average people don't get sick and then try to go get health care and an insurance company says, We can't cover you. You have cancer. But my cancer's fixed, the patient says. But it hasn't been gone for 10 years, so we can't cover you.

Or when we attempt to change the energy policy in this country—which my friend Mr. BOCCIERI has become an expert on because of his position in the military and his recognition of this as a national security issue—when we send $750 billion a year from the United States of America to Middle Eastern countries and foreign countries to buy oil—countries who don't traditionally support our views, our values or our Democratic principles—we send this every year to them, money that goes out of our economy into these OPEC countries. Then a couple of years ago, Mr. BOCCIERI, we spent $115 billion or $120 billion out of our defense bill to escort Exxon-Mobil ships and big oil ships, coming into and out of the Persian Gulf.

So all these tea baggers who want to stand up like they're the most patriotic people in the United States of America are saying, We shouldn't change our energy policy, We should just continue sending $115 billion a year out of our defense budget to escort these big oil ships in and out of the Persian Gulf. Is that pro-American? I don't believe it is. Is it pro-American to allow health care to grow at 9 percent when our GDP grows at 3 percent so that insurance companies can make money hand over fist and deny American citizens coverage?

I'm going to ask you a question: Where are the family values there, Mr. Speaker? That we want the government out. The only entity left to protect people who are getting screwed to the wall by the insurance companies is the government. We need to make rules to make sure that these people, these insurance companies stop hurting people. They're hurting people.

Now I'm sorry, but we had to listen all August about all this nonsense that's going on. In Ohio's 17th Congressional District, we will have 1,600 families go bankrupt next year if we do absolutely nothing about health care. Now I'm sorry. That's not right. And if