

Senator Debbie Stabenow:

Madam President, I wish to thank our dean of the Democratic women, Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI, for once again being right on point and Senator BARBARA BOXER for her leadership as it relates to protecting our environment and energy security. She and Senator MARIA CANTWELL have been our leaders as it relates to cutting gas prices and at the same time doing those things that allow us to protect our beautiful land and water and air. So I wish to thank my colleagues.

Listening to the discussion about what is happening in terms of gas prices just brings me back to what is an essential part of our checklist for change; that is, making sure Americans have jobs. We are going to pay those high gas prices which are absolutely outrageous. Senator Mikulski is right, it takes a change in policy. Senator Boxer is right when she talks about the fact that there are a lot of places the oil companies could be drilling right now. That is the problem. Right now, instead of buying more corporate jets and putting more money into bonuses for themselves, if they were to reinvest in the land that is already there, that would address their concern about supply. We know what is really happening. Unfortunately, for the last 8 years, we have literally had two oilmen in the White House, and we have watched the price of gasoline go beyond our wildest expectations. I know people in Michigan never would have thought we would be at over \$4 a gallon.

To add insult to injury, during this same time when we are looking at foreclosure rates at the highest level in my lifetime, certainly, and gas prices at the highest levels, food prices going up, the cost of health care going up, what is going down--and what is frightening for families across America--is their incomes, their jobs, and their standard of living. Just since January, 324,000 good-paying American jobs have been lost--just since January of this year, 324,000 families without a job, yet paying those high gas prices, paying those high food prices, trying to figure out how to send the kids to college or to pay tuition if they are in college. How do I make ends meet? How do I have my piece of the American dream when I am losing my job or my income is going down?

Our checklist for change is about the things Americans want to have happening in this country. It is frightening to see that since 2001, we have lost 3 million--3 million--think about this number--3 million manufacturing jobs in this country. Certainly, the people in Michigan have taken a big hit of that 3 million. But overall now, considering all of the policies and the lack of action, including the dollars being sent to a war in Iraq rather than being invested here at home, we now are in a situation where 8.5 million Americans are unemployed--8.5 million Americans.

Our Republican colleagues would say: They should just go find a job. We don't want to extend unemployment benefits because that encourages people to stay home. That makes no sense if you are somebody who has been out of work trying to keep your house, trying to pay the food bill and the gas bill and everything else. But the reality is that we have about 4 million jobs in this country right now and 8.5 million people out of work--roughly 4 million available jobs and 8.5 million people unemployed.

We also have what I call a race to the bottom in general economically where Americans are being told: In a global economy, if you will only work for less, we can be competitive. If you will only lose your pension, lose your health care, we can be competitive.

We reject that. Our checklist for change rejects the notion of a race to the bottom and the loss of our American way of life.

What we embrace are strategies that create good-paying jobs, middle-class jobs at home in America. What we embrace is a race to the top. We want to export our products--not our jobs--in a global economy. To do so means a level playing field on trade, enforcing our trade laws, as well as creating new trade agreements. We want to make sure people are not losing jobs because of the high cost of health care, the burdens on small and large businesses today. So we believe the race to the top means a change in the way we fund health care in this country.

Finally, we understand it means investing like crazy in education, in innovation. That is the race to the top. That is what we embrace in our checklist for change. I am very proud of the fact that the Democratic Senate and House have put together a budget resolution for the next year that focuses on three major areas of job development--jobs and innovation through our green-collar jobs initiative: investing in the new advanced battery technology for the new vehicles; investing in conservation and energy efficiency through buildings and other kinds of efficiencies that are so important; job training in the new green-collar economy, investing not only in biofuels but making sure the pump is actually there, so when you drive your vehicle, you can get biofuel or biodiesel--you can actually find a pump. So green-collar jobs are an important piece of what we have put in place.

Secondly, jobs in America. When we are rebuilding highways, bridges, and water and sewer systems, those are jobs that will not be exported overseas. Those are good-paying jobs in America. Our checklist for change, as well as our budget, believes change should be done, and we can invest in good-paying jobs at home.

Finally, in our budget resolution we invest in job training and make a major investment in opportunity through education, from preschool all the way up to college.

We know that serious changes need to be made in the priorities of this country. I had the opportunity a while ago to be on a television show following a Republican colleague--a woman in the House--who looked at our checklist and said: We Republicans can support all those things.

In looking at that, I am scratching my head and going: We have had 6 years with President Bush and an entire Republican Congress, and they had control of every piece of the Government. They were not focusing on jobs, energy alternatives, fiscal accountability--as the occupant of the chair has talked about--or education or equal pay

for equal work. They didn't fix that. They didn't address these issues that American families and businesses are asking us to do.

In the last 2 years, instead of working with us on the changes we have initiated, we have been blocked over and over again on the floor of the Senate. All we get is filibuster, filibuster, filibuster. So we come to the floor and to the American people as Democratic women who have been fighting, along with our Democratic male colleagues, for real change that will send gas prices down, not up, and that will send health care costs down, not up, and make it more available, to bring food prices down and, most important, bring wages up.

In the greatest country in the world, we can do better than losing 324,000 good-paying jobs just since this past January.

I am proud to join my wonderful colleagues in putting together a checklist that speaks to the things we know American families want to see happening. We are going to do everything possible, both this year, and as we go to the changes that we hope will happen next year, to embrace and actually get results on our checklist for change.

I yield the floor.