

AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR ALL AMERICANS

The Facts:

African American Unemployment Is Far Above the National Average and the Employment Gap Has Widened. The African American unemployment rate was 9.3 percent in December 2005, an increase of 13 percent since Bush took office. The unemployment rate for whites is currently 4.3 percent. [Bureau of Labor Statistics]

Worst Private Sector Job Growth Since Hoover Administration. A growing economy should be good news for those seeking jobs in the private sector. But over the course of President Bush's full five years in office, his Administration has the worst private sector job creation record since Herbert Hoover more than 70 years ago. This translates into an average annual job growth rate of 3/10 of one percent per year since this Administration took office. [Joint Economic Committee Democrats, 12/7/05]

African American Household Income Has Declined \$3,251 Under President Bush. Under President Bush the typical African American family has seen its inflation-adjusted income decline by \$3,251. The income gap has also widened. The amount African Americans earn for each dollar earned by whites fell from 69 cents in 2000 to 65 cents in 2004. [Census Bureau]

Nearly One in Four African Americans in Poverty – Including Nearly One in Three Children. In 2000, the African American poverty rate hit an all-time low of 22.5 percent, but falling incomes and higher unemployment contributed to a 12.7 percent rise in the poverty rate by 2004. As a result, in 2004 the poverty rate was 24.7 percent, with 9 million African Americans in poverty. The African American child poverty rate was even higher, 33.6 percent or 3.8 million children. [Census Bureau]

Housing Affordability Has Reached a 14-year Low. Median monthly home ownership costs, including mortgage payments, have risen nearly 5 percent since President Bush has taken office. According to the Wall Street Journal, "Soaring house prices and higher mortgage rates have put homeownership out of reach for more people than at any time in more than a decade... Affordability has long been a problem for low-income home buyers. But as home prices have marched steadily higher in recent years, many buyers with healthier incomes also are being squeezed." [Census Bureau; Wall Street Journal, 12/22/05]

Democrats Fought for African American Families:

Democrats Fought to Increase Wages: Democrats worked to increase the Federal minimum wage working Americans. The Federal minimum wage has not been increased since 1997. Since 1997, Members of Congress have passed pay increases for themselves seven times, equivalent to a raise of \$28,500 or nearly three times the income of a worker earning the Federal minimum wage. Senator Kennedy introduced an amendment that would increase the Federal minimum wage by \$1.10 to \$7.75 an hour. The amendment was rejected by Senate Republicans. [RC 257, S. Amdt. 2063 to H.R. 3058, 10/19/05, 47-51]

Democrats Fought to Strengthen Social Security. Democrats fought to protect and strengthen Social Security by voting to oppose any changes to Social Security that would require deep cuts in benefits or substantial new debt. Democrats also voted to ensure the 75-year solvency of Social Security before considering new tax cuts or mandatory spending increases that would increase the deficit. [RC 49, S. Amdt. 145 to S. Con. Res. 18, 3/15/05, 50-50; RC 47, S. Amdt. 144 to S. Con. Res. 18, 3/15/05, 45-55]

While Republicans Stood in the Way of Progress:

Instead of Encouraging Entrepreneurship, the Bush Administration Eliminated Funding for Minority Small Business Owners. President Bush neglected to fund the New Markets Venture Capital program in the Small Business Administration which promotes investment in areas of the U.S. suffering from chronic unemployment and lack of private sector support. President Bush proposed to eliminate Microloans and counseling to Micro-entrepreneurs in his Fiscal Year 2006 budget. [Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee Democratic Staff, 11/05]

Bush Proposed to Privatize Social Security, Threatening African American Families. The Social Security program has been remarkably important for African Americans. The Government Accountability Office found that, "In the aggregate, blacks and Hispanics have higher disability rates and lower lifetime earnings, and thus as a group tend to receive greater benefits relative to taxes than whites." [GAO, *Social Security and Minorities*, April 2003]

PROVIDING ASSISTANCE IN A TIME OF NEED

The Facts:

Bush Administration's Failed the Victims of Hurricane Katrina. The Administration's initial response to Hurricane Katrina was full of mistakes. Among its more egregious errors, the Administration:

- Failed to act with appropriate urgency to pre-position Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other government personnel and assets in the region prior to the hurricane's landfall and to mobilize a rapid and robust federal response after the extent of the hurricane's impact became clear;
- Waited eight days after the hurricane's landfall to deploy the active military to assist civilian authorities in response activities, and waited three days to begin coordinating the response of National Guard units from outside the affected states;
- Waited four days after landfall in Louisiana to evacuate the Superdome;
- Waited three days after declaring a state of emergency, and one full day after levees were breached in New Orleans, to declare Hurricane Katrina an "incident of national significance" and thereby trigger a full federal response under the National Response Plan;
- Failed to anticipate the extent of the damage from Hurricane Katrina and failed to mobilize an appropriately robust response, despite several warnings about the expected impact of the hurricane [Multiple press reports]

Democrats Fought for African American Families:

Democrats Introduced the Katrina Emergency Relief Plan. Soon after the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina, Senate Democrats introduced the Katrina Emergency Relief Plan to provide immediate relief

to the victims of Hurricane Katrina in a number of key areas. The plan was designed to provide emergency medical care, housing assistance, educational assistance and financial relief to the victims. [S. 1637, 9/8/05]

Democrats Fought to Provide Crucial Medical Assistance to the Victims of Hurricane Katrina.

The survivors of Hurricane Katrina needed health coverage for their medical care just at the time when their state governments were facing a serious lack of resources. Some of Katrina's survivors were already uninsured and many of those who had health insurance have lost it and have been relocated. Democrats offered an amendment to provide health coverage through Medicaid, ease enrollment in states' Medicaid programs, guarantee full Federal funding for Medicaid for survivors in new and directly-affected states. [S. Amdt. 1652 to H.R. 2862, 9/8/05]

Democrats Fought to Get Independent Answers about the Government Failures in Responding to Hurricane Katrina. Senator Hillary Clinton introduced a bill to establish an independent commission modeled on the September 11th Commission to investigate the government response in the Gulf Coast to Hurricane Katrina. [S 1622, 9/7/05]

Republicans Stood in the Way of Progress for African American Families:

The Administration's Response for Rebuilding has been Disastrously Slow. The *Los Angeles Times* has reported that, despite the President's promises of leading a historic recovery effort, "the only real actors in the rebuilding drama at the moment are the city's homeowners and business owners... Individual New Orleanians are struggling to come back largely under their own power, using mostly their own resources." In the first two weeks after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, Congress appropriated more than \$62 billion in emergency supplemental funding for relief and recovery efforts, with roughly \$60 billion designated for FEMA. Three months later, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reports that the federal government has only spent \$7.6 billion of that money on relief activities for three major hurricanes: Katrina, Rita, and Wilma. In fact, over \$36 billion of the appropriated funds has not been allocated to any government program; it is simply sitting untouched in the federal coffers. [Los Angeles Times, 12/4/05; FEMA weekly report, 11/30/05]

Despite Senator Frist's Claims, Congress has Failed to Act Promptly to Meet Urgent Needs.

Shortly before Thanksgiving, Senator Frist told the Senate, "we passed 21 separate pieces of legislation that have responded to many of the immediate needs... I want my colleagues and the American people to understand we are acting and we are moving." Unfortunately, the Republican Leader's comments demonstrate a serious disconnect with reality. Congress has failed to act on numerous key provisions that would enable hurricane survivors to meet immediate needs and begin to rebuild their lives. As the *New York Times* reports, "less than three months after Hurricane Katrina ravaged New Orleans, relief legislation remains dormant in Washington and despair is growing among officials here who fear that Congress and the Bush administration are losing interest in their plight. As evidence, the state and local officials cite an array of stalled bills and policy changes they say are crucial to rebuilding the city and persuading some of its hundreds of thousands of evacuated residents to return, including measures to finance long-term hurricane protection, revive small businesses and compensate the uninsured." [*Congressional Record*, 11/18/05; New York Times, 11/22/05]

Republicans Blocked Attempts to Provide Health Care Relief. On numerous occasions, Senate Republicans stood in the way of bipartisan health care relief for the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

They opposed attempts by a bipartisan group of Senators, led by Senators Baucus and Grassley, to provide funding and access to Medicaid for the survivors. [Congressional Record]

MAKING HEALTH CARE AFFORDABLE AND AVAILABLE

The Facts:

Health Care Premiums Have Increased by Over 50 Percent Since Bush Took Office. The cost of family health insurance has skyrocketed 57 percent since President Bush took office. The typical American family must now pay \$9,950 per year for health insurance compared with \$6,348 in 2000. [Kaiser Family Foundation]

7.1 Million More Americans Without Health Insurance Under President Bush – Bringing The Total Uninsured to Nearly 46 Million, The Highest Number On Record. There are 7.1 million more people without health insurance than in 2000. In total, 45.8 million people are uninsured.

- **7.2 Million African Americans Went Without Health Insurance – One in Five People.** In 2004, 7.2 million African Americans lacked health insurance – that is one in five African Americans. [Census Bureau]

African Americans Still Struggle with the Health Care Divide. African Americans still get far fewer operations, tests, medications and other life-saving treatments than white Americans, according to three studies published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in August 2005. The studies found that African-American patients are less likely than whites to receive life-saving treatments after a heart attack, less likely to get new knees and hips, and less likely to have dangerously high blood-sugar levels controlled. One study found that black women were the most likely to die while being treated after a heart attack. [[New England Journal of Medicine](#), 8/05]

Democrats Fought for African American Families:

Democrats Fought to Cut the Cost of Prescription Drugs: Democrats have proposed to reduce the cost of prescription drugs by allowing Medicare to negotiate for better prices. Washington Republicans have blocked these proposals on behalf of the pharmaceutical industry. [RC 60, S. Amdt. 214 to S. Con. Res. 18, 3/17/05, 49-50; S. 334; RC 302, S.AMDT.2371 to S. 1932, 11/3/05, 51-48]

Democrats Worked to Close the Health Care Divide. Senate Democrats introduced the Healthcare Equality and Accountability Act to close the health care divide. The bill would: expand the health care safety net, diversify the health care work force, combat diseases that disproportionately affect racial and ethnic minorities, emphasize prevention and behavioral health, promote the collection and dissemination of data and enhance medical research, and provide interpreters and translation services in the delivery of health care. [S. 1580, 7/29/05]

While Republicans Stood in the Way of Progress:

Cutting Health Care for Seniors, Children, Pregnant Women and People with Disabilities. The budget bill will reduce access to and costs of health care for people who need it most – children, pregnant women, seniors, and people with disabilities. More than 100,000 people could lose health

coverage altogether because of the bill. The bill also threatens benefits for nearly all of the 29 million children enrolled in Medicaid. The Congressional Budget Office concluded that 80 percent of the cost of the Medicaid cuts will be born by individuals paying increased costs. At the same time, the bill protects the Medicare slush fund for the drug industry, while increasing Part B premiums for seniors. [Congressional Budget Office; Center on Budget and Policy Priorities]

CREATING CLEAN AND AFFORDABLE ENERGY

The Facts:

Winter Heating Costs Have Risen by \$438, or 79 Percent. The cost of heating fuels has skyrocketed, leaving American families unprepared to deal with unprecedented increases in heating bills. The cost of heating a home for the winter has increased by \$438, or 79 percent, since the winter of 2001-2002. [Energy Information Administration, *Short Term Energy Outlook*, 12/6/05]

Transportation Costs for Families Have Increased by \$1,322. Prices at the gas pump have jumped 55 percent from \$1.44 per gallon in January 2001 to \$2.23 in January 2006, while the price for a barrel of oil has more than doubled from \$29.26 in January 2001 to \$62.70 in January 2006. The average household with children will spend about \$3,225 on transportation fuel costs this year, an increase of 69 percent over 2001 costs. [Energy Information Administration, *Household Vehicle Energy Use: Latest Data and Trends*, 11/05 and *Weekly Retail Gasoline and Diesel Prices*]

Democrats Fought for African American Families:

Democrats Fought to Provide Relief from Skyrocketing Home Heating Prices: Democrats proposed to provide relief to Americans struggling with rising home heating costs, through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program and were rejected three times by Republicans. However, while Washington Republicans have approved a variety of new subsidies for the energy industry, during last minute budget negotiations they dropped an increase in LIHEAP assistance that would have helped ordinary families. [RC 250, S. Amdt. 2033 to H.R. 2863, 10/5/05, 50-49; RC 261, S. Amdt. 2077 to H.R. 3058, 10/20/05, 53-46; RC 270, S. 2194 to H.R. 3010, 10/26/05, 54-43]

Democrats Worked to Cut the Cost of Gas Prices: Democrats have proposed to crack down on price gouging and market manipulation, but Washington Republicans have blocked such efforts on behalf of the oil and gas industry. [S. 1735]

While Republicans Stood in the Way of Progress:

Republicans Blocked Home Heating Relief. The Republican-controlled Senate defeated these efforts on a series of procedural votes, even though a majority of the Senate supported additional funding. [RC 250, S. Amdt. 2033 to H.R. 2863, 10/5/05, 50-49; RC 261, S. Amdt. 2077 to H.R. 3058, 10/20/05, 53-46; RC 270, S. 2194 to H.R. 3010, 10/26/05, 54-43]

Republicans Abused their Power to Stand in the Way of Energy Independence. Senate Republicans defeated Senator Cantwell's amendment and attempted to use the Fiscal Year 2006 budget reconciliation process to allow drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. At peak production, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimated in 2004 that oil generated from the Arctic refuge would account for only 3 to 4 percent of U.S. consumption. And, according to the 1998

U.S. Geological Survey study, there is estimated to be 3.2 - 5.2 billion barrels of economically-recoverable oil in the Arctic refuge or the equivalent of six months of oil supply for the United States. Further, research by the Congressional Research Service reveals this six-month supply would not be available for another ten years. [RC 140, S. Amdt. 784 to H.R. 6, 6/16/06, 47-53; Congressional Research Service, October, 17, 2005]

PROVIDING THE OPPORTUNITY OF EDUCATION TO ALL AMERICANS

The Facts:

College Tuition Continues to Skyrocket. Tuition and fees at four-year private universities have increased by almost \$1,200 or 5.9 percent in 2005 and 32 percent since 2001. At four-year public universities, tuition and fees increased by 7.1 percent this past year and 57 percent since President Bush took office. [College Board, 10/05]

Democrats Fought for African American Families:

Democrats Worked to Make College Tuition More Affordable: Democrats have proposed to expand student aid and make college tuition deductible. Instead, Washington Republicans just voted for the largest student aid cut in our nation's history, so that the savings can be used for special interest tax breaks. [RC 363, S. 1932, 12/21/05, 50-50 (Vice President Cheney Cast the Tie-breaking Vote)]

While Republicans Stood in the Way of Progress:

Continuous Cuts to Vital Education Programs. It is widely known that the key to a bright future is to secure a quality education. Yet the administration's 2006 budget slashed funding for educational programs by the largest margin in a decade, including Title I, special education, and No Child Left Behind programs. [Senate Labor, HHS Appropriations Cmte., 12/20/05]

Cutting Student Loans. The bill makes the largest education cuts in history -- \$12.7 billion from the student loan program -- and imposes higher fees on students and parents. The cost of a public higher education has increased by a staggering 46% since 2001, making it no wonder that more than 5.3 million students depended on Pell Grants in the 2004-2005 academic year. Instead of helping students succeed by increasing the award amount, the cut in the student loan program is combined with the Labor-HHS appropriation bill's holding the maximum Pell grant at \$4,050 for the fourth year in a row. [House Budget Committee Democrats; College Board; Labor-HHS Appropriations Conference Report]