

When he was nominated by Bush last year to replace Sandra Day O'Connor on the Supreme Court, practically the entire debate over this right-wing judge revolved around his stance on abortion. So Alito and his backers worked hard to soften his record as a knee-jerk, anti-choice zealot. They convinced enough Senate Democrats and moderate Republicans that Alito was confirmed.

A few of us populists, however, tried to point out that the Supreme Court spends far more time on issues involving worker rights, pollution, and consumers than on abortion. We warned that throughout his career, Alito had sided consistently on these issues with corporate and governmental elites over ordinary citizens and would do the same on the high court.

Sure enough, Alito jumped on his first opportunity to side with bosses over the First Amendment rights of workers. In a May 30 decision involving a whistleblower, a bare 5-4 majority of the court ruled that public employees have no free-speech right to blow the whistle against wrongdoing by their superiors—and they have no constitutional protection against retaliation by their bosses.

The deciding vote came from Alito. Had Sandra Day O'Connor still been on the bench, it's likely that the court would have ruled the other way—for the rights of whistleblowers.

Unfortunately, we're now stuck with this guy for life! The lesson here, especially for Democrats, is that future nominees to all of our courts need not only to be vetted on social issues, but also to be grilled equally hard on

—continued on p. 5



LOWDOWN

Edited by Jim Hightower and Phillip Frazer ■ Vol 8 No. 07 ■ 7 July 2006

Enough of Bush and Co.'s babble about prosperity—

Let's look at our economy by the numbers



GEORGE W keeps buzzing around like a maniacal mosquito on a hot summer night, pestering us with speeches and photo ops to tell us, in so many words, that he's doing "a heck of a job."

Let me ask you: If he were, wouldn't we know it?

Yet in the wonderland where George seems to dwell, prosperity abounds for every American; Iran and Afghanistan are budding flowers of democracy; our environmental skies are perfectly clear; all of our children "is" learning; and the government is in good, capable hands. I don't know where Bush's beautiful world is,

but I want to go there! Meanwhile, back on earth, reality is a lot less rosy. In this special fold-out issue and in next month's, we'll put some hard numbers to that reality, offering you *Lowdowners* a series of scorecards on various areas of importance to We the People.

By seeing where we really stand, we can see what needs to be done if our country is to realize its phenomenal potential. We are putting these facts forth as ammunition for agitation to turn the negative numbers positive by organizing and mobilizing folks at the grassroots level—not merely to take our country back...but to move it forward by teaming up to confront the Powers that Be and press for progressive change.

"This economy of ours is steady and strong. It's steady and strong. It's steady and strong, which means people are going back to work."

— George W, July 2004

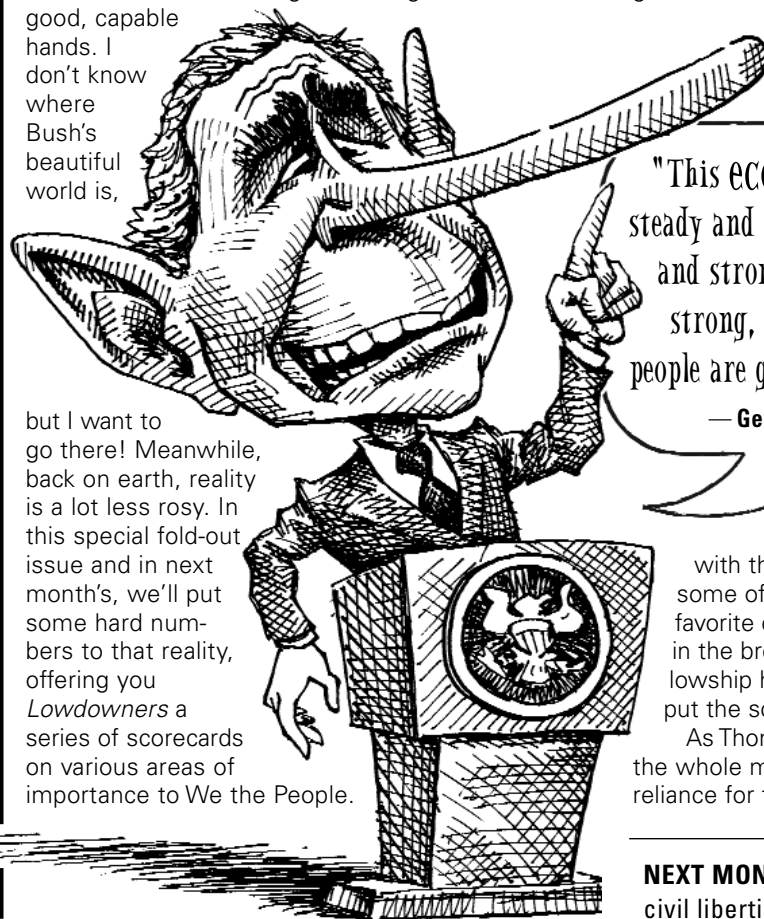
We hope you'll use this ammunition in letters to the editor, family discussions, comments to Congress critics, public forums, and other outlets, rallying your coworkers, friends, and others

to action. Also, please pass the ammunition on—share these issues

with the regulars at the café or cantina, copy some of them to post on bulletin boards at your favorite coffee shops or bookstores, leave copies in the break room at work or in your church fellowship hall, send them out to your holiday list or put the scorecards in your blogs, etc.

As Thomas Jefferson said, "Educate and inform the whole mass of people...They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty."

NEXT MONTH, more fun numbers covering war, civil liberties, secrecy, etc!



whose interests they'll serve on the economic, environmental, and civil liberties cases that come before them.

To learn more about this particular case, call the National Whistleblower Center: 202-342-1902.

CORPORATIZING THE BORDER

What a surprise. George W wants to turn the illegal immigration issue into another multibillion-dollar boondoggle for giant corporations.

Such military contractors as Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, Boeing, and Northrop Grumman are lined up at the federal trough yet again, drooling at what Bush calls the Secure Border Initiative. This scheme will give government contracts to corporations to build a high-tech "virtual fence" along our nation's borders. "We are launching the most technologically advanced border security initiative in American history," bragged Bush.

Actually, that's not a very high hurdle, for our history of border security is littered with high-priced technological failures. Take the nearly half-billion dollar program of video cameras, electronic sensors, and other cutting-edge technologies that corporate contractors provided for the Mexican border just a few years ago. Half of the cameras didn't work or were never installed. The ground sensors did set off alarms—but in 92% of the cases, they were triggered not by



Turn your radio on

If you'd like to hear some radio voices that are not twisted to the ultra-right and not tortured with bile, find Air America Radio on your dial! This all-progressive/all-the-time-network is literally a breath of fresh air. Ranging coast to coast, Air America delivers a full lineup of hard-hitting, fun, straight-shooting, anti-establishment voices—and now you can find your favorite Texas populist among them!

Hightower's daily two-minute radio commentaries are being carried twice a day on 56 Air America stations, once in the AM during the "Air America Mornings" show and again in the evening on "The Majority Report." These daily "Pops of Populism," as Hightower calls them, cover the same sort of topics and come with the same sort of maverick attitude and biting humor that you find every month in the *Lowdown*. The lead sponsors of Hightower's broadcasts are our friends at the United Steelworkers of America union and the Marijuana Policy Project.

Air America Radio was launched only two-and-a-half years ago by a group of liberal funders and radio pros who were fed up with the endless spewings of right-wing blatherers who controlled practically the entire dial. Rather than just shouting back at their radios, these liberal listeners had the gumption to get on the radio.

The right-wing mocked them, the industry establishment scoffed at them, and just about everyone doubted they would last even six months. But not only have they survived, they've thrived! Now in nearly all major and mid-sized markets, Air America keeps gaining affiliates, adding terrific talent, and drawing a large audience of folks looking for radio with a difference—and radio that can *make* a difference.

To find the list of stations that are carrying Hightower's daily commentaries and to see the times that they air, go to his website: www.jimhightower.com. To see the full lineup of Air America's call-in talk shows and news programs—and to see their full list of affiliates—go to www.airamericaradio.com. You can also tune in to all of Air America's programming wherever you are on the globe through that same website.

So turn your radio on—and get radioactive with Air America!

The Big Buy: Tom Delay's Stolen Congress

Brave New Films' *The Big Buy*, now out on DVD, is jampacked with 75 minutes of archival footage and interviews with folks like Hightower, Molly Ivins and representatives from around the political spectrum. *The Big Buy* is a must-see for insight into the corruption machine that—in spite of Delay's resignation—continues to attack democracy on the national level. For more information, visit www.tomdelaymovie.com; purchase your own copy by visiting <http://tomdelaymovie.com/buy.php?track=lowdown>.

illegals but by a wild animal or a passing train.

Now here they come again. Lockheed Martin, for example, is touting its Tethered Aerostat Radar as a border solution. This massive blimp, twice the size of Goodyear's, would be tethered to the ground by a long cable, monitoring all movement below. But there's one little problem: It can't be used in high winds. Another piece of razzle-dazzle technology was a \$6.8 million unmanned plane to patrol the border. It crashed in April after less than a year's use.

The problem of illegal immigration requires an honest economic solution—not buying more hardware from high-tech hucksters.

ATTACK BY THE CORPORATE FOXES

While George W, the Congress, and the media have us all looking south to what they call the "invasion" of America by impoverished illegal immigrants, or looking east to what they call an "endless threat" to America from hordes of fanatical Islamic terrorists, there's another very real but very quiet siege taking place on our people's government... from within.

Far from being a movement of desperate poor people, this assault on democracy is being mounted by extremely wealthy and powerful guys in pinstripe suits. Theirs is a corporate assault on our public resources, public institutions, public functions—and the very idea of the common good. Their goal is to replace our public sector with corporate governance.

In an important book titled *The Fox In the Hen House*, Si Kahn and Elizabeth Minnich document the startling extent to which this takeover has already happened with presidents Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton willingly turning over public purposes, assets, and control to these antidemocratic, profit-seeking interests.

This privatization (which is nothing but a euphemism for corporatization) hit the mother lode with the BushCheney regime. With their extremist, antigovern-

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EDITORS: Jim Hightower, Phillip Frazer
COPY WIZ: Gwenda Blair ARTISTE: Matt Wuerker
DESKTOP: Sahu Barron CIRCULATION: John Ernst
RESEARCH: Laura Ehrlich PUBLISHER: Phillip Frazer

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ment ideology, the Bushites are gleefully selling out the public good by selling off whole chunks of our government. We know about their push to privatize Social Security and schools—but few are aware of the massive turnover of power to corporations in such areas as the military, our parks, prisons, and social programs.

Kahn and Minnich's website is www.thefoxinthehenhouse.com.

HOW STRANGE IS RICK SANTORUM?

We know that politics can make strange bedfellows, but who would've thought it would get as strange as Senator Rick Santorum?

At issue is the location of Rick's bed—that is, where does he live? You would naturally assume that this Republican senator from Pennsylvania lives somewhere in the Keystone State, and indeed, Santorum lists a house in the burg of Penn Hills as his home. However, when the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* sent a routine letter to the senator's home address, it came back marked by the Post Office as "Not Deliverable As Addressed."

Why? Simple: Rick doesn't actually live there. The house is vacant—no bed, no kitchen table, no curtains, no Santorums.

Instead, Rick, his wife, and their six kiddos are ensconced in the family's real home in faraway Leesburg, Virginia. Perhaps he sometimes visits Penn Hills, but the fact is that Santorum does not sleep, eat, raise kids, or otherwise live in the house or town he officially claims as his home—nor, for that matter, does the senator from Pennsylvania even live in the state he claims to represent.

When this embarrassing reality surfaced, Rick responded by claiming his Democratic opponent in this year's senatorial race had sent operatives to trespass on the family's property, which "put our six young children at a serious safety risk."

No, nobody trespassed and the senator's kids could only have been at risk if they were actually there—which they weren't, since, of course, they live in Virginia, as does mom... and dad.

NEW GUY, SAME BAD POLICY

The official spin on our new Treasury Secretary, Henry M. "Hank" Paulson, Jr., is that this CEO from Goldman Sachs brings credibility, financial star power, gravitas, and dynamic new energy to the shaping of George W's economic policies. Much is being made of the fact that Paulson has an environmentalist streak and disagrees with Bush's head-in-the-sand stance on global warming.

But Paulson isn't in charge of environmental policy—his turf is the economy, and on this the Wall Street banker is in lockstep with the Bushites.

After all, Hank took home \$38 million in pay last year and is sitting on a \$700 million fortune. He's all for Bush's cuts in taxes on capital gains and dividends—nearly half of which will go to millionaires like him.

He's also been the premier Wall Street pusher of moving American capital into ventures in China—ventures that move more U.S. jobs to that low-wage sanctuary. As for the crushing national debt that Bush is putting on the backs of our children, Paulson airily calls it "a necessary and understandable side effect of what needed to be done to stimulate the economy." Of course, it's the millionaires who've had their economies "stimulated," while America's workaday majority hasn't even kept up with inflation.

Hank has also backed the Bushites with big bucks, putting more than \$150,000 into George

W's '04 race and hundreds of thousands more into GOP congressional campaigns.

BUSH LAWYERS

Early this year, Representative Maurice Hinchey asked the Justice Department's Office of Professional Responsibility to examine who in the department has actually authorized Bush's domestic spy program and why. We now know that top-ranking officials at Justice had refused the White House request for them to rubber-stamp such obviously illegal spying. So...who signed the authorization?

It was a straightforward and important question. "We are not asking for top-secret information," Hinchey noted. Yet only four months after beginning its probe, the OPR sent a fax to Hinchey saying that it was abruptly closing the inquiry.

Why? Because unnamed lawyers from higher up had ruled that OPR's investigators could not have security clearances for questioning any aspect of the spy program. "Without these clearances," wrote an OPR official, "we cannot investigate this matter."

In short, the very Bushites who excused themselves from obeying the law and the Constitution have now excused themselves from answering any questions about it. Hinchey's number is 202-225-6335.

THE GOP'S XENOPHOBIC GOOFINESS

Did you see that picture of George W riding around in circles

in a decked-out red-white-and-blue dune buggy down on the Mexican border? Apparently, he was trying to look like a tough-guy border defender protecting us from illegal immigrants. Instead, he looked like something out of "The Flintstones."

It was perfect symbolism, though, for the Republican leadership has been running around in circles on the immigration issue, trying to juggle their right-wing, lock-'em-out, anti-immigrant absolutism and their big-business backers who profit from the cheap labor of destitute Latino immigrants. On the one hand, these clowns want to militarize the Mexican border (by, among other things, erecting a monstrous, three-tiered fence to keep Mexicans out), but on the other hand, they want a bracero-style program to keep the cheap labor flowing into our country.

Then, just when you thought their political posturing couldn't get any goofier than putting Bush in a dune buggy, they passed a resolution declaring that English is the "national language" of the USA. Wow—that'll show those immigrants! Not since the House decreed that french fries should be renamed "freedom fries" has our Congress demonstrated such ludicrous loopiness.

Their "speak English" bill is a hoot, for it requires more thorough testing to prove English language proficiency. This from the mumble-mouth president who routinely says things like "Rarely is the question asked—is our children learning?"

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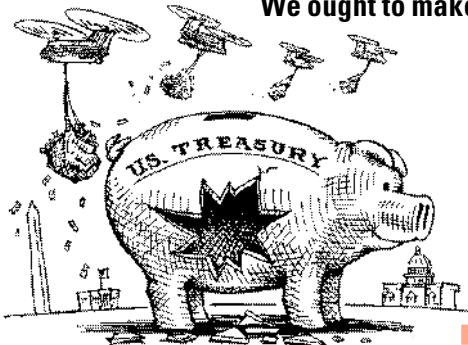
LET'S LOOK AT OUR ECONOMY BY THE NUMBERS

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ARE YOU BETTER OFF YET?

The Overall Economy

"What we Republicans should stand for is growth in the economy. We ought to make the pie higher." — GEORGE W, JULY 2000



Did you know?

IN MARCH, the Senate voted 52-48 to go along with Bush's demand that the legal ceiling on the national debt be raised to **\$9 trillion** for this year. This amounts to roughly **\$30,000** owed by each and every man, woman, and child in America.

Trade:

Note: The trade deficit measures the difference in the dollar value of what the U.S. sells to foreign countries and what we buy from them.

Total 2005 trade deficit:	\$723 billion <i>(a new record)</i>
2005 trade deficit with China:	\$202 billion
The U.S. buys 6 times more from China than we sell there, making this America's most imbalanced trading relationship	
Projected 2006 trade deficit:	Over \$800 billion

Deficits:

10 year budget SURPLUS projected when Bush came into office	\$5.6 trillion
10 year budget DEFICITS projected from now through 2016 under Bush policies	\$8.5 trillion

Note: The *federal deficit* measures government spending above its revenues for one year. The *national debt* is the cumulative total of all borrowings to cover the annual federal deficits.

Debt:

Total national debt the year before Bush took office:	\$5,674,178,209,886
Total national debt today, to the penny:	\$8,368,050,908,810.68
Current increase per day:	\$1.75 billion

Wealth Gap:

U.S. rank among developed nations in gap between the richest and poorest citizens:	#1
Percent of all U.S. wealth (stocks, bonds, cash, homes, real estate, cars, boats, DVDs, Tupperware, etc) owned by richest 1% of Americans:	33.4%
Percent of all U.S. wealth owned by the bottom 90% of Americans:	30.4%

Tax Cuts

"[This vote is] an important step to help hard-working Americans."

— GEORGE W, PUTTING A POPULIST SPIN ON THE PASSAGE OF YET ANOTHER HUGE TAX CUT, MAY 2006

Who are the "hard-working people" who actually get the benefits from Bush's tax giveaways? Let's look at three of his biggest ones.

Tax Cuts:

2001 Income Tax Cut:		
■ Average cut for people making under \$50,000 a year (71% of Americans):		\$425
■ Average cut for people making \$1 million a year (0.1% of Americans):		\$59,216
■ Average cut for people making more than \$10 million a year (0.00004% of Americans):		\$521,905
2003 Tax Cuts for Capital Gains and Dividends:		
■ Average cut for people making under \$50,000 a year:		\$10
■ Average cut for people making \$1 million a year:		\$25,450
■ Average cut for people making more than \$10 million a year:		\$497,463
2006 Extension of Tax Cuts for Capital Gains and Dividends:		
■ Average cut for people making under \$50,000 a year:		\$3
■ Average cut for people making \$1 million or more a year:		\$59,972

Repeal of Estate Tax

The Bushites keep pushing for the total elimination of this tax, which applies to estates valued at \$1 million or more. They claim that this is a "death tax" that is a cruel burden on small businesses, farmers, and bereaved families. Let's run the numbers:

■ Percentage of U.S. families that pay any estate tax whatsoever:	1.2%
■ Percentage of estate tax paid by richest 5% of Americans:	99%
■ Amount of money that repeal of this tax will take from our public treasury and put in the coffers of the richest families in just one decade:	\$1 trillion

■ Number of superrich families that have quietly funded a stealth campaign for the past 10 years to promote the repeal of the estate tax: **18**
(including the Waltons of the Wal-Mart fortune and heirs to Gallo wines, Campbell soup, and M&M candies)

■ Total savings that just these

Jobs

"You work three jobs?... Uniquely American, isn't it? I mean, that is fantastic that you're doing that."

— GEORGE W TO A DIVORCED MOTHER OF THREE, FEBRUARY 4, 2005

Jobs:

Percentage of American workforce employed in 2000:	64.4%
Percentage employed today:	62.9%
<i>Notably, while the overall employment rate is down 1.5%, it's even more depressed for college graduates — down 1.9%</i>	
Net job creation (difference between jobs added to the economy and jobs lost) during the Clinton administration:	22.7 million
Net job creation since Bush took office in 2001:	2.6 million
Number of manufacturing jobs lost since 2001:	2.9 million
Number of new jobs needed each month just to keep up with the number of people newly entering the workforce:	150,000
Average number of jobs created each month since 2001:	41,000

Note: The most anemic job creation performance since Herbert Hoover

Did you know?

WHILE BUSH, the Democrats and all the other Powers That Be insist that the greatest job growth for American workers is in high tech and other fields requiring higher-education degrees, it just ain't so. Of the **30 occupations** projected by Bush's own



Did you know?

AMONG THE VERY WEALTHY, the influential few who would profit handsomely from axing the estate tax are none other than the Bush and Cheney clans.

It's calculated that George's family can dodge up to **\$6.2 million** in estate taxes if the law is repealed, and the Cheneys could avoid up to **\$61 million** that they'd otherwise owe.



labor department to have the greatest job growth between now and 2014, **only six require** as much as a bachelor's degree. Most are **service-sector jobs** calling for only short-term, on-the-job training and are either low or very low paying. Guess what position is ranked **number one** on the growth chart? Retail sales clerk. Also in the top 10: customer-service reps, janitors and cleaners, waiters and waitresses, food prep and service (including fast food), home health aides, and nursing aides and orderlies. The first high-tech position on the chart is number 19, computer-software engineers, and it's projected that there'll be only **222,000** of these jobs created in America by 2014.

Annual salaries that Dell, Microsoft, Intel, IBM, et al pay U.S. software engineers and programmers: **\$50,000 to \$100,000**

These are the middle-class jobs that are alleged to be our future.

Annual salaries these corporations pay engineers and programmers in India: **\$15,000 to \$20,000**

Number of jobs that Dell computer now has in the U.S.: **26,200**

Number of jobs Dell has created offshore in the past three years: **39,900**

Number of jobs Dell plans to create in India in the next three years: **20,000**

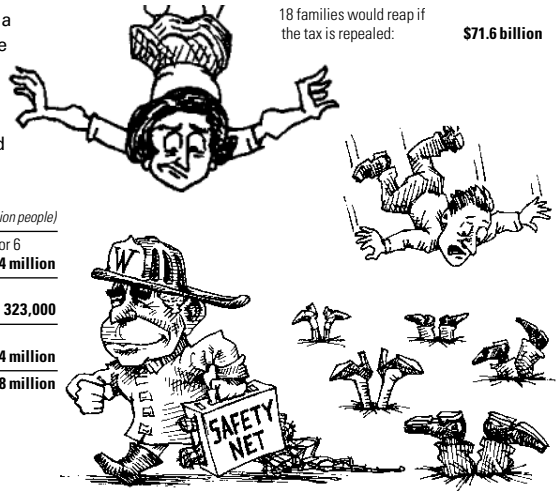
Official unemployment rate for May 2006: **4.6%** (7 million people)

Number of long-term unemployed Americans (out of work for 6 months or longer) as of May 2006: **1.4 million**

Discouraged workers (gave up looking for work, so not counted as unemployed) **323,000**

Underemployed (can't find jobs that are full-time or at their skill level): **14 million**

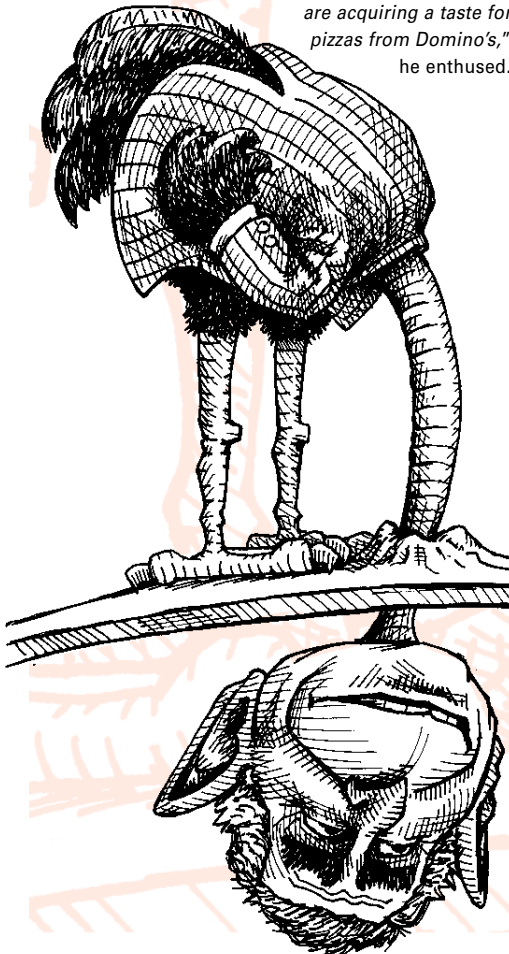
Working more than one job: **7.8 million**



18 families would reap if the tax is repealed: **\$71.6 billion**

Amazing Quote:

IN FEBRUARY, George W said that the offshoring of America's high-tech jobs to India has a bright side since it allows workers there to buy some American products. "Younger Indians are acquiring a taste for pizzas from Domino's," he enthused.



Wages

"Worker productivity accelerated last year at the fastest rate in more than half a century. This higher productivity means our workers receive higher wages."

—GEORGE W, AUGUST 2003

Wages:

Rise in wages for blue-collar and service workers (80% of the U.S. workforce) since Bush took office: **00.00%**

Rise in the cost of living since Bush took office: **8.1%**

The number of years since Bush took office that middle-class families have seen their income fall: **Five in a row**

The share of national income going to corporate profits: **7% in 2001/12.2% today** (an unprecedented rate of growth)

The share of national income that goes to blue-collar and service workers (80% of the workforce): **58.6% in 2001/56.2% today**

Among developed nations, U.S. rank for income disparity between the richest elites and everyone else: **#3**

Exceeded only by the income disparities in Mexico and Russia

1982 ratio of average CEO pay to average worker's pay: **42 to 1**

2003 ratio: **300 to 1**

2006 ratio (\$11.8 million to \$27,460): **431 to 1**

Minimum Wage:

■ **OUR NATION'S WAGE** floor has been stuck at \$5.15 an hour since 1997—the second longest span without a raise in the history of the minimum-wage law.

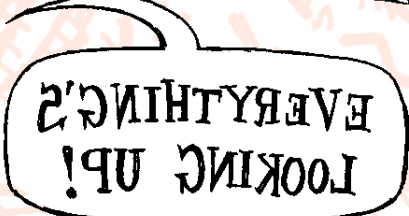
■ **\$5.15 AN HOUR** is about \$10,500 a year for full-time work—i.e., poverty pay.

■ **THE LAST MINIMUM-WAGE** increase has been entirely eroded by inflation—the purchasing power of \$5.15 today is the equivalent of \$4.23 in 1997, the year the minimum wage was raised from \$4.25 an hour.

■ **THERE ARE 7.3 MILLION AMERICANS** working for minimum wage. Another 8.2 million are paid only a dollar more than the minimum.

■ **72% OF MINIMUM-WAGE** workers are adults. The average worker brings home more than half the family's weekly income and a third bring home 100% of their family's earnings; 60% of these workers are women; 760,000 are single mothers.

■ **AT THE BEHEST** of fast-food chains and other low-wage corporations, Bush and his GOP-controlled Congress have stifled all efforts since 2001 to raise America's wage floor above the poverty line.



Did you know?

WHILE CONGRESS has refused to raise the minimum wage, it has increased its own pay every year for the past eight years, for a present total of **\$168,500**. Luckily we have Tom DeLay to explain this to us: "It's not a pay raise," he snapped to reporters. "It's an adjustment." Tom said the annual pay hikes are needed to keep members from "losing their purchasing power." **Their total adjustments** over six and a half years have raised their annual pay by about **\$32,000**—three times the annual pay of minimum-wage workers, who have had no adjustments in the last nine years to protect their purchasing power.

Poverty:

Number of Americans now living in poverty: **37 million** (12.7% of U.S. population)

Increase under Bush: **5.4 million** (even though the economy has been growing)

INTERESTING FACT: Most of today's poverty-stricken Americans have jobs.

Many have two or more

Number of Americans who had to turn to food banks and soup kitchens for meals in 2005: **25 million** (up 9% since 2001)

Rank of U.S. poverty rate among developed nations: **We're # 1!**

Number of U.S. billionaires: **269**
Again, we're # 1!

A HIGHTOWER LOWDOWN POSTER

<http://www.hightowerlowdown.org>