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by Rep. Tom Rooney

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Imagine you needed new tires but couldn't afford them under your monthly budget, which included plans to attend an upcoming concert. To pay for the tires, would you a) cancel your concert plans or b) dip into your child's college savings?

If you're like most parents, I am sure you picked option a. What responsible parent would sacrifice their child's financial future for their own immediate gratification?

The House recently voted on a bill to keep unemployment benefits at 99 weeks through February. This bill would cost more than \$12 billion, and like the family needing new tires, we could pay for it by cutting something we don't need or robbing from our children. House Democrats chose the latter, blocking Republicans from offering amendments to cut wasteful spending, leaving our children with the \$12 billion tab.

Voting against extending unemployment insurance was difficult. I have deep sympathy for individuals who have lost their jobs and cannot find work. However, after two years of record-setting deficits and with a \$13 trillion debt, we cannot continue to rob from our children. Extending benefits for our generation and leaving the bill for the next generation to pay is irresponsible and wrong.

In the long term, we cannot continue to pass extension after extension. Extending unemployment benefits is a Band-aid solution for a gaping wound. President Barack Obama promised that the trillion-dollar stimulus bill would keep unemployment below 8 percent, yet our national unemployment rate has hovered near 10 percent for the last 16 months, and Florida's rate is even higher.

Millions of Americans are out of work due to the failure of President Obama and Congressional Democrats to focus on jobs. The stimulus shoveled money into liberal pet projects, but did not put enough money back in the hands of small business owners and job creators.

After passing this colossal failure, Democrats ignored jobless Americans for two years, instead focusing on legislation that would actually worsen unemployment. They passed the job-killing health care law, which increased taxes and regulations on small businesses, then spent months trying to pass an energy tax. Now, Democrats are threatening to raise taxes on small businesses and other job creators by allowing the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts to expire. Rather than getting out the way and letting small businesses grow and create jobs, this Congress keeps throwing up new roadblocks. That is unacceptable.

We need to extend the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts to keep money in the hands of our working families and allow small businesses to grow and create new jobs. We then need to roll back the costly federal mandates and new taxes of the last two years, so that we can get government off the backs of our small business owners.

On Nov. 2, voters sent a clear message that they want a change from the reckless spending and job-killing policies of the last two years. The failures of these policies have highlighted the need for the federal government to get off the backs and out of the wallets of small business owners. Next year, under Republican leadership, the House of Representatives will propose new ways to create an environment where businesses can grow, hire new workers and bolster the economy. I hope President Obama and Senate Democrats will listen to the American people and join us to cut spending and help businesses create good, private sector jobs.