

Representatives

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ployment compensation to bridge this period, until they get back on their feet."

"None of this is in the republicans' package," he said, "and we're saying that we ought to stimulate the economy by giving a tax break- not to the upper one percent, so it can 'trickle down', but to the bottom people," he says, "the lower 35 percent. If you're looking to stimulate the economy, that's the person that's going to spend money. The upper one percent (that) gets a break will either bank the money or pop (it) offshore."

Pointing to what he considers an outrageous component of the republican proposal, Clyburn exclaimed, "It's retroactive for ten years! They're going back and saying that (for) all of these people who were forced to pay a minimum corporate tax, we're going to go back and wipe all that out. We're going to give G.E. 1.2 billion and give somebody else 800 million. That is where they are."

"There are still significant problems for employment in certain parts of the country, some of it tied to the economy," said Thompson.

What we're looking at with this stimulus package," he said of the democrats, "is how we're going to help those individuals who have, really, no visible means of support, because whatever job they have been attached to is gone."

"If there's anything that defines the parties in congress better than our approach to what needs to be done to stimulate the economy and to bail people out, I haven't seen it," said Clyburn.

Berkely says the republican leadership's promise to address workers' distress within two weeks after Sept. 11 remained unfulfilled nine weeks later. "It's a shame. It's a disgrace," she said.

In the previous case, GOP philosophy demonstrates callousness, say the representatives, in another, it reveals irresponsibility.

An immediate impact of the Sept. 11 attacks was intense scrutiny of airline safety, including security at airports, where, at some, according to Clyburn, "87 percent of the people who are scanning baggage are non-citizens, and therefore have never had background checks." One result was the

recent passage of sweeping legislation to improve aviation security.

"Two weeks ago, we tried to get the republican House of Representatives to pass that very same bill that the senate passed without an opposing vote," said Thompson. "A hundred to nothing," Clyburn affirmed.

Referring to the house republicans, Thompson continued, "They decided, 'No, we'd rather have an inferior system of security at airports in the name of the private sector- rather than federalize that process.'"

"Well, after that vote, a lot of them went home," he said, "and caught hell, because folks said, 'Wait, you mean to tell me (that) you don't want the best system available for the travelling public?' So, in conference, they came back and, in principle, supported just what they had voted against."

"This is a prime example of what garbage we get from our republican friends in congress," said Clyburn.

The legislation that was eventually passed more than doubles salaries for security personnel working in areas that congress felt had to be

upgraded. "They go from an average of 15 thousand dollars a year to an average 35 thousand dollars a year," with first consideration given to current airport workers and airline employees, Clyburn explained.

"They're going to go through serious background checks, they have to be American citizens so that we can do a background check, then they're going to get the adequate training," said Berkley, adding, "and they have to be proficient in English."

On another front, asked what will become of needed and much discussed education initiatives, now that corporate welfare has taken center stage, Thompson replied, "I think democrats are going to have to be vigilant."

"There's a notion that you shouldn't have federal participation in education, that education is a local matter," he said. "But, for all intents and purposes, if you're going to have equity, you must have federal participation, otherwise, you'll have a dual system of education, and we fought that in the sixties all over this country."

Clyburn maintains that the issue will be addressed sooner

rather than later, because congress can avoid it no longer. "We passed the education bill in both houses. It's in conference," he explained, saying that's fortunate because "all the polling indicates that one of the things we ought to be doing as a part of our stimulus package is school construction."

Representing southern Nevada, where a decades-long population boom made school overcrowding a serious issue long ago, Berkley agreed wholeheartedly.

"We build a school a month in Las Vegas to keep up with the growth, so I'm with you a hundred percent. We need those schools, and they're not little schools with six, seven hundred people in them. There are like two, three thousand kids in these schools apiece. It's amazing," said Berkley.

Concerns are not limited to finding economic catalysts, intensifying airport security and building new schools. The representatives say these times make it unwise to take anything for granted. Even patriotism, says Thompson, is in the eye of the beholder.

"We can't be lulled to think that if we disagree with this administration, then we

are unpatriotic," he said. "The commander-in-chief role is one thing, but there are other roles in this country that we have to respond to."

"What democrats are saying is (that) the problem of housing, affordable housing, is still with us," Thompson continued. "The fact that we have 45 million people in this country without any form of health care is unconscionable, and we absolutely should continue to address it. We're trying to stop some of those bad federal judges from being appointed," he said, noting such appointments are for life.

"We have to, as democrats, make sure we keep those issues on the front burner," he said. "Our forum is more difficult because we are in the minority party. If we were in the majority in the house, I think many of these issues would be on the front burner."

Implicit in that assessment was a partisan call to arms, which Thompson made even easier to recognize.

"But, these are not front burner issues for republicans at this day and time," he said. "They are just about giving tax breaks to their wealthy friends."

Arms

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in court again early next year.

Michael Woerfel, former head of EADS in southern Africa, has been charged along with Yengeni. German prosecutors are also investigating whether he broke that country's anti-corruption laws.

The South African minister of justice, Penuell Maduna, says he will offer his assistance if the German prosecutors ask his help with their investigation.

The investigation is also looking at the

head of Acquisitions for the South African Department of Defense, "Chippy" Shaik, for a "conflict of interest."

The report concludes that Chippy Shaik, whose brother, Schabir Shaik, has interests in the French arms manufacturer Thales, and the local company African Defense System (ADS) did not "recuse himself properly" from the procurement for weapons suites for the navy's new ships.

Shaik served on some of the committees that awarded the defense contracts to ADS.

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