the Members of the House should also see this editorial which was to become part of my ''Dear Colleague'' letter last week. Unbelievably, the Republican staff of the Committee on House Administration vetoed the letter as too political. They came to this conclusion without consulting the Democratic staff.

Readers of a newspaper of general circulation can read the truth, but not the elected Members of the House of Representatives. Should we be surprised? Republicans in the White House are censoring scientists; apparently the Republican majority in this House is following that pattern. Republicans may be able to stop me from sending a letter, but they cannot stop me from speaking on the floor.

SUPREME COURT CONSIDERS PLEDGE

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, today the Supreme Court will hear arguments on whether children should be allowed to say the words ''under God'' in the Pledge of Allegiance.

In 2002, the 9th Circuit ruled that the Pledge of Allegiance is unconstitutional. The question raised was whether the Pledge forces an establishment of religion on the American people. Ninety percent of the American public answers this question ''no.'' Yet it never ceases to amaze me that the radical activist minority in this country can use the courts and the first amendment on the one hand to permit targeting of children with pornography; and on the other hand they manipulate it to ban any reference to faith, God, or religion in public life.

There is no way around it. That is an extremist agenda contrary to the letter and spirit of the Constitution, and it is contrary to the will of the people. The fact that this case even made it so far in the courts is a travesty. Our Founders believed, as the American people do, that there is an acceptable beneficial role for public faith and private convictions in the public life of this country. Those who say otherwise are mistaken.

TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES IN BUSH ADMINISTRATION

(Mr. EMANUEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, telling the truth and facing the consequences in the Bush White House has become truth and consequences.

General Shinseki, retired Army Chief of Staff, said occupying Iraq would require several hundred thousand troops, and was forced to resign.

Marine Commander General Zinni said there were greater priorities than Iraq; Zinni was not reappointed as Middle East adviser.

Larry Lindsey, the President's chief economic adviser, said the war in Iraq would cost $200 billion; he was fired.

John DiIulio, former director of Faith-Based Initiatives, said there was no policy apparatus in the White House and was forced to quit.

Our chief Medicare actuary knew the real cost of the Medicare bill and was told there would be extreme consequences for insubordination.

Paul O'Neill, the former Secretary of the Treasury, criticized the tax cuts as stated in ''The Price of Loyalty'' and what they would do to the fiscal order in the United States; he was fired.

Joe Wilson challenged the claim that Iraq tried to buy uranium from Africa; his wife, an undercover CIA agent, was outed.

And now Dick Clarke joins a list of officials whose character was assassinated for telling the truth, truth and consequences in the Bush administration.

REDUCE UNNECESSARY REGULATIONS

(Mr. FORBES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, despite the negative chants we hear from those refusing to take off their partisan uniforms, there is good news when it comes to the economy: 6 consecutive months of job growth; 364,000 new jobs in the last 6 months; and the largest 8-month decline in unemployment since 1995. But there are more challenges ahead.

Perhaps our biggest opportunity is the chance to reduce unnecessary government regulations on small businesses. Every single year, the cost of complying with government regulation adds up to $843 billion. For firms employing fewer than 20 employees, the annual regulatory burden is $6,975 per employee. We put these costly regulations on small businesses, which provide approximately 75 percent of the net new jobs added to the economy, represent 99.7 percent of all employers, employ 50.1 percent of the private workforce, and represent 97 percent of all U.S. exporters.

Instead of trying to raise taxes on small businesses, we need to reduce unnecessary regulations.

REMEMBERING THE ''EXXON VALDEZ''

(Mr. MCDERMOTT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, 15 years ago today the *Exxon Valdez* ran aground and gushed 11 million barrels of oil into Alaska's pristine Prince William Sound. It is pristine no more.

Fifteen years later, Exxon still has not paid the $7 billion in damages a jury awarded to thousands of Alaskans whose livelihoods were devastated. The *Exxon Valdez* ruined 1,300 miles of Alaskan coastline, decimated wildlife, and devastated fisheries. What have we learned?

Fifteen years later, single-hull tankers continue to be the common method of oil transportation. Fifteen years later, America continues to consume fossil fuels with a blatant disregard for global climate change. Fifteen years later, we are still just as vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if Vice President CHENEY invited Exxon into his oil policy meetings that he says should be kept secret from the American people. Perhaps if we knew who had been sitting at the table, we would be able to figure out why 15 years later we are looking at this. Tomorrow it is the budget wreck.

MEDICARE MODERNIZATION ACT HELPS RURAL HOSPITALS

(Mr. SHIMKUS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank today's guest chaplain who talked about the blessings of leadership on this great Nation, which is our task at hand. One of those tasks was the Medicare Modernization Act, which provided great help to this country at large.

I want to focus primarily on one part of the Medicare prescription drug plan and the representation of the most generous package ever to rural health care providers. The Medicare law equalizes payments so that rural and suburban hospitals receive billions in much-needed relief over the next decade. They will receive continued standardized amounts of assistance without pause, increased help for DSH rural and small urban hospitals, adjusted payments to low volume hospitals to provide more equitable reimbursements for health care costs, and greater flexibility for rural and small urban hospitals to have more graduate medical residents providing better care.

We should not have a discrepancy between the care in urban and suburban areas and rural health care. The Medicare Modernization Act is the best health care package that rural America has ever seen. I am glad it was passed, and I look forward to the implementation of the law.

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THE BUDGET

(Mr. BLUMENAUER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, history shows in the last 10 years that we are increasingly taking the budget process here less and less seriously. This week's alternative from the Republican Party will be no exception. It