would be giving up far more than they would be gaining, and that cost, Mr. Speaker, is just too high.

MISTAKES MADE IN THE WAR WITH IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, in the last press conference, the President was asked if he had made any mistakes and what lessons had he learned. And what the President said was, I wish you had given me this written question ahead of time so I could plan for it. I am sure historians will look back and say, gosh, he could have done it better this way or that way. I am just not sure something will pop into my head here in the midst of this press conference with all the pressure of trying to come up with an answer, but it has not yet.

So kind of as a public service, a number of us are coming down to the floor to offer, for the President's consideration, a list of some mistakes that he might want to call up so he does not have to fumble around for an answer at the next press conference, if he has another public press conference.

One of the things that actually is surprising to me that this mistake happened at all, given what we know now, is the long lead-up to the war in Iraq, that they actually had been planning, and bases were being built, and air space to land was being constructed, was a failure to provide the troops with the protection they needed when they were put into harm's way. It surprises me that that mistake was made.

In some cases mistakes have been somewhat corrected, we think; so it would not even hurt the President to mention the fact that as recently as last October, a quarter of our troops in Iraq were lacking in the ceramic-plated body armor that would deflect the bullets that were coming their way. We are told that that has been corrected, although as recently as just a few weeks ago, families are still buying those at about $1,500 a crack for their soldiers just to make sure that they are well equipped. But we know that still the Humvees do not have the proper armor, some of them still do not have the proper armor. A helicopter was shot down that did not have the missile detector that helicopters are supposed to have in order to be fully equipped.

□ 1345

I met the aunt of one of the soldiers who died in that last Sunday. She would think that that was a mistake that the President made and something he might want to mention.

He could have talked about a mistake making soldiers pay for their travel home when they would come on rest and recreation, R&R. In order to get to their homes once they were landed in the U.S., they were paying their own way. That, I understand, has been corrected.

Or we just heard yesterday from the 333rd Military Police Unit in Freeport that was supposed to be coming home this week, that in fact they got redeployed; but all their equipment, their personal foot lockers, had been sent home, and now the families, at their own expense, are shipping the equipment back to their soldiers. They are having to buy all new uniforms. It seems that was a mistake in planning, according to some of the families. Maybe they could have planned better. That is a mistake, and it could be corrected somewhat, at least to reimburse the families that are having to ship back.

But it is not just those soldiers that are in harm's way, who are losing their lives now, unfortunately, sadly, horribly, in record numbers in the last little while; but it is the veterans. Again, it is astonishing that this President would not make sure that at the very least those who come home are well taken care of.

There was a mistake, and it has been corrected. He could cite that. Our wounded soldiers were being charged for food at the hospitals when they came home. Incredible. Now that has been fixed; they are not being charged for that food. But many were languishing with inadequate care in Army barracks when they came home.

Then, right now, this minute, 30,000 veterans are waiting 6 months or longer for appointments at VA hospitals, new increases are proposed in the cost of veterans health care for up to 1 million veterans, and long-term care funding has been slashed. It is really incredible.

What the veterans organizations are saying is that actually the amount of money allocated to veterans is millions of dollars short of what it needs to be. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) actually has a proposal that would add $2.5 billion for veterans health care. The President could acknowledge that it is a mistake to mistreat our veterans, and he could support the bill of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) to restore that money.

He could do something about the fact that he has been refusing to end the survivor benefit penalty. There are a lot of things, a lot of mistakes. We think the President ought to acknowledge some of them and fix them up.

ADDRESSING THE SHORTAGE OF MEDICAL LABORATORY PERSONNEL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURNS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to call attention to a piece of legislation that I introduced, along with my colleagues, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. JACKSON) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS), to address the shortage of medical laboratory personnel, H.R. 623.

The United States is facing a severe and increasing problematic shortage of qualified laboratory personnel. Many rural areas and areas served by smaller hospitals are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain qualified laboratory workers.

The vital role medical laboratory professionals play in health care must be recognized. Between 70 to 75 percent of all medical diagnoses are based on laboratory test results. But because these important health care practitioners seldom have direct patient contact, their important role in health care often goes unnoticed by patients. Ensuring that our Nation's laboratories possess the human resources, that is, laboratory professionals, to accurately process laboratory testing demands is critical to patient health.

The U.S. Department of Labor projects that approximately 13,200 medical laboratory professionals will be needed each year through 2010. Unfortunately, fewer than 5,000 individuals are graduating from accredited training programs each year.

The bill includes a scholarship program to help students meet their academic education and clinical training expenses. It provides for loan forgiveness by working in areas designated as having a shortage of medical laboratory personnel or allied health practitioners. In addition, this legislation establishes a program to provide awards to individuals who teach medical laboratory science.

These are just a few of the important measures created in H.R. 623. I would encourage my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation.

MISTAKES THE PRESIDENT HAS MADE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, 8 days ago at the Presidential news conference, only the third he had done in prime time since he has been President, the President was asked just sort of an obvious question that we all deal with from time to time in our lives, political or not, tell us about one of the biggest mistakes you have made.

The President kind of looked a little deer-in-the-headlights and he said, ''I am sure something will pop into my head here in the midst of this press conference, but with all of the pressure of trying to come up with an answer, it just hasn't yet.''

We would today like to try to help the President, not because we want to criticize President Bush, but because we want to help him learn from his mistakes.

We see several of the mistakes here, from veterans cuts, to trickle-down tax

cuts for the wealthy, to trade that the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) talked about, to helping keep our soldiers as safe as possible that the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) talked about.

I want to talk for a bit about Medicare, not the fact that the bill, they told us it would cost $400 billion, it will cost $534 billion. That was sort of a purposeful mistake from the President. Not about Medicare privatization, that mistake. Not about the gap in coverage, that if you have $5,000 in drug costs, the government only pays $1,000 of it, you have to pay $4,000 out of pocket. The mistake I want to talk about is not even the fact that the drug and insurance companies wrote that legislation.

What I want to talk about is the specific prohibition in the bill that clearly the drug industry, the President at the behest of the drug industry, inserted into the bill that prohibits the government from negotiating the price of prescription drugs.

Now understand, the Canadians pay a lot less than we do for prescription drugs because the Canadian Government negotiates directly with the drug company on behalf of 29 million citizens of Canada to get the best price. But this legislation, written by the drug companies, excuse me, written by the President, this legislation expressly prohibits our government on behalf of 39 million Medicare beneficiaries, prohibits our government from negotiating the best price for our Medicare beneficiaries. That is why we pay so much for our prescription drugs.

Now, when the Architect of the Capitol bought the carpet in this room, he did not take the manufacturer's word that a fair price would impair carpet fiber research and then pay whatever the carpet company wanted. When the Park Service buys rangers' uniforms, it does not take just the first bid, no matter how expensive.

But with drugs, the President and his allies in the drug industry and his friends that run the House of Representatives, the Republican leadership, they say the government must pay any price the drug industry wants to charge. That is why Lipitor costs $763 here, but $438 in Canada. That is why Fosamax costs $797 here, an anti-osteoporosis drug, mostly for women, but only $323 in Canada. That is why Tamoxifen, a breast cancer drug, costs nine times in the United States what it costs in France, even though U.S. taxpayers paid for much of the research through the National Institutes of Health to develop those drugs.

Now, this policy, this mistake, this mistake on Medicare that the President made that says we are not going to negotiate price, we are going to let the drug companies charge whatever they want, this mistake is a joke on the American people; and the drug companies are laughing all the way to the bank.

Perhaps the reason for this Presidential mistake, the Medicare prescription drug Presidential mistake, is the fact that the millions of dollars have come from the drug industry to the Republican Party, and the word on the street is the drug industry is going to give President Bush's reelection $100 million.

A GROSS EXAMPLE OF STATE-SPONSORED DECEPTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, our great country has sustained itself for more than 2¼ centuries because of the brilliant construct of our government, and the essential ingredient in that construct is the separation of powers.

Ultimate power does not reside in any one place. You have the executive branch, the legislative branch and the judicial branch, each with equal powers. It is the responsibility of the legislative branch to make the laws and then to oversee execution of those laws by the executive branch. The question that ought to be on the mind of every American today is to what extent is the legislative branch of this government, the Senate and the House of Representatives, carrying out its responsibilities under those separation of powers. I think when you begin to look at that question, you find that we are not doing a very good job at all.

The most recent example of that, of course, is the revelation that we have had in a recent book that the administration spent $700 million, apparently illegally, that was allocated for Afghanistan, took that money and spent it in preparation for the war in Iraq, when they said they were not engaging in any such preparation. That is a grave deceit. It ought to be investigated by this Congress thoroughly and completely. But it is not the only deceit with regard to the war in Iraq.

We were told when the administration sent their resolution here to the Congress that we had to go to war in Iraq because of weapons of mass destruction. We have found no weapons of mass destruction more than a year later; no stockpile of chemical weapons have been found more than a year later; no mobile weapons laboratories have been found more than a year later. There is no uranium from Niger in Iraq.

Saddam Hussein was not an imminent threat, nor was he a grave and gathering threat. He was not in league with Osama bin Laden. The two were hostile to each other and antagonistic to each other.

What we have here is a gross example of state-sponsored deception. The Founding Fathers realized that this kind of condition could express itself at one time or another during the history of our administration; and, in fact, there have been times when it has, perhaps never as gravely as it has under the present set of circumstances. But they set up a procedure to deal with it, and that procedure is in the hands of the leadership of this House of Representatives.

But, unfortunately, the separation of powers that has served this country so well for more than 2¼ centuries has now morphed itself into a monolithic government, where the leadership of this House takes its orders almost on a daily basis from the White House and there is no oversight of executive actions. There apparently is little or no oversight of executive spending.

So we go on, stumbling forward, blindly. Now more than 700 American servicemen and -women killed in Iraq in this illegal, unjust and unnecessary war; thousands of Americans maimed, injuries they will carry for the rest of their lives, if indeed their lives are not shortened thereby; tens of thousands of Iraqis, perhaps hundreds of thousands, including innocent women and children, killed.

Where is the oversight? Where is the action that is supposed to come from this House of Representatives in examining these illegal, unnecessary actions on the part of the executive branch? Have we not seen enough? When are we going to go into action? When are we going to live up to our obligations under the Constitution? When are we going to do what is necessary to sustain this great democratic Republic?

We need action now. We need an end to the monolithic government and a return to the historic separation of powers which has served this country so well.

AN UNJUST, UNPROVOKED WAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, it has been a little over 1 year since the President of the United States, without just cause and without being provoked, invaded Iraq. Over 700 Americans have given their lives for this war, roughly 10 each week, not to mention the thousands wounded, the billions of dollars spent, and the international good will squandered.

This is the same President Bush who last week could not think of a mistake he had made. We were told that this war was necessary to keep us safe. We were told Saddam Hussein had the world's most dangerous weapons and could strike at any moment.

□ 1400

Now even the President has made tacky jokes about looking for the missing weapons of mass destruction under his White House sofa. That was certainly an insensitive mistake.

In fact, the President's appetite for belligerence and bloodshed only weakens us, it makes us more vulnerable, encouraging further violence and increasing the risk of nuclear destruction.