that America can no longer afford to depend on oil that flows from unstable sources and unreliable partners. Oil has reached almost $60 a barrel, and with world demand for oil increasing at an explosive rate, it is likely we may never see low oil prices again.

□ 2200

Clearly, this Nation is too dependent on foreign sources of oil, and even a brief rundown of the facts is a sobering exercise.

Two-thirds of the world's known oil reserves are located in the volatile and increasingly violent Middle East, while America's domestic oil reserves have declined 20 percent over the past 15 years.

American taxpayers today spend more than $50 billion a year just to protect Middle Eastern oil supplies. This is the cost of our energy, too.

Today, the U.S. is importing more than 62 percent of its oil, and that number is expected to hit 77 percent in the next 20 years.

Yet there has not been a major new refinery built in the U.S. since the Bicentennial.

So, recently, the Renewable Fuels Association announced that January's ethanol production set an all-time record high in production. U.S. fuel ethanol reached 320 million gallons in the month of January. The previous high was 312 million, just the month before in December.

U.S. ethanol industry set an all-time monthly production record this last January now of 241,000 barrels a day, and that is an astonishing amount of production. We have a long ways to go before we get our production up to the point where we can meet the demand in this country, not just at the 10 percent rate or the 30 percent rate.

As the gentlewoman from South Dakota pointed out, we have a market out there for E–85, and E–85 uses a lot more renewable fuel; and it takes a lot more pressure off our imported oils from overseas. It is a lot better for our environment, for our air and our water; and it is something that has been my life's work in soil conservation work, water quality and air quality in preserving our resources. This is something that is good for all of us. It is good for all Americans.

It is one of those issues that when you first pick it up and look at it, it looks good, and you hear some criticism, you find the answers to that and it looks better. Each time you turn this ethanol and biodiesel, the renewable fuels package around, you can see it does more and more for us.

By the way, the balance of trade, we watched our balance of trade, that deficit number get larger in the red over the last several years. A year ago, we were looking at a minus $503 billion of balance of trade, red ink. That is how much product we purchased overseas greater than the amount we exported.

Last February 10, we got our new numbers for the balance of trade. It is now a minus $617.7 billion of more goods that we imported than we exported.

But the ethanol industry, the renewable fuels industry, but ethanol itself will change that balance of trade to the tune of $5.1 billion that will reduce the amount of foreign oil that we will have to purchase.

So this fits in very well with our economics. It fits in very well with our taxes. It fits in very well with our air and our water and our environment. It is something that is good for rural America, good for the Corn Belt, and good for the cities, especially for their air quality. It is a replacement for MTBEs.

That is something I wish we had done a long time ago. It would save this Congress a lot of grief that we will be facing in how to deal with the MTBE issues.

It is time to move forward and solve this problem. I ask for support on this bill. We will be rolling it out here next week, and I am glad to be a part of it. It is something I have a lot of energy and passion for.

I thank the gentlewoman from South Dakota for her efforts.

Ms. HERSETH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) very much for sharing his perspectives based on historical development of the industry, the challenges that we faced in the past and clearly the opportunities that we have today and in the future to utilize ethanol and other renewable fuels as part of a national energy policy. I appreciate as well his thoughtful insights as it relates to the investment in rural America, the impact in a positive way on rural communities, how rural America has stepped up as well to provide capital for investment in the technologies that are necessary to begin and expand and construct the ethanol facilities.

Also, the points made about the potential impact, the positive impact that ethanol production and increasingly utilizing renewable energies and our national energy policy and increasing the blend that can have on our trade balance, as well as clearly the positive environmental impact of ethanol and renewable energy.

So I want to thank again both my distinguished colleague, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING), as well as the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) for their prior work and their commitment to ensuring that renewable energy is a core component of our national energy policy, demonstrating not only the regional support but the bipartisan support for the legislation that we will be introducing.

Renewable fuels such as ethanol already constitute, as we have shown, a significant portion of our Nation's energy portfolio. They reduce the cost of petroleum and are home grown, clean, efficient, and economically beneficial to rural America.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues not to believe the myths and misinformation of the past, and to fairly evaluate or reevaluate the role of ethanol and other renewable fuels as a core component of our national energy policy.

I firmly believe that Congress must enact policies that will facilitate the positive impact of the renewable fuels industry because it will, in turn, benefit the entire country.

We will be introducing this legislation in the coming days, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important initiative, to join their colleagues such as the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) and the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) and a number of others who will introduce this legislation.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be here. I have a slight cold so please forgive me, but we are back with the 30-something Hour, and I will be joined by my two colleagues from Florida here in a few minutes.

We want to continue this debate that we have been having in the United States over the past several months, a debate that the President has initiated in saying after the campaign that he wanted to have a national discussion in regards to the issue of Social Security and the Social Security solvency and where Social Security is going to be in the next few years and the kind of changes that we have to make in the country in order to deal with it.

Those of us on this side, and I think many on the other side, have very many concerns about this because Social Security, quite frankly, has been one of the most successfully administered Federal Government programs in the history of the United States of America.

We have talked over the past few months on how Social Security runs with only a 1 percent administrative cost. So there are a lot of government programs I think we all agree in this Chamber and across the country that are inefficient, that are ineffective, that maybe do not work, that maybe take too much money without getting the kind of results that we ultimately want.

Social Security is not one of those programs. Social Security has been an enormous success, and I think what is great really about Social Security in trying to advance this argument, I think why the President is having so much difficulty is that Social Security is a program that touches all of our lives.

We here in the 30-something Caucus watched our grandparents receive Social Security, and the story of my great-grandfather when Social Security was first implemented, he could

not believe when he got to America that he could retire and walk down to the end of the driveway and get his Social Security check and he would have dignity in his final years.

This program has been successful, and the President is having great difficulty making an argument that we need to somehow radically change the Social Security system.

The President's proposal is to say that those of us who are in our 20s and 30s and 40s, instead of putting our percent, our 6.2 percent into the Social Security system, will be allowed to divert a certain portion of that over into some private annuity or private account that we would be allowed to set up, and there are all kinds of math involved in this in the President's proposal that lead to someone who does put money into a private account to not receive the kind of benefits that they thought they were going to get in the first place.

But the main point is this: the Social Security system, the Social Security program may need change, may need to be tweaked, but it does not need to be privatized, and the President's plan does not fix the problem. It in no way, shape, or form fixes the long-term solvency issues that Social Security has, and there are many other ways we can go about fixing this program. It is good until 2042, into 2050 and even after that you will still get 80 percent of your benefits if we do absolutely nothing.

So there is no need to get crazy. There is no need to get crazy and try to make some radical changes to this program like privatizing it and somehow jeopardize and slash benefits for our seniors and our grandparents and our parents.

I am joined by the gentlewoman who has been on all the talk shows over the past few weeks and did a fantastic job. I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), and it is good to be here with you once again.

Quite honestly, it is good to be here to talk about once again an extremely important issue and that is Social Security. I can tell you that I wish that that is what we had been able to talk about for the last 2 weeks as opposed to some of the other issues we have been focused on, but I am glad we are able to refocus again.

What we have been trying to do in our 30-something Working Group over the last several months and prior to my arrival here in Congress, you and our other colleagues have done yeoman's work on getting the message out about the facts as its relates to Social Security because our generation, your friends, my friends, when you go home and you sit down and you are having coffee or you are having a beer, which we may occasionally do among our friends, and the conversation may turn to whether you think or your friends think that there is going to be Social Security there for you when you retire. Most people our age, they believe the myth that has been put out there by the President and by the leadership of the Congress. They believe that Social Security will not be there.

My colleague and I being in our 30s and we are trying to get the word out to other people our age across this country, the solvency issue to which you just referred, literally, before there is even a concern about a potential drop in benefits, is not for 37 years from now, at the earliest. More likely, 47 years when in my case, I will be 75 years old in 37 years and 85 years old in 47 years, long past retirement age, long past the point after which I would begin collecting Social Security.

So like my colleague said, we are not suggesting that there is not a problem that needs to be addressed. What we are suggesting is that there is not a crisis; that there is no need to sound the alarm bells; that we need to make sure that we approach this problem responsibly; that this is a 70-year program of success, probably the most successful program in our Nation's history, established as an iron clad safety net that no one should have to worry about it being there upon their retirement, which is why that if we are going to make changes, which we should to ensure its long-term solvency, that we take the time to do it correctly and responsibly and not rush to judgment and not make drastic changes which privatizing Social Security, I think by anyone's definition, would be drastic.

We have got to make sure that we preserve Social Security into the future, and what is ironic is that most of the talk coming from the White House and in the leadership of this body has been about privatizing Social Security, setting up private accounts, and this has just been mind-boggling to me because, like you said, privatization does nothing to deal with the solvency issue. We could privatize Social Security, and all we would be doing is adding to our deficit and putting our Nation more in debt than we already are, and we are badly, badly in debt.

So you can go that far and still have to address Social Security solvency problems, and we need to make sure that we responsibly make changes to preserve Social Security into the future.

□ 2215

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Absolutely.

And, Mr. Speaker, when you just look at how the privatization process would be set up, you are actually taking money that would be going into the system out away from the system. And we do not even know, and the President's proposal from all the ones I have read, is that the 4 percent that I would be able to take and move into the side account, the business match will not go into the Social Security account either. So you put in your 6.2, the business puts in theirs, but if I divert 4 percent, then that is 4 percent less that the employer has to put in. So you are talking about taking out trillions of dollars. And I think if there is one point we want to make tonight, that will be it.

We brought our handy-dandy charts here. Privatization equals massive borrowing. There is only one way to fill the gap. We do not have money to plug a $2 trillion hole. And it says in the first 10 years of the plan, anywhere from $1.4 trillion to $2 trillion in borrowing, and over the next 20 years it will be $5 trillion that we will have to borrow just to plug holes in the President's plan. We are running a $400- to $500 billion trade deficit in a year, and we are going to go out and borrow $5 trillion? Where are we going to get $5 trillion to plug the hole in the Social Security plan? We are borrowing the money from foreign countries, and we are shifting the burden on to the next generation. It is irresponsible. It is lunacy. There is no reason to have to do this. So, again, push the taxes off.

Now, this is the chart I like, and Tom Manatos, from our staff, is responsible for this. This is it. The national debt, my colleagues. There are so many numbers here. And this is always changing. You can go to the United States Treasury Web site, and this ticker here will keep going and keep adding, but it is $7.7 trillion. And we are going to go out and we are going to borrow $5 trillion? This is our debt now, almost $8 trillion. And if the President gets his way and we have to implement the private accounts, we are going to go out and have to borrow $5 trillion, which is more than half the national debt that we have right now.

But here is the number you will love the most, your share of the national debt. Your share, one person sitting at home right now, if you are sitting there or if you are born today, you owe $26,000. That is what you owe because we spend more than we take in. Now, if we are going to add $5 trillion to this over the next 20 years, this number will almost double.

So when you think about a baby that is born today that owes this, and if we keep going at the rate we are going, running $500- to $600 billion annual deficits, and this number keeps going, and we are out borrowing money and paying more interest on it, and you live your whole life and this number keeps going up, and then at 18 you go out and borrow money to go to school, to get a bachelor's degree, master's degree, Ph.D., become a lawyer, you are going to borrow more money, what does this number look like? How are we providing opportunity for our children in the next generation?

We are being irresponsible here. The gentleman talked earlier here about the trade deficits and how we have to balancing those off and balancing the budget, but we are not being very kind to the next generation coming up.

Mr. Speaker, I yield once again to my colleague.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I thank my colleague, Mr. Speaker.

I think that statistic and those two numbers there are so illustrative. They really are. People can feel, touch, taste and understand what $26,000 means. For every single person, including an infant in this country, that is their share of the national debt.

I think people have a harder time, though, I mean none of us literally have an understanding of what $7 trillion is; $7,781,336,014,734.14. That is the national debt.

Now, what does that mean? If you are going to try to break it down into what $7 trillion is like, and there are people actually out there figuring this stuff out to try to translate that concept of a trillion dollars into more understandable bites of information, for example, if you stacked a thousand $1 bills, you took a thousand $1 bills and stacked them on top of each other, $1 million would equal 1 foot high of thousand dollar bills. That is how high.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. One bill that equals $1,000 stacked. Okay.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Right. Stacked up would equal a foot. A billion dollars would equal the height of the Empire State building in New York. One trillion dollars, stacked up on top of each other, would be a thousand times the height of the Empire State Building.

So if you are trying to think about how much $7 trillion is, that is how large that number is. That is not something that almost anyone can get their arms around. And think about the unbelievable irresponsibility that that is, and that there currently appears to be almost no regard for that problem and how to deal with it, and no focus here on how we are going to get a handle on the sheer size of that number and shrinking it, and no realistic proposal; only conversations like that of privatizing Social Security, which are going to make that number ever larger. It really starts to boggle your mind.

Yet, when we go home, as we just did, and I spent the last couple of weeks at home going around my district and had town hall meetings. I had a town hall meeting in my district on Social Security, and it appeared as though there is an inverse relationship between the more the President talks about his vague outlines of a proposal and the more people hear about his vague outlines of a proposal. They are moving in opposite directions.

In fact, for our age group, which is his target audience, because he has been assuring people 55 and over they will not have to be concerned about their continued checks and the continuation of Social Security for them, and if you believe that, which I found in my district, and I have a very large population of senior citizens who are Social Security recipients, they are very, very skeptical about how a program the size of Social Security, with as monumental a change as this would be, how it is that they can be assured that a monumental change like that is not going to affect them.

So there is a healthy amount of skepticism as it is, but the target audience, which is our generation and people younger than 30 years old, the polling that has come out recently, and the Pew Research Center did a March 24 poll, which shows support for private accounts among young adults absolutely plummeting. The more young people have heard about this proposal, the less they like it. They are more than twice as likely to oppose private accounts when they have heard a lot about it. And that is illustrative of the inverse relationship between the President's canned town hall meetings, for lack of a better term. Because what we have been doing out in our districts, as Democrats, we are not ticketing our events. We are not hand-picking the audience. We are saying, come on in and talk to us about Social Security. Let us talk to you about what we hear about this proposal, and you tell us what you think.

What is going on in the President's meetings is he is saying, do you agree with me? Oh, okay, you can come in then, and booting people who do not agree with him. That is really not very democratic. It does not show a real ability or desire to actually get input. It is more my way or the highway politics, which is not the way we should be shaping this debate.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And that is not the way we did it in 1983. And everyone has been talking about this monumental national discussion and Tip O'Neill sitting down with President Reagan and Bob Dole, and we had all the great political figures of that generation coming together to say we are going to put politics aside, and we are going to fix the problem.

And we are not here to bash the President or to bash the Republicans or to bash anybody, but we are here to say we have issues here that are going to affect the long-term interest of the country. In many districts across the country we are losing manufacturing jobs. One of the main problems we have with this whole thing is we do not have enough taxpayers working and making a good living and paying into the Social Security System. My own opinion is that is what would really help fix this long term. But we are just here to say we want to sit down and work with you.

You cannot have a national discussion if you do not include the opposition into your town hall meetings. Boy, it would be great to go to a meeting and never have anybody stand up and question any votes you have had or anything like that. We cannot get away with that in our congressional seats, nor should we be able to. And so the President needs to come to Congress and work with us. We want to help him figure this out.

Now, private accounts, for us, are off the table. That is ridiculous. That is not going to happen. But we want to work with the President

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. And, Mr. Speaker, my colleague is just absolutely right on target. We are more than willing to sit down and hash out in the spirit of compromise, like the gentleman referred to what they did in 1983. But, at least in my experience, with compromise, you have to be singing off the same song sheet. You cannot start from two completely different places and define the problem in completely different ways and ultimately reach compromise.

So if the President and his supporters on this concept would come off of the concept of crisis and get to where we are and where the reality is, because every factual description, including from the Social Security trustees that just released their report 2 weeks ago, points to a problem, a problem looming on the horizon that needs to be dealt with.

So when we are singing off the same song sheets, then we will be able to move forward and talk about a compromise that will actually address the solvency question, because private accounts do not address the solvency question, they just cause more debt.

What is unbelievable about the private accounts is that the President, at least in my listening to him, has sold them as almost like it would be an addition to your Social Security benefits. But the reality of his vague plan is that you would not get your private account and your Social Security benefits. There would be a commensurate cut in your Social Security benefits in proportion to what is in your account; approximately a 46 percent cut in your Social Security benefits.

And let us not forget also that his proposal does not leave out the one-third of Social Security recipients who are not earners. You have people who are beneficiaries of Social Security recipients who have passed on and who are not earning an income. You have children and dependents, and you have the disabled community. Now, they are not able to benefit from private accounts because in order to have a private account, you actually have to have an income. So we are not even thinking about how we would address the huge pure cut that they would suffer from.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And, Mr. Speaker, when you look at when you would want to actually take out the money, our colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. WEINER), who was here a few weeks ago with us, had a great explanation. The stock market goes up. The stock market goes down. The stock market goes up. The stock market goes down. Well, what if you are going to retire at the wrong time? What if you were planning on retiring in 2001, 2002, and your private savings account was cut in half? Now all of a sudden you are not retiring.

Social Security grows at a steady pace and keeps up with inflation and makes sure that you would be able to maintain the kind of buying power that you would normally have, and it is stable, and it is safe, and it is guaranteed.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. That is why we call it Social Security.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Social Security, exactly, instead of having the up and down. And that is the kind of risk you are going to have to take on if you are going to put your money into some of these private accounts.

One point more before I pull up another slide here. Your share of the national debt is $26,000, and I think we really need to start looking in terms like this, because not only do business people always worry about what the next quarter's earnings are going to be, what is the next quarter's profits going to be, and we tend to always think what is the next election going to be like, because we get elected every 2 years, so there is no real long-term thinking. So I think it is important for us, especially during the discussions the 30-something group has, is to have this broad discussion: What does this look like to a baby born today and you add this on?

Then we have got the number here that the average college student has $20,000 of debt after going to college; plus a credit card debt, plus a car payment. So what we are trying to say here is that a baby born today has a tax on their head of at least, at least, and that is today, if the clock does not run, of at least $50,000 by the time they are 22 years old and graduating.

□ 2230

Mr. Speaker, you add in inflation and the fact college tuition is doubling, add in all of the other factors, and the bankruptcy bill, which I will not go into, we are not serving our country well and we are not serving the next generation well when we do this. I think we are being very shortsighted and selfish. It sounds good; we are going to borrow money. Wall Street is going to make a killing on the whole deal. It sounds good, and sometimes if it sounds too good to be true, most often it is.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is so right. We need to boil this down in terms that people deal with every day. When we have these conversations on the floor, I try to zero in on the impact that this proposal will have on specific groups. For example, we have some information about the impact Social Security has on children. Social Security survivor and disability benefits help 6.4 million children. We talk about welfare assistance and TANF, which is Temporary Assistance For Needy Families, funding and how important a program that is to helping sustain the lives of millions of children, but Social Security survivor and disability benefits help almost twice as many children as welfare does. That, I think, is something that people just do not realize. I did not realize it until I received this information, and that is according to our nonpartisan Congressional Research Service.

Social Security is currently the largest source of Federal funding that prevents children from falling into poverty. Social Security benefits have kept 920,000 children out of poverty, and more than one-third of families with Social Security income would be poor without these benefits.

If we look at the effects that privatization of Social Security would have on women, women comprise the majority of Social Security benefits. They represent 58 percent of all Social Security recipients at the age of 65, and women represent 71 percent of all beneficiaries by the time they are age 85. Privatization disproportionately harms women, especially because women really end up having much less because of the differences in earning potential, much less opportunity to benefit from Social Security when they are planning for retirement.

There are a number of factors that leave women even more vulnerable to this really radical proposal. Women and poverty in old age is often rooted in the reality that their lives are shaped on. We earn less money. We are at 76 cents on the dollar compared to the same job that a man does. The reality of care giving, we are primarily responsible for caring for loved ones, both children and our older parents, and women have jobs more often that offer very few benefits. So women who have been in the workforce are far less likely to have IRAs and pensions and other outside extra benefits. Social Security for women ends up being the vast majority of the time their sole retirement benefit. So it disproportionately is pulling the rug out from under them.

I think we have to talk about how these proposed changes would impact people. What I have noticed in the time I have been here, and this is a big room and there are a lot of Members, 435 of us, and we talk about a lot of really important issues here. At a certain point, I think Members of Congress forget that the decisions that we make here affect individual people. It is really easy to forget about that. It is easy to talk about numbers in the trillions, and we forget that Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Goldstein, those are real people where our decisions hurt them. Members need to think about them sitting in their kitchens and scratching out how they are going to buy groceries, cover their medication, and pay their electricity bill.

The report that came out from the Social Security and Medicare trustees 2 weeks ago shows that the crisis we should be talking about is Medicare and the looming problem that is going to present because that is what is facing insolvency. But, of course, that problem, according to the leadership here, has been taken care of. They took care of that, according to the leadership here, in the bill that took 3 hours to twist enough arms, from what I understand, to get them to have the votes to pass it. I am not sure why in that legislation they would not have taken steps to address what appears to be the real crisis.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. The fix there to save Medicare solvency was to spend an additional 500 to $600 billion, not to do anything with the cost of prescription drugs, not to allow for reimportation, not to allow the Secretary of HHS to negotiate down the drug prices with some of these drug companies.

The gentlewoman is exactly right. When I think of a crisis going on in my district right now, many of the school districts that I represent, half the kids live in poverty. That is a crisis because those kids are going to be taking from the system instead of creating wealth and paying taxes and contributing to the system. That is a crisis.

In Mahoney County, which encompasses the city of Youngstown, there are thousands of kids who have lead poisoning. There are 2,000 kids, young kids who have lead poisoning in Mahoney County at a level by which it actually affects their cognitive ability which puts you on a level of slight retardation. It is unbelievable. Those are the crises we have in the country: health, education, making sure that the poorest among us have some kind of security.

If Members went to Youngstown, Ohio, and tried to convince the residents there that the biggest crisis in the country starts in 2042, they would laugh at you.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is so right. I represent a community where it is not just the poor we are concerned about; it is the regular middle- to lower-middle class who are struggling. I have hundreds of thousands of senior citizens in south Florida who struggle every single day because Social Security for the vast majority of them is their primary source of income. They are much more focused. It is what I hear when I am stopped at a picnic or at the supermarket. They are concerned about how they are going to pay for their medication. Some of them cannot even make their co-payments. They are concerned about the increase in their premiums for Medicare that just happened.

That is the handwringing that is going on. They are not that concerned about a problem that does not face them for another 37 years. Quite honestly, in the senior citizen community, most of them realize 37 years is not something they are going to have to worry about. But 2017 is when the Medicare trustee report says is the point at which we would literally be paying out more in Medicare benefits than we are bringing in in premiums. That is a serious problem.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And to not do anything about cost for the prescriptions I think illustrates and speaks to the point better than anything else that too much money drives what is going on down here. They are not worried about Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Goldstein. Sometimes the decisions here are about who raises us a lot of money.

Mr. Speaker, who would pass a $500 billion prescription drug bill that is now $700 billion, $800 billion, $900 billion, we do not even know what the real number is, and not do anything about trying to control the price of prescription drugs, and then turn around and come in and say drugs are not the issue, cost is not the issue, Social Security is the biggest crisis in the country now?

Let us not forget as we begin to start wrapping things up, we gave this administration a lot of leeway, a lot of rope with the war, with the prescription drug bill and the war that the taxpayers would not have to pay anything more than $50 billion because we would use the oil money for reconstruction and be greeted as liberators. We are going to be in and out, and all of the things we heard before the war turned out not to be true.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. And the report said gross misrepresentation, grossly inaccurate facts when it comes to reports of there being weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And everyone who was telling them there were no weapons of mass destruction, they ignored them; and to now push the blame off on some bureaucrats is unfair. And that was the war. We all know that. And then the prescription drug bill started off $400 billion as we sat in this Chamber, because many of our fiscal friends on the other side of the aisle did not want to spend more than $400 billion. After the bill was signed, 2 months later, all of a sudden the real price was $500 billion and an actuary was threatened not to give the real numbers to Congress.

After the election a few months ago, we find out this is going to be closer to a trillion dollars in cost. I am saying the track record here is not good for when the administration comes forward and says trust me because we have, we have been burnt; and we are certainly not going to let this happen with the Social Security system.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the gentleman because the gentleman was here. The thing I talked about and heard about on the campaign trail last year was how we ended up with a Medicare bill that added a prescription drug benefit but did not allow, in fact prohibited, the negotiation of discounts for prescription drugs. I know that the VA, the Veterans Administration, already has that ability and drugs made available to our veterans through the VA are significantly less than they are on the private market. So maybe the gentleman can help clarify that for me because I was not here. People out in the real world do not understand that.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the only answer I can come up with is the pharmaceutical companies did not want it. It is amazing because we have obviously signed numerous free trade agreements with every country. In my area we have been devastated by a lot of the agreements. All of a sudden we say if we are going to free trade everything else, let us free trade pharmaceuticals. As long as they have good safety standards, let us let them come in from Canada and drop the price down. But the kibosh was put on that.

When we look at the pharmaceutical industry had three or four lobbyists for every Member of Congress and donated $100 million to Congress over the course of that period when we were negotiating that drug bill, the money comes in here. The pharmaceutical industry did not want that. So they got what they wanted. They got that language removed or not put in. So now the Secretary of Health and Human Services is not allowed to negotiate. Not only are we not allowed to bring drugs in from Canada, but the Secretary of HHS is not allowed to sit down with Pfizer and say Pfizer, Merck, if you want the Medicare drug contract for X drug, and of course they do, so you say we are going to talk price, just like any other business would do.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thought it was very interesting that just last week the former Secretary of Health and Human Services, Tommy Thompson, in a speech to the Kaiser Foundation said it was his biggest frustration in the negotiations on the Medicare prescription drug reform bill because he believed the Secretary should have that ability, that the Secretary, just like they do in the VA, should have the ability to negotiate those discounts, and it absolutely ties the hands of the Health and Human Services Secretary.

In talking about this in his speech to the Kaiser Foundation, he said, unfortunately, membership of the leadership of his party, including the President, did not agree, and he was not able to get through to them that that was an important component, to reduce those prices.

□ 2245

What we have here is we have a Social Security plan, or an outline of a plan, that is going to harm young people and hopefully not harm older people who are imminently collecting benefits or already collecting benefits.

It is hard to get young people to think about when they are going to collect Social Security. We are having town hall meetings for younger people and trying to get them to come, and talk to them about why they should think about this, because it is not looming on the horizon of their lives. And then we have Medicare. We also with our generation have a group of people who just are not thinking about whether Medicare will be there for them. They just feel like they are invincible, and there are no major health care issues for most people in our generation.

We have got to make sure that we continue to pound the drum on this issue and talk to as many people as we can, because if we do not, we will all get caught asleep at the switch. As a result, this train will run smack into a wall at the point in our lives when we do need to worry about it.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. The gentlewoman makes a great point about just kind of how the whole system is working right now. Basically by not having the Secretary of HHS be able to negotiate down the drug prices and by not free-trading pharmaceuticals, it is basically corporate welfare. It is basically public taxpayer, hard-earned money coming down here, and we are giving it to the pharmaceutical companies and inflated drug costs through the Medicare program. So we have corporate welfare going to the most profitable industry in the world right now. Then you give tax cuts to those people who make more than $350,000 a year so they do not have to pay. You reduce the corporate tax rate so those shareholders, and those people who benefit most from moving jobs overseas get the tax benefits there, too. And then you are cutting services here with Medicaid and food stamps and education, the Pell grant and everything that we have talked about. And now you want to go try to mess with Social Security.

So if you see what is happening down here, if you take a step back and you see the whole process, there is all this corporate welfare going to all the big major corporations, they get all the tax cuts, the people who run those companies get tax cuts, and the rich get richer, and the poor are getting poorer. They say, well, that's class warfare. Mark Shields had a great line. He said, The war's over. The rich won. There is not much there anymore. But that is the way things are going, and that is why it is so important that at the bare minimum we keep that basic Social Security system in place.

I think having discussions like we are having tonight and town hall meetings, I think it has been very successful. The response I am getting, and I know the response the gentlewoman is getting down in Florida, and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK), who could not be with us tonight, is getting, and all our colleagues on both sides of the aisle are getting it.

I yield to the gentlewoman for any final comments that she may like to make.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Just a couple, because I think we again need to maybe finish up by zeroing in on the impact that this proposed privatization scheme would have. The private accounts do not make up for the 46 percent cut in benefits that would be part of this proposal. A 20-year-old who enters the workforce this year would lose about $152,000 in Social Security benefits under the Bush proposal.

Social Security provides disability insurance that young families need, and there is no private insurance plan that can compete with the Social Security disability benefits that are offered. The cost of those benefits bought privately would be beyond most people's

ability to pay for them. For a worker in her mid-twenties with a spouse and two children, Social Security provides the equivalent of a $350,000 disability insurance policy, again not one that most people can afford to pay out of pocket for. And suppose, God forbid, you have a young parent that dies suddenly. Social Security provides for the children who are left behind. Social Security survivors benefits will replace as much as 80 percent of the earnings for a 25-year-old average-wage worker who dies leaving two children and a young spouse. For that parent, Social Security survivors benefits are equivalent to a $403,000 life insurance policy.

What we have been trying to do in our Thirtysomething Working Group is explain to our generation what the reality would be in their lives without Social Security as a continued safety net.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Absolutely. I hope from the responses we have been getting, it sounds like some people are listening.

Thirtysomethingdems@mail.house.gov. Send us an e-mail, or you can go to the Web site, democraticleader.house.gov/thirtysomething, and join in our discussion. We will be happy to read some of the e-mails. We have been off for the last few weeks, so maybe next week we will read some.

I would also like to say before we close up, the President of the Ukraine, Victor Yushchenko, is going to be here tomorrow. If you had followed everything that was going on with the West and the Russians and the poisoning, it was like a soap opera going on. I think it is an important point for us to make, he is going to be talking to a joint session of Congress, his election and his uprising and his move to power in the Ukraine was led by young people.

We need to continue to try to encourage, not everyone has to run for office, not everyone has to be involved to the extent they make a career out of it, but it is so important when you see what is going on down here day in and day out and the lack of, I think, long-term vision. It is important because the young people are the ones who are going to be involved in the system longer than all of us are because they are younger. It is important for their voice to be heard.

I thank the gentlewoman from Florida. We missed the gentleman from Florida, but I know he will be back with us next week.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Ms. WATERS (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and April 6 on account of a funeral in the district.

Mr. NEUGEBAUER (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of illness.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today and the balance of the week on account of illness.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. WOOLSEY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MALONEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. COOPER, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. GUTKNECHT) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. MCCOTTER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BILIRAKIS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GUTKNECHT, for 5 minutes, today and April 6.

Mrs. BLACKBURN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, today and April 12.

Mr. PENCE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BOUSTANY, for 5 minutes, April 6.

Mr. DUNCAN, for 5 minutes, April 6 and 7.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, today and April 6.

Mr. POE, for 5 minutes, April 6 and 7.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

Mr. TRANDAHL, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled a bill of the House of the following title, which was thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 1270. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the Leaking Underground Storage Tank Trust Fund financing rate.

SENATE ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The SPEAKER announced his signature to an enrolled bill of the Senate of the following title:

S. 686. An act for the relief of the parents of Theresa Marie Schiavo.

BILL PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

JEFF TRANDAHL, Clerk of the House reports that on March 23, 2005 he presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bill.

H.R. 1270. To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the Leaking Underground Storage Tank Trust Fund financing rate.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 52 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, April 6, 2005, at 10 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

1321. A letter from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Thiophanate-methyl; Pesticide Tolerances for Emergency [OPP-2005-0011; FRL-7699-3] received March 18, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1322. A letter from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Mesotrione; Pesticide Tolerance [OPP-2005-0049; FRL-7703-1] received March 18, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1323. A letter from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Dinotefuran; Pesticide Tolerance [OPP-2005-0003; FRL-7695-5] received March 18, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1324. A letter from the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Manpower and Personnel), Department of Defense, transmitting notification of a decision to implement performance by the Most Efficient Organization (MEO) for the Public Works Center Maintenance and Repair of Building and Structures in San Diego, CA (initiative number NC20020795); to the Committee on Armed Services.

1325. A letter from the Assistant Attorney General, Department of Justice, transmitting a report entitled ''Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Annual Report 2003-2004,'' pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 5617; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

1326. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Labor-Management Programs, Department of Labor, transmitting the Annual Report of the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Labor-Management Standards (OLMS), covering OLMS activities from October 1, 2003 through September 30, 2004; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

1327. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the FY 2004 Performance Report for the Animal Drug User Fee Act (ADUFA), enacted on November 18, 2003 (Pub. L. 108-199); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1328. A letter from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmantal Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval and Promulgation of State Implementation Plans; Designation of Areas for Air Quality Planning Purposes; State of Arizona; Maricopa County Area; Technical Correction [AZ 135-0085; FRL-7879-3] received March 8, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1329. A letter from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants; Delegation of Authority to Texas [R06-OAR-2004-TX-0004; FRL-7886-4] received March 15, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.