budget? Madam Speaker, it's time for Congress to consider a budget, one that puts taxpayers, not big government, first.

CHECK THE DEBT

(Mr. WILSON of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WILSON of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I share the concerns many Americans have about our country's financial future. I often hear from Ohioans who are worried about the financial burden we are leaving for the next generation. They want to know if there's anything they can do to help. That is why yesterday I introduced the Check the Debt Act.

This bill would add a ''check the debt'' box to our annual tax forms. This would allow individuals to contribute $3 to help pay down the national debt, without adding to their tax bill. This option would be similar to the public financing of campaigns check, where a check the box is already available on tax forms. Nearly 33 million people each year respond to public campaign financing without adding to their tax bill. This raises nearly $100 million annually for campaign financing.

That kind of money is a step in the right direction. It will enable and encourage Americans to lend a hand in paying down our debt. The $13 trillion debt our country has built up over the last several decades will not go away overnight, but we must start somewhere.

BULGARIA'S HISTORIC ANNIVERSARY

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, 20 years ago today, I served as an election observer in Bulgaria on behalf of the International Republican Institute, IRI. It was a life-changing dream come true for me to experience firsthand the birth of liberty in a captive nation which had been subjected for decades to Nazism and Communism. As a lifelong Cold Warrior, I always promoted victory over Communism.

On June 10, 1990, the people of Bulgaria participated in the first free elections since the 1930s. It was inspiring to visit polling places in the Plovdiv region and witness the young and old participating freely. The talented people of Bulgaria were unshackled. People did not want to be a slavish Soviet satellite.

Since then, Bulgaria has evolved from the antiquated, frozen-in-time nation of the 1930s to being a vibrant free market democracy of today. It is now a valued member of NATO, with troops having served in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is a dynamic member of the European Union.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11th in the Global War on Terrorism. God bless Bulgaria.

$250 CHECKS FOR SENIORS

(Mrs. DAHLKEMPER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. DAHLKEMPER. Mr. Speaker, today, checks will go in the mail to 189,000 seniors across Pennsylvania, including thousands in my district in Western Pennsylvania. This will help them pay for prescription drugs. These $250 checks are on the way to seniors who fell victim to the prescription drug donut hole in Medicare. The $250 checks are just the first step in reducing prescription drug prices for seniors under the new health care reform. Next year, seniors in the donut hole will get a 50 percent discount on name-brand prescription drugs and a 75 percent discount on generics. The average Pennsylvania senior will save $700 next year on prescription drugs because of the health care reform bill. This is a down payment on reducing prescription drug costs for seniors and eventually closing the donut hole altogether. I am proud that our health care reform legislation is helping seniors during this difficult time.

□ 1015

DOING NOTHING

(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, once again the complete lack of leadership demonstrated by the administration on budget issues is extremely disappointing.

When the President introduced his budget earlier this year, he projected trillion dollar deficits for years to come. To fix the problem, he passed the buck to a new debt commission. This week, when Budget Director Peter Orszag was asked about whether the administration would send a package of budget cuts to Congress, he said that it would be a ''fruitless exercise.''

Certainly Congress controls the purse, but the President plays a critical role in providing leadership on spending issues. I know that House Republicans would support a substantial package of budget cuts. We are not going to wait for the President, however. We are going to keep introducing sensible measures to reduce spending, and we are going to let the American people have their say on the YouCut Web site.

Our national debt has reached the level where it is holding back our economic growth. We shouldn't wait any longer to put the stops on government spending and borrowing, which is out of control.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

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

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, last week I had the opportunity to welcome Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to my district and to the city of Rochester, Minnesota, home to the Mayo Clinic, to talk about the positive influence that the health care reform bill will have on Medicare reform, paying for value over volume and continuing to provide the highest quality care to our citizens at the lowest possible cost.

I also went over with my friend RON KIND into La Crosse, Wisconsin, to talk to seniors. We heard a lot about the Medicare part D doughnut hole. As my colleague from Pennsylvania said, this week $250 rebate checks will be going to them to allow those seniors who have worked their entire life to build this Nation and to prepare for a prosperous and comfortable retirement to be able to pay for that expensive doughnut hole as it was crafted under the previous law. There are 63,000 Minnesotans who will see that 3 weeks in advance.

This is just one of the many benefits that will come to them. It's absolutely critical our seniors in this country hear the facts, the real facts about health care reform, how it will end up bringing higher quality of care and lower costs paying down the national debt. I am proud that the Secretary could see that at the world-famous Mayo Clinic.

ISRAEL'S BLOCKADE

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the Israelis check cargo for hidden weapons that is shipped into Gaza. Last week, six ships ran the security blockade and were boarded. People on one ship attacked and stabbed the Israeli soldiers and beat them with pipes. It was seen on televisions throughout the world. Ten Israeli soldiers were injured as they defended themselves, and, of course, they have the legal and moral right of self-defense.

But the hate Israel at any price crowd denounced the Israelis, and now our administration is telling Israel they shouldn't be so security conscious. ''Back off a little on the blockades,'' the White House says. And just so we don't hurt anybody's feelings, the administration is sending $400 million to Gaza. Why? What are the Palestinians going to do with that money. Buy more rockets to shoot into Israel? Who knows.

Who are we to tell our ally, Israel, how to secure its borders? We are giving advice to a country on smuggling security when we can't even keep the smuggling contraband out of our own country.