

of this 107th Congress is the time for me to stand down as majority leader and as a Member of Congress; to take my leave of this place and the people I love so much, and to return home to my beloved 26th district of Texas and, more importantly, to my beloved wife and family.

Mr. Speaker, I am sad to say what we all know is true. Too often our service to our Nation is a disservice to our family. To our spouses, our years of service seem to be an unbroken string of broken promises and disappointments. Our husbands and wives are too often excluded from what we do. They live a life of hardship that is rarely supposed and even less understood. It is as if they are single parents.

You all know what I mean. We all have our own heartbreaking chapter and verse. Bless our hearts, and, even more, bless our spouses' hearts.

But, Mr. Speaker, here is the good news. Throughout all the difficulties that only we who serve here can understand, I have kept the love of a good woman. And, Mr. Speaker, I have kept my love for her just as it was on the day we were wed. Just as she has always been, my darling wife Susan is here with me today from our home in Texas.

Honey, I want to thank you for all your years of sacrifice. And, honey, you get to keep this house. We are not moving again.

Mr. Speaker, let me just mention our children, Kathy and Brandon, David and Lori, Chip and Christine, Scott and Carisa, and Scott and Pam. They have given us our beautiful grandchildren, Avery, Christian, Christopher, and Jacob. I very much look forward to making up for lost time with them, just as with my wonderful mother-in-law, Alyne, our beautiful sister Betsy and her darling little Ryan.

Mr. Speaker, while this is a sad announcement for me, I am consoled by the fact that I have one more year, one more year in the leadership of this body. I am looking forward to that being the best year ever. We are just completing an outstanding legislative year, and we will do even more next year. I do not intend to miss a minute of it.

Mr. Speaker, my first lesson in politics was "good policy makes good politics." I believe that. And I believe this majority makes good policy. That is why, Mr. Speaker, the American people elected us to this majority and that is why I know they will do it again in the next Congress, and I do not have a doubt about it. I can complete my work next year knowing the House will remain in good hands.

And, Mr. Speaker, may I say in that regard to you personally, to you personally, Mr. Speaker, thank you for answering your Nation's call to duty. Mr. Speaker, you are, in my life's experience, more than anybody else I have ever known, the right man to step up to provide the right leadership at the right time for all the right reasons, and I thank you. May God bless you.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, that you have made it possible for me to know I have got the best job in this town, and I am going to do it with all my energy for another year.

The good people of Texas have made it possible for me to work with the finest people in the world, the Members of the United States House of Representatives on both sides of the aisle. To my friends on the other side of the aisle, we have many good contests. We are sometimes together, but we are more often in opposition. But we always represent what we believe. Thank you, my friends. You are constant, consistent and reliable.

You know, despite the often too-bitter contests we have, I cherish the fact that when our country needed us to come together, we stood on the steps of this Capitol and hand to hand we sang "God Bless America." It was that feeling of unity, not the heated exchanges, that I will remember most fondly when I leave here.

To my Republican colleagues, we should be proud of what we have done in our young majority. Twice now we have lowered the tax burden on America's working families and left them more in charge of their own hard-earned money. We reformed a failed welfare system in a way that has saved families. We honored the American people's prosperity by our spending restraint, and we turned government deficits into hard-won surpluses, and we must now hold them. We will hold those surpluses by restoring economic growth through supply-side tax cuts, and that is why we cannot leave here without an economic stimulus package.

My colleagues, my friends, my appreciation for you has only been made greater because in the past few years I have had the privilege of visiting nearly every congressional district in America. I am looking forward to returning to about 100 more next year. But for now, my friends, let us finish our work and go home.

Let me conclude by saying, I wish you all, all of you and all your hard-working staffs, and all the wonderful people that make this great organization work, and the security and the police, let me wish you all a happy holiday season. Whether it is the celebration of Chanukah or, for me, Christmas, the birthday of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, I just hope this is a happy and joyous occasion. It will be for me and my family, it will be for America, and it should be in all our lives.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless America.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following titles:

H.R. 2199. An act to amend the National Capital Revitalization and Self-Government Improvement Act of 1997 to permit any Federal law enforcement agency to enter into a cooperative agreement with the Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia to assist the Department in carrying out crime prevention and law enforcement activities in the District of Columbia if deemed appropriate by the Chief of the Department and the United States Attorney for the District of Columbia, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed with amendments in which the concurrence of the House is requested a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 2336. An act to make permanent the authority to redact financial disclosure statements of judicial employees and judicial officers.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed a bill and a concurrent resolution of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 1519. an act to amend the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act to provide farm credit assistance for activated reservists.

S. Con. Res. 55. Concurrent Resolution honoring the 19 United States servicemen who died in the terrorist bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia on June 25, 1996.

The message also announced that the Senate agreed to the amendment of the House to the bill (S. 494) "An Act to provide for a transition to democracy and to promote economic recovery in Zimbabwe."

HOW THE GRINCH STOLE THE CONSTITUTION

(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, a fourth grader in Pennsylvania has been told that he cannot hand out Christmas cards to his classmates if they contain religious messages.

Two middle school students in Minnesota have gotten in trouble for wearing red and green scarves during a Christmas skit and for ending the skit by saying "We hope you all have a merry Christmas."

Two ninth graders in Massachusetts have been told they cannot create Christmas cards that say Merry Christmas or depict a nativity scene.

A teacher in Illinois has been warned by her principal not to read a book about Christmas to her second grade class, even though it is from the school library.

A school district in Georgia has deleted the word Christmas from its school calendar to avoid a lawsuit from the ACLU.

Mr. Speaker, the Constitution has been hijacked. The founders never intended the first amendment to prevent schoolchildren from wishing each other a merry Christmas.

Left-wing lawyers are distorting the Constitution beyond all recognition.