

choice in the matter. In the minute that I will stand before Members this morning, we will accrue almost \$1 billion in interest to our public debt. These are wasted dollars paying interest on debt, rather than paying down the debt.

Today the national debt is \$6 trillion. Since January of last year, the CBO baseline's projected net interest payments over the 2002 to 2011 period have gone up by \$1 trillion, from \$620 billion to \$1.6 trillion, roughly \$10,000 per American household and \$1,000 per household per year.

If we make the tax cut permanent, like some have suggested, this number rises to almost \$4,000 per household per year. This is insanity. Mr. Speaker, I ask that we remember the words of Thomas Jefferson.

OPPOSE HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 87 AND STOP THE YUCCA MOUNTAIN PROJECT

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

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, today we will be deciding whether to ship high-level nuclear waste, one of the most dangerous and deadly substances known to man, across this great country by and through our roads and neighborhoods and schools and parkways.

Mr. Speaker, today we must reject this dangerous plan. Whatever Members believe, let us look at some of the startling facts.

According to the Department of Transportation itself, there have been over 11,000 train accidents in the past 5 years. It is estimated that at least one train accident occurs every 24 hours. Since 1998, 3,800 people have lost their lives and more than 45,000 people have been injured in train accidents in the United States alone. Just imagine how many more people would die or could have been injured had these trains been carrying high-level nuclear waste to Yucca Mountain.

Mr. Speaker, it takes only one anti-tank missile or one terrorist act to cause a catastrophic nuclear disaster, but today we can prevent that disaster. We can oppose House Joint Resolution 87 and stop the Yucca Mountain project now before we endanger the lives of thousands of innocent Americans.

URGING MEMBERS TO PASS STRONGEST POSSIBLE TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE FOR AMERICA'S WORKERS

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

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, the Senate is considering the President's request for trade promotional authority right now, and at the same time, connected to it, trade

adjustment assistance, help for workers who have lost their jobs.

I rise today to urge the Senate today to pass the strongest possible trade adjustment assistance packages. Workers desperately need help dealing with the new economy. It is a land of opportunity for all of us, but there are also challenges. Workers must continually have access to training and education to update their skills. They also need the health care benefits necessary to carry them during periods of unemployment, and they also need income assistance to help them as they move forward and try to find new jobs.

I am a strong supporter of trade. As a new Democrat, it is one of our top priority issues to open trade throughout the world and give us access to other markets.

Connected to that, however, we have to help the workers of our country deal with the challenges and opportunities that come along with that. There must be a strong health care component. There must be job training and education available.

If the Senate were to put together that type of package and pass a trade promotional assistance bill with a strong trade adjustment assistance piece, I am very confident they would be able to pass it in the House, and they would move forward on two critical policies for this country.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded it is improper to urge action by the other body.

WESTERN SAHARA

(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, last week the United Nations considered a new solution to the conflict over Western Sahara, a solution which basically gives Morocco control over Western Sahara.

Mr. Speaker, everyone knows the Moroccan people do not have a democracy. The country is ruled by a king. They use torture in their prisons. The former king, father of the current king, established the notorious and hideously brutal Tazmamart prison camp in which he imprisoned and tortured his own family members. So how in the world will Morocco assure that democracy is protected for the Sahrawis?

Mr. Speaker, I am deeply disturbed by reports that our U.S. Government now may be willing to throw away the rights of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination by supporting Moroccan claims of sovereignty to the land. It seems that our government is willing to bargain away fundamental human rights for cooperation with current agendas, after 10 years of advocating self-determination for Western Sahara.

When our country no longer cares about the right to self-determination, a right on which our Nation was founded, it is a sad day, indeed.

Mr. Speaker, this is a dangerous time to play with instability, particularly in North Africa.

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PRESCRIPTION DRUG CARE BENEFIT

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

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, it is shameful that our citizens are still without workable prescription drug coverage. Because of the rapid increase of prescription drug use, as we know, it is critical and needed; and at the time we established Medicare, prescriptions were not used as much, but now we understand that those senior citizens do need prescription drugs to be able to take care of their illnesses. We need to be there for them to make sure that we will get that prescription. It is unfortunate, but I keep hearing stories about our senior citizens that continue to make decisions between buying food and buying prescription that they need. I hear from the spouses where they sometimes go without prescriptions to get their husbands their prescriptions.

We as a community and as Americans need to make sure that our seniors have accessible prescription drug coverage. And as Democrats we support a prescription drug benefit coverage for all seniors that would be voluntary and be able to have access to them. No seniors should be faced with the prospects of not being able to afford medicine, regardless of income. We need to be there for our seniors. They have been there for us.

STOP TAXING MILITARY STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENTS

(Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, our military uses students loan repayment to recruit for shortages in critical military occupational specialties such as the Medical Corps. If you are on active duty, tuition assistance is not taxed as income. If you have been honorably discharged and received education assistance through the GI bill, it is not taxed as income. However, if the military needs to recruit an individual for an occupational specialty that is needed, the student loan repayment is taxed as income.

For example, if the military pay is \$24,000 per year and he or she receives \$20,000 that year to pay a student loan, they are taxed at an income level of \$44,000 and the tax payment has to come out of a \$24,000 salary.

This is wrong. Support H.R. 4555 to correct this.

PROBLEMS OF TANF REAUTHORIZATION

(Ms. WATSON of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WATSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support my Democratic colleagues in their approach to welfare reform. Voters overwhelmingly believe that expanding training opportunities that will help new people from welfare to good jobs should be a top priority of this Congress.

The voting public supports a TANF reform agenda of expanded access to training, education and flexible time limits. The polling data demonstrates that 82 percent of Americans favor increasing funding for job training and child care. Mr. Speaker, this is what the Democratic proposal presents.

The Republican proposals do not represent the voice of America or our welfare recipients. The one-size-fits-all, Washington-knows-best unfunded mandates of Republican proposals will not work. We need to build upon the success of the past by increasing funding flexibility. We need to assist TANF recipients to get living wage jobs so that they have access to upward mobility.

Mr. Speaker, the Democratic proposals will do just that.

SENIORS NEED PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

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

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, here we go again. Like Yogi Berra said, "It is deja vu all over again."

The Republican majority is trying to convince the American people that they want to do something to provide prescription drug benefit for our Nation's seniors, but it is the same proposal that went nowhere last year. It is nothing but an election year proposal that will provide very little benefit to most seniors.

This tiered proposal, leveled proposal, treats some seniors differently than others, despite the fact that all seniors have paid into the program and deserve a meaningful prescription drug benefit.

I am in favor of providing real prescription drug benefits to seniors. If this proposal is going to work, we need a benefit that is good for all seniors, not just a few. Unfortunately, the Republican plan will not help middle income seniors who have only moderate drug costs. Their plan is unworkable. Even the insurance industry says that insurance will not go for it. So what we have here is a plan that the seniors will not like, the insurance companies will not like, and the public will be able to see through. And even members of my

Republican colleagues' party have mentioned that this bill is not a good proposal.

Let us stop playing games with seniors' lives. It is time to provide a meaningful, generous benefit that actually does something to address the prescription drug problem.

STICK TO THE PRESIDENT'S SUPPLEMENTAL DEFENSE REQUEST

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

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, it has been a hallmark of the Republican majority in Congress to practice fiscal restraint and to stand by a strong national defense. Today here on Capitol Hill we will be about the business of responding to the President's supplemental defense request, and there are some reports and some discussion on Capitol Hill that we may in this majority bring to the floor later this week a bill that could exceed the President's request by nearly 10 percent, adding in spending on election reform and interior agencies; nothing much to do with national defense.

I urge my colleagues to hew to their roots, Mr. Speaker. Spend not one penny more than the President has requested when we pass the defense supplemental this week. By demonstrating fiscal discipline, our majority will renew our commitment to fiscal responsibility and to national defense without compromising either.

HONORING SOUTH CAROLINA POLICY COUNCIL

(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, in 1986 a group of South Carolina civic leaders dedicated to improving their State joined together and created the South Carolina Policy Council. South Carolina at that time was dominated by a legislature which controlled an array of semi-autonomous boards and commissions that fostered red tape and hindered accountability. Through the visionary leadership of the late Thomas A. Roe, the Policy Council was formed to fill the void of reformist conservative philosophy.

By publishing timely reports, comprehensive white papers, and hard-hitting editorials, the Policy Council grew in stature and membership. In the beginning of the Republican Revolution, Ed McMullen was chosen as its president. The Policy Council has played a role in every major reform debate. From modernizing State government, to promoting performance audits, to reforming welfare, to cutting taxes, the Policy Council was there. It was further energized by dedicated researcher Hal Eberle and now South Carolina Senate Clerk Jeff Gossett.

Today the South Carolina Policy Council boasts a membership of over 5,000 and regularly participates in policy debates with political, religious and business leaders throughout the Palmetto State.

I am honored to take this opportunity to thank the Policy Council and to wish them well on the ongoing fight to conserve the principles of limited government and traditional values.

STRENGTHEN U.S. STEEL INDUSTRY

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, as a representative of industrial America, I am urging my colleagues today to vote both to strengthen the U.S. steel industry and to put on hold plans to ship spent nuclear material to Yucca Mountain.

In an era where our rail beds as well as human error yield major train derailments and accidents each year, why authorize Yucca Mountain? Why not improve our rail beds, improve our steel industry and make this country an industrial leader in terms of rail transportation?

In an age of terrorism, why have nuclear material moving all over this country? And, finally, in my own district, a recent nuclear mishap occurred in which boric acid ate through 80 pounds of carbon steel in the central container inside the core, I really ask the question—Why do we have such poor engineering and poor inspection in the nuclear industry? Why do we have a plant reactor that cannot be repaired in this country? Why even if we were able to repair it, do we have to send the core to Japan to cast a new head and then to France for finishing? Why is the nuclear industry exempt with no one responsible under the Price Anderson Act, for liability in the event an accident occurs? Please, I urge my colleagues today to vote to strengthen the U.S. steel industry and vote for nuclear safety.

Vote to uphold the steel decision on limiting imports and to table the Yucca Mountain nuclear storage proposal.

FREE MARTIN AND GRACIA BURNHAM

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

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, today marks the 347th day that Martin and Gracia Burnham have been held captive by Muslim terrorists in the Philippines.

This afternoon many members of my family, including my father and mother, will arrive in Washington to visit me and their grandchildren. As I look forward to their visit, I think of the Burnham family and the family reunion they await every day. Too often