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House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a concurrent resolution of the House of the following title:

H. Con. Res. 84. Concurrent Resolution providing for the acceptance of a statue of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, presented by the people of Kansas, for placement in the Capitol, and for other purposes.

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

S. 318. An act to provide emergency assistance to nonfarm-related small business concerns that have suffered substantial economic harm from drought.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority leader, the minority leader or the minority whip limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY).

KEEP SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS NARROWLY FOCUSED

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, the President of the United States has no greater responsibility than to protect and defend the American people. While defending our freedoms half a world away, this administration is just as focused on the security needs right here in our homeland. These dual priorities

are expressed in the President's supplemental budget request.

This war budget will meet America's needs directly arising from Operation Iraqi Freedom and our ongoing war against terror, including \$63 billion for military operations, \$5 billion in assistance to help our brave coalition partners and \$4 billion for the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security to address the immediate and emerging threats to American soil.

Predictably, detractors are surfacing to criticize the President's request. It should come as no surprise that many of the people criticizing this war budget are the same ones who have criticized all along the bold policies it would pay for.

The war in Iraq and the war on terror are vital to the national security of the United States. The Secretaries of Defense, State and Homeland Security and the Attorney General have assessed their needs and asked the President for the funds necessary to meet those needs. This supplemental then reflects the informed opinions of the experts on President Bush's national security and homeland security teams. Yet the pseudo-experts say it is not enough.

The ballooning of spending bills seems to be an annual ritual here in Washington, D.C., but before we are tempted to spend money for projects unrelated to our pressing security needs, we should all remember what it is we are doing here. This is not a normal appropriations bill. Its purpose is to fight and win the war in Iraq, to liberate an oppressed people from a brutal dictator. Its purpose is to fight and win the war on terror and defend our Nation from those who would revisit on us the horrors of 9/11.

Let us keep in mind the seriousness of the times and the cool deliberation required of our homeland security experts to determine our needs. We must give our national and homeland secu-

rity agencies the money that they need to protect us, and we must make sure every dime we spend in the supplemental goes to that purpose, and that purpose alone.

VETERANS' NEEDS GOING UNMET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHUSTER). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the good news is that we can afford to meet the funding needs of the Veterans Administration. We have the money. But the Republicans, in spite of the comments from my colleague from Texas, have other priorities. They are going to award the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans a tax cut. The top 1 percent of Americans are people who make an average of \$968,000 a year. Half the tax cut goes to that 1 percent.

The total cost of that tax cut for the top 1 percent, those making on the average \$968,000 a year, the total cost of that tax cut is larger than the entire budget of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Most veterans are not millionaires, but their contributions to this country are immeasurable. If they do not qualify for the President's tax cut, then they must sacrifice. That is the way that people around here are thinking.

We cannot begin to place a value on the sacrifices they have made. But apparently President Bush and House Republicans are putting a value on their contribution, and, under the budget my friend from Texas just mentioned, they think that veterans can stand to lose \$28 billion in services. Republicans believe it is more important to focus on millionaires who qualify for tax cuts than on the men and women who served this country and qualified for veterans benefits.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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Tax cuts for millionaires; \$28 billion in cuts for veterans benefits. It is outrageous. Veterans have been asked already to shoulder the burden of costs that the Bush administration has failed to provide. Last year funding provided under the continuing resolution represented a cut of \$659 million from the amount needed simply to keep pace with veterans benefits in the 2002 budget. We all know that 2002 funding was inadequate. Undercutting it is devastating.

Republicans have a new policy when it comes to veterans health care. It is called abandonment. Let me give you some examples.

First, the President and House Republicans are cutting Veterans Administration outreach. The VA already has halted outreach typically done to alert veterans to the services they are eligible for. It is the Republicans' way to save money. If you do not tell veterans about the benefits, then you do not have to provide benefits and services they were promised in gratitude for serving our country.

Second, President Bush proposed raising the prescription drug copay. Last year, veterans paid \$2 per month per drug. Living on \$1,100 or \$1,200 per month for a retired veteran is not an easy thing, so that \$2 copay per drug per month was very important. Come January, the President raised that to \$7 per drug per month for veterans. Now the President proposes raising it to \$15 per drug per prescription per month for every veteran.

Veterans live on fixed incomes and simply cannot afford the 250 percent increase in the cost of their medications, and now the President wants to even more than double it. Ignoring that burden, doubling their copay, is insulting to veterans, especially in a time of war.

The Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that 700,000 more veterans will receive VA care in 2003 than had been projected. They may be eligible for health care services, but \$1.5 billion in cuts will undermine the VA's ability to deliver this care.

The Republicans in this body should be ashamed of those budget cuts to veterans. But it is not just this body. In the other body, the leader of the other body earlier this month pledged to support veterans concerned about President Bush's health care proposal, but he also said veterans and others will have to make sacrifices.

Here is what the leader of the other body said. "It applies to me in terms of domestic priorities and it applies to groups like the veterans today as they lobby."

In other words, we are going to go to war, but we are saying to veterans, so we can pay for the Bush \$726 billion tax cut, half of which goes to people making on the average \$968,000, the leader of the other body, the Republican leader of the other body is saying what the Republican leaders in this body are saying, and that is that we need the tax cut more than we need the veterans benefits.

Tax cuts for people making \$968,000 a year; \$28 billion in cuts in veterans services. What message does that send to our troops fighting in Iraq? Let us hope when it is their time to claim VA services that they have a different Congress, that they have a Congress that keeps its commitments to those who served this country. Let us hope that when it is their time, they are told "thank you" by a future Congress; not that it is your turn to sacrifice so we can pay for a tax cut, which is what the leaders in this Congress are telling them.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair must remind Members to avoid improper references to the Senate or its Members.

STOP THIS WAR NOW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, stop the war now. As Baghdad will be encircled, this is the time to get the UN back in to inspect Baghdad and the rest of Iraq for biological and chemical weapons. Our troops should not have to be the ones who will find out in combat whether Iraq has such weapons. Why put our troops at greater risk? We can get the United Nations inspectors back in.

Stop the war now, before we send our troops into house-to-house combat in Baghdad, a city of 5 million people; before we ask our troops to take up the burden of shooting innocent civilians in the fog of war.

Stop the war now. This war has been advanced on lie upon lie. Iraq was not responsible for 9/11. Iraq was not responsible for any role al Qaeda may have had in 9/11. Iraq was not responsible for the anthrax attacks on this country. Iraq did not try to acquire nuclear weapon technologies from Niger. This war is built on falsehoods.

Stop the war now. We are not defending America in Iraq. Iraq did not attack this Nation. Iraq has no ability to attack this Nation. Each innocent civilian casualty represents a threat to America for years to come and will end up making our Nation less safe.

The \$75 billion supplemental needs to be challenged, because each dime we spend on this war makes America less safe. Only international cooperation will help us win the war on terror.

After 9/11, all Americans remember that we had the support and the sympathy of the world. Every nation was ready to be of assistance to the United States in meeting the challenge of terrorism, and yet with this war we have squandered the sympathy of the world. We have brought upon this Nation the anger of the world. We need the co-

operation of the world to find the terrorists before they come to our shores.

Stop this war now. \$75 billion more for war, three-quarters of a trillion dollars for tax cuts, but no money for veterans' benefits. Money for war, but no money for health care in America. Money for war, but no money for Social Security. But money for war.

We have money to blow up bridges over the Tigris and the Euphrates, but no money to build bridges in our own cities. We have money to ruin the health of the Iraqi children, but no money to repair the health of our own children and our educational programs.

Stop this war now. It is wrong, it is illegal, it is unjust, and it will come to no good for this country.

Stop this war now. Show our wisdom and our humanity to be able to stop it. Bring back the United Nations into the process. Rescue this moment. Rescue this Nation from a war which is wrong, which is unjust, which is immoral.

Stop this war now.

SUPPORTING OUR NATION'S VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentlewoman from Guam (Ms. BORDALLO) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this morning to pay tribute to our Nation's veterans and to talk about what the budget resolution of this House would mean for their quality of life and their health care over the course of the next 10 years.

I am sad to say that 2 weeks ago this House barely passed a budget resolution that would severely cut veterans' benefits, including cuts to health care, disability compensation, pensions and other important benefits.

I would not be here today, Mr. Speaker, if not for those brave veterans that liberated Guam in 1944. Therefore, I must speak out when I see our government being derelict in its duty to veterans. It is unthinkable that this House would even take such drastic action against our veterans during a time of war. This is the wrong time and the wrong message to be sending to our country.

This budget cuts \$14.6 billion in funding from mandatory veterans programs over 10 years to help pay for the \$1.35 of trillion of tax cuts in the budget. Over a 10-year period, the budget resolution that this House passed would cut almost \$9 billion alone in veterans' health care, an average of more than \$900 million less than the President has proposed per year.

Make no mistake about it, Mr. Speaker: Should these cuts prevail in conference, and we should not let that happen, this budget would mean serious problems for veterans' health care. New copayments and enrollment fees would no doubt be on the table and under consideration to keep the entire system afloat in the next fiscal year.

This House has a chance to correct that, to reverse course, to honor our Nation's veterans and to recognize their service, their sacrifice, and their patriotism. We can correct the harmful reconciliation instruction to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and we can restore these cuts by supporting the motion to instruct conferees that will be offered later today by our colleague, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT).

Quite frankly, we should be increasing, rather than cutting, health and other benefits to our veterans. Let us not turn our back on our veterans. We should instead salute them.

Vote for the Spratt motion to instruct conferees today when it comes to the floor. Vote to honor our veterans, and vote for a better budget.

PRESERVING THE DIGNITY OF OUR NATION'S VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentlewoman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Ms. CARSON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I know there is a hard and fast rule that we cannot refer to someone in the other body, but since this person is no longer a Member of the United States Senate, let me dedicate my remarks to the Honorable Max Cleland, who became a triple amputee in the Vietnam War and who is no longer in service in the United States Senate.

I rise today to speak about the dignity of our Nation's veterans. Last week, Mr. Speaker, we offered and passed a resolution asking for the country to pray and to fast. I did not realize that at that time, according to what I am told, many of our troops in harm's way were down to one meal a day. I did not realize at the time that it was them that we were asking to fast.

As General Omar Bradley once stated, "We are dealing with veterans, not with procedures. We are dealing with their problems, and not ours."

I have a constituent who served his country in Vietnam, Mr. Bob Creasy. He was exposed to Agent Orange, the defoliant used to fight the war. Mr. Creasy did not realize at the time how deadly and poisonous the chemical was. Actually, none of us did. Many years later he experienced symptoms and illnesses that can now be validated and linked to his exposure to Agent Orange.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs claims that Bob is not eligible for compensation because he did not come forward when the symptoms first occurred. The symptoms, however, were not recognized as being caused by Agent Orange until very recently.

Why can we not validate the disability and compensate accordingly at this time? Is it that the Veterans' Administration is very restricted and limited in resources and will escape obligations any way and however they can?

What of our brave women and men who served in the first Gulf War? What of the Gulf War Syndrome? We are sending hundreds of thousands of young women and men into harm's way at this very moment, and at the same time we are cutting benefits for those who served in previous wars.

My observation, Mr. Speaker, is not extracted from a comic book. My name is JULIA CARSON, married to Sam Carson, a veteran of the Korean conflict, United States Marine Corps, who is now 100 percent service-connected disabled. My son, Sam Carson, United States Marine, served his country well, fortunately during peacetime.

It is not that I do not understand the plight of veterans, Mr. Speaker; I know the plight of veterans. There are over 25 million veterans in this great Nation of ours, and in Indiana alone there are 562,000. Are we supposed to tell them after serving in the military, defending our country, preserving our freedom, that the services that they need are unavailable in order to pay for a tax cut?

I heard another rumor emanating from the administration about "shared sacrifices." I suppose those "shared sacrifices" are relegated to the have-nots and the have-even-less. To pass a budget that cuts mandatory spending from the President's budget by \$15 billion is unconscionable. Even that budget was \$3 billion too low to fully fund the needs of those who have served this country so ably.

As our distinguished ranking member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS) recently stated, "Our Nation must not require those who serve in uniform to bear the financial costs of their service-connected disabilities."

Give me a break. A tax break for those who need no tax break, who earned their wealth off of the United States of America, and now we are asking them to take more; and we give less to the people who are responsible for our well-being, for the most part, the veterans of this Nation?

There is no excuse to delay the needed medical care for our veterans. We need to show them with deeds and not with words that, regardless of their mission, we support their dedication to their jobs and that we are for them in their time of need.

Last week, Mr. Speaker, I recited the words of the first President of the United States, George Washington, whose words are worth repeating at this time:

"The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their country."

Mr. Speaker, we must not fail our veterans.

OPPOSING PROPOSED CUTS IN VETERAN PROGRAMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I, too, rise today to add my comments to the chorus of dismay and opposition to the proposed cuts in veteran programs and benefits that we are currently hearing about in this country proposed by the President and approved by the Republican majority of this House.

Many families in my district have sons and daughters, husbands and wives, family members, that are in the military and in this current conflict that this country finds itself in. Presently I have the responsibility to communicate to some of these families about the death, the serious life-threatening injuries and the missing-in-action status of some of their family members. I relate to them my personal respect, gratitude and sorrow at their anguish and at their sacrifice.

Yet, while I am doing that, I find it unconscionable that while our men and women are fighting overseas, following the orders of their Commander-in-Chief, we at home are reducing the health care benefits that our veterans have earned while risking and giving their lives in the service of this country, in the protection of our freedoms and in the extension of the liberties that we all enjoy.

How can we possibly justify the budget as passed by this House that contains almost \$29 billion in cuts in veterans' programs over a 10 year period, primarily in veterans benefits and health care. What are we going to tell the men and women presently in uniform and their families; that their service is honorable, needed, and respected, but not worth the cost of full benefits for them and their future?

Mr. Speaker, today I would urge all of my colleagues to restore and enhance the benefits and programs that have been earned by our veterans and cut by the President and this Congress. To do otherwise would be an appalling betrayal of America's commitments to our veterans.

At a time of war, let us not be hypocritical. Let us respect and enhance the benefits of our veterans, so as they sacrifice for us, as they follow the orders of their Commander-in-Chief, they will earn not only our respect, but entitlement to benefits and protection of programs that will extend and support their quality of life.

VETERANS CUTS DEPLORED BY VETERAN LEADERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, while American troops are fighting over in Iraq, veterans of past wars are fighting a different battle here in the United States. These veterans, who sacrificed a great deal to serve their Nation with great distinction, are now essentially being told by the House Republicans, "thanks for your service, but we are going to have to make major cuts in your health care and other services to pay for our huge tax cut for the wealthiest few."

Last month, House Republicans approved a budget by the slimmest of margins that cuts \$14.2 billion in veterans programs over the next 10 years. Upon hearing that veterans were not a priority of the Republican majority, several leaders of veterans groups sent letters to Republican leaders.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to read some excerpts from some of the letters sent to the Speaker, because I think they are so much on point.

The first one is from Edward Heath, the National Commander of Disabled American Veterans. If I could just quote some sections, Mr. Heath writes:

"I write today on behalf of the 2.3 million disabled veterans, including the more than 1.2 million members of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) to communicate our deep-seated outrage regarding the fiscal year 2004 budget adopted by the House Budget Committee which would cut veterans programs by more than \$15 billion during the next 10 years.

"Has Congress no shame? Is there no honor left in the hallowed halls of our government that you choose to dishonor the sacrifices of our Nation's heroes and rob our programs, health care and disability compensation to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy? You will be reducing benefits and services for disabled veterans at a time when thousands of our servicemen are in harm's way fighting terrorists around the world and thousands more of our sons and daughters are preparing for war against Iraq.

"If you, in your leadership role in your House, allow this budget proposal to pass the House without exempting VA programs from the massive cuts, it could mean the loss of 19,000 nurses, equating to the loss of 6.6 million outpatient visits or more than three-quarters of a million hospital bed days. But that is not all of the devastation that will be caused by the proposed cuts. You will be reaching into the pockets of our Nation's service-connected veterans, including combat disabled veterans, and robbing them and their survivors of a portion of their compensation.

"Mr. Speaker, this budget dishonors the service of millions of service-connected disabled veterans, including combat disabled veterans, and seriously erodes the Nation's commitment to care for its defenders."

Mr. Edward Heath, the National Commander of Disabled American Veterans, goes on to talk about the really

negative impacts that these cuts will have.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to read sections from a letter that was sent to the chairman of the Committee on the Budget by Steve Robertson, Director, National Legislative Commission for the American Legion.

He says, "Dear Mr. Chairman: The American Legion is deeply troubled by the impact H. Con. Res. 95, the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget, would have on veterans, especially severely service-connected disabled veterans and their families.

"Veterans did not cause the budgetary shortfalls and should not be financially penalized in the name of fiscal responsibility. Much has been said that all Americans must be willing to make sacrifices to eliminate the budget deficit. Severely service-connected disabled veterans have already made significant personal sacrifices for their earned entitlements."

Mr. Speaker, last is a letter to Speaker HASTERT from Joseph L. Fox, Sr., National President of the Paralyzed Veterans of America.

He says in part, "Dear Mr. Speaker: The proposal, if implemented, would have a shocking effect on VA health care services and would be an affront to millions of veterans facing reductions in their health care, compensation, pension and education benefits.

"The House Budget Committee proposal also calls for cutting \$15 billion over 10 years, \$463 million in fiscal year 2004 alone, in VA mandatory spending under the guise of eliminating fraud, waste and abuse. We do not consider payments to war-disabled veterans, pensions for the poorest disabled veterans and GI Bill benefits for soldiers returning from Afghanistan to be "fraud, waste and abuse." Ninety percent of the spending for VA entitlements goes in monthly payments to these veterans and their survivors. The House Budget Committee plan, if approved, would force cuts in each of these programs."

Mr. Speaker, I am only mentioning these letters because I think it is much better to quote from some of the people who are involved as veterans, from veterans organizations, rather than speaking myself, in terms of the real impact of the cuts in the budgets on veterans programs.

I think the Republicans clearly were not listening to veterans last month when they approved the fiscal year 2004 budget. I hope today they will keep veterans' voices in when they have a chance to instruct budget conferees to restore the funds that they so callously took away last month.

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is, we are in the middle of a war, and to cut veterans' programs at this time is definitely not the way we should go.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair

declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 4 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon today.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. CAPITO) at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

I am grateful to the Members of the House of Representatives and all those who work here on Capitol Hill because they exist and because they are who they are. They do what they do and try as they may to make a difference in this place, in this Nation, and in this world.

I am grateful to You, O God, for having placed me among them and for having told me to be their father, their minister, their rabbi, a spiritual seeker with them in troublesome times.

Finally, I am grateful to You, O Lord, because in the midst of such public hearing and so much activity, I can find the solitude of prayer that shuts off the TV wars and simply questions the times in which we live and the priorities which set our motion.

In this most significant place, I find myself in them and with them, wondering what is the human dimension to government, to power, to war, and to life. I wonder, and I wonder further, and I wonder, until I come to You, our wonderful God. I wonder if You still recognize Yourself in us, for we were once made in Your image and likeness.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. KLINE led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

U.S. WILL NOT EXCUSE WAR CRIMES OF IRAQI REGIME

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

Mr. REHBERG. Madam Speaker, some of Saddam Hussein's paramilitary monsters hanged a teenage girl last week for waving at coalition troops. In the same week, Iraqi military, pretending to surrender, fired upon our people who had offered them safety. This week we learned Saddam's desperate soldiers have taken to shielding themselves with women and children when confronting our advancing troops. His paramilitary forces rule by terror, lodging military stockpiles in schools and hospitals, firing at villagers who try to flee, and exterminating townspeople who refuse to fight for Saddam's terrorist state.

Perhaps the signature statement of the abhorrent and despicable nature of the enemy is its treatment of our young people in uniform taken captive. Some have been humiliated and paraded in front of television cameras. Others, we now know, were brutally executed or, should I say murdered, by Iraqi soldiers.

Can there be any doubt about the vile and inhumane character of Saddam's dying regime?

As President Bush has correctly noted, "Given the nature of this regime, we expect such war crimes, but we will not excuse them." Our brave men and women in uniform deserve our support, both for what they are doing and for why they are there.

OPPOSING BUDGET CUTS FOR VETERANS

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

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to call attention to the actions taken by the Republicans in this House to drastically cut the funding for veterans programs.

While thousands of brave men and women are fighting for our country and risking their lives every single day, the House majority party voted for the GOP budget resolution which would cut veterans programs by \$28.8 billion. This cut in programs includes money for health care, for disability compensation, pensions, and other benefits. The Disabled American Veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the American Legion have all issued statements opposing this budget.

We cannot in good conscience commit men and women to defend this Nation while at the same time reducing the benefits they are entitled to and deserve, because after all, what message, what message does this send to those that have and those that are serving our country?

I am appalled at the actions of the Republican House. While brave men and women are defending our freedom, we must defend their right to receive their benefits.

HONORING AND SUPPORTING OUR TROOPS IN IRAQ

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

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of our brave military men and women fighting for our freedom here at home and to take the yoke of oppression off the Iraqi people.

I also want to thank the military families and let them know that these soldiers are doing the best job in the world.

Madam Speaker, there are some awful stories out there. Iraqis were shown on TV voicing support for Saddam Hussein. When asked why they were doing that, they replied that they were afraid if they did not show support for Saddam and he did win, then he would remember them as enemies, and he would kill or torture their family members. That is just wrong.

Now our servicemen and women are implementing a precise military plan that will put an end to Saddam Hussein's reign of terror and his ruthless regime forever. We in the Congress are going to do all in our power to make sure that our troops remain the best trained and equipped in the world and are paid as veterans. To the brave men and women in uniform, I thank you and we salute you.

TRIBUTE TO PAUL WALDEN

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, I am sad to report to the House today the passing of Paul Walden of Hood River, Oregon, the father of our colleague, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN).

It was my pleasure to serve in the Oregon House of Representatives with Paul where he was a distinguished member in the 1970s. By the time he became a legislator, he was already an established community leader, active in his church and many civic organizations.

Paul was a successful businessman whose ready wit and deep melodious voice made him a natural for a career in radio. He served a half century in the broadcast industry, ultimately owning his own radio stations.

This Oregonian of pioneer stock made his community better as he brightened people's lives. He was the obvious choice for the community for major responsibilities, like serving as chair and master of ceremonies for the opening of the massive Dallas's Dam featuring Vice President Richard Nixon.

I will remember him as a friend who served his community with honor, with humor, and with insight.

Our thoughts are with our colleague, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WAL-

DEN); his wife, Maylene; son, Anthony; and the entire Walden family.

APRIL IS THE MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD

(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. Madam Speaker, the Department of Defense has designated April as the Month of the Military Child.

Today, thousands of fathers and mothers are halfway around the world from their children making tremendous sacrifices to defend freedom and liberty. Some sons and daughters will see their parent come home wounded and, in some cases, the military parent will not return at all.

Military families make enormous sacrifices on a daily basis so that our soldiers have the support they need. It is up to Americans and communities throughout our great Nation to support these families, even by simple food, clothes and toy donations for the children.

I urge all Americans to reach out to military families in their communities by contacting their local military base, National Guard and Reserve armory, and public affairs offices to find out how they can best help.

In conclusion, God bless our troops.

OPPOSING BUDGET CUTS TO VETERANS PROGRAMS

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

Mr. MICHAUD. Madam Speaker, I rise today out of deep concern about the budget that was passed last week. The Committee on the Budget resolution cut mandatory spending in many areas, but one of the most unconscionable cuts is the \$15 billion reduction for veterans programs like service disability compensation, pension for low-income wartime veterans, and veterans housing programs. At a time of war, how can we vote to neglect our veterans like this?

In recent days we have heard from the American Legion, Paralyzed Veterans of America, AMVETS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Disabled American Veterans, all strongly opposed to these cuts.

I will continue to stand with them and to oppose this dishonorable treatment of our most honorable men and women. I urge my colleagues to do the same.

HIGHER EDUCATION RELIEF OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS ACT OF 2003

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

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I rise today to support the Higher Education Relief Act, the HEROES Act, as it is called.

Since September 11 and now with the activities of the war in Iraq, this Nation is sending our men and women, our young sons and daughters, into harm's way, into a conflict the likes of which this Nation has never seen before. And they do so in the name of America, in the name of liberty, freedom and dignity, which the United States stands for.

But during this time, this legislation will now grant to the Secretary of Education the authority and the power to grant to the students who are overseas now the relief that they need. It does that in three ways. First of all, it provides to the Reservists who are leaving from their jobs to go overseas right now relief from making student loan payments for a period of time while they are away.

Secondly, it provides to the borrowers and to the families who are back here at home relief from receiving letters and phone calls from the lenders while they are in service. And, thirdly, this legislation provides relief through consecutive service requirements to be considered uninterrupted while they are overseas.

Madam Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support the HEROES Act and to support our troops as well.

TRIBUTE TO CESAR CHAVEZ

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

Mr. BACA. Madam Speaker, Cesar Chavez was a champion for the poor and underserved people in America. He did not care about politics, money, or votes; he cared about people and their children. He sacrificed so they may have a better life.

Cesar gave Latinos in this country a voice. He touched the lives of millions with nonviolent struggle for justice, education, equality, and hope.

His life is a testament to the notion that victory can be won without violent confrontation. He used boycotts, pickets, strikes, and fasts to achieve this goal. But he never raised his hand or encouraged his followers to raise their hands in anger or hate or violence. This is a lesson that the world should be reminded of right now.

Cesar was committed so that he would be willing to sacrifice his own life so that violence was not used. He fasted many times. He proved that his commitment through his persistence, hard work, faith, and willingness to sacrifice for La Causa.

The terrible suffering of the farm workers and their children by crushing farm workers' rights, the dangers of pesticides, the denial of fair and Federal elections, Cesar's fast was a heartfelt prayer for purification and strength for all of those who worked

beside him in this movement. His words will always be true in our lives that say: Si, se puede.

Yesterday was Cesar Chavez's birthday. This would be a great day to honor him in the Nation every year. I urge my colleagues to cosponsor H. Res. 112 calling for a National Cesar Chavez holiday.

□ 1215

IRAQ

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

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Madam Speaker, our forces have been in action in Iraq for 2 weeks. In that time, they have achieved great success. They have moved hundreds of miles and are beginning to encircle Baghdad and the regime of Saddam Hussein.

They have begun to distribute humanitarian aid to the long-suffering people of Iraq. They have weakened the enemy forces significantly. They have fought off groups of Saddam's thugs who are desperate to hold on to power. In short, the plan is going forward in an undaunted fashion.

As President Bush had stated time and time again, we may not know the duration of this war, but we do know its outcome: Our forces will disarm Iraq and will force the tyrannical regime of Saddam Hussein from power. The day of liberation for the people of Iraq is near, and they will be free. We will not tire, and we will not stop until we achieve our goals. I have no doubt that our forces are up to the task.

I urge every American to keep the men and women of our Armed Forces in their thoughts and in their prayers. We must support our troops as they fight to protect freedom and to defeat the forces of terror.

IN SUPPORT OF VETERANS

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

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ. Madam Speaker, I stand before Members today outraged at the disgraceful treatment of our Nation's veterans. While some may disagree with the United States' decision to lead the charge against Iraq, all would agree that the men and women putting their lives on the line deserve our unwavering support. These volunteers deserve respect not only during times of war, but also when they return home.

The administration has spent a great deal of time showcasing our proud troops, but that same administration is attempting to make cuts to health care and other benefits that impact our veterans. Unless this body takes action, many veterans will be financially responsible for paying for the injuries they receive as a direct result of their

sacrifice in defending us and our values.

This is hypocrisy at its best. What kind of message does this send to our troops? It says that we appreciate them putting their lives on the line when we need them, but we cannot offer them that same assistance when they need us.

House Concurrent Resolution 95, the budget resolution that recently passed the House, would require an across-the-board cut of 1 percent in mandatory appropriations for veterans programs. This budget would cut compensation for service-connected disabilities and education benefits and other health care funding by \$14 billion over the next 10 years.

In addition, while the Bush budget anticipates an increase in the number of veterans eligible for compensation due to service-connected disabilities, the budget does not add one dime for benefits for additional disabilities and deaths.

As an American, as a patriot, and as a Member of this esteemed body, I encourage all Members to support the efforts to restore the funding cuts in mandatory spending for veterans benefits. Our past and future veterans deserve the respect and gratitude of this Nation. The least we can do is take care of them when they return home from defending our American values.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. CAPITO). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later today.

HIGHER EDUCATION RELIEF OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS ACT OF 2003

Mr. KLINE. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1412) to provide the Secretary of Education with specific waiver authority to respond to a war or other military operation or national emergency.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1412

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; FINDINGS; REFERENCE.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act of 2003".

(b) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds the following:

(1) There is no more important cause than that of our nation's defense.

(2) The United States will protect the freedom and secure the safety of its citizens.

(3) The United States military is the finest in the world and its personnel are determined to lead the world in pursuit of peace.

(4) Hundreds of thousands of Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy, and Coast Guard reservists and members of the National Guard have been called to active duty or active service.

(5) The men and women of the United States military put their lives on hold, leave their families, jobs, and postsecondary education in order to serve their country and do so with distinction.

(6) There is no more important cause for this Congress than to support the members of the United States military and provide assistance with their transition into and out of active duty and active service.

(c) REFERENCE.—References in this Act to “the Act” are references to the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001 et seq.).

SEC. 2. WAIVER AUTHORITY FOR RESPONSE TO MILITARY CONTINGENCIES AND NATIONAL EMERGENCIES.

(a) WAIVERS AND MODIFICATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, unless enacted with specific reference to this section, the Secretary of Education (referred to in this Act as the “Secretary”) may waive or modify any statutory or regulatory provision applicable to the student financial assistance programs under title IV of the Act as the Secretary deems necessary in connection with a war or other military operation or national emergency to provide the waivers or modifications authorized by paragraph (2).

(2) ACTIONS AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary is authorized to waive or modify any provision described in paragraph (1) as may be necessary to ensure that—

(A) recipients of student financial assistance under title IV of the Act who are affected individuals are not placed in a worse position financially in relation to that financial assistance because of their status as affected individuals;

(B) administrative requirements placed on affected individuals who are recipients of student financial assistance are minimized, to the extent possible without impairing the integrity of the student financial assistance programs, to ease the burden on such students and avoid inadvertent, technical violations or defaults;

(C) the calculation of “annual adjusted family income” and “available income”, as used in the determination of need for student financial assistance under title IV of the Act for any such affected individual (and the determination of such need for his or her spouse and dependents, if applicable), may be modified to mean the sums received in the first calendar year of the award year for which such determination is made, in order to reflect more accurately the financial condition of such affected individual and his or her family;

(D) the calculation under section 484B(b)(2) of the Act (20 U.S.C. 1091b(b)(2)) of the amount a student is required to return in the case of an affected individual may be modified so that no overpayment will be required to be returned or repaid if the institution has documented (i) the student’s status as an affected individual in the student’s file, and (ii) the amount of any overpayment discharged; and

(E) institutions of higher education, eligible lenders, guaranty agencies, and other entities participating in the student assistance programs under title IV of the Act that are located in areas that are declared disaster areas by any Federal, State or local official in connection with a national emergency, or whose operations are significantly affected by such a disaster, may be granted temporary relief from requirements that are rendered infeasible or unreasonable by a national emergency, including due diligence requirements and reporting deadlines.

(b) NOTICE OF WAIVERS OR MODIFICATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding section 437 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232) and section 553 of title 5, United States Code, the Secretary shall, by notice in the Federal Register, publish the waivers or modifications of statutory and regulatory provisions the Secretary deems necessary to achieve the purposes of this section.

(2) TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—The notice under paragraph (1) shall include the terms and conditions to be applied in lieu of such statutory and regulatory provisions.

(3) CASE-BY-CASE BASIS.—The Secretary is not required to exercise the waiver or modification authority under this section on a case-by-case basis.

(c) IMPACT REPORT.—The Secretary shall, not later than 15 months after first exercising any authority to issue a waiver or modification under subsection (a), report to the Committee on Education and the Workforce of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions of the Senate on the impact of any waivers or modifications issued pursuant to subsection (a) on affected individuals and the programs under title IV of the Act, and the basis for such determination, and include in such report the Secretary’s recommendations for changes to the statutory or regulatory provisions that were the subject of such waiver or modification.

(d) NO DELAY IN WAIVERS AND MODIFICATIONS.—Sections 482(c) and 492 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1089(c), 1098a) shall not apply to the waivers and modifications authorized or required by this Act.

SEC. 3. TUITION REFUNDS OR CREDITS FOR MEMBERS OF ARMED FORCES.

(a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) all institutions offering postsecondary education should provide a full refund to students who are affected individuals for that portion of a period of instruction such student was unable to complete, or for which such individual did not receive academic credit, because he or she was called up for active duty or active service; and

(2) if affected individuals withdraw from a course of study as a result of such active duty or active service, such institutions should make every effort to minimize deferral of enrollment or reapplication requirements and should provide the greatest flexibility possible with administrative deadlines related to those applications.

(b) DEFINITION OF FULL REFUND.—For purposes of this section, a full refund includes a refund of required tuition and fees, or a credit in a comparable amount against future tuition and fees.

SEC. 4. USE OF PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT.

A financial aid administrator shall be considered to be making a necessary adjustment in accordance with section 479A(a) of the Act if the administrator makes adjustments with respect to the calculation of the expected student or parent contribution (or both) of an affected individual, and adequately documents the need for the adjustment.

SEC. 5. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) ACTIVE DUTY.—The term “active duty” has the meaning given such term in section 101(d)(1) of title 10, United States Code, except that such term does not include active duty for training or attendance at a service school.

(2) AFFECTED INDIVIDUAL.—The term “affected individual” means an individual who—

(A) is serving on active duty during a war or other military operation or national emergency;

(B) is performing qualifying National Guard duty during a war or other military operation or national emergency;

(C) resides or is employed in an area that is declared a disaster area by any Federal, State, or local official in connection with a national emergency; or

(D) suffered direct economic hardship as a direct result of a war or other military operation or national emergency, as determined by the Secretary.

(3) MILITARY OPERATION.—The term “military operation” means a contingency operation as such term is defined in section 101(a)(13) of title 10, United States Code.

(4) NATIONAL EMERGENCY.—The term “national emergency” means a national emergency declared by the President of the United States.

(5) SERVING ON ACTIVE DUTY.—The term “serving on active duty during a war or other military operation or national emergency” shall include service by an individual who is—

(A) a Reserve of an Armed Force ordered to active duty under section 12301(a), 12301(g), 12302, 12304, or 12306 of title 10, United States Code, or any retired member of an Armed Force ordered to active duty under section 688 of such title, for service in connection with a war or other military operation or national emergency, regardless of the location at which such active duty service is performed; and

(B) any other member of an Armed Force on active duty in connection with such war, operation, or emergency or subsequent actions or conditions who has been assigned to a duty station at a location other than the location at which such member is normally assigned.

(6) QUALIFYING NATIONAL GUARD DUTY.—The term “qualifying National Guard duty during a war or other military operation or national emergency” means service as a member of the National Guard on full-time National Guard duty (as defined in section 101(d)(5) of title 10, United States Code) under a call to active service authorized by the President or the Secretary of Defense for a period of more than 30 consecutive days under section 502(f) of title 32, United States Code, in connection with a war, another military operation, or a national emergency declared by the President and supported by Federal funds.

SEC. 6. TERMINATION OF AUTHORITY.

The provisions of this Act shall cease to be effective at the close of September 30, 2005.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KLINE. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous matter on H.R. 1412.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Minnesota?

There was no objection.

Mr. KLINE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself 3 minutes.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to bring forward, along with several of my colleagues, the Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students, or HEROES, Act of 2003. This is a bill that

expresses the support and commitment of the United States House of Representatives to the troops who protect and defend the United States.

Throughout our involvement in the war on terrorism, many thousands of men and women who serve our Nation in the Reserves or National Guard of the Armed Forces, whether the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, other than Coast Guard, have been called to active duty or active service. Many of these men and women are also college and university students who are called away from their families, class work and studies to defend our Nation. Unfortunately, due to a number of restrictions in the Higher Education Act, these individuals are at risk of losing financial assistance and/or educational credit as a result of their service.

Such a scenario is clearly not acceptable. The HEROES Act provides assurance to our men and women in uniform that they will not face education-related financial or administrative difficulties while they defend our Nation. The HEROES Act achieves this by granting the Secretary of Education the authority to address the specific needs of each student whose education is interrupted when they are called to service.

This bill is specific in its intent to ensure that as a result of a war, military contingency operation, or national emergency our men and women are protected. By granting flexibility to the Secretary of Education, the HEROES Act will protect recipients of student financial assistance from further financial difficulty generated when they are called to serve, minimize administrative requirements without affecting the integrity of the programs, adjust the calculation used to determine financial need to accurately reflect the financial condition of the individual and his or her family, and provide the Secretary with the authority to address issues not yet foreseen.

Following the September 11, 2001, attacks on our Nation, Members of this House united to unanimously pass similar legislation which helped ease the burden on students, institutions, and families affected by the attacks on our Nation. Today, the men and women serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom and in other parts of the world deserve the same support.

I am pleased that a number of my colleagues have signed on as cosponsors of this legislation. This is an indication of Congress' commitment to our military, our students, our families, and our schools. I urge my colleagues to stand in strong support of the Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act and join me in voting yes on H.R. 1412.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of the HEROES Act introduced by

my colleague, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE), and thank him for doing so. This HEROES Act is appropriate at this time, as we have become very familiar over the past few weeks, watching the war unlike we have ever watched a war before. To address this very serious issue of the student loan repayment, this is altogether fitting and proper.

This is a great first step for this Chamber to make; but Madam Speaker, I believe that as we continue to watch and become aware that this war is not going to be as quick as we thought it was going to be, as this war begins to extend, and as our troops who were activated for possibly months or a year, this conflict now may stretch to 2 years or to 3 years, specifically dealing with the student loans, as we talk about forbearance in that the Secretary will have the opportunity to forbear a loan as our servicemen and servicewomen are activated, this will allow them not to pay on their student loans for the time that they are active.

Unfortunately, while they are still serving our country, making great sacrifices, the interest on their loan will still be accruing; so this is a great first step, but I think we can do much better. I think we in the Chamber, as we go forward in the next few weeks, should continue to try to extend these benefits, possibly allow these soldiers to defer their loans, and to subsidize the interest, so when they get back after serving this country, they will not owe more than when they left. I think that is a small step that we should make in order to support our troops as we should.

I have a bill that is the Active Reservists and National Guard Student Loan Relief Act which would do this, and I think we should look into it. Some soldiers who have \$50,000 in student loans will accrue \$2,600 in interest if they are serving for only 1 year. When they come back, they will owe \$2,600 more.

Madam Speaker, I urge us to vote in support of the HEROES Act, but continue to be open-minded with other options in which we can show support for our troops.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KLINE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I thank the gentleman for his remarks, and appreciate his commitment to the troops and his desire to extend additional benefits to those now serving. I look forward to work with the gentleman on that.

Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE) for introducing this important piece of legislation. Last Friday in Atlanta, Georgia, at our State Capitol, and along with the gentlemen from Georgia, Mr. GINGREY and Mr. LINDER, and our Governor, I signed

a proclamation commending the employers of our men and women who have been called up to active duty from the Reserves, to commend them for the sacrifice those companies are giving, and to commend them on their commitment to reemploy and keep those jobs for those troops when they come home.

It is only appropriate that we in Congress today do exactly what we are doing with regard to student loans. I support the HEROES Act of 2003, which gives the Secretary the authority under title IV of the Higher Education Act to make those waivers and deferrals that are necessary to ensure that our troops whose lives have been disrupted suddenly, and now serve us in the Middle East and in Iraq, to make sure that their families are not harassed by collectors and that their loan payments are deferred until they return; and also encourage those institutions of higher learning that have accepted tuition for semesters or quarters that now cannot be fulfilled because that Reservist has been activated to refund the tuition back to those Reservists. So when they return home they can enjoy a full quarter or semester, and they can get every dollar that they have invested in every bit of education they have paid for.

The gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE) is doing what all of us in Congress want to do: showing in every way and every facet every appreciation for those brave men and women who serve in our Reserves, and at a moment's notice, go in harm's way on behalf of the defense of everything we do in this country.

I commend the gentleman for his introduction, and I urge every Member of the House to support the HEROES Act of 2003.

Mr. KLINE. Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER), chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

Mr. BOEHNER. Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for yielding time to me, and congratulate the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE), one of our freshman members of the committee, for the introduction of this bill.

Let me also thank my colleague, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), another freshman member of our committee, for his contributions to this effort.

None of us believe that our active duty soldiers should be in a position where they are going to have to make payments on their student loans while in fact they are not here. This discretion has been given to the Secretary under the Higher Education Act Amendments, the recent reauthorization.

What we want to do here is to make it clear to the Secretary that not only does he have that authority and we expect that he will work with it, but also to give him a more permanent authority in the case of a national emergency

that he can, in fact, defer these payments.

Members of our committee have a very good relationship with the Secretary of Education. He is working with those institutions and agencies today to ensure that our active duty soldiers, sailors, airmen, and the rest have this protection. I do think the passage of this will give him clear authority to make sure that they and their families do not have this in this time of war.

□ 1230

Again, I wanted to congratulate both of my colleagues for their efforts on this bill and urge all of my colleagues in the House to support the HEROES Act of 2003.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would also like to thank the chairman of the committee for all of his work also on this effort. He has been great to work with; and I think, again, this is a good first step for us to take. And while he is here, I just wanted to mention a couple of people, one who is from my district in Ohio, Krista Rosado, Madam Speaker. She is a Reservist in my district. She has been called to duty for up to 2 years for the war on terror. She is a technical sergeant, and she has student loans in the amount of \$11,400 with a 7 percent interest rate.

Now, under the current legislation that we are dealing with, she will accrue over \$1,400 in additional interest on her loan. So when she does get back from service, she will owe this money. And I think the natural next step for us to take is to say to Krista, thank you for your service, thank you for your sacrifice, and we will take care of the interest on your loan while you were over serving your country.

Mr. BOEHNER. Madam Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. BOEHNER. Madam Speaker, as I have mentioned to the gentleman and staff, we have worked on his important addition to this bill, but under the 1973 Budget Act we are required to find offsets. As the gentleman is aware, there is about a \$10 million cost estimate from the CBO on this bill. But I commit to the gentleman we will continue to work with you to try to find these offsets under the Budget Act so that we can, in fact, bring this bill to the floor.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman, and I look forward to working with him.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCKEON), the chairman of the Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness.

Mr. MCKEON. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1412, the Higher Education Relief Opportunity

for Student Act of 2003, or more appropriately called the HEROES Act. I want to thank my colleague from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) for their leadership in bringing this bill to the floor, especially the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE), who spent 25 years as a Marine and learned great leadership skills with that great body and now is bringing those great leadership skills here to Congress which are exemplified by him bringing this bill to the floor.

The HEROES Act provides the Secretary of Education with specific waiver authority under title IV of the Higher Education Act, which governs student financial assistance programs. The Secretary would be able to provide relief to those students with student loans and other title IV assistance who have been called to active duty and those active duty military being reassigned to different duty stations. We are asking a great deal of our men and women in the military. They are going forward to fight in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and they are doing so with great distinction. Their lives are being disrupted, and we need to give them our full support. The last thing these men and women need to worry about is making a student loan payment or worry about how they will reenroll in schooling when they return.

H.R. 1412 will provide the Secretary of Education with the opportunity to relieve those concerns and allow them to focus on the difficult and dangerous jobs that they have been assigned to do. This bill will also relieve the burdens on the families here at home because they will not have to deal with loan collectors hounding them for students loan payments, among other things.

Another important aspect of the HEROES Act is that it allows the Secretary of Education to act quickly should a situation arise that has not been considered. It allows him to protect the interests of our military personnel while at the same time ensuring the integrity of the Federal Student Assistance Programs. The Secretary of Education is in a unique position to act as ambassador between the students, institutions of higher education, and the student aid community to ensure the necessary accommodations are provided to those who are affected by the conflict before us.

I want to applaud the Secretary and his staff for the work they have done since the tragedy of September 11 to provide the relief and flexibility to our military and others. I also want to acknowledge the efforts put forward by the postsecondary education community, lenders, loan servicers, secondary markets and students loan guarantee agencies in the student loan programs who work with all of those affected by the events that have confronted us.

The bipartisan HEROES Act will go a long way in reducing some of the burdens facing our military. While it will

not solve every issue that will arise, the HEROES Act will alleviate concerns around student financial assistance and postsecondary education. It also stands as a clear indication of the commitment of this Congress to the men and women fighting to protect the freedoms of this great Nation.

I urge my colleagues to unite in their support for the brave men and women fighting in Operation Iraqi Freedom and elsewhere and strongly support the bipartisan HEROES Act. I look forward to swift passage of this legislation.

Mr. KLINE. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BURNS), a member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, a man with extensive experience in higher education.

Mr. BURNS. Madam Speaker, we have before us today a sensible piece of legislation that will support our troops in completing their education, a bill that will help our troops participate in the Federal financial aid program by cutting through the administrative hurdles upon their return from active duty.

H.R. 1412 would ask postsecondary institutions to provide a full refund of tuitions and fees to students for the period that they are not able to complete because of their service to America. It would also minimize difficult enrollments or reapplication requirements making it easier for military personnel to reenter the postsecondary education environment when they return from serving their Nation. The HEROES bill would excuse military personnel from their Federal student loan obligations while they are on active duty in service to the United States. While these men and women are fighting for our freedom overseas, they should not be worrying about repaying their student loans.

Our military Reservists are called to serve the Nation. It is our duty to provide them with the support and flexibility they need to avoid financial hardship as they defend freedom and protect our safety.

Madam Speaker, this is a good bill for the men and women who are fighting for our future. I am proud to be a co-sponsor of this legislation, and I urge the support of its passage from my colleagues.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KLINE. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE), my colleague on the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

Mr. OSBORNE. Madam Speaker, I would like to join those congratulating the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE) for his introduction of H.R. 1412.

Madam Speaker, a high percentage of our military personnel are Reservists and National Guardsmen. These are ordinary citizens; they have families. Many of them are in school. Many are in higher education.

I would like to call attention to a couple of aspects of H.R. 1412 which

have heretofore been somewhat ignored. Number one, this particular legislation allows Reservists who leave college and universities for military service to return with the same academic standing as they had when they left. And this may seem kind of minor, but it is very important because in many graduate programs if you are not there for consecutive semesters, you lose your standing. You are no longer in the graduate college. Also sometimes after a period of absence, a student will lose credits and so this legislation prevents that from happening. I think that is very important. Also this legislation urges full refunds of tuition and fees for those who are called to active duty. Often times this happens in the middle of the semester, and the student may have already paid thousands of dollars in tuition and fees and normally the universities, when you drop out, do not refund these, so this does call for a full refund. And of course we have already discussed the fact that this does relieve Reservists from payments of student loans while on duty, which is very, very important.

On April 15, 2002, the State of Nebraska enacted the above provisions for those called to active duty through a memorandum agreement between the Governor and the colleges and universities. This was certainly a very good step for the State of Nebraska and, of course, this legislation to make these provisions applicable nationwide. So I urge its support and, again, want to thank the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE) for his introduction of this bill. It is a good bill and something we can all be proud of in a bipartisan manner in this House of Representatives.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I yield myself 2 minutes.

Madam Speaker, I also want to thank the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE), who is also a colleague of mine on the Committee on Education and the Workforce. I do not think there is a Member of this Congress who has more experience dealing with some of the hardships that young people deal with when in college. He mentioned that some of the Reservists who are on active duty and who have been activated that the HEROES Act is going to help. Sixty-seven percent of the Reservists have some college education with which this bill will be able to assist them, some college education or more; 25.8 percent have some college education but not yet have received a degree; and then of which the HEROES Act will also help 12.1 percent have an associate's degree; 20 percent have a bachelor's degree; 7 percent have a master's degree; and 2 percent have a doctoral or some professional degree. So this HEROES Act is going to address a significant number of people who are currently serving their country. Again, I commend the gentleman for introducing this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KLINE. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Geor-

gia (Mr. GINGREY), another of my colleagues on the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

Mr. GINGREY. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE) for yielding me time.

When we have legislation in this body, often times we come up with an acronym. In this particular bill, the HEROES Act, Higher Education Relief Opportunity Act for Students, what a great acronym for H.R. 1412, because truly we are talking about doing something for our young men and women who are indeed our heroes.

We emphasize so much to young people that there is nothing more valuable to them in life than an education; and we want them, indeed, all of us, to be lifelong learners, and there is no more noble calling, of course, than service to one's country and putting one's life, indeed, in harm's way for this country as these students are now doing. So I commend the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE), my colleague on the Committee on Education and the Workforce. I commend the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), my colleague also on this committee. In listening to his testimony, it is obvious where his heart is in regards to wanting to actually extend relief even more than this bill will do in regard to mitigating the accrual of interest during the time that these young men and women are serving our country.

And as the chairman of our committee, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER), indicated, when we can figure out an opportunity to offset some of the costs of that, certainly we want to work very closely with the gentleman from Ohio. But it is indeed a wonderful bill and it is saying to these students, you can go right back to school as soon as your duty to this country is over with. The families will not be put upon during that interim for payment of interest; and I am a very proud, proud supporter of H.R. 1412, the HEROES Act.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would like to thank the gentleman for his fine work on the committee and his pledge of support to work with us. I think given the intellect of this body, we should be able to figure out a way to make this happen and to make sure that the soldiers over there who are sacrificing and risking life and limb for our own freedoms in this country, we should be able to work it out.

In closing, Madam Speaker, again, this HEROES Act is a great first step for us. As we said earlier, this addresses a number of people who are soldiers, who are making sacrifice for this country and really for freedom around the world.

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Again, just to reiterate, the forbearance is a great first step. I think the intention of forbearing a loan, again, is for more of the shorter conflicts where

our soldiers are just going to be activated for maybe a few months, where the accrual of interest would not be that significant. But as we see this conflict start to extend from a year to 2 years, or how long the President decides, we need to understand that the accrual of that interest needs to be taken care of, because these soldiers who, many as we know are making great sacrifices not only physically, but economically at home, and many of these soldiers who are over there are not earning nearly the amount that they would be earning if they were working here in this country.

They are taking significant pay cuts, taking enormous physical risks, and so the forbearance for a short conflict, the subsidies and deferment for longer conflicts where there is an opportunity to have significant accrual of the interest, I think that is a next logical step.

We are here to support these young men and young women who are fighting for this country, not just the soldiers on the front lines, but also those following whom we have seen become prisoners of war and missing in action. This is a very dangerous endeavor that we have taken.

I thank the gentleman again and very much look forward to working with him to take this to the next step and to the next level. I very much look forward to working with the gentleman and the chairman of the committee to do that.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. KLINE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would like to start by saying thanks again to my colleague, the gentleman from Ohio, for his passionate interest in this bill, for his support of the bill; and I, too, look forward to working with him in the days and weeks that come ahead to make sure that we are doing the very best that we can for our men and women who have been called to active duty.

I appreciate very much the many remarks of my colleagues here today. We have had remarks from a college professor and from a college coach and from people with years of experience on this committee. I very much appreciate the work they have done on this.

I am grateful for the credit that has been given to me for bringing this bill forward, but the truth is, I am following the steps of some people who have blazed the trail ahead of me.

This is a very, very important bill. It is important for our colleagues, for families and for the men and women in uniform, and I urge my colleagues to stand in strong support of the Heroes Act and vote yes on H.R. 1412.

Mr. REYES. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1412, the Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act of 2003, which would assist students who have answered the call to serve our nation and students whose lives may be disrupted by a national disaster connected to the current war effort.

The Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act would waive or modify any provisions applicable to federal student financial aid programs in order to assist students who are honorably serving in the Persian Gulf. These young men and women are risking their lives today to protect our nation's freedom and liberty. This bill will ensure that those members of our Armed Services who have put their studies on hold are not placed in a worse financial position as a result of their service to our nation. This is the least we can do.

In keeping with this objective, this bill will assure that administrative requirements for these armed service members are minimized. Not only will this bill prevent any financial burden that these troops may otherwise experience as a result of serving our country, but by extension will serve to facilitate their transition into and out of active service.

In addition to protecting students who today find themselves defending our nation, one of the provisions in the bill grants institutions of higher education, eligible lenders, and guaranty agencies located in any area declared a disaster temporary relief from infeasible and unreasonable requirements.

We must make sure that all of our students are protected against any burden they may face as a result of the current war. I am proud to support of H.R. 1412, the Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act of 2003 and strongly urge my colleagues to do the same.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1412.

I support H.R. 1412 because the Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act of 2003 ensures that the brave young men and women of our armed services will not have their educations compromised when they answer the call to active duty.

H.R. 1412 grants the Secretary of Education the discretion to provide financial aid relief, tuition refunds, or credits to members of our Armed Forces when they respond to military operations or national emergencies.

When enlisted men and women, who are also students at colleges and universities, are called to active duty, H.R. 1412 will allow the Secretary of Education to grant waivers and statutory exceptions to protect their enrollment and financial aid status.

It will also empower the Secretary of Education with the discretion to grant a full tuition refund to members of our Armed Services who are called to active duty.

This discretion will empower the Secretary to drastically reduce the likelihood that enlisted men's and women's educations will be jeopardized by inadvertent, technical violations or defaults when they are called to service. It also ensures that members of our Armed Forces do not forfeit their tuition payments when they answer the call to service.

Hundreds of thousands of young men and women have been called to active duty in our Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard.

These heroes put the safety of every American citizen before themselves. They risk their lives, and their educations, so that we can be safe.

H.R. 1412 protects the members of our Armed Forces. It ensures that they will not be in a worse position financially or in their education as a result of their status as students and soldiers.

I support H.R. 1412, Madam Speaker, because we must support the members of our Armed Forces in every way that we can, including in their educations.

Mr. HOLT. Madam Speaker, as our nation is at war in the Persian Gulf, many men and women who serve in our nation's armed forces have been called up to active duty, including many college and university students.

Many of these students participate in federal financial aid programs, and in order to ensure the utmost flexibility during the time that they are engaged in military service, it is essential that the Department of Education be given extended waiver authority to accommodate the needs of our troops.

This is why I support H.R. 1412 Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students (HEROES) Act of 2003.

The bill will extend the waive authority granted to the Secretary of Education to allow him to provide the appropriate assistance and flexibility to our men and women in uniform as they transfer in and out of postsecondary education during a time of war.

The extended waiver authority provided for in the HEROES bill addresses the need to assist students who are being asked to disrupt their lives in the defense of the freedoms we all hold so precious.

It will also allow the Secretary to address events now unforeseen. It also urges all postsecondary institutions to provide a full refund of tuition, fees and other charges to students who are members of the Armed Forces or are serving on active duty, including the Reserves and National Guard.

What a positive message it would send to the hundreds of thousands of American men and women in uniform currently risking their lives to help them with their student loans. Recall the fine, positive effect of the GI education bills.

Our men and women deserve our help. As the brave men and women of the United States are engaged in this difficult and dangerous war we should limit the negative impacts on them and their families here at home.

I ask my colleagues to support H.R. 1412 Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act.

Mr. EMANUEL. Madam Speaker. I rise today in support of H.R. 1412, the Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act. This is timely, essential legislation which ensures that those brave men and women who make enormous sacrifices for our nation do not forfeit their right to an affordable and accessible education.

Members of the armed forces often spend considerable time away from their families, stall other career and educational goals, and, most significantly, expose themselves to the risk of serious injury or death. These individuals and their families deserve our greatest respect, and certainly deserve the assurance that they will not be unfairly penalized for their time spent in military service.

The promise of higher education, and the availability of federal financial assistance to make this opportunity a reality, represent key components of the American experience. It is only right that we ensure access to higher education for those who work to protect the values and privileges that we enjoy as Americans.

I applaud Congressman KLINE and the other Members of the Committee on Education and

Workforce for introducing this critical legislation and bringing it to the floor today. It is a symbol of support for the brave men and women involved in Operation Iraqi Freedom and for all of those who selflessly devote their lives to protecting our nation and our freedom.

Mr. KLINE. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. CAPITO). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1412.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. KLINE. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

BUSINESS CHECKING FREEDOM ACT OF 2003

Mr. BACHUS. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 758) to allow all businesses to make up to 24 transfers each month from interest-bearing transaction accounts to other transaction accounts, to require the payment of interest on reserves held for depository institutions at federal reserve banks, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 758

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Business Checking Freedom Act of 2003".

SEC. 2. INTEREST-BEARING TRANSACTION ACCOUNTS AUTHORIZED FOR ALL BUSINESSES.

(a) Section 2 of Public Law 93-100 (12 U.S.C. 1832) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (b) and (c) as subsections (c) and (d), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after subsection (a) the following:

"(b) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any depository institution may permit the owner of any deposit or account which is a deposit or account on which interest or dividends are paid and is not a deposit or account described in subsection (a)(2) to make up to 24 transfers per month (or such greater number as the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System may determine by rule or order), for any purpose, to another account of the owner in the same institution. An account offered pursuant to this subsection shall be considered a transaction account for purposes of section 19 of the Federal Reserve Act unless the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System determines otherwise."

(b) Effective at the end of the 2-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, section 2 of Public Law 93-100 (12 U.S.C. 1832) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(1), by striking "but subject to paragraph (2)";

(2) by striking paragraph (2) of subsection (a) and inserting the following new paragraph:

“(2) No provision of this section may be construed as conferring the authority to offer demand deposit accounts to any institution that is prohibited by law from offering demand deposit accounts.”; and

(3) in subsection (b) (as added by subsection (a) of this section) by striking “and is not a deposit or account described in subsection (a)(2)”.

SEC. 3. INTEREST-BEARING TRANSACTION ACCOUNTS AUTHORIZED.

(a) **REPEAL OF PROHIBITION ON PAYMENT OF INTEREST ON DEMAND DEPOSITS.**—

(1) **FEDERAL RESERVE ACT.**—Section 19(i) of the Federal Reserve Act (12 U.S.C. 371a) is amended to read as follows:

“(i) [Repealed].”

(2) **HOME OWNERS' LOAN ACT.**—The first sentence of section 5(b)(1)(B) of the Home Owners' Loan Act (12 U.S.C. 1464(b)(1)(B)) is amended by striking “savings association may not—” and all that follows through “(ii) permit any” and inserting “savings association may not permit any”.

(3) **FEDERAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE ACT.**—Section 18(g) of the Federal Deposit Insurance Act (12 U.S.C. 1828(g)) is amended to read as follows:

“(g) [Repealed].”

(b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect at the end of the 2-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 4. PAYMENT OF INTEREST ON RESERVES AT FEDERAL RESERVE BANKS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 19(b) of the Federal Reserve Act (12 U.S.C. 461(b)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(12) **EARNINGS ON RESERVES.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Balances maintained at a Federal reserve bank by or on behalf of a depository institution may receive earnings to be paid by the Federal reserve bank at least once each calendar quarter at a rate or rates not to exceed the general level of short-term interest rates.

“(B) **REGULATIONS RELATING TO PAYMENTS AND DISTRIBUTION.**—The Board may prescribe regulations concerning—

“(i) the payment of earnings in accordance with this paragraph;

“(ii) the distribution of such earnings to the depository institutions which maintain balances at such banks or on whose behalf such balances are maintained; and

“(iii) the responsibilities of depository institutions, Federal home loan banks, and the National Credit Union Administration Central Liquidity Facility with respect to the crediting and distribution of earnings attributable to balances maintained, in accordance with subsection (c)(1)(A), in a Federal reserve bank by any such entity on behalf of depository institutions.

“(C) **DEPOSITORY INSTITUTIONS DEFINED.**—For purposes of this paragraph, the term ‘depository institution’, in addition to the institutions described in paragraph (1)(A), includes any trust company, corporation organized under section 25A or having an agreement with the Board under section 25, or any branch or agency of a foreign bank (as defined in section 1(b) of the International Banking Act of 1978).”.

(b) **AUTHORIZATION FOR PASS THROUGH RESERVES FOR MEMBER BANKS.**—Section 19(c)(1)(B) of the Federal Reserve Act (12 U.S.C. 461(c)(1)(B)) is amended by striking “which is not a member bank”.

(c) **CONSUMER BANKING COSTS ASSESSMENT.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Federal Reserve Act (12 U.S.C. 221 et seq.) is amended—

(A) by redesignating sections 30 and 31 as sections 31 and 32, respectively; and

(B) by inserting after section 29 the following new section:

“SEC. 30. SURVEY OF BANK FEES AND SERVICES.

“(a) **ANNUAL SURVEY REQUIRED.**—The Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System

shall obtain annually a sample, which is representative by type and size of the institution (including small institutions) and geographic location, of the following retail banking services and products provided by insured depository institutions and insured credit unions (along with related fees and minimum balances):

“(1) Checking and other transaction accounts.

“(2) Negotiable order of withdrawal and savings accounts.

“(3) Automated teller machine transactions.

“(4) Other electronic transactions.

“(b) **MINIMUM SURVEY REQUIREMENT.**—The annual survey described in subsection (a) shall meet the following minimum requirements:

“(1) **CHECKING AND OTHER TRANSACTION ACCOUNTS.**—Data on checking and transaction accounts shall include, at a minimum, the following:

“(A) Monthly and annual fees and minimum balances to avoid such fees.

“(B) Minimum opening balances.

“(C) Check processing fees.

“(D) Check printing fees.

“(E) Balance inquiry fees.

“(F) Fees imposed for using a teller or other institution employee.

“(G) Stop payment order fees.

“(H) Nonsufficient fund fees.

“(I) Overdraft fees.

“(J) Deposit items returned fees.

“(K) **AVAILABILITY OF NO-COST OR LOW-COST ACCOUNTS FOR CONSUMERS WHO MAINTAIN LOW BALANCES.**

“(2) **NEGOTIABLE ORDER OF WITHDRAWAL ACCOUNTS AND SAVINGS ACCOUNTS.**—Data on negotiable order of withdrawal accounts and savings accounts shall include, at a minimum, the following:

“(A) Monthly and annual fees and minimum balances to avoid such fees.

“(B) Minimum opening balances.

“(C) **RATE AT WHICH INTEREST IS PAID TO CONSUMERS.**

“(D) **CHECK PROCESSING FEES FOR NEGOTIABLE ORDER OF WITHDRAWAL ACCOUNTS.**

“(E) **FEES IMPOSED FOR USING A TELLER OR OTHER INSTITUTION EMPLOYEE.**

“(F) **AVAILABILITY OF NO-COST OR LOW-COST ACCOUNTS FOR CONSUMERS WHO MAINTAIN LOW BALANCES.**

“(3) **AUTOMATED TELLER TRANSACTIONS.**—Data on automated teller machine transactions shall include, at a minimum, the following:

“(A) Monthly and annual fees.

“(B) Card fees.

“(C) **FEES CHARGED TO CUSTOMERS FOR WITHDRAWALS, DEPOSITS, AND BALANCE INQUIRIES THROUGH INSTITUTION-OWNED MACHINES.**

“(D) **FEES CHARGED TO CUSTOMERS FOR WITHDRAWALS, DEPOSITS, AND BALANCE INQUIRIES THROUGH MACHINES OWNED BY OTHERS.**

“(E) **FEES CHARGED TO NONCUSTOMERS FOR WITHDRAWALS, DEPOSITS, AND BALANCE INQUIRIES THROUGH INSTITUTION-OWNED MACHINES.**

“(F) **POINT-OF-SALE TRANSACTION FEES.**

“(4) **OTHER ELECTRONIC TRANSACTIONS.**—Data on other electronic transactions shall include, at a minimum, the following:

“(A) Wire transfer fees.

“(B) **FEES RELATED TO PAYMENTS MADE OVER THE INTERNET OR THROUGH OTHER ELECTRONIC MEANS.**

“(5) **OTHER FEES AND CHARGES.**—Data on any other fees and charges that the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System determines to be appropriate to meet the purposes of this section.

“(6) **FEDERAL RESERVE BOARD AUTHORITY.**—The Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System may cease the collection of information with regard to any particular fee or charge specified in this subsection if the Board makes a determination that, on the basis of changing practices in the financial services industry, the collection of such information is no longer necessary to accomplish the purposes of this section.

“(c) **ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS REQUIRED.**—

“(1) **PREPARATION.**—The Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System shall prepare a report of the results of each survey conducted pursuant to subsections (a) and (b) of this section and section 136(b)(1) of the Consumer Credit Protection Act.

“(2) **CONTENTS OF THE REPORT.**—In addition to the data required to be collected pursuant to subsections (a) and (b), each report prepared pursuant to paragraph (1) shall include a description of any discernible trend, in the Nation as a whole, in a representative sample of the 50 States (selected with due regard for regional differences), and in each consolidated metropolitan statistical area (as defined by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget), in the cost and availability of the retail banking services, including those described in subsections (a) and (b) (including related fees and minimum balances), that delineates differences between institutions on the basis of the type of institution and the size of the institution, between large and small institutions of the same type, and any engagement of the institution in multistate activity.

“(3) **SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.**—The Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System shall submit an annual report to the Congress not later than June 1, 2005, and not later than June 1 of each subsequent year.

“(d) **DEFINITIONS.**—For purposes of this section, the term ‘insured depository institution’ has the meaning given such term in section 3 of the Federal Deposit Insurance Act, and the term ‘insured credit union’ has the meaning given such term in section 101 of the Federal Credit Union Act.”.

(2) **CONFORMING AMENDMENT.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Paragraph (1) of section 136(b) of the Truth in Lending Act (15 U.S.C. 1646(b)(1)) is amended to read as follows:

“(1) **COLLECTION REQUIRED.**—The Board shall collect, on a semiannual basis, from a broad sample of financial institutions which offer credit card services, credit card price and availability information including—

“(A) the information required to be disclosed under section 127(c) of this chapter;

“(B) the average total amount of finance charges paid by consumers; and

“(C) the following credit card rates and fees:

“(i) Application fees.

“(ii) Annual percentage rates for cash advances and balance transfers.

“(iii) Maximum annual percentage rate that may be charged when an account is in default.

“(iv) Fees for the use of convenience checks.

“(v) Fees for balance transfers.

“(vi) Fees for foreign currency conversions.”.

(B) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendment made by subparagraph (A) shall take effect on January 1, 2004.

(3) **REPEAL OF OTHER REPORT PROVISIONS.**—Section 1002 of Financial Institutions Reform, Recovery, and Enforcement Act of 1989 and section 108 of the Riegle-Neal Interstate Banking and Branching Efficiency Act of 1994 are hereby repealed.

(d) **TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.**—Section 19 of the Federal Reserve Act (12 U.S.C. 461) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b)(4) (12 U.S.C. 461(b)(4)), by striking subparagraph (C) and redesignating subparagraphs (D) and (E) as subparagraphs (C) and (D), respectively; and

(2) in subsection (c)(1)(A) (12 U.S.C. 461(c)(1)(A)), by striking “subsection (b)(4)(C)” and inserting “subsection (b)”.

SEC. 5. INCREASED FEDERAL RESERVE BOARD FLEXIBILITY IN SETTING RESERVE REQUIREMENTS.

Section 19(b)(2)(A) of the Federal Reserve Act (12 U.S.C. 461(b)(2)(A)) is amended—

(1) in clause (i), by striking “the ratio of 3 per centum” and inserting “a ratio not greater than 3 per centum (and which may be zero)”;

(2) in clause (ii), by striking “and not less than 8 per centum,” and inserting “(and which may be zero).”.

SEC. 6. TRANSFER OF FEDERAL RESERVE SURPLUSES.

(a) *IN GENERAL.*—Section 7(b) of the Federal Reserve Act (12 U.S.C. 289(b)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(4) *ADDITIONAL TRANSFERS TO COVER INTEREST PAYMENTS FOR FISCAL YEARS 2003 THROUGH 2007.*—

“(A) *IN GENERAL.*—In addition to the amounts required to be transferred from the surplus funds of the Federal reserve banks pursuant to subsection (a)(3), the Federal reserve banks shall transfer from such surplus funds to the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for transfer to the Secretary of the Treasury for deposit in the general fund of the Treasury, such sums as are necessary to equal the net cost of section 19(b)(12) in each of the fiscal years 2003 through 2007.

“(B) *ALLOCATION BY FEDERAL RESERVE BOARD.*—Of the total amount required to be paid by the Federal reserve banks under subparagraph (A) for fiscal years 2003 through 2007, the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System shall determine the amount each such bank shall pay in such fiscal year.

“(C) *REPLENISHMENT OF SURPLUS FUND PROHIBITED.*—During fiscal years 2003 through 2007, no Federal reserve bank may replenish such bank’s surplus fund by the amount of any transfer by such bank under subparagraph (A).”

(b) *TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENT.*—Section 7(a) of the Federal Reserve Act (12 U.S.C. 289(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(3) *PAYMENT TO TREASURY.*—During fiscal years 2003 through 2007, any amount in the surplus fund of any Federal reserve bank in excess of the amount equal to 3 percent of the paid-in capital and surplus of the member banks of such bank shall be transferred to the Secretary of the Treasury for deposit in the general fund of the Treasury.”

SEC. 7. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.

In the case of an escrow account maintained at a depository institution in connection with a real estate transaction—

(1) the absorption, by the depository institution, of expenses incidental to providing a normal banking service with respect to such escrow account;

(2) the forbearance, by the depository institution, from charging a fee for providing any such banking function; and

(3) any benefit which may accrue to the holder or the beneficiary of such escrow account as a result of an action of the depository institution described in subparagraph (1) or (2) or similar in nature to such action,

shall not be treated as the payment or receipt of interest for purposes of this Act and any provision of Public Law 93-100, the Federal Reserve Act, the Home Owners’ Loan Act, or the Federal Deposit Insurance Act relating to the payment of interest on accounts or deposits at depository institutions, provided, however, that nothing herein shall be construed so as to require a depository institution that maintains an escrow account in connection with a real estate transaction to pay interest on such escrow account or to prohibit such institution from paying interest on such escrow account. Nor shall anything herein be construed to preempt the provisions of law of any State dealing with the payment of interest on escrow accounts maintained in connection with real estate transactions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BACHUS) and the gentleman from Utah (Mr. MATHESON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BACHUS).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BACHUS. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members

may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 758.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Alabama?

There was no objection.

Mr. BACHUS. Madam Speaker, I yield myself 3 minutes.

The legislation before us today, H.R. 758, the Business Checking Freedom Act, is a result of two things. In 1996, in a joint report called Streamlining Regulatory Requirements, the board of governors of the Federal Reserve, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the Comptroller of the Currency and the OTS determined that the 1933 statutory prohibition against paying of interest on business checking accounts no longer serves a public purpose.

Last year, President Bush joined many others in saying that small banks should be allowed to pay interest on their small business checking accounts. The reasons for this are basically two- or threefold.

One is, it is a free-market approach. More than that, though, there is an advantage now in the present prohibition against small banks. Large banks can offer complex sweep accounts or other sophisticated ways of offering implicit interest on checking accounts. Small banks simply do not have the resources to do this.

Secondly, large corporations today have several alternatives with what they can do with their funds to get interest. Small businesses, more often than not, have to rely on checking accounts and are denied equal treatment. So this will level the playing field between small banks and larger financial institutions. It will also level the playing field between small and large businesses.

I want to commend the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY), the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY), the cosponsors of this legislation. I want to particularly commend the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY) for making this a priority.

In closing, I want to say that this legislation has passed the House twice in the 107th Congress. It has wide bipartisan support. It came out of the Committee on Financial Services on a large, one-sided vote. It has the endorsement of certain groups, of the Chamber of Commerce, NFIB, Independent Insurance Agents, American Community Banks, and I could go on and on.

Finally, I simply want to say there is another provision in this, and this offers the Federal Reserve the right to pay interest on sterile reserves. Recently, they testified before our committee that by being allowed to pay interest, it would both increase the amount of interest that small depositors could make or a depositor could make on their deposits in financial institutions, and it would also lower the cost of consumer credit.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MATHESON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of H.R. 758, the Business Checking Freedom Act of 2003. By repealing the prohibition on the payment of interest on demand deposits, this bill will repeal the last vestige of interest rate controls enacted in the 1930s during the Depression. This prohibition long ago ceased to serve any useful purpose and has imposed unnecessary costs on banks and their business customers, particularly small banks and businesses that cannot afford sophisticated cash management products. The repeal of this prohibition is long overdue.

For institutions that cannot offer demand deposits, however, the bill includes a provision added as a result of an amendment that I cosponsored with the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE), the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK), the ranking member, and others that permits depository institutions to offer interest-bearing negotiable order of withdrawal, or NOW, accounts to their commercial customers. This provision will allow institutions such as industrial loan companies to offer the same type of interest-bearing account to business customers that they have long been able to offer to individuals, nonprofit organizations and public entities.

I think it is important to note this provision does not permit industrial companies to offer demand deposits. As has been the case since the enactment of the Competitive Banking Equality Act of 1987, ILCs would continue to be prohibited from offering demand deposits. Moreover, ILCs will continue to be subject to the same safety and soundness regulations by the FDIC and by their State regulators as under current law.

There is no indication that State regulators will allow their chartering authority to be used in an inappropriate manner. I note, for example, that State authorities in the past have rejected applications by some commercial companies to establish ILCs where there were concerns about how the charter would be used.

H.R. 758 also will permit the Federal Reserve Board to lower the reserves it currently requires on transaction accounts, such as demand deposits and NOW accounts, and to pay interest on the reserve balances that depository institutions are required to maintain. While providing these cost savings for banks, the bill will require the board to conduct an annual survey on a broad range of bank fees and services and to report to Congress on trends in the cost and availability of retail banking services. This survey will provide Congress the information we need to determine the extent to which retail customers receive the benefit from the cost savings we are creating with this bill.

H.R. 758 is a good, balanced bill that resulted in benefits for both banks and

their customers. I recommend passage of this bill.

I want to thank the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BACHUS), the subcommittee chairman, and the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the ranking member, for this bill. I want to recognize that the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY), the chairman of the full committee, and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK) for their support of this, as well; and I want to acknowledge the lead sponsors of this bill, which are the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY), the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY), the gentlewoman from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN), and the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MOORE).

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BACHUS. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH).

Mr. LEACH. Madam Speaker, it is with a great deal of reluctance that I rise in opposition to this bill. It contains many reasonable provisions, most importantly, the payment of interest on business checking, with my only concern on that point being that it does not immediately go into effect, but rather is put off for several years.

It also contains a very reasonable provision that interest be paid by the Fed on sterile reserves held by institutions.

But deeply embedded in this bill is a philosophical umbrage of very profound proportions. There is a small charter, as referred to by the gentleman from Utah, called the industrial loan corporation (ILC) charter. For the first time, the Congress is moving in the direction of giving this kind of charter the powers that make it the functional equivalent of banks. While the gentleman from Utah is correct that there is no effort to offer demand deposits, there is the authorization of business checking accounts which are their functional equivalent.

This particular charter countenances, and indeed there are a number today, the merger of commerce and banking; that is, nonfinancial institutions may own ILC charters. There is also no prohibition about new charters being granted, so new charters presumably can be offered on passage of this act.

What this does is move the American financial system in the direction of the Japanese financial system where they have financial firms intertwined with commercial enterprises and with obvious conflicts of interest.

I would alert this body to the fact that Chairman Greenspan and the Federal Reserve of the United States strongly have come out against this provision, and despite my request, there has not been allowance on the House floor for an amendment relating to this amendment to be proffered. I personally consider it a philosophically

difficult circumstance that no amendment was allowed to be offered and that this bill, instead, is being brought up under the Suspension Calendar with exceedingly brief notice.

Having stated that, the big issue is whether or not we want to change the nature of American finance, and I would again alert this body, Chairman Greenspan has written that this will change the structure of American banking in ways that would have allowed, for example, Enron or Tyco to own an ILC with expanded powers. In fact, Tyco does own an ILC. It would have allowed the prospect, with ILCs now becoming the functional equivalent of banks, for such companies to take over enormous sectors of the American banking community.

□ 1300

I think this would be a mistake. I think this Congress ought to be deeply skeptical of this kind of circumstance, particularly given the history of the last few years in this country and the last several decades in other countries.

So despite the fact that this bill is reasonable in many respects, this particular provision outweighs the entirety of the bill and, in my view, should cause the bill to be defeated.

Mr. MATHESON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute to address a couple of the concerns that have been raised.

First of all, there is nothing in this bill that creates new authority to offer accounts to businesses. So while the Federal Reserve did suggest that we are altering the structure of banking in the United States, the institutions raised already can offer ILCs. Tyco already has one. So this bill talks about parity. It talks about banks and industrial corporations both offering interest on business checking accounts. That is all this bill does.

There is a broader discussion about the validity of the ILCs. That is not what this bill is about. It is about offering two entities to have parity in terms of offering the same service.

And let me mention one other point in this regard, and that is in terms of the concern about mixing of banking and commerce. FDIC Chairman Powell has stated that he does not have any safety or soundness concerns relating to this provision of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY).

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his leadership and for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 758, the Business Checking Freedom Act, which the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) introduced and which I am pleased to cosponsor. My friend and colleague from New York was a former small business owner, and she has been a great advocate for small businesses and has worked through several Congresses and several twists and turns on this legislation. I congratulate her on her hard work.

While other speakers have described the bill, I will simply add that this legislation builds on the important modernization of financial services that Congress has worked on in recent years. This legislation lifts the prohibition on the payment of interest on business checking accounts after a 2-year phase-in. During the phase-in, banks may increase sweeps to interest paying accounts to four intervals per month.

The prohibition on interest on both consumer and business accounts was enacted during the Great Depression. At the time, it was enacted to limit competitive pressures to pay higher interests that were feared would lead to bank failures. Today, given the global nature of financial services, interstate banking, and advances in technology, interest payment limits only distort competition and force businesses to seek out alternative interest-bearing opportunities.

The prohibition on paying interest on consumer checking accounts was repealed by Congress more than 20 years ago and has not increased concern about safety and soundness. Today, the House takes an important step forward in offering this same benefit to the business community.

Importantly, this legislation will disproportionately benefit small businesses. Small businesses must keep money in checking accounts to meet payrolls and pay expenses. They are less likely to have complex financial arrangements that allow them to get around interest restrictions. From restaurants in Astoria, Queens, to high-tech startups in Manhattan, this legislation will benefit small businesses across New York City, State, and the Nation.

The legislation also allows the Federal Reserve to pay interest on sterile reserves. These are reserves private banks hold at the Federal Reserve which the Fed can use as a tool of monetary policy. This provision is endorsed by Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Utah (Mr. MATHESON), certainly the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY), and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KANJORSKI), and certainly the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK) for his leadership on these issues.

Finally, I want to remind my colleagues that this legislation passed the House by a voice vote in two different forms last Congress, and it is my hope that this legislation is enacted this year and we continue the important work of modernizing financial services.

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. Kelley), the sponsor of the bill.

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Alabama for both yielding me this time and for his work to move this legislation forward. In addition, I want to thank the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY) for his

support, as well as the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY) for the contribution that he has made to this legislation with his bill H.R. 859, which was merged into this bill during committee consideration.

My bill addresses an issue which has been pending before Congress for some time now. This body actually passed a similar measure by voice vote not once but twice during the 107th Congress, but the job is still not done. So we come to the floor once again with a strong hope that the enactment of this bill will finally be realized this Congress. The legislation will go a long way in helping our Main Street banks and small businesses which are so essential to our communities.

The Business Checking Freedom Act contains a number of important provisions. First, it repeals the 70-year-old law prohibiting banks from paying interest on business checking accounts after a transition period. While I believe it should be repealed, I believe a proper transition period is critical. The 2-year transition period contained in the bill is certainly better than the 1-year transition period which was in the original bill, although my preference is for an even longer period to allow the banks and businesses to disengage from each other.

Nevertheless, I believe it is time to move forward with this legislation. The legislation also allows banks to increase money market deposits and savings account sweeps from the current 6 to 24 times a month. This gives the banks an increase in their sweep activities, enabling them to sweep every night, increasing the interest which businesses can make on their accounts.

The bill also gives the Federal Reserve the opportunity to pay interest on reserves that the banks keep with the Federal Reserve System, and gives the Federal Reserve the additional flexibility to lower reserve requirements. This will give the Federal Reserve greater control at maintaining reserves at a specific and consistent level. That will help foster healthy reserve balances, thereby reducing the potential for volatility within the Federal funds rate and protecting the Federal Reserve's ability to conduct monetary policy.

Quite simply, this legislation is about creating new and broader market options. We allow banks to pay interest on business checking accounts, we allow banks to increase sweep activities, and we allow the Fed to pay interest on the sterile reserves that all banks are required to keep with them. We also allow the Fed to lower reserve requirements. We do not require or mandate anything. This way we can allow the market to create change and not the government.

I again thank the gentleman from Ohio for his strong leadership on this issue and for the swift consideration of this legislation, and I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in strong support for this commonsense bipartisan legislation.

Mr. MATHESON. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY), who, along with the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY), is one of the two primary co-sponsors of the legislation and both drafted legislation.

(Mr. TOOMEY asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BACHUS) and appreciate all his help on this legislation as well as the time he has yielded to me. I would also like to thank (Mr. KANJORSKI), an original co-sponsor of my bill, which is part of this one, as well as the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) for her work.

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Iowa, with whom I actually have a disagreement on this particular issue, but I have enormous respect for his opinion and would like to give him an opportunity to rebut a point made earlier.

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this. And let me say that the brunt of this bill is a wonderfully thoughtful approach, and I congratulate the gentleman and the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) on this.

I would only come back to the one provision which I would like to have changed, and that is the industrial loan corporation provision, and to point out to this body that only a handful of States are authorized, such as the State of Utah, to have industrial loan corporations. They are not trivial institutions. In the State of Utah, for example, their assets are double that of banks, S&Ls and credit unions combined.

If this bill passes with this provision and becomes law, the vast majority of States will see deposits swept from their States to this handful of States. That alone is a philosophical circumstance that in my mind should lead people to raise serious doubts about this particular provision of this particular bill.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming the balance of my time, I would just say that I appreciate the thoughtful remarks of the gentleman from Iowa but respectfully disagree, and I think that the merits of this bill are really quite strong.

In fact, the combination of the bill that I introduced, H.R. 859, and the bill that the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) introduced, H.R. 758, really are a modernizing effort here. It is going to help small businesses and their employees. It is going to help small banks and their employees and their customers. It is pro-free market legislation. It is bipartisan. It is really a commonsense repeal.

Frankly, it was hard for me to believe when I first discovered that we

have a law in the United States of America that says it is illegal for a bank to pay interest on a business checking account. I thought that was the business banks were in, as a matter of fact. But in fact it is hard to repeal a bad law in this country, and we have had this one on the books for about 70 years. Its repeal is long overdue. Today is our chance to do what we can do in the House to abolish this bill.

Now, if it goes into effect and is signed into law, the actual repeal happens 2 years from now. I would prefer it happen sooner than that, but this is the compromise that was arrived at. So that is certainly better than continuing with the legislation. But I would like to be precise about the net effect of this. Because it is not precisely that businesses will now start earning interest which heretofore they have not. In fact, what happens now is that banks have found these cumbersome and very inefficient ways to circumvent this prohibition. So they pay the economic equivalent of most of the interest that a business would earn, but because of the expense of administering these bureaucratic programs, the businesses do not get the full value of the deposits they have.

At the end of the day, we should not force banks and their customers to go through a lot of expensive and inefficient and economically unproductive hurdles to avoid a regulation that has no merit in the first place. So that is why we are here, to repeal this.

Mr. Speaker, I thank everybody who has been involved in supporting this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to vote "yes."

H.R. 758 contains a provision, section 7, entitled Rule of Construction, regarding escrow accounts maintained for purposes of settling real estate transactions. This provision is similar to section 7 of H.R. 1009, the Business Checking Freedom Act of 2002, a bill I sponsored that the House passed last year. Section 7 of H.R. 758 makes clear that the current legal treatment of certain services and benefits provided by banks in lieu of interest in connection with such escrow accounts remains the same. There are some minor changes to this section from section 7 of H.R. 1009, which clarify that the provision does not prohibit or require the payment of interest on such accounts and that it does not affect State laws regarding the payment of interest on escrow accounts. I understand the latter is intended to ensure that State laws governing mortgage servicing escrow accounts for the monthly collection and payment of taxes and insurance are maintained. In brief, section 7 does not alter the current legal definition of interest or the legal treatment of real estate settlement escrow transactions.

Under section 7, current Federal legal standards, including regulatory interpretations, regarding the definition of interest on deposits will continue to stand. For example, the Federal Reserve's Regulation Q currently provides that services and benefits can be given by banks in lieu of interest to depositors and that the provision or the receipt of such services and benefits does not constitute interest. This has been the Federal Reserve's consistent

regulatory and interpretive view for decades. For example, a Federal Reserve staff opinion in 1978 stated that the "absorption or reduction" of banking service changes did not constitute the payment of interest (Fed. Res. Bd. Staff Op., October 27, 1978), a view also reflected in a 1964 Fed. interpretative letter (1964 Fed. Res. Interp., July 17, 1964). Under these regulatory principles, title companies and agents receive bank services, such as free printed checks, overnight float and safe deposit and night depository facilities, armored car services, as well as low-interest loans, that help defray their cost of maintaining real estate settlement escrows, ultimately lowering the cost of these services to the public. Such accounts often times last only a few days, the time necessary for settlement payments and other disbursements to be made after the closing of a real estate transaction.

In our Nation's highly developed financial system, Federal banking law and regulations have operated to facilitate the smooth and efficient flow of real estate transactions and promoted American homeownership. I am optimistic that these services will continue to be provided in the current efficient manner when H.R. 758 becomes law.

Mr. MATHESON. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) to speak in favor of the legislation.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill, which is called the Business Checking Freedom Act; and I think giving banks the ability to pay interest on business checking accounts is a good concept. It has been endorsed by the President of the United States as part of his small business agenda, but it has also been endorsed by Federal regulators.

Federal regulators have long supported the effort to allow banks to offer interest on demand accounts, and this particular measure enjoys a broad base of support in the industry, including the National Federation of Independent Businesses, America's Community Bankers, the National Association of Federal Credit Unions, the Association of Financial Professionals, and the Financial Services Roundtable.

The inability of depository institutions to pay interest on business accounts, I think, hurts all sectors of the economy; and I think it decreases the overall competitiveness of the American markets. This legislation gives small businesses the jump-start that they need to create new jobs and improve the economy while removing burdensome regulations from small banks and, basically, while allowing the market to work.

In my view, this legislation is solely about business checking. In my view, it is not about the legal status of ILCs. I think contrary to the concerns raised by the Federal Reserve, the FDIC Chairman Don Powell, recently testified before our committee, testified that there are no safety and soundness concerns with this amendment and that the FDIC has no objection to an authorization for ILCs, or industrial

loan banks, to pay interest on NOW accounts held by businesses.

Mr. Speaker, I just thought I would quote Chairman Powell. He said, "The FDIC would not object to paying interest by these financial institutions on NOW accounts held by businesses. We do not really perceive those any different from any other business accounts, and we do not see it as a safety and soundness issue."

Further, with respect to any concern regarding the relationship between industrial loan banks and the few commercial companies that own them in four States, Chairman Powell stated in a speech to the American Bankers Association on October 8, 2002, that "Congress has given us good tools to manage the relationship between parents and insured subsidiaries.

□ 1315

"Indeed, the FDIC manages these relationships every day in the industrial loan company model with little or no risk to the deposit insurance funds, and no subsidy transferred to the nonbank parent."

Again, in my view, this bill is about business checking for depository institutions, not the legal status of ILCs. I want to commend the authors of this legislation, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

Mr. MATHESON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this is a piece of legislation that is overdue. The notion of eliminating interest on business checking accounts is something that seems like common sense. I was a small businessman before I came to Congress, and it never seemed to make sense to me is that this prohibition existed. We are talking about removing some inefficiencies that exist in our financial marketplace. That is why this legislation has such strong bipartisan support. I encourage Members to pass this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to address the issue of what this bill does and what it does not do. The bill authorizes the Federal Reserve to pay interest on sterile reserves, and as has been testified before our committee, that should result in depositors in banks, thrifts, credit unions, receiving higher interest on their deposits. It should also result in lower interest rates for consumers.

The second thing that this legislation does, it allows banks to pay interest on accounts established by businesses in those banks. It does not authorize any new types of accounts. It does not in any way change who can own a bank and who cannot own a bank. It does not in any way allow these industrial loan companies to offer accounts which they are prohibited from offering now. And they are

prohibited at the present time from offering demand deposit checking accounts; there is nothing in this legislation that allows them to offer those accounts.

The Bank Holding Company Act establishes the rules for who can own a bank and who cannot. We do not amend that legislation in any regard. The bill does not, with respect to the gentleman from Iowa, authorize Wal-Mart, WorldCom, Enron or any other company to own a bank or expand the authority that they might have under existing law. They already have authority under existing laws and under the Bank Holding Company Act, which specifically permits them to own certain limited-purpose banks, including credit card banks, industrial loan banks, grandfathered unitary thrifts, grandfathered nonbank banks, and trust banks. That is the present law.

There is nothing in this legislation that expands their right to own an institution. So WorldCom presently, Wal-Mart presently, they could own an industrial loan company or a unitary thrift, or some of these grandfathered institutions. We do not expand that authority at all.

The gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) has a fear, first of all, that we are mixing banking and commerce. Well, we are already mixing them. Present law already allows them to mix. We do not expand that in any way under this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, we addressed the amendments of the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH); he offered two amendments in committee. And I have great respect for the former chairman of the committee. He offered two amendments to strip the ILC language from the bill. They were overwhelmingly rejected, 55 nays, 8 yeases; the other amendment, 55 nays, 8 yeases. The gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) has legitimate concern with certain types of commerce and financial institutions and the mixing of them. However, this legislation does not do that. That will have to be addressed in the Bank Holding Act.

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BACHUS. I yield to the gentleman from Iowa.

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the gentleman, and he is right about what companies can now do. However, what is not fully described is that they will now be able to buy a charter with an enhanced set of powers, which has not been offered before. It is the enhanced power of this obscure charter that makes this legislation difficult, and that is my concern.

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, does the gentleman agree that an industrial loan company can already offer a NOW account?

Mr. LEACH. If the gentleman will continue to yield, for the first time, they will be allowed to offer business checking accounts, which has never

been done before. Chairman Greenspan has noted this will cause an ILC to become the functional equivalent of a bank, and such charters will only be authorized in a handful of States, and thus will cause the movement of assets to those States.

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, what Chairman Greenspan has said is, these institutions are not regulated by the Federal Reserve. There is nothing in this that takes any regulation or adds any regulation.

Mr. LEACH. That is true. My amendment did not suggest that it be regulated by the Federal Reserve, although other amendments I offered did suggest that.

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, this does not authorize them to offer any accounts which they presently cannot offer nor expand the rights of corporations to own these industrial companies.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, as a co-sponsor of H.R. 758, I want to express my strong support for this legislation, the Business Checking Freedom Act of 2003, legislation designed to help small businesses obtain a better return on their checking account deposits and to permit banks to receive interest on the reserves they must maintain at Federal Reserve Banks. The House has passed similar legislation in the past few years and it should take the same action regarding this bill.

In addition to expressing my support for the bill as a whole, I also want to express specific support for section 7, entitled Rule of Construction, which will help maintain the legal status quo of the treatment of real estate escrow accounts maintained for the purpose of settling real estate transactions. These accounts, which often last only a matter of days, are usually established by title companies and their agents to collect and disburse funds after the closing of a real estate transaction. This Rule of Construction provision, similar to language in H.R. 1009 passed by the House in April 2002, ensures that neither this legislation nor other laws will affect the current regulatory treatment of certain services and benefits provided by banks in lieu of interest on escrow accounts maintained by title insurance companies and title agents in connection with real estate closing transactions. The inclusion of section 7 in H.R. 758 preserves beneficial financial practices for escrow accounts at the same time that we are eliminating an outdated prohibition against the payment of interest on business checking accounts.

As a co-sponsor of this legislation, I wholeheartedly endorse and support its passage.

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BACHUS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 758, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

COCONINO AND TONTO NATIONAL FOREST LAND EXCHANGE ACT

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 622) to provide for the exchange of certain lands in the Coconino and Tonto National Forests in Arizona, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 622

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FINDINGS; PURPOSE.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) Certain private lands adjacent to the Montezuma Castle National Monument in Yavapai County, Arizona, are desirable for Federal acquisition to protect important riparian values along Beaver Creek and the scenic backdrop for the National Monument.

(2) Certain other inholdings in the Coconino National Forest are desirable for Federal acquisition to protect important public values near Double Cabin Park.

(3) Approximately 108 acres of land within the Tonto National Forest, northeast of Payson, Arizona, are currently occupied by 45 residential cabins under special use permits from the Secretary of Agriculture, and have been so occupied since the mid-1950s, rendering such lands of limited use and enjoyment potential for the general public. Such lands are, therefore, appropriate for transfer to the cabin owners in exchange for lands that will have higher public use values.

(4) In return for the privatization of such encumbered lands the Secretary of Agriculture has been offered approximately 495 acres of non-Federal land (known as the Q Ranch) within the Tonto National Forest, east of Young, Arizona, in an area where the Secretary has completed previous land exchanges to consolidate public ownership of National Forest lands.

(5) The acquisition of the Q Ranch non-Federal lands by the Secretary will greatly increase National Forest management efficiency and promote public access, use, and enjoyment of the area and surrounding National Forest System lands.

(b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to authorize, direct, facilitate, and expedite the consummation of the land exchanges set forth herein in accordance with the terms and conditions of this Act.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

As used in this Act:

(1) DPSHA.—The term “DPSHA” means the Diamond Point Summer Homes Association, a nonprofit corporation in the State of Arizona.

(2) FEDERAL LAND.—The term “Federal land” means land to be conveyed into non-Federal ownership under this Act.

(3) FLPMA.—The term “FLPMA” means the Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976.

(4) MCJV.—The term “MCJV” means the Montezuma Castle Land Exchange Joint Venture Partnership, an Arizona Partnership.

(5) NON-FEDERAL LAND.—The term “non-Federal land” means land to be conveyed to the Secretary of Agriculture under this Act.

(6) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Agriculture, unless otherwise specified.

SEC. 3. MONTEZUMA CASTLE LAND EXCHANGE.

(a) LAND EXCHANGE.—Upon receipt of a binding offer from MCJV to convey title acceptable to the Secretary to the land described in subsection (b), the Secretary shall convey to MCJV all right, title, and interest

of the United States in and to the Federal land described in subsection (c).

(b) NON-FEDERAL.—The land described in this subsection is the following:

(1) The approximately 157 acres of land adjacent to the Montezuma Castle National Monument, as generally depicted on the map entitled “Montezuma Castle Contiguous Lands”, dated May 2002.

(2) Certain private land within the Coconino National Forest, Arizona, comprising approximately 108 acres, as generally depicted on the map entitled “Double Cabin Park Lands”, dated September 2002.

(c) FEDERAL LAND.—The Federal land described in this subsection is the approximately 222 acres in the Tonto National Forest, Arizona, and surveyed as Lots 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, and Tract 40 in section 32, Township 11 North, Range 10 East, Gila and Salt River Meridian, Arizona.

(d) EQUAL VALUE EXCHANGE.—The values of the non-Federal and Federal land directed to be exchanged under this section shall be equal or equalized as determined by the Secretary through an appraisal performed by a qualified appraiser mutually agreed to by the Secretary and MCJV and performed in conformance with the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions (U.S. Department of Justice, December 2000), and section 206(d) of the FLPMA (43 U.S.C. 1716(d)). If the values are not equal, the Secretary shall delete Federal lots from the conveyance to MCJV in the following order and priority, as necessary, until the values of Federal and non-Federal land are within the 25 percent cash equalization limit of 206(b) of FLPMA:

(1) Lot 3.

(2) Lot 4.

(3) Lot 9.

(4) Lot 10.

(5) Lot 11.

(6) Lot 8.

(e) CASH EQUALIZATION.—Any difference in value remaining after compliance with subsection (d) shall be equalized by the payment of cash to the Secretary or MCJV, as the circumstances dictate, in accordance with section 206(b) of FLPMA (43 U.S.C. 1716(b)). Public Law 90-171 (16 U.S.C. 484a; commonly known as the “Sisk Act”) shall, without further appropriation, apply to any cash equalization payment received by the United States under this section.

SEC. 4. DIAMOND POINT—Q RANCH LAND EXCHANGE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Upon receipt of a binding offer from DPSHA to convey title acceptable to the Secretary to the land described in subsection (b), the Secretary shall convey to DPSHA all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to the land described in subsection (c).

(b) NON-FEDERAL LAND.—The land described in this subsection is the approximately 495 acres of non-Federal land generally depicted on the map entitled “Diamond Point Exchange—Q Ranch Non-Federal Lands”, dated May 2002.

(c) FEDERAL LAND.—The Federal land described in this subsection is the approximately 108 acres northeast of Payson, Arizona, as generally depicted on a map entitled “Diamond Point Exchange—Federal Land”, dated May 2002.

(d) EQUAL VALUE EXCHANGE.—The values of the non-Federal and Federal land directed to be exchanged under this section shall be equal or equalized as determined by the Secretary through an appraisal performed by a qualified appraiser mutually agreed to by the Secretary and DPSHA and in conformance with the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions (U.S. Department of Justice, December 2000), and section 206(d) of FLPMA (43 U.S.C. 1716(d)). If the

values are not equal, they shall be equalized by the payment of cash to the Secretary or DPSHA pursuant to section 206(b) of FLPMA (43 U.S.C. 1716(b)). Public Law 90-171 (16 U.S.C. 484a; commonly known as the "Sisk Act") shall, without further appropriation, apply to any cash equalization payment received by the United States under this section.

(e) SPECIAL USE PERMIT TERMINATION.—Upon execution of the land exchange authorized by this section, all special use cabin permits on the Federal land shall be terminated.

SEC. 5. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS.

(a) EXCHANGE TIMETABLE.—Not later than 6 months after the Secretary receives an offer under section 3 or 4, the Secretary shall execute the exchange under section 3 or 4, respectively, unless the Secretary and MCJV or DPSHA, respectively, mutually agree to extend such deadline.

(b) EXCHANGE PROCESSING.—Prior to executing the land exchanges authorized by this Act, the Secretary shall perform any necessary land surveys and required preexchange clearances, reviews, and approvals relating to threatened and endangered species, cultural and historic resources, wetlands and floodplains and hazardous materials. If 1 or more of the Federal land parcels or lots, or portions thereof, cannot be transferred to MCJV or DPSHA due to hazardous materials, threatened or endangered species, cultural or historic resources, or wetland and flood plain problems, the parcel or lot, or portion thereof, shall be deleted from the exchange, and the values of the lands to be exchanged adjusted in accordance with subsections (d) and (e) of section 3 or section 4(d), as appropriate. In order to save administrative costs to the United States, the costs of performing such work, including the appraisals required pursuant to this Act, shall be paid by MCJV or DPSHA for the relevant property, except for the costs of any such work (including appraisal reviews and approvals) that the Secretary is required or elects to have performed by employees of the Department of Agriculture.

(c) FEDERAL LAND RESERVATIONS AND ENCUMBRANCES.—The Secretary shall convey the Federal land under this Act subject to valid existing rights, including easements, rights-of-way, utility lines and any other valid encumbrances on the Federal land as of the date of the conveyance under this Act. If applicable to the land conveyed, the Secretary shall also retain any right of access as may be required by section 120(h) of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980 (42 U.S.C. 9620(h)) for remedial or corrective action relating to hazardous substances as may be necessary in the future.

(d) ADMINISTRATION OF ACQUIRED LAND.—The land acquired by the Secretary pursuant to this Act shall become part of the Tonto or Coconino National Forest, as appropriate, and be administered as such in accordance with the laws, rules, and regulations generally applicable to the National Forest System. Such land may be made available for domestic livestock grazing if determined appropriate by the Secretary in accordance with the laws, rules, and regulations applicable thereto on National Forest System land.

(e) TRANSFER OF LAND TO PARK SERVICE.—Upon their acquisition by the United States, the "Montezuma Castle Contiguous Lands" identified in section 3(d)(1) shall be transferred to the administrative jurisdiction of the National Park Service, and shall thereafter be permanently incorporated in, and administered by the Secretary of the Interior as part of, the Montezuma Castle National Monument.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI) and the gentlewoman from Guam (Mr. BORDALLO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI).

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 622 would require the Secretary of Agriculture to perform two land exchanges in the Tonto and Coconino National Forests in Arizona, the Montezuma Castle Land Exchange and the Diamond Point Land Exchange. With the help of the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH), I introduced this legislation on February 5, 2003.

First, under the Montezuma Castle Land Exchange, the Forest Service would acquire a 157-acre parcel of private land adjacent to Montezuma Castle National Monument, which it may reconvey to the National Park Service, and the 143-acre Double Cabin Park parcel, both in the Coconino National Forest. In the exchange, the Montezuma Castle Land Exchange Joint Venture, an Arizona partnership, will receive approximately 122 acres of National Forest system land adjacent to the Town of Payson municipal airport. The Town of Payson has entered into an agreement to purchase a portion of the property to create a private-sector business development and job opportunities. This exchange will protect riparian areas around Beaver Creek, the view-shed for the National Monument, and it will transfer Double Cabin Park to Federal ownership.

Second, under the Diamond Point Land Exchange, the Forest Service will receive a 495-acre parcel known as the "Q Ranch" in an area which has completed previous acquisitions and consolidated Federal land. In exchange, the Diamond Point Summer Homes Association will acquire 108 acres of Federal land which have been occupied by the association's 45 residential cabins since the 1950s. The Tonto National Forest Plan specifically recommends conveyance of the Federal land to the cabin owners.

The exchange will transfer public land of limited public use to the association in exchange for private lands that will greatly increase the management efficiency and enhance public use, access and the enjoyment of the surrounding National Forest lands. Both exchanges have multiple benefits, enhancing environmental protection and recreation, while also increasing economic opportunities for the community.

H.R. 622 is the result of almost a decade of cooperative efforts between local officials and the Forest Service and is based on a balanced solution to responsibly use the land and conserve this area. I urge adoption of this measure.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Ms. BORDALLO asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 622, the Tonto and Coconino National Forest Land Exchange Act, would direct the Secretary of Agriculture to complete two separate land exchanges, Diamond Point and Montezuma Castle in Arizona. The Secretary already has the authority to consummate the land exchanges, but the amendment would expedite the transactions and make them a priority for the Secretary. I support the bill and urge its adoption.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 622.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REASONABLE RIGHT-OF-WAY FEES ACT OF 2003

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 762) to amend the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 and the Mineral Leasing Act to clarify the method by which the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture determine the fair market value of certain rights-of-way granted, issued, or renewed under these Acts.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 762

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Reasonable Right-of-Way Fees Act of 2003".

SEC. 2. CLARIFICATION OF FAIR MARKET RENTAL VALUE DETERMINATIONS FOR PUBLIC LANDS AND FOREST SERVICE RIGHTS-OF-WAY.

(a) LINEAR RIGHTS-OF-WAY UNDER FEDERAL LAND POLICY AND MANAGEMENT ACT.—Section 504 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1764) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(k) DETERMINATION OF FAIR MARKET VALUE OF LINEAR RIGHTS-OF-WAY.—(1) Effective upon the issuance of the rules required by paragraph (2), for purposes of subsection (g), the Secretary concerned shall determine the fair market rental for the use of land encumbered by a linear right-of-way granted, issued, or renewed under this title using the valuation method described in paragraphs (2), (3), and (4).

"(2) Not later than one year after the date of enactment of the Reasonable Right-of-Way Fees Act of 2003, and in accordance with subsection (k), the Secretary of the Interior shall amend section 2803.1-2 of title 43, Code of Federal Regulations, as in effect on the date of enactment of such Act, to revise the

per acre rental fee zone value schedule by State, county, and type of linear right-of-way use to reflect current values of land in each zone. The Secretary of Agriculture shall make the same revisions for linear rights-of-way granted, issued, or renewed under this title on National Forest System lands.

“(3) The Secretary concerned shall update annually the schedule revised under paragraph (2) by multiplying the current year’s rental per acre by the annual change, second quarter to the second quarter (June 30 to June 30) in the Gross National Product Implicit Price Deflator Index published in the Survey of Current Business of the Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

“(4) Whenever the cumulative change in the index referred to in paragraph (3) exceeds 30 percent, or the change in the 3-year average of the 1-year Treasury interest rate used to determine per acre rental fee zone values exceeds plus or minus 50 percent, the Secretary concerned shall conduct a review of the zones and rental per acre figures to determine whether the value of Federal land has differed sufficiently from the index referred to in paragraph (3) to warrant a revision in the base zones and rental per acre figures. If, as a result of the review, the Secretary concerned determines that such a revision is warranted, the Secretary concerned shall revise the base zones and rental per acre figures accordingly.”

(b) RIGHTS-OF-WAY UNDER MINERAL LEASING ACT.—Section 28(l) of the Mineral Leasing Act (30 U.S.C. 185(l)) is amended by inserting before the period at the end the following: “using the valuation method described in section 2803.1-2 of title 43, Code of Federal Regulations, as revised pursuant to section 504(k) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1764(k))”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI) and the gentlewoman from Guam (Mr. BORDALLO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI).

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Wyoming (Mrs. CUBIN).

Mrs. CUBIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 762, the Reasonable Right-of-Way Fees Act of 2003, which I introduced February 13, 2003.

□ 1330

This bill will help to facilitate the deployment of critical infrastructure to States that are made up largely of Federal lands, such as Wyoming and almost every western State. While exploring ways to bring advanced telecommunications services and pipeline infrastructure to Wyoming, I found that Federal land management agencies were considering ways which would actually discourage deployment of critical infrastructure. The Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service had started down a road to abandon a commonsense right-of-way fee schedule that had been in place for many years by charging a per-line fee for fiberoptic deployment instead of a fee based on linear footage of the pipe. In other words, when fiberoptics were

being deployed to rural areas, the agencies wanted to charge a right-of-way fee for every single line that went down the pipe which would obviously make it financially impossible to deploy fiberoptics to rural areas. My bill ensures that rights-of-way fees are reasonable and that private users of public lands pay a fair price for that privilege.

This bill creates a policy that protects the value of our Federal lands and at the same time helps to ensure that these Federal lands continue to be available to a multitude of compatible uses. This bill will not increase the environmental impact of the rights-of-way corridors, nor will it reduce any environmental monitoring. I am confident as we work to place the Reasonable Right-of-Way Fee Act into law that there is little public interest in turning our Federal lands into roadblocks on the information superhighway or along the path of any of our Nation’s critical infrastructures.

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Ms. BORDALLO asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, investigations conducted by the Department of the Interior’s Inspector General and the General Accounting Office have provided ample evidence that the right-of-way fees currently being charged by the Federal land management agencies are far below fair market values. States, local governments, and private individuals all charge significantly more than the Federal Government for rights-of-way across lands that they own. This undercharging for the use of Federal public lands means that large corporations, who stand to make vast profits from the use of those lands, are not being required to pay the American people a fair rate of return for that privilege.

As a result, we share, the gentlewoman from Wyoming’s desire to correct this problem. This legislation will require the agencies to review their existing fee schedules and the land valuations which underlie them to ensure that they represent current values. In addition, Mr. Speaker, this measure will ensure that once these new fees have been promulgated, they will be adjusted annually for inflation. This approach is a significant improvement over the status quo and should move us closer to a system that adequately compensates the taxpayers for the use of their lands.

We would like to thank the gentlewoman from Wyoming (Mrs. CUBIN) for her willingness to work together on this legislation, and we do support H.R. 762.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI) that the House

suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 762.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

OTTAWA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPLEX EXPANSION AND DETROIT RIVER INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE EXPANSION ACT

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 289) to expand the boundaries of the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 289

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex Expansion and Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Expansion Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) the western basin of Lake Erie, as part of the Great Lakes ecosystem—

(A) is the largest freshwater ecosystem in the world; and

(B) is vitally important to the economic and environmental future of the United States;

(2) over the 30-year period preceding the date of enactment of this Act, the citizens and governmental institutions of the United States and Canada have devoted increasing attention and resources to the restoration of the water quality and fisheries of the Great Lakes, including the western basin;

(3) that increased awareness has been accompanied by a gradual shift toward a holistic ecosystem approach that highlights a growing recognition that shoreline areas, commonly referred to as nearshore terrestrial ecosystems, are an integral part of the western basin and the Great Lakes ecosystem;

(4) the Great Lakes account for more than 90 percent of the surface freshwater in the United States;

(5) the western basin receives approximately 90 percent of its flow from the Detroit River and only approximately 10 percent from tributaries;

(6) the western basin is an important ecosystem that includes a number of distinct islands, channels, rivers, and shoals that support dense populations of fish, wildlife, and aquatic plants;

(7) coastal wetland of Lake Erie supports the largest diversity of plant and wildlife species in the Great Lakes;

(8) because Lake Erie is located at a more southern latitude than other Great Lakes, the moderate climate of Lake Erie is appropriate for many species that are not found in or along the northern Great Lakes;

(9) more than 300 species of plants, including 37 significant species, have been identified in the aquatic and wetland habitats of the western basin;

(10) the shallow western basin of Lake Erie, extending from the Lower Detroit River to Sandusky Bay, is home to the greatest concentration of marshes in Lake Erie, including—

(A) Mouille, Metzger, and Magee marshes;
 (B) the Maumee Bay wetland complex;
 (C) the wetland complexes flanking Locust Point; and

(D) the wetland in Sandusky Bay;
 (11) the larger islands of the United States in western Lake Erie have wetland in small embayments;

(12) the wetland in the western basin comprises some of the most important waterfowl habitat in the Great Lakes;

(13) waterfowl, wading birds, shore birds, gulls and terns, raptors, and perching birds use the wetland in the western basin for migration, nesting, and feeding;

(14) hundreds of thousands of diving ducks stop to rest in the Lake Erie area during autumn migration from Canada to points east and south;

(15) the wetland of the western basin provides a major stopover for ducks, such as migrating bufflehead, common goldeneye, common mergansers, and ruddy duck;

(16) the international importance of Lake Erie is indicated in the United States by congressional designation of the Ottawa and Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuges;

(17)(A) Lake Erie has an international reputation for walleye, perch, and bass fishing, recreational boating, birding, photography, and duck hunting; and

(B) on an economic basis, tourism in the Lake Erie area accounts for an estimated \$1,500,000,000 in retail sales and more than 50,000 jobs;

(18)(A) many of the 417,000 boats that are registered in the State of Ohio are used in the western basin, in part to fish for the estimated 10,000,000 walleye that migrate from the lake to spawn; and

(B) that internationally renowned walleye fishery drives much of the \$2,000,000,000 sport fishing industry in the State of Ohio;

(19) coastal wetland in the western basin has been subjected to intense pressure for 150 years;

(20) prior to 1850, the western basin was part of an extensive coastal marsh and swamp system consisting of approximately 122,000 hectares that comprised a portion of the Great Black Swamp;

(21) by 1951, only 12,407 wetland hectares remained in the western basin;

(22) 50 percent of that acreage was destroyed between 1972 and 1987, leaving only approximately 5,000 hectares in existence today;

(23) along the Michigan shoreline, coastal wetland was reduced by 62 percent between 1916 and the early 1970s;

(24) the development of the city of Monroe, Michigan, has had a particularly significant impact on the coastal wetland at the mouth of the Raisin River;

(25) only approximately 100 hectares remain physically unaltered today in an area in which, 70 years ago, marshes were 10 times more extensive;

(26) in addition to the actual loss of coastal wetland acreage along the shores of Lake Erie, the quality of much remaining dike wetland has been degraded by numerous stressors, especially excessive loadings of sediments and nutrients, contaminants, shoreline modification, exotic species, and the diking of wetland; and

(27) protective peninsula beach systems, such as the former Bay Point and Woodtick, at the border of Ohio and Michigan near the mouth of the Ottawa River and Maumee Bay, have been eroded over the years, exacerbating erosion along the shorelines and negatively affecting breeding and spawning grounds.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) INTERNATIONAL REFUGE.—The term “International Refuge” means the Detroit

River International Wildlife Refuge established by section 5(a) of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Establishment Act (16 U.S.C. 668dd note; 115 Stat. 894).

(2) REFUGE COMPLEX.—The term “Refuge Complex” means the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex and the lands and waters in the complex, as described in the document entitled “The Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex” and dated September 22, 2000, including—

(A) the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, established by the Secretary in accordance with the Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 715 et seq.);

(B) the West Sister Island National Wildlife Refuge established by Executive Order No. 7937, dated August 2, 1937; and

(C) the Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge established by the Secretary in accordance with the Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 715 et seq.).

(3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

(4) WESTERN BASIN.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The term “western basin” means the western basin of Lake Erie, consisting of the land and water in the watersheds of Lake Erie extending from the watershed of the Lower Detroit River in the State of Michigan to and including Sandusky Bay and the watershed of Sandusky Bay in the State of Ohio.

(B) INCLUSION.—The term “western basin” includes the Bass Island archipelago in the State of Ohio.

SEC. 4. EXPANSION OF BOUNDARIES.

(a) REFUGE COMPLEX BOUNDARIES.—

(1) EXPANSION.—The boundaries of the Refuge Complex are expanded to include land and water in the State of Ohio from the eastern boundary of Maumee Bay State Park to the eastern boundary of the Darby Unit (including the Bass Island archipelago), as depicted on the map entitled “Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex Expansion and Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Expansion Act” and dated September 6, 2002.

(2) AVAILABILITY OF MAP.—The map referred to in paragraph (1) shall be available for inspection in appropriate offices of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

(b) BOUNDARY REVISIONS.—The Secretary may make such revisions of the boundaries of the Refuge Complex as the Secretary determines to be appropriate to facilitate the acquisition of property within the Refuge Complex.

(c) ACQUISITION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2), the Secretary may acquire by donation, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, or exchange the land and water, and interests in land and water (including conservation easements), within the boundaries of the Refuge Complex.

(2) MANNER OF ACQUISITION.—Any and all acquisitions of land or waters under the provisions of this Act shall be made in a voluntary manner and shall not be the result of forced takings.

(d) TRANSFERS FROM OTHER AGENCIES.—Administrative jurisdiction over any Federal property that is located within the boundaries of the Refuge Complex and under the administrative jurisdiction of an agency of the United States other than the Department of the Interior may, with the concurrence of the head of the administering agency, be transferred without consideration to the Secretary for the purpose of this Act.

(e) STUDY OF ASSOCIATED AREA.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, acting through the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, shall conduct a study of fish and wildlife habitat and aquatic

and terrestrial communities in and around the 2 dredge spoil disposal sites that are—

(A) referred to by the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority as “Port Authority Facility Number Three” and “Grassy Island”, respectively; and

(B) located within Toledo Harbor near the mouth of the Maumee River.

(2) REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of the Act, the Secretary shall—

(A) complete the study under paragraph (1); and

(B) submit to Congress a report on the results of the study.

SEC. 5. EXPANSION OF INTERNATIONAL REFUGE BOUNDARIES.

The southern boundary of the International Refuge is extended south to include additional land and water in the State of Michigan located east of Interstate Route 75, extending from the southern boundary of Sterling State Park to the Ohio State boundary, as depicted on the map referred to in section 4(a)(1).

SEC. 6. ADMINISTRATION.

(A) REFUGE COMPLEX.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall administer all federally owned land, water, and interests in land and water that are located within the boundaries of the Refuge Complex in accordance with—

(A) the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.); and

(B) this Act.

(2) ADDITIONAL AUTHORITY.—The Secretary may use such additional statutory authority available to the Secretary for the conservation of fish and wildlife, and the provision of opportunities for fish- and wildlife-dependent recreation, as the Secretary determines to be appropriate to carry out this Act.

(b) ADDITIONAL PURPOSES.—In addition to the purposes of the Refuge Complex under other laws, regulations, executive orders, and comprehensive conservation plans, the Refuge Complex shall be managed—

(1) to strengthen and complement existing resource management, conservation, and education programs and activities at the Refuge Complex in a manner consistent with the primary purposes of the Refuge Complex—

(A) to provide major resting, feeding, and wintering habitats for migratory birds and other wildlife; and

(B) to enhance national resource conservation and management in the western basin;

(2) in partnership with nongovernmental and private organizations and private individuals dedicated to habitat enhancement, to conserve, enhance, and restore the native aquatic and terrestrial community characteristics of the western basin (including associated fish, wildlife, and plant species);

(3) to facilitate partnerships among the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Canadian national and provincial authorities, State and local governments, local communities in the United States and Canada, conservation organizations, and other non-Federal entities to promote public awareness of the resources of the western basin; and

(4) to advance the collective goals and priorities that—

(A) were established in the report entitled “Great Lakes Strategy 2002—A Plan for the New Millennium”, developed by the United States Policy Committee, comprised of Federal agencies (including the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the United States Geological Survey, the Forest Service, and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission) and State governments and tribal governments in the Great Lakes basin; and

(B) include the goals of cooperating to protect and restore the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Great Lakes basin ecosystem.

(c) **PRIORITY USES.**—In providing opportunities for compatible fish- and wildlife-dependent recreation, the Secretary, in accordance with paragraphs (3) and (4) of section 4(a) of the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)), shall ensure that hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation are the priority public uses of the Refuge Complex.

(d) **COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS REGARDING NON-FEDERAL LAND.**—To promote public awareness of the resources of the western basin and encourage public participation in the conservation of those resources, the Secretary may enter into cooperative agreements with the State of Ohio or Michigan, any political subdivision of the State, or any person for the management, in a manner consistent with this Act, of land that—

(1) is owned by the State, political subdivision, or person; and

(2) is located within the boundaries of the Refuge Complex.

SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as are necessary—

(1) to acquire land and water within the Refuge Complex under section 4(c);

(2) to carry out the study under section 4(e); and

(3) to develop, operate, and maintain the Refuge Complex.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI) and the gentlewoman from Guam (Ms. BORDALLO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI).

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. H.R. 289, introduced by the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), would expand the boundaries of two refuges in Ohio and Michigan. This measure has been thoroughly reviewed; and it has been endorsed by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the Toledo Chamber of Commerce, the local port authorities, and Ducks Unlimited. Once enacted, this expansion should help to conserve wintering habitat for migratory birds, enhance the natural resources of Lake Erie, and ensure that thousands of sportsmen will have an opportunity to enjoy wildlife-dependent recreation, including fishing, hunting, trapping and wildlife observation. All land acquired by the Federal Government must be obtained in a voluntary manner and absolutely no private property can be added to either refuge as a result of a forced taking.

I urge an "aye" vote on this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Ms. BORDALLO asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, as noted by the previous speaker, the

overall purpose of this legislation is to authorize the expansion of the existing Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge complex in Ohio and to extend the southern boundary of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge in Michigan. The overarching goal is to protect and, where possible, to enhance the remaining wetlands and other aquatic habitats within the western basin of Lake Erie. This region provides critical migratory waterfowl habitat and supports the most significant recreational fishery in the entire Great Lakes.

I commend the bill's sponsors, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), for their ingenuity in developing a long-term conservation strategy to protect this regional treasure. They have worked tirelessly to adjust the acquisition boundaries set forth by this legislation so that they meet the priorities of the other body, the States of Ohio and Michigan, and the interests of local stakeholders. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has expressed some concern regarding the scope of the proposed boundaries and about possible impingement on existing management activities. However, considering that the service has proposed its own 5,000-acre expansion of the Ottawa Refuge and also, Mr. Speaker, recognizing that any future acquisition at either refuge will be done on a voluntary basis, H.R. 289 will ensure that future expansion is undertaken to enhance existing refuge resources, to complement operations, and to protect critical habitat areas.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the fish and wildlife resources found in the western basin of Lake Erie are cherished by millions of sportsmen and women. H.R. 289 is innovative legislation necessary to protect this heritage, and it deserves our support.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR), the ranking member on the agriculture appropriations subcommittee who has worked so diligently on this legislation on behalf of her district and the entire Lake Erie region.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Guam (Ms. BORDALLO) and the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI) for allocating time so that I might speak on behalf of H.R. 289, which would expand the boundaries, as they have said, of two national wildlife refuges along the north coast, the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge in Ohio and the Lower Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge in Michigan. Obviously, we are one of the few American flyways that remain.

The bill that is before us today is identical to a measure that passed by unanimous consent here on the House floor late in the 107th Congress. But because of inaction by the other body it was unable to be sent to the President for signature. I would like to thank the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST) and the gentleman from

New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE), chairman and ranking member of the Fisheries Subcommittee, for their assistance, and also chairman and ranking member of the Committee on Resources, the gentleman from California (Mr. POMBO) and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL), for their efforts as well. We deeply appreciate the support they have given on a bipartisan basis throughout.

This bill is modeled on the legislation of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) to create the Lower Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Obviously, our region is right next to Canada, and it builds on the remarkable success of that effort. Let me emphasize that this bill facilitates only voluntary actions. Voluntary cooperation is the byword. Our bill explicitly prohibits any forced takings. It does not force any private landowner or the Federal Government to do anything that both parties are not willing to do. What it does do is create a mechanism and a boundary, again drawing upon the success of the Lower Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, to foster cooperation and teamwork to promote conservation and the national wildlife refuge system.

The bill facilitates a process by which our U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can either purchase land or accept donations of land and conservation easements from willing parties, corporations, nonprofit organizations and individuals. That is well under way in the lower Detroit as I speak. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, which is a part of this, was created in 1961 originally when local conservation and hunting clubs donated pristine Lake Erie marshland to the Federal Government and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The bill enjoys broad and deep support in northern Ohio along the north coast from conservation groups, wildlife groups, and as the gentleman from Arizona mentioned Ducks Unlimited, and local governments. It is supported by the State of Ohio and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

Mr. Speaker, this year we are celebrating as a Nation the 100th anniversary of the national wildlife refuge system that was created by the vision of President Theodore Roosevelt. During this centennial year, obviously the north coast is very grateful to be included. H.R. 289 will help us raise the profile of the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, the Lake Erie marshlands and also the Lake Erie islands so that more Americans and people from throughout the world can enjoy their natural splendor.

The refuge now attracts over 130,000 visitors a year, hunters, fishermen, photographers, birders, hikers, artists and schoolchildren. We expect that number to increase dramatically. I might say as a result of our recognition of our dependence on our natural system, when we first began work in this region of our country, we had but

two or three nesting pairs of eagles that were left in our region of the country. That is now up over 84 nesting pairs of eagles. We expect those numbers to increase in ensuing years as well.

We see the natural wonders of the Lake Erie marshlands as an economic boon to our north coast region through ecotourism, which is expanding. We want families to enjoy the roller coasters at Cedar Point in Sandusky and then drive a few miles west to see the bald eagles at the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge. We want tourists to enjoy some of the greatest fishing on Earth. I would like to say that I represent the bathtub of the Great Lakes. We have more fish and more swimmers than any other part of the region, or anyplace in the world, in the central and western basins of Lake Erie and also some of the greatest bird watching in the world as well.

H.R. 289 will help us build on this momentum, not only for Ottawa but also for the Lower Detroit International Wildlife Refuge. I want to personally express my deep gratitude to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), seniority number one here in the House, for his leadership for our entire region.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Members to vote "yes" on H.R. 289.

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 289.

This proposal has been the subject of two congressional hearings. We have heard from a diverse group of witnesses testifying in strong support of expanding the boundaries of these two existing refuges. One of those witnesses is the director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. In his statement, Mr. Samuel Speck noted that this measure will "ensure an abundance of ecological and conservation improvements that will truly benefit this "Great Lake" and the millions of Americans who benefit from it".

The fundamental goal of H.R. 289 is to conserve the wetland resources of the western basin of Lake Erie. This shallow body of water is, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, the 11th largest fresh water lake in the world and it has the most productive fishing habitat in all of the Great Lakes.

While sadly more than 98 percent of the original wetlands in Northwest Ohio have been lost, the remaining 12,500 acres provide irreplaceable habitat for 325 species of birds, 300 species of plants and 43 fish species. In fact, the western basin is used by 70 percent of the black ducks that migrate in the Mississippi flyway and it provides nesting habit for 79 breeding pairs of bald eagles.

The remaining wetlands should be protected and the most effective way to accomplish that goal is to include available habitat within the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Furthermore, it is my hope that by expanding these refuges, all interested parties will work together to devise a comprehensive strategy to protect and restore the physical and biological integrity of the Lake Erie western basin ecosystem.

I urge an "aye" vote and I compliment my colleagues MARCY KAPTUR and JOHN DINGELL for proposing this innovative legislation.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 289, legislation that I co-authored with the distinguished gentlewoman from Toledo, Ms. KAPTUR. This important fish and wildlife conservation measure will expand the boundaries of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge to encompass important lands in Southeastern Michigan and Northern Ohio. It is of immense importance to the people of Southeast Michigan and our neighbors to the South in Ohio.

I would like to thank Chairman GILCHREST and Ranking Member PALLONE for their leadership and their assistance. I would also like to thank the Chairman of the full Committee, RICHARD POMBO, and Ranking Member NICK RAHALL, for their assistance is shepherding this bill to the floor. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, in 2001, thanks to the leadership of the Resources Committee and the support from local grassroots organizations, conservation groups, state and local governments, as well as our Canadian neighbors, we were able to create the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Our refuge on the Detroit River is already demonstrating how—working as a team—federal, state, and local officials in the United States and Canada, can work with businesses, conservationists and private citizens to preserve our remaining wildlife habitat along the River and improve the quality of life. H.R. 289 builds on that success, expanding the refuge south into Ohio, to protect the Lake Erie shoreline.

The lands we are talking about encompass an area of tremendous bio-diversity, with unique geological features and a wide variety of plant life that attracts numerous species of fish, birds, and waterfowl.

In the Great Lakes region, there is a tremendous urgency to protect our remaining high-quality habitats before they are lost to further development. We must also do our utmost to rehabilitate and enhance degraded habitat. This is essential to sustain the quality of life enjoyed by the people living along the Detroit River and the Lake Erie corridor.

The Western basin of Lake Erie is vitally important to the economic and environmental future of the United States. In the 1970s and 1980s, the ecological health of Lake Erie was a running joke—fisherman derisively renamed Lake Erie "The Dead Sea." Water quality was poor, and fish and wildlife suffered as a result.

But in the past two decades, the citizens and governmental institutions of both the United States and Canada have devoted increasing attention and resources to the restoration of the water quality and the fisheries of the Great Lakes, including the Western basin. Numerous grassroots environmental and conservation organizations have worked dutifully to address environmental degradation in the region. I am happy to say that these efforts have been successful, though there is still much more that must be done.

The coastal wetlands of Lake Erie support the largest diversity of plant and wildlife species in the Great Lakes. More than 320 species of birds and 43 species of fish have been identified in the aquatic and wetland habitats of the Western basin. The shallow Western basin is home to the largest concentration of marshes in Lake Erie, which makes it a major migratory bird corridor. Seventy percent of the Mississippi Flyway population of black ducks is concentrated in the Lake Erie marshes during fall migration.

The important of Lake Erie is manifested in the United States congressional designation of the Ottawa and Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuges. Lake Erie has an international reputation for walleye, perch, and bass fishing, as well as duck hunting. On an economic basis, Lake Erie tourism accounts for an estimated \$1.5 billion in retail sales and more than 50,000 jobs.

In Michigan, the Refuge will run from the southern boundary of Sterling State Park to the eastern edge of Sandusky Bay, Ohio. The Secretary of Interior is authorized to acquire by donation, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, or grant conservation easements with the boundaries of the Refuge. Any and all acquisitions of lands are voluntary, and federal takings are strictly prohibited. I would note that the Secretary shall administer all federally owned lands, waters, and interests within the Refuge in accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act. Thus, the rights of sportsmen and waterfowlers like myself to hunt and fish in accordance with state law will be protected.

Mr. Speaker, I again thank the Resources Committee for their assistance. Ms. KAPTUR's bill is an important piece of legislation which will be great benefit to the people of Michigan, Ohio, and Ontario, and represents a sound approach to protecting, preserving, and restoring the wildlife habitat of the Great Lakes. I urge its adoption.

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 289, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material in the RECORD on H.R. 622, H.R. 762, and H.R. 289, the three bills just considered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arizona?

There was no objection.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING THE BLUE STAR BANNER AND THE GOLD STAR

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 109) expressing the sense of the Congress regarding the Blue Star Banner and the Gold Star, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 109

Whereas the Blue Star Flag (commonly referred to as the "Blue Star Banner") was

patented and designed in 1917, during the height of the World War I, by Army Captain Robert L. Queissner of the 5th Ohio Infantry, who had two sons serving on the front lines;

Whereas the Blue Star Flag quickly became the symbol for a family member serving the Nation in the Armed Forces, and families began proudly displaying these flags in their front windows during World War I;

Whereas each Blue Star on the flag represents a family member serving in the Armed Forces and symbolizes hope and pride;

Whereas beginning in 1918, the Blue Star would signify the living, and a smaller Gold Star would be placed on top of the Blue Star, forming a blue border, if the family member was killed or died while on active duty, to symbolize the family member's sacrifice for the cause of freedom;

Whereas Blue Star Flags were displayed widely during World War II;

Whereas many of the flags displayed during those wars were hand-made by the mothers of those serving in the Armed Forces;

Whereas the legacy of the Blue Star Flag continued during the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf Wars and other periods of conflict, as well as in times of peace;

Whereas the Blue Star Flag is the official flag authorized by law, at section 901 of title 36, United States Code, to be displayed in honor of a family member serving the United States on active duty in the Armed Forces during a period of war or hostilities, while the Gold Star may be displayed in honor of a family member who has made the ultimate sacrifice for the Nation;

Whereas for over 85 years, families have proudly displayed the Blue Star Flag showing United States service personnel the honor and pride that is taken in their sacrifices for freedom;

Whereas the flag may be displayed by members of the immediate family of a loved one serving in the Armed Forces;

Whereas the flag may be flown by families with a service member stationed either domestically or overseas;

Whereas the display of the flag in the front window of a home shows a family's pride in their loved one and is a reminder that preserving America's freedom demands great sacrifice; and

Whereas such a reminder is especially timely during the current conflict with Iraq and the global war on terrorism: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress—

(1) honors members of the United States Armed Forces and their families;

(2) calls on all Americans to honor the members of the United States Armed Forces and their families, to recognize the importance of the Blue Star Flag and the Gold Star and their symbolism of the devotion and service of the members of the United States Armed Forces, and to advance awareness of the Blue Star Flag and the Gold Star through all appropriate information and media channels; and

(3) encourages the families of members of the Armed Forces to proudly display the Blue Star Flag or, if their loved one has made the ultimate sacrifice, the Gold Star.

SEC. 2. The authority on which this resolution rests is the authority of Congress to make all laws which shall be necessary and proper as provided in Article I, section 8 of the United States Constitution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS).

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GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Con. Res. 109, the concurrent resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Nevada?

There was no objection.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 6 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SHADEGG), the author of this resolution.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

I rise in strong support of the resolution. This is a grand tradition of our Nation, and this resolution encourages all Americans to honor the Blue Star Banner and the Gold Star as patriotic symbols of the proud tradition of the families of our fighting men.

This tradition was started in World War I when, in 1917, the Blue Star Banner was designed by an Army veteran Captain Robert L. Queissner, who had two sons serving on the front lines during World War I. The design is to symbolize the number of members of the family from that household who are currently serving in our armed services; and the intent of the resolution is to simply encourage American families with service personnel currently serving in our Armed Forces to proudly display this banner.

The banner became a particularly strong symbol. Mothers across the country embraced it as a symbol of devotion and their pride for family members who were serving in the war, and it came to its pinnacle of recognition during World War II. As a matter of fact, I would remind my colleagues that in the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, they may recall that as the Army sedan pulls up to the home of the Ryans, we can see a Blue Star Banner in the window of their home, acknowledging that a member of their family was serving in the war.

If more than one member of the family is serving in the armed services at the time of the combat, then there are as many blue stars as there are members of the family currently serving.

This symbol, as I said, reached its pinnacle during World War II when great pride was exhibited by our American families for the service men and women from their families who were currently serving. It has fallen into some disuse since then, and this resolution simply calls upon all American service families to proudly display the Blue Star Banner, acknowledging that a member of that household's family is currently serving in our armed services somewhere around the world.

Clearly, we are at war. We are at war not only to liberate Iraq, but we are

also at war across the globe in our war against terrorism, in Afghanistan but elsewhere around the world; and we all, every single one of us, are tremendously proud of our Armed Forces and the battle that they are carrying forward both to liberate Iraq but also to battle and fight terrorism wherever it appears around the globe.

Our hope, my hope as a sponsor of this resolution, is that all families with service personnel currently serving in our Armed Forces will proudly display the Blue Star Banner, and that all Americans across the Nation will recognize the Blue Star Banner as a symbol of pride and dedication, recognizing not just the sacrifice of the individual service member, man or woman, in our armed services at this critical point in our Nation's history, but also the sacrifice made by that family.

It seems to me that this is a particularly important time, and my hope is that across the country these banners will spring up, hanging in the windows of families with service personnel and that all of us, as a Nation, all of us who do not have a family member serving in the armed services, will step forward and tell those families how much we appreciate not only the sacrifice that the individual serviceman or servicewoman is making to serve our Nation at this critical point in time, but also that the family is making. It seems to me that this is indeed a grand tradition and one that is very important.

I need to go on and explain, however, the tradition of the Gold Star because the Gold Star carries this tradition one step further. As we know as Americans, as the world knows, freedom is not free. It comes at a very heavy price. Not far from here, at Bethesda Naval Hospital, there are many injured servicemen who have come back from the war to liberate Iraq and who are there being healed. But we also know that some service members already in this war have lost their lives.

The tradition of the Gold Star shortly followed the Blue Star Banner, and the Gold Star is a star which is displayed by a family when they have lost a family member, that is, when a member of the service has made the ultimate sacrifice. Tragically, that has happened in this war. Tragically, we have lost all too many soldiers in this war, and the tradition is that when a family member is lost, when a family member has made the final sacrifice, that the Gold Star is placed over the Blue Star, acknowledging that someone from that home has made the ultimate sacrifice.

This concurrent resolution, the Blue Star Banner and the Gold Star, is supported by many groups across the country, the American Legion and its efforts all across the country. The Blue Star Mothers of America, the American Gold Star Mothers and the Gold Star Wives of America, as well as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, are all supporting these banners. Indeed, this is the official banner recognized by Congress in 1967 and by the Department of

Defense as the official acknowledgment of the fact that there is a family member in the services.

This morning at the press conference we held on this topic, a representative of the Gold Star Mothers came forward, and she made it very clear, along with a representative of the Gold Star Wives, that they did not want their group to expand, that indeed because the Blue Star Banner is a moment of pride for a service member serving, the Gold Star Banner, of course, is an acknowledgment of a lost life; and the women from the Gold Star Wives and the American Gold Star Mothers came forward and said they do not want their groups to expand, of course because the only way one gains membership in the group of Gold Star Mothers or Gold Star Wives is to lose a family member. I think every member of the Nation hopes that the Gold Star does not expand, but each day as this war goes forward there is the risk of that.

I think it is time for America to passionately thank our armed services personnel. The Blue Star Banner and the Gold Star are a great tradition for doing that.

I urge my colleagues not to just embrace this resolution and vote for it, but go home and talk about it in their districts, tell their constituents, let them know of this grand tradition, encourage every single family with a member in our armed services to fly the Blue Star Banner with great pride and let every other American express their gratitude and their thanks to those service personnel serving.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

First, let me compliment the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SHADEGG) for offering this resolution before the Congress, the sense of Congress regarding the Blue Star Banner and the Gold Star. I think this is certainly fitting and proper considering the fact that we today are at war in Iraq, considering the fact that we already have lost American lives in that conflict.

I remember as a young boy growing up in my hometown of Lexington, Missouri, and seeing these banners with Blue Stars and some with two Blue Stars and some with Gold Stars, knowing the fact that members of the family, either a sailor or sometimes brothers; or sometimes a soldier would lose his life on the battlefield and the Gold Star would hang in the window of that family's home. And I think it is certainly fitting that we, in our own way, express our sense that this is the right thing to do now, to bring it home to America that these young men and women who literally put their lives on the line should be remembered in such a visible and fine way.

Cicero, the great Roman orator, once said that gratitude is the greatest of all virtues, and this is one way, a small way, be that as it may, to express the gratitude of not just the Congress but

of the American people for the young people who risk their lives on the battlefield.

So, as a cosponsor of this House concurrent resolution, I support this measure. It is a timely resolution recognizing the importance of Blue Stars and Gold Star banners. The Blue Star Banner actually emerged during the First World War when Army Captain Robert Queissner designed a Blue Star to honor his two sons who were serving on the front lines during that conflict. The patented star soon became the country's unofficial symbol which families used to recognize a child serving in our Armed Forces.

In 1918, President Woodrow Wilson approved a recommendation by the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defenses that mothers who had lost a child in conflict wear a Gold Star on the traditional black mourning arm-band. Thus began the tradition of covering a Blue Star with a Gold Star when a family lost such a loved one.

The Department of Defense has recognized the banner as an official service flag for immediate family members of servicemen and women to display during any period of war or hostilities in which the American Armed Forces are engaged.

As I mentioned, when I was a boy growing up in my hometown of Lexington, I still recall those Blue Stars, those banners, hanging in the windows of homes as fathers or mothers, husbands, wives and sons and daughters left to serve our Nation in that Second World War. As men and women were called upon to serve our Nation, the prevalence of the Blue and the Gold Star Banners became a familiar sight wherever we went in my hometown. It was during the Second World War that organizations also displayed the banner to recognize their members who were serving in uniform.

Today, Mr. Speaker, as one travels across our wonderful land, one can still find these traditional symbols being proudly displayed. However, while we have more than a million service members in uniform as we speak, the use of the banner has steadily declined and, sadly, this American tradition has faded. Many Americans no longer recognize this banner for the important part it has played in the history of our country, particularly the military history of our country, and yet American men and women are still called upon to defend our freedoms. Korea, Vietnam, Operation Desert Storm, the Balkans, Afghanistan, and now Operation Iraqi Freedom are just a few of the conflicts which our Armed Forces have served.

This last September, as American forces continued the fight against terrorists, this House of Representatives passed a similar resolution that called upon the President to issue a proclamation in support of the Blue and the Gold Star Banners. As our forces continue to engage in battle in the Middle East, I urge the President to issue a proclamation that calls upon families

of service members to display the Blue Star Banner in patriotic support of our loved ones.

As our men and women in uniform fight to bring democracy and stability to the people of Iraq, I hope that we will restore this proud tradition. And it is a proud tradition. I urge all Americans to restore the display of a star for their loved ones who are defending the freedoms that this body was founded upon.

So it is with pleasure, Mr. Speaker, that I endorse and urge this House of Representatives to pass this resolution and that we have a unanimous vote in favor of the Blue Stars and the Gold Stars to be displayed on the banners in our windows of our homes.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BURNS).

Mr. BURNS. Mr. Speaker, this resolution is powerful. It is powerful because it says that if one has a loved one in the armed services, we encourage them to fly a Blue Star Banner. It is powerful because it encourages those families who have lost a loved one in the service of his or her country to display a Gold Star on that same banner. The Blue Star Banner and the Gold Star are symbols not only of our men and women in uniform and the sacrifices that they make for our freedoms, but they are also symbols of hope, symbols of love, and symbols of sacrifice of families who give so much for our troops.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution is particularly significant to me because many of the troops who are leading the charge of our military in Iraq come from the Third Infantry Division out of Fort Stewart, Georgia. These fine young men and women have gone to Iraq. Some, sadly, will make the ultimate sacrifice for freedom and not return. But this legislation is a visible symbol of our support for our troops, their families, and their collective sacrifices for all of our freedoms.

□ 1400

I am proud to be a cosponsor of this resolution, and I urge its immediate passage.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS).

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) for conducting this discussion and our friends on the other side of the aisle.

I rise today also to strongly support this resolution. Popular during World War II, we are seeing the Blue Star Banners flown again. I brought a copy of one, because these are being proudly flown in my own district in the cities of El Monte and West Covina, and they are being displayed by families who have loved ones serving in the Armed

Forces, whether their family member is a son, daughter, brother, sister, wife, husband, or even a grandchild.

The banner shows a family's pride in their loved one serving in the military. It also reminds us that we are preserving America's freedom and that demands so much.

Blue Star Mothers and Gold Star Mothers organizations were established back in World War I and remain active even today. There are Blue Star Moms that are popping up in my district where I live in the city of El Monte. Unfortunately, we are also seeing more families displaying Gold Stars on their banners. Families like the Flores family in my district who just learned that they lost their son, Francisco A. Martinez Flores, who was killed in Iraq.

We must honor the United States Armed Forces and their families because they are all heroes. I encourage these families to proudly display the Blue Star Banner.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the resolution offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SHADEGG), and I commend the gentleman for bringing this important resolution to the attention of the House.

House Concurrent Resolution 109 reminds the Nation of one of our most cherished wartime traditions, having the families of military servicemembers display the Blue Star Service Flag and wear a service lapel pin.

The daily lives of most Americans remain unchanged by the conflict in Iraq and the war on terrorism. Aside from the television news coverage, many Americans do not think about these very challenging conflicts during the rush of their busy days. However, there are hundreds of thousands of Americans whose family members are fighting on the front lines of these 21st century wars and enduring all the same dangers and hardships that confronted our warriors during previous conflicts.

Mr. Speaker, all of us need to remember that these Americans are experiencing this war in a very personal manner and with a level of fear and uncertainty for loved ones in uniform that only they can understand.

Mr. Speaker, that is why the Blue Star Service Flag and its accompanying service lapel pin are so important. They will be an eloquent reminder for friends and neighbors that our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines are fighting and sacrificing their lives to keep us safe and to keep us free.

We can all benefit from a short, somber moment every day to remember those brave Americans and pledge to do more during our day to support our troops and the families they leave behind.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague and friend, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), for his lifelong dedication to

the service and our troops. It is a pleasure to serve on the committee with him as the ranking member. Again, I want to commend the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SHADEGG), and I urge strong support for this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Let me first compliment the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS) for bringing this important resolution to the floor. Let me share, if I may, Mr. Speaker, an experience I had yesterday.

I went out to Bethesda Naval Hospital, and I had the opportunity to visit with seven of the 10 young Marines and one sailor who were injured in the Iraqi war, the Iraqi conflict, and some of them were injured rather severely. I have to tell my colleagues that of the seven I visited, all seven were extremely strong in morale, they backed the purpose of our being in Iraq, and were just proud to be United States Marines. I met some of their families too, and what great American families they were. And these families, I know full well, will display with great pride and affection the Blue Star Banner that we are speaking of, which the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SHADEGG) was good enough to endorse through his resolution.

So let us hope that every member of our military's families will display this banner with pride and exhibit the pride of the families I saw yesterday with those injured Marines at the Bethesda Naval Hospital. I am proud of them. I am proud of everyone who wears the American uniform.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT).

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I commend both sides for the bipartisan effort they have made here to restore a proud, proud tradition. I am just old enough to remember the Gold Star and Blue Star Banners. I am a war baby born in 1942. But I still have a dim recollection of that and a warm feeling of the pride that those who displayed these banners had, to let all the community know that they had a loved one who was serving abroad or serving in service at some place in time.

I spent this past weekend, Sunday afternoon, in the little town of Jefferson, South Carolina, where we had a memorial service for a staff sergeant in the Air Force, Jason Higgs, whose helicopter was on a rescue mission to pick up two Afghan girls, both of whom were in need of medical care, to bring them back and have them attended to by Air Force doctors. He did not make it back. The next day they sent for the girls, they had their surgery, that was successful. Sunday afternoon we laid him to rest.

All over America there are countless stories like this, about these folks who are laying their lives on the line for us and our freedom. This is a wonderful

tradition to restore, and I wholeheartedly support this legislation.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers, except to thank the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SHADEGG) for this resolution and to thank the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS) for sponsoring this resolution. I think it is very, very important that every American family have the opportunity to display a banner such as this resolution endorses, that every American family that does not have a loved one in uniform understands, recognizes, and appreciates those families that do.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, with the eloquent words of my friend, the gentleman from Missouri, I would also urge each and every one of our colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. FOSSELLA. Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to take a moment to speak about the Blue Star Banner and the Gold Star.

As we continue to battle the enemy of freedom, each day many Americans bid farewell to a loved one that is a member of our Armed Forces, not knowing where they will go or when they will return, these families only have symbols of their loved ones.

These brave men and women who proudly wear our military's uniforms leave behind equally brave friends and relations who look for some way to remain connected to their loved ones abroad. Those on the homefront are eager to show their support for our troops, their hope for a safe return, and their pride in the actions and bravery of their loved ones. The Blue and Gold Star Banner emphasizes the special and difficult role of the family left behind in time of war.

Recognizing this desire to show support and pride for our family members who are off to battle, Army Captain Robert L. Queissner designed the Blue Star Banner in 1917, initially in support of his two sons who were serving on the front lines in World War I. The popularity of this banner spread quickly among those whose family members were also fighting in the War, and continued through many years and many battles to be displayed by families nationwide who anxiously awaited their loved ones' return.

The families of those who did not make it back home displayed a Gold Star over the Blue Star Banner, to symbolize the honor with which their loved ones perished in the name of freedom. This practice continues today, as a way for families to show their pride in the valiant actions of their loved ones in service to our country, who have made the ultimate sacrifice on our behalf.

I therefore encourage the families of all American servicemembers to display the Blue Star Banner and, as necessary, the Gold Star, in show of unconditional support for and pride in our nation's Armed Forces.

Mr. GILLMOR. Mr. Speaker, I proudly rise today in support of H. Con. Res. 109. The Blue Star Banner was originally patented and designed in 1917, by Spanish-American War Veteran and World War I Army Captain Robert L. Queissner of the 5th Ohio Infantry, who at that time had two sons serving on the frontlines. Since its unofficial adoption back in the early 20th century, it has grown to become the

official symbol of all mothers who have children proudly serving their country in the Armed Forces. As our history shows, many of the brave men and women who have so honorably served this country in battle have indeed made the ultimate sacrifice to ensure that the United States of America remains the beacon of freedom and prosperity throughout the world. To honor these fallen heroes family members who lost loved ones in the defense of liberty began placing a gold star over the blue star to symbolize their sacrifice. As we speak, our courageous service men and women continue to secure the safety of the world and bring freedom to oppressed peoples. Therefore, it is only appropriate that we pass this resolution today and show our solidarity and resolve not only to those who serve, but to their family members that they have left behind here on the home-front. Mr. Speaker, I would urge all my colleagues to pass this resolution and show that the steadfastness of the American spirit starts here in the United States Congress.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISAKSON). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 109, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

APPOINTMENT OF CONFEREES ON H. CON. RES. 95, CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2004

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 95) establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for the fiscal year 2004, and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2003 and 2005 through 2013, with the Senate amendment thereto, disagree to the Senate amendment, and agree to a conference asked by the Senate on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Iowa?

There was no objection.

MOTION TO INSTRUCT OFFERED BY MR. SPRATT

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to instruct conferees.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. SPRATT moves that within the scope of the conference (1) the managers on the part of the House at the conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the Senate amendment to the concurrent resolution

H. Con. Res. 95 be instructed to eliminate the reconciliation instruction to the Committee on Agriculture, the Committee on Education and the Workforce, the Committee on Energy and Commerce, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and the Committee on Ways and Means contained in section 201(b) of the House resolution; that (2) such managers be instructed to recede to the Senate on section 319 (entitled "Reserve Fund to Strengthen Social Security") of the Senate amendment; and that (3) such managers be instructed to adjust the revenue levels by the amounts needed to offset the cost of the instructions set forth in paragraphs (1) and (2), without resulting in any increase in the deficit or reduction in surplus for any fiscal year covered by the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) and the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUSSLE) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT).

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, but for one vote, the budget resolution that we now seem to send to conference would have gone down. Fortunately, there is still a way out for this budget with its massive deficits and its misguided priorities: we can rewrite it in conference. If we cut through all the words, all the legislative language and the motion that was just read, that is what the motion to instruct calls for.

Now, we do not cover the waterfront and take out every change that we find objectionable and make every change that we feel needs to be made, but we do send the conferees a strong message, and that is to get rid of the worst of the entitlement reconciliation directives in this budget resolution.

First of all, Medicare. Originally, our Republican colleagues on the Committee on the Budget sought to cut Medicare by \$262 billion and Medicaid by \$110 billion. That was to offset the cost of their prescription drug benefit under Medicare. We tried to knock out these cuts in markup, but failed. The chairman, however, did change his mark twice. After these modifications were made, however, the Committee on Ways and Means is still directed to cut \$62 billion out of entitlement programs in its jurisdiction. This sort of saving can only come from two sources under the Committee on Ways and Means jurisdiction: Medicare or programs for the poor, the earned income tax credit, temporary assistance to needy families, or supplemental security income. It will have to come out of these programs, \$62 billion; and these could be critical cuts in critically important programs.

The chairman's amendment, the manager's amendment also shaved the reconciliation directions just slightly to the Committee on Energy and Commerce from \$110 billion to \$107 billion.

□ 1415

But of this amount, \$94 billion must still come from Medicaid, or SCHIP,

the children's health insurance program. Contrast that, Mr. Speaker, to what we do in our budget resolution, or would have done had it passed. Given the struggle that all the States are having with Medicaid, we sought to increase the Federal share and lighten the States' burden by adding \$10 billion at the Federal level to the cost of Medicaid this year.

If the rule had allowed during consideration of the budget, we would have offered amendments when the budget was on the floor to strike all of these cuts. Since everyone knows that they would have emasculated Medicare and Medicaid, I think they would have passed; but we were not allowed to make such an amendment.

Next, veterans. Originally, the Republicans on the Committee on the Budget set out to cut \$30 billion from the budget for the veterans. They say that veterans benefits actually increase in their budget, and they may in nominal dollars. But this is the fact of the matter: Their budget resolution, as brought to the floor, provided \$15 billion less for veterans health care than the President requested, and it still provides less for veterans disability benefits.

Next, education. The Republican resolution not only cuts appropriations for education below the President's already-low level, it saves none of the 47 programs that the President wiped out or would kill. It goes a step further: It whacks \$9.4 billion out of mandatory spending. What does the Committee on Education and the Workforce have in its jurisdiction? Student loans and school lunches. Do we really want to cut student loans and school lunches to pay for a dividend tax exclusion?

Next, railroad retirees. Looking everywhere for programs they could cut to offset a big tax cut of another \$1.35 trillion, our colleagues on the Committee on the Budget even called on the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to come up with some reconciliation savings, namely, \$3.7 billion out of its mandatory or entitlement programs.

The only source that can produce such a cut under the jurisdiction of that committee is railroad retirement, a vested benefit on which 700,000 retirees depend. Surely we are not going to cut \$3.7 billion out of that.

Finally, in the same vein, is agriculture. The budget, as it now stands, requires the Committee on Agriculture to cut \$18.6 billion of direct spending over the next 10 years, but as in all of the other cases, it fails to mention which programs and fails to say how much.

Where does the Committee on Agriculture go? It can turn to the conservation reserve program, \$18.6 billion, roughly what it costs to run that program for 10 years; or the Committee on Agriculture could turn to food stamps and take 12 percent out of food stamps for the next 10 years to produce \$18.6 billion. But do we want to take 34 million acres of environmentally sensitive

land out of reserves? Do we want to cut food stamps when unemployment is 6 percent nationwide, in double digits in places like my district?

These are a few of the reasons, Mr. Speaker, that we should tell the conferees and tell them emphatically to recede to the Senate and drop these reconciliation directives. They should not be in here. First of all, these cuts are not in the President's budget, they are not in the Senate's budget, and except for the House budget, they are not on anybody's agenda.

Second, they are wrapped up in ambiguity, written in language so evasive that no one can know where the cuts may fall. They were clouded further by colloquies here on the House floor when we had the budget on the floor, in which the chairman of the committee, the Committee on the Budget, assured chairman after chairman of committees of jurisdiction that, no, they would not have to do what the black letter provisions of this resolution plainly say they must do, and that is cut Medicare, cut Medicaid and cut veterans benefits.

All, in effect, that this motion does is say to the conferees, conform the budget resolution to legislative history as recorded right here on the House floor the night we had the budget up.

Finally, these cuts, Mr. Speaker, would be questionable at any time, but cutting veterans when we are at war and Medicaid when the States are struggling just to sustain it and student loans for no good reason it is just wrong, callous and wrong.

In the end, I will be frank to say that I do not think most of these cuts will ever come to pass, not this year, anyway. But another huge tax cut may be passed. Its impact on the deficit may be obscured by pretending that these spending cuts will be enacted later as offsets. Most of these cuts may not be enacted later for the same political reasons, but as deficits swell, as they surely will if these tax cuts proposed are passed, the cuts will come in time, and this budget resolution is our forewarning of where they will have to fall.

We can ask fairly, what would happen to the budget's bottom line if these spending cuts we are calling for deletion are not enacted? The answer is that these proposed spending cuts are made necessary by the proposed tax cuts. If we forgo the tax cuts, we can forgo the deep cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, veterans benefits, student loans, agriculture, and railroad retirees.

As for the bottom line, if we just leave spending and revenues at current service levels, the Congressional Budget Office tells us the budget will be in balance by the year 2008. That is 4 years sooner and a couple of trillion less debt than this resolution promises. So if Members are for a budget that balances priorities as well as the bottom line, they should vote for this motion to instruct.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, here we are again. We are on the floor discussing the fact that the Federal Government does not have even one penny of waste. Do Members believe that? It is hard to believe that somebody would come to the floor of the House, or that an entire party would come to the floor of the House today and suggest that the United States Government does not have any waste.

I will admit, as the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) very eloquently stated, that there is no way, as we go to the conference between the House and Senate over the budget, that possibly the House-passed numbers of savings might be difficult to attain, and certainly might be difficult to reach a negotiation between the House and Senate.

But they come to the floor today and basically say that we are going to eliminate the instructions in order to get waste and abuse in this government, and that none of the instructions, not one of the years over the next 10 years can we even find a penny.

Is it going to be hard to find the \$300 billion? Okay, let us suggest it is. We made an attempt on our side in good faith to try and look at our programs called entitlements, which are nothing more than automatic spending, which has now basically engulfed the budget to the tune of about 60 percent of all our expenditures are automatic. We have nothing to say about them. We get sent to Washington to make judgments and choices, and those choices were made before us, a long time before us, in many instances.

As we do research on those programs, as we look and examine the programs, where we find challenges, where we find waste, where we find abuse, where we find problems, we even hire an agency called the General Accounting Office to do reports for us, and when we find those, we are not to challenge ourselves to reform those programs. We are not to challenge ourselves to find savings in those programs. We are not to challenge ourselves to look in every nook and cranny of the budget, or every nook and cranny of the Federal Government in order, at a time of challenge for our country, to find savings, so we can save taxpayers a little bit of money.

I do not know about the Members, but I just had to send in my taxes. That is not a fun experience for me, and I am sure it is not for any of my colleagues. I guarantee, Members, it is not for my friends back home in Iowa as they go visit the tax people.

So looking for a little bit of savings, looking for a little bit of waste and fraud and abuse, I thought would be a pretty worthy endeavor. We even put into our budget a couple of different items that we found kind of interesting.

We said that the Inspector General for the Department of Education has

found that nearly 23 percent of the recipients whose loans were discharged due to disability claims were gainfully employed. Now, think about this a second. What the Democrats are coming here today and saying is, we cannot find any waste. But the Inspector General who works for the Department of Education has found 23 percent of the claims for disability benefits for education were actually employed, 23 percent.

Can we do anything about that? No, we cannot do anything about that. Heaven forbid we challenge the Committee on Education and the Workforce to go looking for that, so let us eliminate that instruction. Not the amount in the budget, not even a penny, we cannot even find a penny of waste in the Education Department is what the Democrats are saying.

Based on the data provided by the Office of Management and Budget, the Committee on the Budget estimates more than \$8 billion in erroneous earned income tax payments are made every year, \$8 billion of checks that go out to recipients in the United States, \$8 billion.

Can we do anything about that? No, no, we cannot do anything about that. We do not want to challenge that. That is going to be real heavy lifting; we cannot do anything about that.

The Office of Management and Budget estimates there are erroneous payments for food stamps that account for almost 9 percent, 9 percent. With almost one out of every 10 people who get food stamps, something was erroneous about those accounts and those benefits. Can we challenge the Committee on Agriculture to go look at that? No, we cannot do that. Heaven forbid we will come down to the floor and scream that it is going to farmers, when we know full well that it is not.

We put in here that mismanagement of almost more than \$3 billion in trust funds controlled by the Bureau of Indian Affairs led the Congress to take extraordinary measures to regain control of the funds because \$3 billion were being mismanaged.

Can we find that? No, do not look there. There is no waste over there. Do not look over there. We cannot find any waste over there, not this year, not next year, not for the next 10 years, no waste.

There is no waste in Washington, that is what the Democrats are coming to the floor today to tell us. We cannot do any of that, too heavy. That is too heavy lifting.

Inspector General, Personnel Management, has documented numerous instances of the government continuing to make electronic payments for retirement benefits for the Civil Service Retirement system after the person died, meaning that people who work for our Federal Government, we give them a pension, and after they die, we care so much about the work they did for the United States Government we keep paying them.

But can we ask anybody to go look for that? No, we cannot do that. The motion to instruct says no, we are not going to do that. There is no waste in Washington. That is what the Democrats say, no waste in Washington. Eliminate that instruction. That is too hard. In fact, if it really gets hard, we will come down here and tell people that we are throwing seniors out of nursing homes, or that we are eliminating Medicare benefits, or that we are going to do a disservice to veterans.

In fact, we do such a service to veterans that last year 5,500 veterans received benefits from the Veterans Administration after they died. But can we go to the Veterans Administration? No, we cannot touch them. We do not want to do anything in that department. That is too heavy, that is too hard. Let us just keep paying them, because it is easier to send out the press release today saying, I supported the veterans, or I supported Medicare, or I supported Medicaid, or I supported farmers.

I do not think Members are supporting veterans when they pay them when they die. That does not make much sense. Pay them when they are alive, pay them for their service; there is not anybody who disagrees with that. We all agree with that. But to say there is not at least even a penny of savings over the next 10 years, I would like Members to go home and explain that to Members' constituents in a town meeting. I want Members to explain that they do not believe there is any waste in Washington, no waste at all in Washington.

What we are asking our committees to do is to go look for it and go find it. Is that going to be hard to do? Sure. Some of these are very politically sensitive areas, very politically sensitive, which is why today, for political intrigue and fodder, the Democrats rushed to the floor saying, we are supporting all of these constituent groups, and we are supporting them so much we will support them when there is mismanagement, when there is waste, when there is fraud within the system. We are not willing to challenge our committees to go and get that job done.

The second thing they say is that, what we are going to do about this is we are going to trim back the tax cut. The tax relief in the House-passed budget estimates it will create about 1.4 million jobs. How many jobs do Members want to create? Obviously, not 1.4 million. About half that? It is 1.4 million jobs. Why is it that they want to eliminate the opportunities under this growth package?

□ 1430

And what is more important, going to your second point here about the Social Security trust fund, is that the best way to create money in the Social Security trust fund is to create workers. That is who pays the bills, who

pays the Social Security money in the first place, the people who are working. The more people you create, the more jobs you create, the more people you have working, the more money that goes into the trust fund. And so by eliminating jobs by suggesting that you do not want to create these jobs at a time when our economy is struggling does the biggest disservice to the Social Security trust fund.

So I would rather you come here today and basically say that the General Accounting Office, which does all of these reports on the defense, food stamps, here is one on debt collection, here is one on the Defense Department again, public housing, here is a good one on the post office, Federal loans, defense again, foreign assistance, we have got travel cards in the Defense Department and across the country or across the government that are being abused. You do not want to do anything about that. You do not want to do anything about waste, fraud and abuse. That is what we are asking for. And so you come down here today, and you want to basically tie the hands of the conferees and say you do not want to instruct any of the committees to do this job.

Well, we reject that. We are not going to get, we know, all of the waste, fraud and abuse in the first budget, maybe not in the second budget. We may not get much at all, but you have got to start somewhere. And to suggest there is not even a penny, to basically say eliminate it all, eliminate any attempt to go find wasteful Washington spending, to me I think is a disservice. And so even though this is a non-binding motion to instruct conferees and certainly the minority has an opportunity to come down here and make this motion, it really shows your cards.

It shows that you do not really have a concern about some of these programs and their usefulness, finding the waste and the fraud and abuse within our Federal Government. That is what it shows to me, and I think it shows that to the American people. There is not a person in America that does not believe there is waste in Washington. There is not a person, certainly not a person I have ever run into. I hope if there is somebody, you would let me know because I have not met one yet who does not think there is some waste in Washington.

But your motion to instruct conferees says no there is no waste in Washington. We do not have to do our work. Let us just keep this automatic spending going right on automatically down the line. Let us not worry about it at all. Let us not create those jobs. Let us back down the tax relief. Let us not create taxpayers so we can replenish the Social Security trust fund. Let us not do that, and let us continue on business as usual in Washington.

Well, we do not want to do that. We want to make sure that the conferees, I hope to be one of them, of course, continues to work for waste, fraud and

abuse; and that is why we are going to continue that job even in the face of the Democrats coming here today suggesting that there is no waste in Washington.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time. I believe the gentleman has quite a bit of time remaining on his side for debate.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), the minority whip.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time, and I yield to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT), the ranking member of the Committee on the Budget.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, we are as concerned as any Member of this Congress about squeezing out waste, fraud and abuse. But we sincerely doubt that you can squeeze, ferret out \$265 billion in waste, fraud and abuse. If you can, I would say to my colleague, where has the Republican majority been for the last 8 years during which you have controlled the House. Instead of having oversight, we have had overlook, if there is that much waste being accumulated in the Federal operation at this time.

Here are the cuts that are entailed by this resolution as it goes to conference: Agriculture, \$18 billion. Waste, fraud and abuse, where is it? Education and the Workforce, Energy and Commerce, 107; most of that is Medicaid. Medicare, \$62 billion. The total amount, \$265 billion.

If you required these reconciliation savings to be accomplished and laid on the table before you passed your budget resolution, before you passed your tax cuts, they would have more credibility. But they lack credibility with me because if you are going to go ahead and have the tax cuts premised on adopting all of these \$265 billion in savings just a few months afterwards, I do not think they will ever come to pass.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, there is not anybody in here who is not against waste, fraud and abuse. Ronald Reagan ran in 1980, and he said he was going to save a lot of money by eliminating waste, fraud and abuse. The Republicans were in charge of the Senate. Ronald Reagan was President of the United States. Not once, not ever did Ronald Reagan have a veto of any appropriation bill overridden, not once that asked to spend more money.

He was in charge of the executive department. George Bush was in charge of the executive department for the 4 years following, for 12 years in a row. And, Mr. NUSSLE, you know what happened to waste, fraud and abuse? You quadrupled the national debt, I say to my friend who is trying to ignore me. You quadrupled the national debt from \$985 billion to \$4 trillion. Why did Mr. Reagan and Mr. Bush not eliminate waste, fraud and abuse?

And then what happened? Bill Clinton came to town, elected President of

the United States, and what happened in those 8 years? For 8 years in a row the deficit came down, for 4 years; and then the surplus started going up until 2001. We had 4 years of surpluses for the first time in 80 years. And then what happened? President Bush came to office. Mr. NUSSLE became the chairman of the Committee on the Budget, and we have reescalated the debt.

This budget proposes the largest debt in the history of this country. This budget is an April fool, a cruel hoax and joke on the American public. And what does the chairman of the Committee on the Budget do? He brings these little blue books. They are important books. The question I wanted to ask you, Mr. NUSSLE, and just an answer, is I am sure your committee staff has added up how would the savings if every piece of waste in those blue books was effected would it provide us. How much, Mr. NUSSLE?

Would it provide the 18 billion you want to take away from farmers who are attacked by drought? Would it take away the money that you are going to reduce school lunches by? Student loans by? Would it provide for the Medicaid that you want the Committee on Energy and Commerce to cut? Would it provide for the Medicare that your own committee has jurisdiction over?

Now, Mr. NUSSLE, it is April Fool's Day but do not take us for fools, because with all due respect, you offered a budget last year. Now you complained it did not pass, but in years past we have deemed adopted the House-passed budget and passed bills.

Again, the chairman of the Committee on the Budget ignores me. It is a shame because, my friends, 11 of the appropriations bills did not pass this House last year. Why? Because they could not get them within the budget. The budget that Mr. NUSSLE offered is not a real document. It is an April fool's joke. It will never be adopted. Never. And, Mr. NUSSLE, I believe you know it. I believe you know that the document that you have provided is unsustainable politically because the American public will reject it out of hand because they do not believe that that railroad retirement and people who work hard for their retirement should be cut. They do not believe that Social Security should be cut. They do not believe that Medicaid should be cut. They do not believe that Medicare should be cut.

The motion to instruct will make it a real budget and turn an April fool's joke into a real document for America.

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed fitting that on this, April Fool's Day, we're voting on this motion to instruct on the House GOP's phony and foolhardy budget.

Why?

Because the fact of the matter is: This GOP budget is a dishonest document designed solely to fool the American people.

To fool them into believing that this Republican Party really does care about balancing the budget, controlling deficits and reducing debt.

To fool them into believing that our nation—which is now prosecuting a war of unknown duration and undetermined costs—really can afford the President's \$1.4 trillion tax plan.

And, to fool them into believing that the Members who sit on the Republican side of the aisle really have the courage of their convictions.

Let me ask you: will you really vote to cut Medicaid funding and the Children's Health Insurance Program by \$94 billion?

Will you really vote to cut school lunches for poor children and student loans by \$9.4 billion?

Will you really vote to cut railroad retirees' pensions and Agriculture programs such as Food Stamps and Farm Support Payments?

And, with our brave armed forces now on the field of battle risking their lives to defend freedom and combat tyranny, will you really vote to cut veterans' benefits by \$14.6 billion?

Some of you actually might.

But we all know that most of you have absolutely no intention of walking the plank and voting for legislation that would implement these draconian funding cuts.

Thus, today, we're engaged in nothing more than a cynical charade.

You get to pretend that you're for balanced budgets and enormous tax cuts, too.

That's not leadership. That's a conscious evasion of the responsibility to level with the American people—to tell them that we cannot afford everything—and a deliberate decision to pass the costs of this reckless tax plan onto the next generation.

I urge all of my colleagues—including those on the Republican side of the aisle who are still nursing sore arms after the vote on the budget resolution two weeks ago—to vote for the Spratt motion to instruct.

That motion—which instructs conferees to reject these proposed and clearly unpassable and untenable funding cuts—is an honest one and based in reality.

Everyone of us knows that this GOP budget is not.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), the majority leader.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I was watching this debate, and I was very intrigued by the Democrat's motion to instruct. And as I look at this motion to instruct and I want to yield to the chairman of the Committee on the Budget to answer, if he sees this as what I see this. This looks like to me that the Democrats are suggesting that we have attacked an economic growth package that sets out a number of about \$514 billion. Is that correct, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DELAY. I yield to the gentleman from Iowa.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) is correct. If you take the tax number in the bill in the resolution at 726 and what the gentleman from South Carolina's (Mr. SPRATT) motion to instruct conferees backs out, which is \$212 billion of what they say, you know, there is no waste in Washington, yes, you would arrive at a tax number of about \$514 billion.

Mr. DELAY. So from what the chairman is saying, Mr. Speaker, is that the Democrats of this House are suggesting that the tax number be \$514 billion. I might be able to take that, Mr. Chairman. I am a little concerned that in the motion to instruct to continue spending, and I know that the minority loves to spend and they want to continue to spend; and we tried to as we pointed out in the House budget, that it was important not only to get the economy going again but also to show some fiscal restraint in the way the Federal Government spends money around here, and we wanted to go after waste, fraud and abuse and efficiencies and reforms, not cutting programs, but trying to squeeze out, out of this bureaucracy in Washington, D.C. the kind of savings we could find, anywhere we could find them, so that we could show some spending restraint and at the same time have an economic growth package.

So if the minority is suggesting that we go to conference and we go to conference with a number that seems to me to be a floor on the tax bill of \$514 billion, having faced in conference that the House has a number of 726 and the Senate has a number of 350 billion, I might take that. I might take that right now. I think we could do some really good stimulative effect with \$514 billion. We could go in there and make sure that the accelerated experiencing for small business people to be able to go out and buy equipment and start people making equipment would be there. We might be able to do something on capital gains. We all know through history that lowering capital gains rates always stimulates the economy and provides for long-term growth. And frankly, at 514 billion we could probably fool around a little bit with the double taxation dividends and even get something like that in there.

So I just might vote for this. I am going to look at it a little closer, but I just might vote for this motion to instruct because I for the first time am noticing that the Democrats are suggesting that we have a \$514 billion tax relief package, and I think we could do a lot with that.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DELAY. I yield to the gentleman from Iowa.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure I understand what you are saying because I certainly want to defend the budget that I helped pass. While this technically is a nonbinding motion, I want to understand what we are suggesting here.

The Democrats are coming here and basically suggesting that even though we do not want to reduce the tax number, that they would be willing to go to \$514 billion. I do not like that number. I would rather stay at 726. I met very briefly with the chairman of the Senate budget committee today, and I told him that is what I am still interested in doing. But if we can get some agreement here, if the Democrats are willing

to come to the floor today and support a number in the tax bill of \$514 billion, at least that would be a more positive signal than what came out of the Senate.

So I still believe there is waste in Washington. I hate the first instruction in here that says that over the next 10 years we cannot even find a penny of waste, is what the Democrats said, not a penny. Nowhere is there waste in Washington. I hate that instruction. Of all of the instructions, that is the one that probably turns my stomach more than any of them. But if the majority leader is interested in this, I certainly would be willing to consider agreeing to the motion and urging my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to agree to a number of about \$514 billion.

Certainly at a time when Americans across the country are looking to get back to work and we are looking to try and create jobs, a tax number of \$514 billion is certainly, probably a good day's work. So I appreciate the gentleman analyzing the amendment and coming to that very interesting conclusion.

You know what will be interesting now, to see whether or not the Democrats even support their own motion.

□ 1445

I have a suspicion that the Democrats do not even support \$514 billion.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, obviously we are going to have to give them the opportunity to express themselves, but the chairman knows that I want to restrain spending, too, and I want to find that waste, fraud and abuse myself. Just because we have a motion to instruct that says we want to do that does not mean the chairman has to negotiate that way on that particular portion.

But to have the Democrats support a \$514 billion tax cut, I think that strengthens us in conference because all throughout the debate, all I heard is, they did not want any of it, they wanted to spend it all. In fact, in their proposal, they wanted to raise taxes in order to bring down the deficit, which I think is a flawed way to go, because we have seen in the past that when we raise taxes and keep spending, the deficits keep going.

The point is, now we have a revelation here where the Democrats want \$514 billion. We could do that and we can still fight, or the chairman could fight in the conference committee for those spending restraints that we all want and come out of conference with a \$514 billion tax number and still have the spending.

I think the Democrats may have something, and I am going to think real hard about this.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1½ minutes to make a few things clear before I yield to the gentleman from California (Mrs. CAPPES).

First of all, as to the tax cut level sought by the resolution that is now going to conference, this resolution has two different provisions with respect to tax cuts.

First, they say, reconcile the passage by a date certain of the President's request for \$726 billion of additional tax cuts. Second, in their revenue assumptions and elsewhere, they assume that we will pass and permanently enact the tax cuts that were enacted by the House in June of 2001. When we add those two together, the total amount of tax reduction called for by this resolution is \$1.35 trillion, not \$726 billion. That should be made clear.

Secondly, we have proposed tax cuts. We would like to have some tax cuts to go to the pockets and hands of people who are likely to spend it and give this economy a boost. On January 6, we proposed just such a rebate, along with some business tax cuts, accelerated appreciation, immediate expensing in order to give this economy a kick.

Thirdly, let me say with respect to these spending levels, Agriculture, Education, Energy and Commerce, which is Medicaid, Transportation, Veterans Affairs, Ways and Means, which is Medicare, as with respect to all of those, Mr. Speaker, we simply seek to restore the level of spending in these programs to the level sought by the President for the veterans and for Medicare beneficiaries.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mrs. CAPPES).

Mrs. CAPPES. Mr. Speaker, I thank my distinguished ranking member for yielding me the time, and Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Democratic motion to instruct conferees so that we can fix the budget so narrowly passed by the House of Representatives, a Federal budget that is supposed to reflect our values and our priorities, but this House budget resolution does not do that and so we need to change it.

The Republican budget resolution embraces the administration's irresponsible tax cut package at the expense of our Nation's health care needs. This is part of our national security, our health care security, and despite the protests of many Members of this Chamber, the majority resolution still requires Medicare and Medicaid to be cut, Medicaid to be cut by \$93 billion, and the appropriating committees are charged to either cut Medicare by almost \$200 billion or to shortchange an already weak prescription drug coverage benefit. Terrible choices.

These cuts endanger health care for almost 90 million Americans, among them the most vulnerable members of our society. This is unconscionable. This does not reflect American values.

As we move toward conference, we need to eliminate these terrible cuts, and among them, these health care cuts include cuts to our veterans, even as we are sending our young men and women off to war, and they will one day come back to be our Nation's vet-

erans. We are cutting health care benefits to today's veterans, wheelchair bound, frail, elderly. Promises made should be promises kept.

We need to reflect America's values in our budget, in our budget resolution, and we need to support the Democratic motion to instruct conferees so that we can do that.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of our time on this motion to instruct conferees on a \$514 billion tax cut.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, once again, I yield myself 30 seconds just to make it clear.

We do not propose and would not have our motion construed to say that we are adopting a \$514 billion tax cut or any level of tax reduction. We are saying that the tax cut ought to be adjusted accordingly after restoring these entitlement cuts that we have proposed in the motion to recommit.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY).

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

We are watching quite a performance on the other side this afternoon. First, we had the Budget chairman trying to explain away the vicious cuts they have made to programs as vital as veterans services. Imagine that, passing a budget that cuts veterans services, right in the middle of the Iraq war. It was unconscionable and unthinkable. Small wonder he tried to talk all around what they have done without ever really owning up to what is the issue before us.

Then the majority leader comes to the floor. He tries to totally redefine the motion that is advanced and before us. It looked a little to me like they are waving the white flag, that they do not have the votes to beat this motion because who, in the light of day, can vote for the cuts to veterans services, to Medicare, to Medicaid and to our Nation's farmers in the agricultural account.

There was no other budget advanced, not the administration's, not the Republican-controlled Senate's, that had this measure of cuts. It was a phenomenon of the House Committee on the Budget, led by the chairman and endorsed by majority leadership.

I view always as one of the darker moments of my time in the House the vote to support our troops taken at 2:30 in the morning followed by, 15 minutes later, the passage of the budget which cut the funding of veterans services. Frankly, it was a high water of hypocrisy in a Chamber that sees a good bit of hypocrisy.

We have got to reject these cuts, and this is what this motion before us does today. Reject the cuts to veterans services. Reject the cuts to agriculture. Reject the cuts to education. Reject the cuts to Medicare. That is the issue before us, and I will be very pleased if we can have a strong bipartisan vote overturning the really ill-advised direction the House budget would take us down.

Let us have a bipartisan vote on the motion to instruct.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of our time on the Democrat motion to cut taxes by \$514 billion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISAKSON). For the benefit of the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUSSLE) and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT), the gentleman from Iowa reserves the balance of his time, which is 12½ minutes. The gentleman from South Carolina has 12 minutes remaining.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, once again, I yield 30 seconds to myself to say that in no way can this resolution be construed to support a tax cut of \$514 billion. If the gentleman wishes to put that construction upon it, I am here to say, as the author of it, it does not apply. We do not support such a tax cut. We have supported tax cuts to boost the economy, but not the tax cuts that this budget resolution proposes because it would drive a deficit deeper and deeper into debt.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY).

Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, it is interesting when we talk about people saying they are against cutting waste, fraud and abuse. We are all for doing everything we can to cut waste, fraud and abuse, and I would suggest to my colleagues on the other side that possibly we should look at waste, fraud and abuse and use those dollars for tax cuts that we find.

Again, I want to reiterate, the maker of this motion is not talking about tax cuts. What he is talking about is restoring funds to some of those programs that are vital to the United States.

Here we are 2 years after Members from both sides of the aisle pledged to leave no child behind, and yet the House majority has approved budget cuts of over \$9 billion from Leave No Child Behind. The budget passed by this House proposes cuts in so many vital education programs I do not even know where to begin.

After-school programs: After-school programs have been one of those programs that have done more to help keep children getting into our juvenile system than anything else. It has cut higher education funding. It cuts teacher quality training. It cuts rural education. This budget cuts money from everywhere in education.

When we passed Leave No Child Behind, we demanded more from teachers and students, but this budget would cut billions that would help teachers and students prepare to meet the new tougher standards imposed by the Federal Government. If we are going to demand more from our education system, we need to provide schools with adequate resources to meet those demands. We fool ourselves and cheat our students when we impose higher standards without providing the money necessary to achieve those standards.

Our schools are in dire straits right now. I do not know about the rest of my colleagues, but I know Oregon schools are. I visited a lot of schools throughout my district and the State, and there are schools that are literally falling down. Teachers are using closets as extra classroom space. Kids are sitting on heaters for lack of room.

At a time when State budget crises are forcing schools to lay off staff, increase class sizes and cut days off the school year, the Federal Government is once again failing to live up to its commitment and fund the laws that we have passed.

I do not understand why Congress would spend a year reforming our education system only to turn around and fail to provide States with the money needed for those reforms. We need to fund the No Child Left Behind Act. We need to fund the Individuals With Disabilities Act. Twenty-eight years ago, we promised we would fund 40 percent of that program; we do not even fund half of that. To my State, it would mean \$120 million more a year. That is a lot of money to our State.

We need to fund student financial aid. Instead, this budget cuts school lunches, student loan programs, after-school programs, increases class size and diverts public funds to private schools. This is not what we need to improve the education of our students.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of the motion to instruct and in favor of increasing education funding and living up to its commitment and living up to its promises.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the time on the Democrat motion to cut taxes by \$514 billion.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 45 seconds to say the gentleman is willfully misconstruing this resolution, and if he will simply read his black letter language, he will find out not only do we restore \$214 billion of programs like Medicare and Medicaid to be at the level the President requested, we also provide for the Breax amendment to be adopted and incorporated so that \$396 billion can be taken out of the tax cuts and assigned to the solvency of Social Security. That is Section 319 of the Senate budget resolution which we are asking the House to accede to.

Add those two together, it is about \$700 billion. That is about the size of the tax cut. This is not an endorsement of that tax cut in any way, shape or form.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT).

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Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time and would just want to point out, Mr. Speaker, this chart, which shows in stark terms what the budget deficit looked like over the years, until 1993, when this green box right here shows the Democratic plan to a surplus, and

in 1 year we are back to worse than where we were. I would point out that this chart was done before the supplemental war budget, which has no way to pay for itself, so the red ink would go even \$70 billion further down than this chart.

Mr. Speaker, because of the tax cuts that caused this drop, we are having to do spending cuts; spending cuts like cuts in school lunches, Pell Grants, student loans, health care, and veterans benefits. That is right, over \$14 billion in veterans benefit cuts will be restored if the motion to instruct is adopted.

Mr. Speaker, what are some of those cuts? Fraud, waste and abuse? No, they are cuts in disability compensation, pensions, GI bill benefits, housing subsidies, and burial funds. This is an unconscionable attack against our military personnel at a time when they are deployed in Iraq.

And Mr. Speaker, some say that we could get this through eliminating waste, but the President of the United States does not need funding cuts to stop paying benefits to people that are ineligible for benefits. This budget will cut benefits for eligible veterans.

Now, what do some of the veterans groups say? Letters to the Speaker from the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Disabled American Veterans say that "we recognize that our country has serious budget problems, but cutting already underfunded veterans programs to offset the cost of tax cuts is indefensible and callous."

The Disabled American Veterans wrote, "Has Congress no shame? Is there no honor left in the hallowed halls of our government that you choose to dishonor the sacrifices of our Nation's heroes and rob our programs, health care, and disability compensation to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy? You will be reducing benefits and services for disabled veterans at a time when thousands of our servicemen are in harm's way fighting terrorists around the world, and thousands more of our sons and daughters are preparing for war against Iraq."

And what do the Paralyzed Veterans of America say? They say, in a letter to the Speaker, "The House Committee on the Budget proposal also calls for cutting \$15 billion over 10 years, \$463 million in fiscal year 2004 alone, in VA mandatory spending under the guise of eliminating 'fraud waste and abuse.' We do not consider payments to war-disabled veterans, pensions for the poorest disabled veterans, and GI benefits for soldiers returning from Afghanistan to be fraud, waste, and abuse. Fifty percent of the spending in VA entitlement goes to monthly payments to those veterans and their survivors. The House Committee on the Budget plan, if approved, would force cuts in each of these programs."

Mr. Speaker, listen to our veterans, support our troops, and pass the motion to instruct conferees.

Mr. Speaker, I submit for the RECORD the letters I just referred to.

MARCH 17, 2003.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
House Minority Leader, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER AND REPRESENTATIVE PELOSI: As so many of our nation's finest men and women are poised for possible war in the Persian Gulf region, fighting a global war on terror and defending our ideals at home and abroad, Congress is considering budget cuts that would deny sick and disabled veterans much-needed medical care and other earned benefits.

The House budget resolution proposes reducing both mandatory and discretionary spending for veterans programs and services by \$15 billion over the next 10 years. Especially appalling is a proposed 1 percent cut in mandatory spending, including veterans disability compensation and pensions, which is the main source of income for many veterans.

We point out that the monthly compensation for 3.3 million veterans and survivors increased just 1.4% this year. That is the smallest cost-of-living adjustment in three years. Now, with soaring energy costs driving up prices for other goods and services, it is callous and indefensible to propose slashing these benefits.

We recognize that our country has serious budget problems, but cutting already underfunded veterans' programs to offset the costs of tax cuts is indefensible and callous.

Congress must rethink drastic cuts in benefits and services for disabled veterans at a time when we have thousands of our service members in harm's way fighting terrorism around the world and when we are sending thousands more of our sons and daughters to fight a war against Iraq.

RONALD F. CONLEY,
National Commander,
The American Legion.

RAY C. SISK,
Commander in Chief,
Veterans of Foreign Wars.

EDWARD R. HEATH, SR.,
National Commander,
Disabled American Veterans.

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS,
March 17, 2003.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: I write today on behalf of the 2.3 million disabled veterans, including the more than 1.2 million members of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), to communicate our deep-seated outrage regarding the fiscal year 2004 budget adopted by the House Budget Committee, which would cut veterans programs by more than \$15 billion during the next 10 years.

Has Congress no shame? Is there no honor left in the hallowed halls of our government that you choose to dishonor the sacrifices of our nation's heroes and rob our programs—health care and disability compensation—to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy? You will be reducing benefits and services for disabled veterans at a time when thousands of our servicemembers are in harm's way fighting terrorists around the world and thousands more of our sons and daughters are preparing for war against Iraq.

The budget adopted by the Committee, on a nearly party-line vote, would reduce funding for veterans health care by \$844 million below the President's recommendation for

next year. It also proposes to cut \$463 million from benefit programs, such as disability compensation, pension, vocational rehabilitation, education and survivors' benefits, next year and \$15 billion over the next 10 years. The budget proposal is in distinct contrast to the recommendations made by the Committee on Veterans' Affairs to increase discretionary programs, such as veterans health care, by \$3 billion to help ensure that our nation's sick and disabled veterans can be cared for properly.

Mr. Speaker, you are personally aware of the crisis in veterans health care and the urgent need to adequately fund the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system. If you, in your leadership role in the House, allow this budget proposal to pass the House without exempting VA programs from the massive cuts, it could mean the loss of 19,000 nurses, equating to the loss of 6.6 million outpatient visits or more than three-quarters of a million hospital bed days. But that is not all of the devastation that will be caused by the proposed cuts. You will be reaching into the pockets of our nation's service-connected veterans, including combat disabled veterans, and robbing them and their survivors of a portion of their compensation. Ninety percent of VA's mandatory spending is from cash payments to service-connected disabled veterans, low-income wartime veterans, and their survivors.

As hundreds of thousands of America's brave young men and women await the uncertainties brought on by war, including the potential of biological and chemical attacks at the hand of a fanatical tyrant, they should not have to also be concerned about the discouraging possibilities of a Department of Veterans Affairs that cannot provide either the necessary services or benefits they have earned and might need. Nor should World War II veterans, the "Greatest Generation," now in their twilight years, who are directly responsible for the freedom and prosperity of our nation, be forced out of a system designed specifically to provide for their needs.

All eyes will be on the critical action of the House this week as you vote on the budget. With America's sons and daughters prepared to do battle with the enemies of our country, and our veterans locked in battles over the crisis in VA health care and drastic cuts to our programs, the American public will want to know whether our government will honor its commitment to our veterans and to their children—our future veterans—serving in harm's way.

There is no question that the vote on the proposed budget is an important vote, one that will set the tone for the remainder of this Congress, and likely the next Congress.

Mr. Speaker, this budget dishonors the service of millions of service-connected disabled veterans, including combat disabled veterans, and seriously erodes the nation's commitment to care for its defenders. If this budget resolution retains provisions to cut veteran's programs, I will use all the resources at my disposal to take our case to the American people and call upon members of Congress to oppose and vote against the budget resolution. I urge you to reconsider the inequitable and ill-advised course proposed in the Committee's partisan budget proposal. I look to you, in your leadership position, to ensure that this Congress honors our government's commitment to its veterans.

Sincerely,

EDWARD R. HEATH, SR.,
National Commander.

PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA,
Washington, DC.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House, Capitol Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: On behalf of the members of Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) I am writing to express our profound objection to the provisions contained in the FY 2004 Budget Resolution as approved by the House Committee on the Budget that would cut veterans health care and benefit programs by nearly \$25 billion. The proposal, if implemented, would have a shocking effect on VA health care services and would be an affront to millions of veterans facing reductions in their health care, compensation, pension and education benefits.

The FY 2004 budget proposed by the Administration is already inadequate to meet the health care needs of veterans. The proposal, approximately \$1.3 billion above the FY 2003 appropriation, would not even cover inflationary impact and anticipated salary increases for VA health care workers. That budget proposal already relies too much on unrealistic management efficiencies, increased copayments, a new annual enrollment tax on certain veterans using the VA health care system and other "efficiencies" such as eliminating 5,000 VA nursing home beds. If the House Budget Committee plan is approved, Congress would have to vote to further block health care eligibility for hundreds of thousands currently eligible veterans, and drastically increase waiting times for health care and benefits adjudication. A cut of this size would force the House of Representatives to vote for a budget that would call for a loss of 9,000 VA physicians equating to a loss of nearly 900,000 days of hospital care.

The House Budget Committee proposal also calls for cutting \$15 billion over ten years, \$463 million in FY 2004 alone, in VA mandatory spending under the guise of eliminating "fraud, waste and abuse." We do not consider payments to war-disabled veterans pensions for the poorest disabled veterans and G.I. Bill benefits for soldiers returning from Afghanistan to be "fraud, waste and abuse." Ninety percent of the spending for VA entitlements goes in monthly payments to these veterans and their survivors. The House Budget Committee plan, if approved, would force cuts in each of these programs.

Mr. Speaker, budget resolutions set spending priorities. We find it hard to fathom that veterans would not be a priority to the Budget Committee, or the leadership of the House of Representatives. We know that forcing spending cuts on veterans in order to pay for other priorities, such as large tax cuts, would not be the priority of the American people. Hundreds of thousands of this country's men and women in the Armed Forces are poised to invade the country of Iraq in defense of the United States. In defense of them and their best interest, we must strongly object to this Budget Resolution in its entirety if the magnitude of these cuts in veterans benefits and services is sustained in any fashion. The vote on this budget resolution will be closely watched by our members and all veterans.

Sincerely,

JOSEPH L. FOX, SR.,
National President.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS), the very distinguished chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I rise in part because I have

just now read the motion to instruct conferees. The ranking member on the Committee on the Budget had indicated that perhaps there were some misrepresentations by a description of what some of the black letter language was. If the gentleman would be willing to respond to some questions that I have, it might assist us in understanding, or at least it will assist this gentleman from California in understanding.

When, for example, on page 5 the gentleman indicates that we be instructed to eliminate the reconciliation instruction, that means to remove the 1 percent across-the-board cut; is that correct?

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. THOMAS. I yield to the gentleman from South Carolina.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, it means it is to remove, in the case of agriculture, a reduction of \$18 billion.

Mr. THOMAS. That is 1 percent across the board.

Mr. SPRATT. If the gentleman would be so kind as to let me finish answering his question.

Mr. THOMAS. Reclaiming my time, Mr. Speaker, if we are going to go through each of the committees, that will eat up my entire time.

The instruction was a 1 percent.

Mr. SPRATT. We are seeking to restore to the level the President requested Medicare, Medicaid, education.

Mr. THOMAS. Reclaiming my time, it does not say restore to. Reading the black letters in front of me, it does not say restore to the President's request. It says eliminate the reconciliation instruction, not restore to the President's request.

So it is clear, then, it is the removal of the 1 percent no matter what they may say they mean based upon that language.

Then when we drop down further and the gentleman talks about the managers receding to the Senate on section 319. It was described, I understand, as the Breaux amendment. The Breaux amendment is in two sections. One section is to cut by \$396 billion, the other is to create a reserve fund to strengthen Social Security.

My assumption is that when the gentleman refers to 319, not tying it to the money number that was included in the Breaux amendment, he is referring only to the creation of a reserve fund or a lockbox for Social Security; is that correct?

Mr. SPRATT. In the amount of \$396 billion, which would be deducted from the gentleman's tax cut. We would instead invest it in the insolvency of Social Security.

Mr. THOMAS. Does that language include the \$396 billion which was included in the Breaux amendment?

Mr. SPRATT. If the gentleman will continue to yield, section 319 reads, "If legislation is reported by the Senate Committee on Finance, or if an amendment is offered or conference report is

submitted to extend the solvency of the Social Security trust funds, the chairman of the sitting Committee on the Budget may revise the aggregates, the functional totals, the allocations and limits by up to \$396 billion in budget authority.

Mr. THOMAS. In other words, Mr. Speaker, this is an attempt to create a lockbox to preserve Social Security.

And then, no matter how much the gentleman may not like the explanation, when we read the black letter language, what it says is that instead of a \$1.3 billion reduction in taxes, there will be a \$1.1 billion reduction in taxes, and it in no way addresses the \$726 billion amount that was included in the House budget resolution.

That is not discussed, nor is it altered by this motion to instruct. There may be an attempt through language on the floor to convey that that is the intent; but as the gentleman requested, if we read the black letter language in front of us, the \$726 billion budget cut for taxes is retained. It is a removal of the 1 percent cut across the board, and it is to create a Social Security lockbox. That is what they are attempting to do.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute to correct the gross misstatement the gentleman just made as to the construction of this motion.

If he will read on, the last sentence says, "and that such managers be instructed to address the revenue levels by the amounts needed." "To adjust the revenue levels by the amounts needed to offset the cost of the instructions in paragraphs 1." Those are the entitlement reclamations. "The restoration of the entitlement expenditures." And two, that is the Breaux reserve fund. To adjust the levels of revenues in this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY).

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, this is a most extraordinary debate. Where I come from they mean what they say and they say what they mean.

Let us look at this debate. In the first 10 minutes, the chairman of the Committee on the Budget talks against the resolution. He is surprised by the majority leader, who comes to the floor and says, you know, I think we can go for this, even while the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means tries to parse the language.

It is quite clear they are a little uncertain of what to do. What is this all about? It is because cuts to veterans services do not stand the light of day. And this is not 2:30 in the morning. This is in the afternoon, with America watching and our country at war. So it is time we pass this resolution and reject the cuts to veterans services contained in the majority budget.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds to say, no, that is not what it says. It says cut taxes \$1.1 billion and freeze veterans benefits. That is what the other side's motion to instruct says.

You have to read it. You wrote it; you read it. I do not like it, because, quite honestly, I think our budget was better. But if the other side is going to instruct us, at least know what you are instructing us. You are instructing us to freeze on spending at 2003 levels, and you are saying cut taxes by at least \$1.1 trillion. That is what the letter of the law in the instruction says.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I believe we have the right to close.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). That is correct.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS), the vice chairman of the Committee on the Budget.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I did not think that the last speaker, a colleague who used to be for controlling the growth in spending, would be advocating spending so much.

When we were in the Committee on the Budget voting out this bill, my Democratic colleagues came out with a total of \$982 billion of new spending over the next 10 years. That is far more than the amount of the tax cut. It would not have helped reduce the deficit. It was simply more government spending.

Only in Washington when we spend more money do people call it a cut. The total budget is going to go up 3 percent. Medicare is going to go up 7.9 percent. Veterans spending is going to go up 6.9 percent, but they called it a cut. They call a \$3.97 billion increase a cut when it is actually an increase of 6.9 percent.

I believe that during the time I was on the Committee on the Budget we had some clear delineation. We wanted to cut taxes. Our Democratic colleagues did not want a cut in taxes; they wanted to spend more. We never had a debate with President Clinton in which he thought we were spending too much. It was always that we needed to spend more, and that is the dialogue that is happening now. Then some of my conservative colleagues on the other side of the aisle are saying they cannot, in some areas, have a 1 percent cut in the budget for 1 year and then allow it to go back on its trail of new spending.

I was proud of what the Committee on the Budget did. I would have liked for us to stay on that issue. I would have liked for us, for 1 year, to take a deep breath and show at least some of what local communities are doing, where Governor Richardson in New Mexico is cutting spending and cutting taxes. He happens to be a Democrat doing what Republicans usually do.

In my judgment, we should control the growth of spending, take a breath for a year, cut taxes and grow this economy. But instead, what we are seeing once again are my Democratic colleagues saying we are not spending

enough. We need to spend more and more and more. I think we need to do what they are doing on the State and local levels: suck it in a little bit, control, and spend 1 percent less on non-defense, non-homeland security and get our country's financial house in order. That is what I believe we should be doing.

Whether or not my colleague on the other side of the aisle is supporting a \$514 billion tax cut or a \$700 billion-plus tax cut, the bottom line is we need a tax cut to grow this economy. This side of the aisle is not going to be like President Hoover. We need to move this economy forward. That is absolutely essential.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, how much time remains on this side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUSSLE) has 5 minutes remaining, and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) has 3¼ minutes remaining.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ), the chairman of our caucus.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, today must be April Fool's Day, because what I hear in this debate is our Republican colleagues renouncing their budget and, in essence, accepting ours.

This motion to recommit is about values. Mr. Speaker, what message is the Republican majority sending our brave men and women fighting in Iraq even as we speak when it cuts \$14.6 billion in veterans benefits in the budget resolution; when it cuts the health care and disability compensation even as hundreds of thousands of men and women are deployed in the Middle East risking their lives for America, even as dozens of our wounded troops are airlifted back to hospitals in Germany and the United States?

The Republican value is very clear, as is their message: fight for us today, but we cannot make any promises to you about tomorrow. And that is exactly what their budget does. In fact, the Disabled American Veterans described the House Republican approach in the following terms by asking, "Has the Congress no shame?"

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Mr. Speaker, Republicans choose to dishonor the sacrifices of our Nation's heroes and rob our programs to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy, and it is a real shame. These young men and women may well depend upon the benefits they are seeking to cut.

This weekend, I was fortunate enough to visit 7,000 troops at Fort Dix, New Jersey, 7,000 men and women, 7,000 sons and daughters, 7,000 mothers and fathers about to be deployed to Iraq. They were unanimous in their dedication and selflessness, and they are ready to perform and perform proudly. But soldiers do not pick the battle or the place or the time. They just respond to the call. We should respond to the call by rallying behind them and

those that served before them, our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, this motion to recommit is that opportunity. Try telling them that they are part of waste, fraud and abuse. The other side had 8 years of Republican control to root out that waste, fraud and abuse, and Republicans did nothing. Do not do it on the backs of veterans today. Vote for the motion to recommit.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentleman for not only yielding time, but for offering this most important motion to instruct conferees on the Fiscal Year 2004 Budget Resolution.

What message is the Republican Majority sending our brave men and women fighting in Iraq even as we speak, when it cuts 14.6 billion dollars in Veterans' Benefits in the Budget Resolution?

Cuts to health care and disability compensation, even as hundreds of thousands of men and women are deployed in the Middle East, risking their lives for freedom and democracy?

Cuts to health care and disability compensation, even as dozens of our wounded troops are airlifted back to hospitals in Germany and the United States?

The Republican Budget's message is clear: Fight for us today, but we can't make any promises for tomorrow.

And that's exactly what their budget does—in fact, the Disabled American Veterans described the House Republican approach in the following terms:

"Has the Congress no shame? Is there no honor left in the hallowed halls of our government that you choose to dishonor the sacrifices of our nation's heroes and rob our programs . . . to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy?"

It is a real shame. Our men and women in uniform are fighting in Iraq or are about to be shipped out to the Middle East, and Republicans are suggesting cutting benefits many of these young men and women may depend on upon their return.

This weekend I was fortunate enough to visit 7,000 troops at Fort Dix in New Jersey; 7,000 men and women; 7,000 sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, about to be deployed to Iraq.

They were unanimous in their dedication and selflessness—they told me that, no matter what their personal views may be on this war, they will fight honorably and will make us proud.

I wish the Republican Leadership had even an iota of their bravery, selflessness and dedication. But instead, it turns its back on these troops, their families, our communities, and, worst of all, our veterans.

Soldiers don't pick the battle. They don't pick the place. They don't pick the time. They just respond to the call, and we should respond to the call by rallying behind them, and those that served before them, our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I believe all of us who say we support our troops and veterans should be on this floor supporting this motion when the time comes. I urge my colleagues to vote for the gentleman's motion to instruct.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY).

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, the previous speaker should have saved that debate for the debate on the budget. We

are debating a motion to instruct conferees.

I have to admit to the gentleman from South Carolina I did misread this. I thought he was eliminating all the cuts, 1 percent across the board. Indeed, what he is doing is freezing. I am willing to accept that. I will take a freeze over the cut. It is still spending restraint, and I will do that.

Secondly, in the provision, the gentleman is right. I thought it was \$212 billion out of the \$726 billion tax relief, but as I read it and analyze it, it is \$212 billion from \$1.4 trillion that is in the budget. So we lower the tax number down to \$1.2 trillion, more than enough to accommodate the President's economic growth package. I am going to support this motion to instruct, and I ask the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) in the interest of bipartisanship, I am willing to work with the gentleman on this motion to instruct and ask the gentleman if he is going to call a voice vote on the motion.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DELAY. I yield to the gentleman from South Carolina.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I intend to ask for a recorded vote.

Mr. DELAY. Then it is obvious this is nothing but a political operation. If the gentleman calls for a recorded vote on this, it is all politics on the other side. The problem is, they so poorly wrote this that now the Democrats are going to support freezing the budget to 2003 levels of all these committees, and give us enough of a tax number to accommodate the President's package.

I am all for it, and I am going to vote with the gentleman.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI).

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time and I thank him for his tremendous leadership once again in putting forth a proposal that reflects the values of our country. Even the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), the majority leader, has to admit the gentleman is right on his motion to instruct.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this motion to instruct the budget resolution conferees to reject some of the most harmful cuts in the Republican budget.

Mr. Speaker, the Federal budget should be a statement of our shared national values. We should allocate our resources to those proposals and initiatives that are important to our country. The budget passed by the Republicans in the House certainly does not meet that standard. I am not even sure they understand what they passed in the House.

But what we do know is that when the President sent his budget to Congress, we thought we had seen the worst of it. The Bush budget shortchanges veterans, seniors, children and the environment to pay for his tax cut.

But the worst was yet to come. The House Republicans did the President's budget one better, or one worse as the case may be, and made even deeper cuts in education and issues relating to seniors. The difference is significant.

President Bush's budget is not balanced. He pays for his tax cut by adding more than \$2 trillion to the deficit. It is reckless and irresponsible.

House Republicans have shown us that the only way they can pay for the President's reckless and irresponsible tax cut and balance the budget by 2012 is to slash veterans benefits, slash student loans, slash the school lunch program, and slash Medicaid. Slashing those priorities in order to give every millionaire in this country a \$90,000 tax cut, that does not reflect our values.

Americans value our veterans. We value education. We value access to quality health care. Passing a budget that cuts those priorities to pay for a huge tax cut that will not benefit most Americans is simply wrong.

The Democratic motion instructs conferees to do the right thing. A vote for the Democratic motion is to reject the cuts to veterans benefits, education and health care currently in the bill passed by the Republicans. The announcement by the distinguished majority leader that he would accept the Spratt motion to instruct is an admission that the Republican budget is wrong.

We must not shortchange the veterans who have so courageously defended our country and the thousands of future veterans who are risking their lives in Iraq as we speak. A vote for the Spratt amendment supports our veterans. It is ironic that on the same night that this House properly passed a resolution to honor the troops, the Republican majority passed this budget that dishonors the troops by making deep cuts in veterans benefits.

The conferees should accept the other body's language that provides \$14.6 billion more than the House Republican bill for veterans disability and education benefits. We must not shortchange students who rely on student loans and other education programs that expand opportunities and promote excellence.

A vote for the Spratt motion to instruct expands opportunity and promotes excellence. It rejects \$9 billion in cuts to student loans and the school lunch program. We must do the right thing for millions of seniors, children and disabled Americans who rely on Medicare for their health care coverage.

We should accept the other body's language that rejects \$94 billion in cuts in Medicaid. These cuts threaten access to nursing home care, hospital services and prescription drugs for some of our most vulnerable citizens. A vote for the Spratt motion to instruct would remove that threat from the budget.

It is simply wrong to pass a budget that fails veterans, fails students, fails seniors, fails children and fails the dis-

abled. The American people deserve better. I urge my colleagues to support the Democratic motion to instruct.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). The gentleman is recognized for 4 minutes.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, the distinguished minority leader, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) has a great speech writer, but the speech writer failed to read the budget. Great speech, but the speech writer did not read the budget.

School lunches are not mentioned in the budget. It is not in there. Education, not even mentioned. There are no cuts in education. There are no cuts to seniors. We cannot find farmers in here. Hospitals, we will not find the word "hospital" in the budget. No, that is not what a budget is about. The gentlewoman knows that. Student loans, that is not mentioned in the budget. Cuts to the school lunch program, she claims. School lunch program is not in here.

See, the interesting thing about it is that Democrats come running to the floor claiming there is no waste in Washington. So very hastily they draw up a motion to instruct conferees. And what does that motion say? It says there is no waste in Washington. The Democrats cannot find one penny of waste in Washington. So instead of finding waste and instead of adopting the Republican-passed budget, what should we do?

Well, it says right here in black and white, let us reduce those instructions so what we end up with is a freeze in spending. So they are freezing school lunches and veterans benefits, freezing hospitals, freezing student loans, freezing all these things that they are talking about. They come running to the floor breathlessly to discuss this and send their press releases and play political games about a motion to instruct.

That is not what this is about. But that is what the other side of the aisle is saying. What do they do with the so-called "savings" of just freezing spending? They want to reduce the tax cut. We happen to support a \$1.3 trillion tax cut. By reducing this, what the Democrats come running here to the floor today to support is a \$1.1 trillion tax cut.

Well, we have considered it. It is not what we passed. We would rather find waste in Washington. We do not want to just freeze spending. We would rather go through each and every program and find the savings, find the waste and the abuse, so the money and the programs go to the intended purpose. But instead, what the Democrats want to do is freeze spending. All right, I guess we can consider doing that when we get to conference.

So I would encourage my Republican colleagues to vote for the Spratt motion to instruct conferees that freezes spending. That is at least a good start. I think we could do better, but I think

this is at least a good start to freeze spending. Of course, freezing spending at the 2003 level is a cut, is a cut from the increase that was anticipated, the anticipated increase that the other side of the aisle sometimes comes to the floor and claims that we provide cuts in.

So 2003 levels in a 2004 budget is what the other side of the aisle is supporting.

The second thing they say is, reduce the tax cut by that amount. We have done the math. We have read the black and white letters of the motion to instruct conferees, and the math is very simple. We come up with \$1.1 trillion worth of tax relief. That is far and above where the Senate was. That is not where the House wanted to be, but we think it is at least worthy of taking into consideration in the conference.

So I believe even though we can find more waste in Washington than what the Democrats are suggesting, and we can have more tax reform and more simplification and more reduction in taxes to create jobs, even though I believe those things, I believe we should support this motion to instruct conferees. It is nonbinding, it is political, but I think they have been hoisted by their own petard.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) has 15 seconds remaining.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, this restores spending to the present levels for Medicaid, Medicare, school lunches. In addition, this does not endorse any particular level of tax cut. It simply says it adjusts the revenues accordingly after restoring these amounts to the budgets.

It is a good motion. Members should vote for it if they want to vote for Medicaid, Medicare, student loans and other programs which are so vitally important to our country.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Spratt/Pomeroy motion to instruct conferees on the budget resolution. This motion rejects the House's mandatory spending cuts to education, health care, and veterans' programs by calling on the conferees, on a deficit-neutral basis, to restore these cuts. These cuts are included in the Republican budget—which I voted against—but not in the Senate resolution, or the President's budget.

As our country is engaged in a war with Iraq that will require additional spending, we must not overlook our domestic priorities.

This motion calls on the conferees to reject the budget cuts to Medicaid and Medicare; cuts to key education programs like school lunches and student loans; cuts in veterans' benefits; cuts to railroad retirees' pensions; cuts in aid for working families and the disabled; and cuts to the food stamp program.

It is astonishing that in this time of conflict, we could cut benefits to our nation's veterans. The House-passed resolution cuts direct spending for veterans' benefits by a total of \$14.6 billion over ten years. Veterans all across the Nation will be hurt if these cuts are

not restored. Our Nation's veterans have risked their lives for our country and they served on the front lines. We cannot deny them basic benefits like housing, medical care, and other services that civilians receive.

I offered an amendment in the Rules Committee to restore these cuts. Specifically, my amendment would have stricken the reconciliation instructions to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs in section 201 (b)(2)(M) and increased mandatory budget authority and outlays for Function 700. Unfortunately, the committee rejected my amendment.

The House resolution's cuts are supposed to be unspecified reductions in veterans' benefits that eliminate so-called "waste, fraud, and abuse." We are robbing from our veterans' programs—health care and disability compensation—to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy.

According to Amvets, a veterans organization, more than 200,000 veterans seeking health care in January waited more than six months. VA officials say they are working on improving the wait time. The national goal for a doctor's visit is a 30-day wait. Waits at Texas hospitals and clinics abound.

Hospitalized veterans also are vying for too few doctors and nurses. And the VA system has started drastically rationing its health care, deciding some veterans get care while others don't.

It is still unclear how budget cuts will affect post-war health benefits for troops returning from Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

A 1998 law compels the VA to provide free medical care to those newly returned from a combat zone, whether or not they have a military service-related disability, for up to two years. After that, only those with medical problems related to military service qualify for life-long medical benefits.

We wonder how a system that cannot afford to treat the veterans it already serves will be able to handle new ones, especially if some of those new patients may be exposed to chemical or biological weapons in this war. It is unconscionable that we will not provide additional benefits to those who have suffered from Agent Orange while serving in the Vietnam Conflict, and we do not know all the ills that possibly face our troops now deployed in Iraq.

More than 6.5 million veterans are enrolled in the VA health system, but the VA is budgeted to provide care for only 4.8 million patients in 2004.

Will support for our troops evaporate once war ends? We must fund critical programs for veterans. I urge my colleagues to support the Spratt/Pomeroy motion.

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the Budget Resolution approved last month by this body contains cuts to domestic programs that millions of Americans depend on, day in and day out.

The victims of these funding cuts include Medicaid, children's health care, student loan, and veterans programs. To slash programs that provide health care to our seniors and children, educate our students and honor the commitments made to the veterans who have bravely protected our freedom flies in the face of the American values that we hold so dearly.

Mr. Speaker, the President didn't request cuts for these programs. Furthermore, the Senate's budget did not contain these cuts. Yet, this chamber cut these programs in order to fund a tax cut.

Ask any group of senior citizens if they'd trade Medicare funding for a tax cut on their dividends, and I guarantee you they'd choose Medicare. Ask any high school senior what's more important to him, a tax cut or a student loan program that will make his education more affordable. The answer is clear.

Ask any of our troops who are fighting so valiantly to bring freedom to Iraq whether they'd rather have a tax cut or adequately funded veterans programs. I bet you they'd want this country to honor their military service and restore the \$14.6 billion this budget cuts from veterans programs over the next 10 years.

We cannot afford this tax cut on economic grounds alone. But to pay for it by taking away from our seniors, students, veterans and farmers is particularly shameful. I urge my colleagues to support this motion and instruct the budget conferees to restore funding for these crucial domestic programs.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the gentleman from South Carolina's motion to instruct conferees on the budget resolution. This common sense, non-binding motion will restore some sanity to this budget.

Put simply, Mr. Spratt's resolution rejects cuts to education, health care, and veterans' programs by urging the House and Senate conferees, on a deficit-neutral basis, to restore these cuts. The House budget is so extreme that these cuts are not included in the Senate-passed budget or even the Bush distraction's budget blueprint.

It is sadly ironic that at the same time we send our young people abroad to fight a war, the majority is advancing a budget that will force those same young people to pay the bill for their recklessness. By showering the most privileged among us with hundreds of billions of dollars in tax breaks and running up more than a trillion dollars in debt, this budget poses a serious threat to the long-term economic well-being of the nation.

Month after month, more American families are suffering from the failure of this Administration's irresponsible economic strategy. With the economy hemorrhaging jobs for every sector, an increasing number of Americans are losing faith that they will ever find a job. With this budget, the majority has turned their backs on the problems of American families. Instead of offering new ideas and fresh solutions, the Administration continues to push a tired ideology that has turned our once-robust economy into a job-destroying machine.

I believe we are obligated to help our States, counties and cities meet the every-increasing burdens of skyrocketing programs. I believe we are obligated to reject the drastic cuts to Medicare and Medicaid. I believe we are obligated to reject the cuts to education funding, including school lunches and student loans. I believe we are obligated to reject the majority's cuts to the critical programs that benefit our veterans. I believe we are obligated to reject the cuts to assistance programs for the working poor—especially important during this economic downturn.

Most important though, this budget will hang more than a trillion dollars of debt around the necks of our children and grandchildren. They will be paying for this mistake for decades to come. The President's own chief economist, in his academic writings, agrees that the chronic deficits perpetuated by this budget will raise

interest rates, and cut off economic growth for the future.

I will continue to fight for a budget that contains a fiscally responsible stimulus plan that cuts taxes today, while meeting our obligation to prepare for the future. This is not a time to shrink from our responsibilities to one another. We need to meet the test of this demanding movement in our history.

I thank Ranking Member SPRATT, for offering this reasonable motion to instruct and I urge my colleagues to vote for it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to instruct.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to instruct offered by the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT).

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on the motion to instruct conferees on the budget resolution will be followed by two 5-minute votes on motions to suspend the rules that were debated earlier today.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 399, nays 22, not voting 13, as follows:

[Roll No. 95]

YEAS—399

Abercrombie	Burns	Dicks
Ackerman	Burr	Dingell
Aderholt	Burton (IN)	Doggett
Akin	Buyer	Dooley (CA)
Alexander	Calvert	Doolittle
Allen	Camp	Doyle
Andrews	Cantor	Dreier
Baca	Capito	Duncan
Bachus	Capps	Dunn
Baird	Capuano	Edwards
Baker	Cardin	Ehlers
Baldwin	Cardoza	Emanuel
Ballance	Carson (IN)	Emerson
Ballenger	Carson (OK)	Engel
Barrett (SC)	Carter	English
Bartlett (MD)	Case	Eshoo
Barton (TX)	Castle	Etheridge
Bass	Chabot	Evans
Beauprez	Chocola	Everett
Becerra	Clay	Farr
Bell	Clyburn	Fattah
Bereuter	Coble	Feeney
Berkley	Cole	Ferguson
Berman	Collins	Filner
Berry	Conyers	Fletcher
Biggert	Cooper	Forbes
Billirakis	Costello	Ford
Bishop (GA)	Cox	Fossella
Bishop (NY)	Cramer	Frank (MA)
Bishop (UT)	Crane	Frelinghuysen
Blackburn	Crenshaw	Frost
Blumenauer	Cubin	Gallegly
Blunt	Cummings	Garrett (NJ)
Boehlert	Cunningham	Gerlach
Boehner	Davis (AL)	Gibbons
Bonilla	Davis (CA)	Gilchrest
Bonner	Davis (FL)	Gillmor
Bono	Davis (IL)	Gingrey
Boozman	Davis (TN)	Gonzalez
Boswell	Davis, Jo Ann	Goode
Boucher	Davis, Tom	Goodlatte
Boyd	DeFazio	Gordon
Bradley (NH)	DeGette	Goss
Brady (PA)	Delahunt	Granger
Brady (TX)	DeLauro	Graves
Brown (OH)	DeLay	Green (TX)
Brown (SC)	DeMint	Green (WI)
Brown, Corrine	Deutsch	Greenwood
Brown-Waite,	Diaz-Balart, L.	Grijalva
Ginny	Diaz-Balart, M.	Gutierrez

Gutknecht
Hall
Harman
Harris
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Hayworth
Hensarling
Herger
Hill
Hinchev
Hinojosa
Hobson
Hoeffel
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley (OR)
Houghton
Hoyer
Hunter
Inslie
Isakson
Israel
Issa
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee
(TX)
Janklow
Jefferson
Jenkins
John
Johnson (CT)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Keller
Kelly
Kennedy (MN)
Kennedy (RI)
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kirk
Klecza
Kline
Knollenberg
Kucinich
LaHood
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
LaTourette
Leach
Lee
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Lofgren
Lowey
Lucas (KY)
Lucas (OK)
Lynch
Majette
Maloney
Manzullo
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui

McCarthy (NY)
McCormack
McCotter
McCrery
McDermott
McGovern
McHugh
McIntyre
McKeon
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Menendez
Michaud
Millender-
McDonald
Miller (MI)
Miller (NC)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Mollohan
Moore
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murphy
Murtha
Musgrave
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Nethercutt
Ney
Northup
Nunes
Nussle
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Osborne
Ose
Owens
Oxley
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Pearce
Pelosi
Pence
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Pombo
Pomeroy
Porter
Portman
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Quinn
Radanovich
Rahall
Ramstad
Rangel
Regula
Rehberg
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Rodriguez
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush

NAYS—22

Burgess
Cannon
Culberson
Deal (GA)
Flake
Franks (AZ)
Hart
Hefley

NOT VOTING—13

Combest
Crowley

McCarthy (MO)
McInnis
Mica
Oberstar
Simmons
Souder
Walden (OR)
Bradley (NH)
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Brown (OH)
Brown (SC)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite,
Ginny
Burgess
Burns
Burr
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardin
Cardoza
Carson (IN)
Carson (OK)
Carter
Case
Castle
Chabot
Chocola
Clay
Clyburn
Coble
Cole
Collins
Conyers
Cooper
Costello
Cox
Cramer
Crane
Crenshaw
Cubin
Culberson
Cummings
Cunningham
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (FL)
Davis (IL)
Davis (TN)
Davis, Jo Ann
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
DeLay
DeMint
Deutsch
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Dooley (CA)
Doolittle
Doyle
Dreier
Duncan
Dunn
Edwards
Ehlers
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English
Eshoo
Etheridge
Evans
Everett
Farr
Fattah
Feeney
Ferguson
Filner
Flake
Fletcher
Foley
Forbes
Ford
Fossella
Frank (MA)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Frost

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE
The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE) (during the vote). Members are advised that approximately 2 minutes remain in this vote.

□ 1551

Messrs. KOLBE, SHADEGG, CANNON, PAUL, MILLER of Florida, DEAL of Georgia, NORWOOD, CULBERSON, ROYCE, KINGSTON, TAYLOR of North Carolina, FRANKS of Arizona, WELDON of Florida, HEFLEY, and BURGESS, and Ms. HART changed their vote from "yea" to "nay."

Mr. PENCE changed his vote from "nay" to "yea."

So the motion to instruct was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 95, had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). Without objection, the Chair appoints the following conferees:

For consideration of the House concurrent resolution and the Senate amendment, and modifications committed to conference: Messrs. NUSSLE, SHAYS, and SPRATT.

There was no objection.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the remainder of this series will be conducted as 5-minute votes.

HIGHER EDUCATION RELIEF OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS ACT OF 2003

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The pending business is the question of suspending the rules and passing the bill, H.R. 1412.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1412, on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 421, nays 1, not voting 12, as follows:

[Roll No. 96]

YEAS—421

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Allen
Andrews
Baca
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldwin
Ballance
Ballenger
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bass
Beauprez
Becerra
Bell
Bereuter
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)

Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
 Blackburn
Blumenauer
Blunt
Boehler
Boehner
Bonilla
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gibbons
Gilchrist
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gonzalez
Goode
Goodlatte
Gordon
Goss
Granger
Graves
Green (TX)
Green (WI)
Greenwood
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Gutknecht
Hall
Harman
Harris
Hart
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Hayworth
Hefley
Hensarling
Herger
Hill
Hinchev
Hinojosa
Hobson
Hoeffel
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley (OR)
Hostettler
Hostettler
Houghton
Hoyer
Hunter
Inslie
Isakson
Israel
Issa
Istook
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee
(TX)
Janklow
Jefferson
Jenkins
John
Johnson (CT)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Keller
Kelly
Kennedy (MN)
Kennedy (RI)
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Klecza
Kline
Knollenberg
Kolbe
Kucinich
LaHood
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
Lampson
Langevin
Leach
Lee
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Lofgren
Lowey
Lucas (KY)
Lucas (OK)
Lynch
Majette
Maloney
Manzullo
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Lofgren
Lowey
Lucas (KY)
Lucas (OK)
Lynch
Majette
Maloney
Manzullo
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui

Ros-Lehtinen	Simpson	Towns	Beauprez	Engel	LaHood	Rahall	Serrano	Thornberry
Ross	Skelton	Turner (OH)	Becerra	English	Lampson	Ramstad	Sessions	Tiberi
Rothman	Slaughter	Turner (TX)	Bell	Eshoo	Langevin	Rangel	Shadegg	Tierney
Roybal-Allard	Smith (MI)	Udall (CO)	Bereuter	Etheridge	Lantos	Regula	Shaw	Toomey
Royce	Smith (NJ)	Udall (NM)	Berkley	Evans	Larsen (WA)	Rehberg	Shays	Towns
Ruppersberger	Smith (TX)	Upton	Berman	Everett	Larson (CT)	Renzi	Sherman	Turner (OH)
Rush	Smith (WA)	Van Hollen	Berry	Farr	Latham	Reyes	Sherwood	Turner (TX)
Ryan (OH)	Snyder	Velazquez	Biggert	Fattah	LaTourette	Reynolds	Shimkus	Udall (CO)
Ryan (WI)	Solis	Visclosky	Bilirakis	Feeney	Leach	Rodriguez	Shuster	Udall (NM)
Ryun (KS)	Spratt	Vitter	Bishop (GA)	Ferguson	Lee	Rogers (AL)	Simpson	Upton
Sabo	Stark	Walsh	Bishop (NY)	Filner	Levin	Rogers (KY)	Skelton	Van Hollen
Sanchez, Linda	Stearns	Wamp	Bishop (UT)	Flake	Lewis (CA)	Rogers (MI)	Slaughter	Velazquez
T.	Stenholm	Waters	Blackburn	Fletcher	Lewis (GA)	Rohrabacher	Smith (MI)	Visclosky
Sanchez, Loretta	Strickland	Watson	Blumenauer	Foley	Lewis (KY)	Ros-Lehtinen	Smith (NJ)	Vitter
Sanders	Stupak	Watt	Blunt	Forbes	Lucas (KY)	Ross	Smith (TX)	Walsh
Sandlin	Sullivan	Waxman	Boehler	Ford	Lucas (OK)	Rothman	Smith (WA)	Wamp
Saxton	Sweeney	Weiner	Boehner	Fossella	Lucas (OK)	Roybal-Allard	Snyder	Waters
Schakowsky	Tancredo	Weldon (FL)	Bonilla	Franks (AZ)	Lowey	Royce	Solis	Watson
Schiff	Tanner	Weldon (PA)	Bonner	Frelinghuysen	Lowey	Ruppersberger	Spratt	Watt
Schrock	Tauscher	Weller	Bono	Frost	Lucas (KY)	Rush	Stark	Waxman
Scott (GA)	Tauzin	Wexler	Boozman	Gallegly	Lucas (OK)	Ryan (OH)	Stearns	Weiner
Scott (VA)	Taylor (MS)	Whitfield	Bowwell	Garrett (NJ)	Majette	Ryan (WI)	Stenholm	Weldon (FL)
Sensenbrenner	Taylor (NC)	Wicker	Boucher	Gerlach	Maloney	Ryun (KS)	Strickland	Weldon (PA)
Serrano	Terry	Wilson (NM)	Boyd	Gibbons	Manzullo	Sabo	Stupak	Weller
Sessions	Thomas	Wilson (SC)	Bradley (NH)	Gilchrist	Markey	Sanchez, Linda	Sullivan	Wexler
Shadegg	Thompson (CA)	Wolf	Brady (PA)	Gillmor	Marshall	T.	Sweeney	Whitfield
Shaw	Thompson (MS)	Woolsey	Brady (TX)	Gingrey	Matheson	Sanchez, Loretta	Tancredo	Wicker
Shays	Thornberry	Wu	Brown (OH)	Gonzalez	Matsui	Sanders	Tanner	Wilson (NM)
Sherman	Tiahrt	Wynn	Brown (SC)	Goode	McCarthy (NY)	Sandlin	Tauscher	Wilson (SC)
Sherwood	Tiberi	Young (AK)	Brown (SC)	Goode	McCollum	Saxton	Tauzin	Wolf
Shimkus	Tierney	Young (FL)	Brown, Corrine	Goodlatte	McCotter	Schakowsky	Taylor (MS)	Woolsey
Shuster	Toomey		Brown-Waite,	Gordon	McCrery	Schiff	Taylor (NC)	Wu
			Ginny	Granger	McDermott	Schrock	Terry	Wynn
			Burgess	Graves	McGovern	Scott (GA)	Thomas	Young (AK)
			Burns	Green (TX)	McHugh	Scott (VA)	Thompson (CA)	Young (FL)
			Burr	Green (WI)	McIntyre	Sensenbrenner	Thompson (MS)	
			Burton (IN)	Greenwood	McKeon			
			Buyer	Grijalva	McNulty			
			Calvert	Gutierrez	Meehan			
			Camp	Gutknecht	Meek (FL)			
			Cannon	Hall	Meeke (NY)			
			Cantor	Harman	Menendez			
			Capito	Harris	Mica			
			Capps	Hart	Michaud			
			Capuano	Hastings (FL)	Millender			
			Cardin	Hastings (WA)	McDonald			
			Cardoza	Hayes	Miller (FL)			
			Carson (IN)	Hayworth	Miller (MI)			
			Carson (OK)	Hefley	Miller (NC)			
			Carter	Hensarling	Miller, Gary			
			Case	Herger	Miller, George			
			Castle	Hill	Mollohan			
			Chabot	Hinchev	Moore			
			Chocola	Hinojosa	Moran (KS)			
			Clay	Hobson	Moran (VA)			
			Clyburn	Hoeffel	Murphy			
			Coble	Hoekstra	Murtha			
			Cole	Holden	Musgrave			
			Collins	Holt	Myrick			
			Conyers	Honda	Nadler			
			Cooper	Hooley (OR)	Napolitano			
			Cooper	Hostettler	Neal (MA)			
			Costello	Houghton	Nethercutt			
			Cox	Hoyer	Ney			
			Cramer	Hunter	Northup			
			Crane	Inslee	Norwood			
			Crenshaw	Isakson	Nunes			
			Cubin	Israel	Nussle			
			Culberson	Issa	Obey			
			Cummings	Istook	Olver			
			Cunningham	Jackson (IL)	Ortiz			
			Davis (AL)	Jackson-Lee	Osborne			
			Davis (CA)	(TX)	Ose			
			Davis (FL)	Janklow	Otter			
			Davis (IL)	Jefferson	Owens			
			Davis (TN)	Jenkins	Oxley			
			Davis, Jo Ann	John	Pallone			
			Davis, Tom	Johnson (CT)	Pascarell			
			Deal (GA)	Johnson (IL)	Pastor			
			DeFazio	Johnson, E. B.	Paul			
			DeGette	Johnson, Sam	Payne			
			DeLahunt	Jones (NC)	Pearce			
			DeLauro	Kanjorski	Pelosi			
			DeLay	Kaptur	Pence			
			DeMint	Keller	Peterson (MN)			
			Deutsch	Kelly	Peterson (PA)			
			Diaz-Balart, L.	Kennedy (MN)	Petri			
			Diaz-Balart, M.	Kennedy (RI)	Pickering			
			Dicks	Kildee	Pitts			
			Dingell	Kilpatrick	Platts			
			Doggett	Kind	Pombo			
			Doggett	King (IA)	Pomeroy			
			Dooley (CA)	King (NY)	Porter			
			Doolittle	Kingston	Portman			
			Doyle	Kirk	Price (NC)			
			Dreier	Kline	Pryce (OH)			
			Duncan	Knollenberg	Putnam			
			Abercrombie	Emanuel	Quinn			
			Ackerman	Emerson	Radanovich			
			Aderholt					
			Akin					
			Alexander					
			Allen					

NAYS—1

Miller, George

NOT VOTING—12

Combest	Hyde	Quinn
Crowley	McCarthy (MO)	Simmons
Gephardt	McInnis	Souder
Hulshof	Oberstar	Walden (OR)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). The Chair will advise all Members there are 2 minutes left in this vote.

□ 1559

So (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING THE BLUE STAR BANNER AND THE GOLD STAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The pending business is the question of suspending the rules and agreeing to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 109, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 109, as amended, on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 418, nays 0, not voting 16, as follows:

[Roll No. 97]

YEAS—418

Abercrombie	Andrews	Ballance
Ackerman	Baca	Ballenger
Aderholt	Bachus	Barrett (SC)
Akin	Baird	Bartlett (MD)
Alexander	Baker	Barton (TX)
Allen	Baldwin	Bass

Burgess	Granger	McDermott
Burns	Graves	McGovern
Burr	Green (TX)	McHugh
Burton (IN)	Green (WI)	McIntyre
Buyer	Greenwood	McKeon
Calvert	Grijalva	McNulty
Camp	Gutierrez	Meehan
Cannon	Gutknecht	Meek (FL)
Cantor	Hall	Meeke (NY)
Capito	Harman	Menendez
Capps	Harris	Mica
Capuano	Hart	Michaud
Cardin	Hastings (FL)	Millender
Cardoza	Hastings (WA)	McDonald
Carson (IN)	Hayes	Miller (FL)
Carson (OK)	Hayworth	Miller (MI)
Carter	Hefley	Miller (NC)
Case	Hensarling	Miller, Gary
Castle	Herger	Miller, George
Chabot	Hill	Mollohan
Chocola	Hinchev	Moore
Clay	Hinojosa	Moran (KS)
Clyburn	Hobson	Moran (VA)
Coble	Hoeffel	Murphy
Cole	Hoekstra	Murtha
Collins	Holden	Musgrave
Conyers	Holt	Myrick
Cooper	Honda	Nadler
Cooper	Hooley (OR)	Napolitano
Costello	Hostettler	Neal (MA)
Cox	Houghton	Nethercutt
Cramer	Hoyer	Ney
Crane	Hunter	Northup
Crenshaw	Inslee	Norwood
Cubin	Isakson	Nunes
Culberson	Israel	Nussle
Cummings	Issa	Obey
Cunningham	Istook	Olver
Davis (AL)	Jackson (IL)	Ortiz
Davis (CA)	Jackson-Lee	Osborne
Davis (FL)	(TX)	Ose
Davis (IL)	Janklow	Otter
Davis (TN)	Jefferson	Owens
Davis, Jo Ann	Jenkins	Oxley
Davis, Tom	John	Pallone
Deal (GA)	Johnson (CT)	Pascarell
DeFazio	Johnson (IL)	Pastor
DeGette	Johnson, E. B.	Paul
DeLahunt	Johnson, Sam	Payne
DeLauro	Jones (NC)	Pearce
DeLay	Kanjorski	Pelosi
DeMint	Kaptur	Pence
Deutsch	Keller	Peterson (MN)
Diaz-Balart, L.	Kelly	Peterson (PA)
Diaz-Balart, M.	Kennedy (MN)	Petri
Dicks	Kennedy (RI)	Pickering
Dingell	Kildee	Pitts
Doggett	Kilpatrick	Platts
Doggett	Kind	Pombo
Dooley (CA)	King (IA)	Pomeroy
Doolittle	King (NY)	Porter
Doyle	Kingston	Portman
Dreier	Kirk	Price (NC)
Duncan	Kline	Pryce (OH)
Ackerman	Knollenberg	Putnam
Aderholt	Emanuel	Quinn
Akin	Emerson	Radanovich
Alexander		
Allen		

Rahall	Serrano	Thornberry
Ramstad	Sessions	Tiberi
Rangel	Shadegg	Tierney
Regula	Shaw	Toomey
Rehberg	Shays	Towns
Renzi	Sherman	Turner (OH)
Reyes	Sherwood	Turner (TX)
Reynolds	Shimkus	Udall (CO)
Rodriguez	Shuster	Udall (NM)
Rogers (AL)	Simpson	Upton
Rogers (KY)	Skelton	Van Hollen
Rogers (MI)	Slaughter	Velazquez
Rohrabacher	Smith (MI)	Visclosky
Ros-Lehtinen	Smith (NJ)	Vitter
Ross	Smith (TX)	Walsh
Rothman	Smith (WA)	Wamp
Roybal-Allard	Snyder	Waters
Royce	Solis	Watson
Ruppersberger	Spratt	Watt
Rush	Stark	Waxman
Ryan (OH)	Stearns	Weiner
Ryan (WI)	Stenholm	Weldon (FL)
Ryun (KS)	Strickland	Weldon (PA)
Sabo	Stupak	Weller
Sanchez, Linda	Sullivan	Wexler
T.	Sweeney	Whitfield
Sanchez, Loretta	Tancredo	Wicker
Sanders	Tanner	Wilson (NM)
Sandlin	Tauscher	Wilson (SC)
Saxton	Tauzin	Wolf
Schakowsky	Taylor (MS)	Woolsey
Schiff	Taylor (NC)	Wu
Schrock	Terry	Wynn
Scott (GA)	Thomas	Young (AK)
Scott (VA)	Thompson (CA)	Young (FL)
Sensenbrenner	Thompson (MS)	

NOT VOTING—16

Combest	Jones (OH)	Simmons
Crowley	Klecza	Souder
Frank (MA)	Lynch	Tiahrt
Gephardt	McCarthy (MO)	Walden (OR)
Hulshof	McInnis	
Hyde	Oberstar	

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE) (during the vote). Members are reminded that there are 2 minutes remaining on this vote.

□ 1606

So (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The title of the concurrent resolution was amended so as to read: "Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress regarding the Blue Star Flag and the Gold Star."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 1006, THE CAPTIVE WILDLIFE SAFETY ACT

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. ALEXANDER) be removed as a cosponsor of H.R. 1006, the Captive Wildlife Safety Act, as he was mistakenly added as a cosponsor to this legislation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 743, SOCIAL SECURITY PROTECTION ACT OF 2003

Mr. LINDER, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report

(Rept. No. 108-54) on the resolution (H. Res. 168) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 743) to amend the Social Security Act and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide additional safeguards for Social Security and Supplemental Security Income beneficiaries with representative payees, to enhance program protections, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

MAKING IN ORDER AT ANY TIME CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 735, POSTAL CIVIL SERVICE RETIREMENT SYSTEM FUNDING REFORM ACT OF 2003

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order at any time for the Speaker, as though pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, to declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of H.R. 735, and that consideration of the bill proceed according to the following order:

The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with.

All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived.

General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Government Reform.

After general debate, the bill shall be considered for amendment under the 5-minute rule.

It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the 5-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Government Reform now printed in the bill.

The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read.

All points of order against the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute are waived.

No amendment to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be in order except the following amendments, which may be offered only in the order specified, may be offered only by the Member designated or his designee, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for 10 minutes equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole: (1) the amendment numbered 1 in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD by Representative WAXMAN of California; and, (2) the amendment numbered 2 in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD by Representative TOM DAVIS of Virginia.

All points of order against such amendments are waived.

At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment, the Committee

shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute. The previous question shall be ordered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit, with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

MAKING IN ORDER AT ANY TIME CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 522, FEDERAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE REFORM ACT OF 2003

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order at any time for the Speaker, as though pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, to declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House for the state of the Union for consideration of H.R. 522, and that consideration of the bill proceed according to the following order:

The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with.

All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived.

General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Financial Services.

After general debate, the bill shall be considered for amendment under the 5-minute rule.

It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the 5-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Financial Services now printed in the bill.

The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read.

All points of order against the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute are waived.

No amendment to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be in order except the following amendments printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD pursuant to clause 8 of rule XVIII, which may be offered only in the order specified, may be offered only by the Member designated or his designee, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole: (1) by Representative OSE of California; and, (2) by Representative ROHRBACHER of California.

All points of order against such amendments are waived.

At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment, the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

PUT VETERANS BENEFITS FUNDS BACK IN THE BUDGET

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

Mr. HOLT. Madam Speaker, the leadership of the House of Representatives narrowly passed a budget resolution on March 20 that would severely cut veterans benefits, including health care, disability compensation, pensions, and other benefits.

Now, 211 of my colleagues and I opposed this budget resolution and many of us voted instead for an alternative budget resolution preferred by the American Legion and other veterans groups that would have increased veterans benefits. I am sad to say it did not pass.

Now today, the majority party voted for a motion to instruct conferees presented by the Democrats. I must question the seriousness of this vote. Maybe it is April Fool's Day, but cutting veterans benefits does not seem very funny to me.

How can Congress even consider cutting veterans benefits during a time of war?

I must question the seriousness of it because only a week ago when my Republican friend and colleague, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), the chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, expressed his own outrage at the leadership's budget proposal, he was severely rebuked by his own party. Now, no American should be rebuked for standing up for veterans.

The promise that the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) got and this motion to instruct today should not have been necessary. It should have been in the original budget resolution that the veterans were looked after, that their disability payments would be taken care of. Certainly at a time of war and great sacrifice by our Nation's armed services, we cannot let these cuts stand.

□ 1615

VETERAN BUDGET CUTS

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

Ms. SOLIS. Madam Speaker, I rise today with much disappointment. I am disappointed that the Republican-driven budget resolution that passed cuts, over 10 years, \$14.6 in direct spending for our veterans benefits and \$14.2 billion in veterans health care.

How can the Congress even consider cutting benefits to our veterans when hundreds of thousands of American men and women in uniform are currently risking their lives overseas? What will it tell them upon their return? Thanks for your service, but you are on your own?

Our veterans and our future veterans deserve a lot better. Every day I pray for the safe return of our troops, realizing that some may not come back at all. Lance Corporal Jesus Alberto Suarez del Solar is one of our heroes who was killed recently in action, last Thursday. Suarez, although not even a U.S. citizen, chose to serve our country as a Marine.

Suarez' father is a U.S. citizen, and feels, and I quote, "both betrayed and proud." In the Los Angeles Times article Mr. Suarez says, "President Bush has not demonstrated to me or to thousands of other people that this war is justified." These are the words of his father.

How can we send our sons and daughters off when we cannot promise them support back home? I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to reconsider these cuts.

ON THE NEED TO REVITALIZE AMERICA'S ECONOMY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS SECTOR

(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. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak on the need to revitalize our economy, and particularly the telecommunications sector.

The telecommunications industry has been in a severe decline. Part of it was an investment bubble, but a big part of the decline was due to regulatory uncertainty. The Federal Communications Commission had a chance to give the industry some certainty, and instead, created even more chaos. They avoided making the tough decisions and have punted the responsibility to our States.

In fact, they have succeeded in pleasing no one and punishing every sector of the telecommunications industry. Unlike Solomon in the Old Testament, the SEC actually did cut the telecom baby in half.

This chaos immediately struck Wall Street as the telecom stocks plummeted, wiping out over \$15 billion in

market capital. When the telecommunications companies are already hurting, devaluing their stock makes matters much worse because they do not have that money to invest in upgrades.

Madam Speaker, it has been more than a month since the FCC released their decision on the Triennial Review, and we still have not seen the details. The FCC needs to take actions that foster investments by all parties, not create artificial competition.

I hope their final order accomplishes its goals, but I am concerned that it may fall far short.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

PARTIAL BIRTH ABORTION

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

Mr. KING of Iowa. Madam Speaker, an issue that concerns me a great deal has come before us here this evening. That subject matter is partial birth abortion.

Given that the Committee on the Judiciary marked up the Partial Birth Abortion Act last week and that it will be debated on the floor soon, I would like to bring our attention back to the fundamental principles and facts of the issue.

I have here a picture of an unborn baby 19 weeks old. Unborn 19- and 20-week-old boys and girls are often victims of partial birth abortion, though many abortionists will abort unborn babies up to 24 weeks old and older.

At 20 weeks old, this baby's body does not need to form new parts or develop new body systems. Instead, she will use the remaining time in her mother's womb to grow over the next 4½ months. She can dream, and she has REM sleep, just like you or me. At 20 weeks, she recognizes her mother's voice. Unborn babies, born prematurely at 21 or 22 weeks, can routinely be saved. Sometimes they can be saved even younger.

If we open up the phone book, we will find in the Yellow Pages, and particularly here in Washington, D.C., advertisements offering to abort unborn babies up to 24 weeks.

Many people recognize that this unborn baby's life should be protected. States have tried to outlaw these abortions, and many States have banned late-term abortion. But the Supreme Court in *Doe v. Bolton* created a mandatory loophole in all State laws that protect unborn children from abortion that allows abortionists to drive a truck through. The Supreme Court added an exception for the health of

the mother to Georgia's law protecting unborn children that went far beyond an abortion necessary to save the life of the mother.

Here is what they said: "We agree with the District Court that the medical judgment may be exercised in the light of all factors—physical, emotional, psychological, familial, and a woman's age—relevant to the well-being of the patient. All these factors may relate to health. This allows the attending physician the room he needs to make his best medical judgment. And it is room that operates for the benefit, not the disadvantage, of the pregnant woman." That is a quote from the case.

Abortionists continue to get around State bans on late-term abortions by finding excuses and justifications relating to emotional, psychological, and familial health. However, they neglect entirely the health of the unborn baby and his or her physical, emotional, psychological, and familial well-being.

Dr. Warren Hern of Colorado, the author of the standard textbook on abortion procedures, who also performs many third-trimester abortions, has stated: "I will certify that any pregnancy is a threat to a woman's life and could cause grievous injury to her physical health." Any pregnancy is a threat to a woman's life, according to Dr. Hern.

Statements like those of Dr. Hern's that any pregnancy injures a woman's health underscore the need for a partial birth abortion ban at the Federal level. I hope Members will take my words to heart as we consider partial birth abortion and the right to life for all human beings, born and unborn.

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

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TRIBUTE TO ADOLPH REED, SR., 1921-2003, PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS, PINE BLUFF; SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY, BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA; UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS, FAYETTEVILLE

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I was indeed fortunate as a teenager to attend the Arkansas Mechanical and Normal College, which is now the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. While this was one of the historically black colleges and universities, it did not have a great deal in the way of material supplies and resources. However, it had some of the most profound educators and education administrators this country has ever known.

I could cite any number of them, but today I will mention three and highlight one. Prexy, President Lawrence A. Davis, Sr., had no peer as an administrator and was beloved by generations of individuals who are connected to the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff.

Mr. Ray Russell, chairman of the History Department, was one of the most exciting professors that I have ever known. I was a history major, and he was my friend, mentor, and a father figure.

However, the man that I would highlight and the man whose thinking helped to shape my own passion for democratic principles and social activism, Professor Adolph Reed, Sr., was my political science professor. I remember Mr. REED so well, as his other students have described him, slender, suave, in constant motion, talking incessantly, keeping us in rapt attention as he waxed eloquently about Locke, Rousseau, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Daisy Bates, Martin Luther King, and the nameless sharecroppers, common, ordinary people, everyday people who would march, demonstrate, picket, boycott, and do whatever they could to try and obtain justice.

Professor Reed, like so many others of his generation, migrated from Arkansas to Chicago, where he worked as a railroad dining car waiter and sat in on classes at the University of Chicago. His experiences in the hustle and bustle in the predominantly black South Side of Chicago remained a central part of his being as he continued on the path to greatness.

He was drafted into the Army, was part of the Normandy invasion, and saw action at the Battle of the Bulge. He was involved in protests by black troops in Charleston, South Carolina, and in Manchester, England. He often remarked about the contradiction of having been sent to fight the racist Nazis in a racially segregated United States Army.

After the war, Professor Reed, like many other veterans, especially African American males who had never before had the opportunity to attend college in large numbers, enrolled at Fiske University in Nashville, Tennessee. He pursued postgraduate studies at New York University and American University.

Mr. REED taught at Arkansas A.M. and N. College, where he was my instructor. He then moved on to Southern University, where he resigned as the result of a clash with the university's president over his expulsion of student protestors who were demonstrating for civil rights, equal opportunity, and an end to segregation. He held visiting professorships at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of California at San Diego.

At Arkansas A.M. and N., we knew Mr. REED was spellbinding, but we did not know that while at Fiske he had

been editor of an independent radical newspaper called "Give Me a Name," or that during the 1940s had been active in the American Labor Party. In 1948, he was a delegate to the Progressive Party convention that launched Henry Wallace's Presidential campaign.

We did not know that he had been at Peekskill, New York, in 1949 to show support for our hero, Paul Robeson; or that he had been a reporter for the New York Compass.

After getting to know Dr. Adolph Reed, Jr., a well-known college professor who teaches political science at the New School for Social Research in New York City, and to know that Mr. REED's grandson, Toure F. Reed is a history professor at Illinois State University in Bloomington, Illinois, it reinforces for me the kind of legacy that he left.

Mr. REED taught at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville from 1971 to 1994, when he retired with the title "professor emeritus."

Madam Speaker, it is good to have known one who lived what he taught, who practiced what he preached, who understood that you cannot lead where you are unwilling to go, and that you cannot teach what you do not know.

I want to end this with Dr. Reed, Jr.'s, characterization of his father. "Professor Reed as a political scientist remained convinced that both major political parties are too beholden to corporate interests, which he frequently described as the basis for the perverted priorities of American politics."

In recent years, he became an active supporter of the New Labor Party, created in 1996, and its project of building a politics in this country based on a working-class economic agenda. He was a man for many seasons, and oftentimes thought of as a man before his time.

I am proud to have known him, and appreciate the tremendous contribution that he made to all of America.

Madam Speaker, it is so good to have known one who lived what he taught, who practiced what he preached, who understood that you cannot lead where you are unwilling to go and that you cannot teach what you do not know.

I want to end this with Dr. Adolph Reed Jr.'s characterization of his father. Professor Reed as a political scientist:

... remained convinced that both major political parties are too beholden to corporate interests, which he frequently described as the basis for the "perverted priorities" of American politics. In recent years, he became an active supporter of the New Labor Party, created in 1996, and its project of building a politics in this country based on a working class economic agenda that cuts across other potential social divisions. All his life he lamented what he perceived as the ruling class's success in inducing too many poor and working people to identify the wrong enemies.

He stressed the roles of the news media, education system and organized religion in perpetuating that situation:

These convictions shaped his approach to intellectual and political life. He was widely

known among colleagues and in the political science profession as a person of uncommon honesty and integrity, a witty and engaging raconteur, big ban jazz aficionado, a biting critic and a generous friend. Although he never shied away from expressing intellectual and political disagreements, he refused to take differences personally and could maintain friendships with those with who he differed sharply. His teaching philosophy was simply to encourage students to think independently.

Professor Reed was an important force in the development of a generation of Black Political scientists and a prominent voice in the organization throughout its formative years. He was also a founding member of the American Political Science Association's Caucus for a New Political Science.

When I learned that Mr. Reed and his family had lived in Dumas, Eudora and Reed, Arkansas, his being became even more meaningful to me, given the fact that this is the largely rural, impoverished area where I grew up. This has provided me with even more affinity for this great scholar and tremendous teacher.

Adolph Reed Sr. 1921–2003, a man with exceptional insight, common experiences, menial work, a soldier, activist, uncompromising philosopher, served on State Constitution Committees in Arkansas and Louisiana, inspiration to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., acknowledged prominently in Race and Democracy, a book by Adam Fairclough depicting the Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana from 1915 to 1972, heralded by activists like Stokely Carmichael, featured in the Black Press for being at the core of student unrest and activism on black college campuses, intellectual giant. Mr. Reed, when your family and friends gather in Fayetteville, Arkansas to pay tribute, please know that there are thousands of us across the country who are there in spirit and of course, you will always be with us. "Sante Sana" "The Struggle will Continue."

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

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

SALUTING A GREAT AMERICAN, THE LATE PRIVATE MICHAEL RUSSELL CREIGHTON-WELDON

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

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise this afternoon to salute a great American, Private Michael

Russell Creighton-Weldon. Private Creighton-Weldon of Palm Bay, Florida, was killed this past weekend while serving in Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was one of the soldiers killed by the suicide bomber driving the taxi.

Private Creighton-Weldon was in Company A, the 27th Infantry, Third Division, out of Fort Stewart, Georgia. My prayers and condolences are with Michael's family during this hour of loss. My family and my staff grieve with them in honor of Michael.

President Lincoln was once quoted saying that we as a nation "should have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us, to the end, dare to do our duty." Michael dared to do his duty, and in so doing, he gave the ultimate sacrifice for our continued freedom. We owe him a debt of gratitude that we can never repay.

□ 1630

This morning, I had the honor of speaking to Michael's mother, retired U.S. Army Sergeant Major Jean Weldon. She said that Michael, or Big Mike as his family affectionately called him, was a hero to his family and now he is a hero for America.

Mrs. Weldon also had great praise for the Palm Bay Police Department and the mayor for the support that they have provided her during this time of grieving. Specifically, they have had to deploy officers to her house to keep the press away from her and her family who have been very grieved by the constant approaches of the press. And I think America's press should be aware of this that one grieving mom would like some space and that they should be sensitive to this all across the Nation because I am sure her experience is not unique.

While sadness comes with the loss of each soldier, we can have faith in our military commanders and in our Commander in Chief. Coalition forces continue to make good progress towards our objective of ending the Iraqi regime, freeing the Iraqi people, and disarming the country of weapons of mass destruction. It was in this cause that Michael gave his life, and it is a worthy cause.

Secretary Rumsfeld said this past weekend that there are difficult days ahead. We know this in Palm Bay, as we are experiencing it firsthand. To the extent that the Republican Guard poses difficulties, which we expect them to, there will be dangerous days ahead, Mr. Rumsfeld went on to say. Baghdad may not be easy, but the outcome is certain and at some point the Iraqi people will end up fearing Saddam Hussein and his regime less and they will end up anticipating liberation and freedom more; and it will end and it will end successfully.

The true nature of the Iraqi regime is being revealed by what we see. Brutal treatment of POWs; use of human shields to protect military assets from attack; the torching of oil fields which

are the future of the Iraqi people; false reports about coalition attacks on civilians, mosques and cultural centers; lies about Iraqi adherence to Geneva Conventions which they have blatantly violated; Feyadeen infiltration of regular Iraqi forces to prevent surrender and defection; using false acts of surrender in flagrant violation of the laws of war, and using them to attack coalition forces; and, yes, the use of suicide bombers, one of whom took the life of a great American, Michael Russell Creighton-Weldon.

We all in the 15th congressional district and in our Nation salute Michael for the service he provided our Nation and the sacrifice he made. We join with his mother, his father, his entire extended family in extending our condolences, and our prayers are with them and our Nation and our troops in the field as we continue in this cause.

CHURCH PENSION PLAN FAIRNESS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation that amends our Nation's security laws in order to end discrimination against church pension programs.

One thing most Americans understand is the importance of saving money to ensure financial security after they retire. Just as important, they understand that investing in an employer-sponsored pension plan is a great way to help achieve this goal. America's clergy are no less interested in their retirement. In fact, for thousands of dedicated men and women of our clergy, pension plans are just as important, if not more so, as they are to members of the laity.

Yet for far too long, Congress has unintentionally failed to update church pension laws making it more difficult for clergy and other church employees to maximize their retirement savings.

Madam Speaker, one arcane, yet important, provision of our security laws allows corporate and other secular pension plans to band together into what are called collective trusts. These trusts allow pension plans to pool their assets for investment purposes in various stock and nonstock interests. For example, some collective trusts invest in real estate or private investment opportunities. They represent a way for pension plans to diversify their investments and to share the risks and transaction costs with other pension plans.

Collective trusts are not the problem. The problem is current law prohibits the Christian Brothers Church in Romeoville, Illinois, along with thousands of other church pension plans across the country, from participating in collective trusts. As a result, church pension plans cannot pool their assets and reap the benefits of collecting buy-

ing power. My bill is intended to correct this inequity.

There are three other points that are important for me to make: first, the SEC requires that collective trusts have sole management and control over the assets that are invested; second, nothing in this legislation is intended to alter the traditional SEC interpretation that the financial institution is responsible for exercising hands-on control over the collective trust; and, third, this measure does not in any way effect Tax Code provisions governing the treatment of pension plans, including the requirement that a church plan must be maintained by a church or eligible church-affiliated organization.

My bill allows church plan assets to be included in collective trust funds that also include assets of private employee and governmental plans.

Madam Speaker, there is no sound policy reason for our security laws to exclude church plan participation in specifically tailored pension plan investments. The Church Pension Plan Fairness Act is a reasonable, measured, and fair response to many of the concerns raised by clergy and other church employees around the country.

I want to thank my distinguished colleague and friend from Tennessee (Mr. FORD) for his strong support in co-sponsorship of this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting this bill. Our clergy deserves no less than the millions of other working men and women of America.

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

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time allocated to the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

FIGHT FOR OUR VETERANS

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, in Iraq our Nation is creating 300,000 new war veterans. As these future veterans are fulfilling their duty to America in time of war, we must commit to fulfill our responsibilities to them in times of peace. But instead, the Bush administration recently saved \$388 million by

eliminating 174,000 veterans from eligibility in the VA health care systems. Some might say that that is fiscally responsible; but I say it is absolutely dishonorable.

While we are warring in Iraq, this House is engaged in a debate on whether to give Americans who earn more than \$1 million a year a tax cut of almost \$90,000 each, while just two months ago President Bush decided that veterans earning more than \$29,000 a year do not need America's help getting health care.

Where are our priorities? Giving money to the richest of the rich while taking services from the bravest and sometimes the poorest is unacceptable. Giving the wealthiest Americans extra spending money should not be the first priority of this House. But making sure we give every veteran health coverage must be. It seems like the priorities of this Congress are all wrong.

We have forgotten about responsibility, morality, and justice. We have forgotten our commitment to our men and women in uniform. We have forgotten about human dignity. Finding money for veterans programs is not impossible. It is a matter of priorities. We can pay for concurrent receipt, but not if we pass a huge tax cut for the wealthiest of the wealthy.

Families are the glue that make America strong. We cannot forget the sacrifices of those family members who have supported veterans from the homefront. America owes them a debt of gratitude as well. That is why it is so important to fix the survivor benefit plan which ensures that veterans' families have the resources needed to deal with the death of a loved one.

I am proud to co-sponsor H.R. 548, which would fix the problems with our current system and ensure that survivors get the assistance that they deserve. But, Madam Speaker, the Republican budget resolution is also a slap to America's veterans. It cuts over \$14.5 billion from mandatory veterans benefits and another \$14 billion in discretionary programs; \$14.6 billion that veterans could spend on health care, on housing, and feeding their families.

Every American owes veterans a debt of gratitude. We must do more than give speeches on Memorial Day. The rhetoric of patriotism is absolutely not enough. We must ensure that veterans get the services and the resources they have earned and the resources and the services that they deserve. Let us also make sure that disabled veterans receive the retirement pay along with disability compensation. It is an issue of fairness and our veterans deserve better than what we are giving them. This is money that should serve those that have served America. This is money that would go to our soldiers fighting today in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is money that veterans have been promised and that veterans deserve.

Unfortunately, this money is being denied to veterans so that the wealthiest Americans can get an obscenely

large tax cut. If we cut money for veterans, we should be ashamed, all of America should be ashamed. Veterans deserve to be one of this Nation's number one priorities. I urge my Republican colleagues in this House to remember that. Veterans are fighting for us. We must fight for them.

AMERICA MUST NOT ALIENATE ITSELF

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

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, this week we will be working on the \$75 billion supplemental appropriations to pay for the war. Financing the war is not as simple as it appears. It involves more than just passing a piece of legislation labeled as support for the troops.

It has now been fashionable to bash France and Germany and other friends if they are less enthusiastic for the war than we think they should be. Yet foreign corporations provide millions of jobs for American citizens. French companies alone employ over 400,000. There is a practical reason why offending the French and others may backfire on us.

In 2002 we earned \$11.9 billion less from our investments overseas than foreigners did here. This is not a sign of financial strength. A negative balance on the income account contributes to the \$500 billion annual current account deficit. Since 1985 when we became a deficit NATION, we have acquired a foreign debt of approximately \$2.8 trillion, the world's largest. No nation can long sustain a debt that continues to expand at a rate greater than 5 percent of the GDP. This means we borrowed more than \$1.4 billion every day to keep the borrowing binge going. This only can be maintained until foreigners get tired of taking and holding our dollars and buying our debt. Bashing the French and others will only hasten the day that sets off the train of economic events that will please no one.

In thinking about providing funds for the war and overall military expenditures, not only must every dollar be borrowed from overseas, but an additional \$150 billion each year as well. The current account deficit is now 44 percent greater than the military budget and represents the amount we must borrow to balance the accounts. The bottom line is that our international financial condition is dire and being made worse by current international events.

It is true that military might gives a boost to a nation's currency; but this is not permanent if fiscal and monetary policies are abused. Currently, our budget deficits are exploding, as there is no restraint on spending.

□ 1645

No one can guarantee permanent military superiority.

The dollar has already significantly weakened this past year, and this trend will surely continue. A weaker dollar requires that we pay more for everything we buy overseas. Foreign borrowing will eventually become more difficult, and this will in time cause interest rates to rise. Be assured that domestic price inflation will accelerate. Economic law dictates that these events will cause the recession to linger and deepen.

My humble advice, consider being nicer to our friends and allies. We need them more than we can imagine to finance our war efforts. There is more to it than passing the supplemental appropriation. Besides, we need time to get our financial house in order. Antagonizing our trading partners can only make that task that much more complicated.

The day will come when true monetary reform will be required. Printing money to finance war and welfare can never be a panacea.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. CARSON of Indiana addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. MILLER of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentlewoman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

REPUBLICAN BUDGET

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

Mr. MILLER of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, we speak of the generation that fought the Second World War as our greatest generation. The men and women now serving our Armed Forces, the soldiers now in harm's way in Iraq and Afghanistan, are pretty great, too. They are dedicated and courageous, and I am proud of them.

I am not proud of the budget that this House passed less than 2 weeks ago in the dead of night, however. The budget makes severe cuts in benefits for our veterans, benefits that our Nation has seen as simple gratitude for more than a century, as the least that we could do for those Americans who defend our freedom at the risk of their own lives.

The House budget cuts veterans benefits across the board, health care benefits, disability benefits, survivor benefits, pensions, everything, a total of \$28

billion in cuts over the next decade. In my State, in North Carolina, more than 30,000 veterans will be pushed out, forced out of the VA system. Tens of thousands more North Carolina veterans would face sharply higher costs.

The budget cuts benefits when needs are increasing. World War II veterans and Korean War veterans are aging. Their health care needs are pressing, and Vietnam veterans are just behind them. There are already waiting lists, and those lists will only grow longer, if the benefits are available at all.

The men and women in uniform in Iraq and Afghanistan must see this budget and wonder if our praise for them today is simply hollow rhetoric intended to score political points, not a sincere appreciation for their service. The House budget walks away from our debt to veterans so we can cut taxes.

I know that I am not the first today to point out on this floor how lopsided that tax cut favors the richest Americans. I know that I am not the first to point out that Americans making more than a million dollars a year get a tax cut of \$90,000, but ordinary Americans fare much less well. Half of North Carolina families get less than \$100 a year. One-third of North Carolina families get nothing at all.

Madam Speaker, the Americans who would benefit the most from proposed tax cuts owe the most to our veterans, and the veterans who need their veterans benefits the most would benefit least from the proposed tax cut.

The majority party is now saying that they did not really mean it, they had their fingers crossed behind their backs the whole time. They knew the Senate would put veterans benefits back into the budget and that they would go along. Just minutes ago, the majority party voted to repudiate the very budget that they adopted less than 2 weeks ago.

Veterans deserve better than that kind of political double talk. There should not be bargaining chips and back-room budget deals between the House and Senate. They have earned better than that.

Madam Speaker, I do not believe that the House budget adopted less than 2 weeks ago reflects our Nation's values. I do not believe that we have become a Nation of ingrates.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

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

Mr. TANCREDO. Madam Speaker, I would urge my colleagues to consider and to just picture something with me, and that is, picture a life in rural Arizona, a life that is in the one of the most bucolic settings one can possibly imagine, the beautiful desert, a life where a family has been operating a ranch for generations, as a matter of fact, six generations.

Imagine waking up every morning to that kind of an environment and going

out to do what is necessary to keep that ranch going, as it has been going and has been running for someone's parents, grandparents, and generations on back. It is a beautiful life, as they say, and as the movie title goes.

Then one day, picture this. One day a person gets up, but their whole life is completely turned around because of something that has happened, a change in the environment I guess one might say. Imagine finding that across the land people are coming, and people are coming in very large numbers. People are coming by the hundreds, by the thousands. People are cutting the fences in order to get on the land. People, once they get on to the land, are defecating in the water supply and/or breaking the water valves. This is, remember, the middle of the desert, and the water there is the most precious commodity imaginable.

Imagine them strewing trash all over the ranch so that the cattle begin eating some of this trash and eventually die.

Imagine being threatened by these people who are crossing the land. Land, remember again, land on which you have been for six generations, but your children all of a sudden are afraid to go to their grandmother's house because of the danger that exists in moving just a few miles across the land.

This is the situation that Steven and Tammy Sue Smith are facing. The Smiths own and operate a cattle ranch located only 30 miles north of the U.S.-Mexico border. This is their family. There are, as I say, six generations of owners of this particular property. Like many other ranch families in Arizona, their family has been there longer than Arizona has been a State.

The Smiths have three children: two sons, Chance, 17, and Will, 15, and one daughter, Shaye, Shaye Lynn, that is to say, 14. All three children live and work on the ranch while attending school.

Over the past several years, the Smith family has had to deal with an invasion of thousands of illegal aliens trespassing over their ranchland. Not surprising when we consider that in one month alone the Tucson sector, which is the area in which this particular ranch exists, reported that they had, in fact, stopped or identified or collected 23,000 illegal aliens. That was in the month of November, last.

Also, remember that they even admit that they get one in five. So, in the Tucson sector, where this ranch exists, 100,000 people came across that border from Mexico and into the United States illegally, and many of them came across this ranch.

Since September 11, as security at ports of entry in and around cities has stepped up, the flow of illegal aliens has shifted to the public and private rangeland where countless miles of border are marked by barbed-wire fences and little else. There this open rangeland is rapidly becoming one of America's most dangerous doorsteps.

Steven and Tammy Sue Smith have concern for their property and for their children and for the safety of their family. This concern is not misplaced nor is it exaggerated.

I will cite a few examples of the very direct and dangerous encounters that the Smiths and their children have had on their own land. Remember, that this has only really happened to them in the last several years.

The Smith ranch is a popular travel route for people smuggling and drug smuggling because of the very mountainous terrain. The hilly and rocky terrain makes it harder to track the trespassers and harder to see them and apprehend them. Thus, the Smith family finds itself a major thoroughfare for hundreds of illegal aliens and drug smugglers every month.

Shaye Lynn, when she was 12 years old, was driving with her grandmother across their own ranch to feed some cattle. They were confronted on the road by a car with two illegal aliens who subjected them to threats of violence. Fortunately, they were able to essentially outrun the pursuers. Their vehicle made it to safety.

Steven, the dad, almost died 2 years after he contracted a very serious illness after coming in contact with a cadaver on his land, and the doctors asked him if he had, in fact, done that, if he had come across something like that, because they told him that they were encountering many strange diseases for which they did not have any sort of treatment, and they did not know essentially what to do.

Their son Will rolled his pickup truck in avoiding hitting two illegal aliens who tried to hijack him by placing large boulders in the middle of the road. I have seen this out there. They, in fact, will use either boulders on the road or sometimes they will cut down a tree, cut down a large saguaro cactus laid across the road, and then when people stopped, they are hijacked. This is on a little, tiny, dirt road in the middle of nowhere.

Will and Shaye were able to identify a man on America's Most Wanted one night based on the appearance on their property a few weeks earlier. He had demanded food and then tried to steal two horses. America's Most Wanted described this man as one of Mexico's most dangerous coyotes, the thugs who smuggle people across the border for money.

On another occasion, the Smith family observed a group of 32 aliens crossing their lands very near their house. They tracked them and were able to stop 27 of them and were able to detain them until the Border Patrol arrived. One, who appeared to be of Middle Eastern descent, was later found to have been from Guatemala. This is also very typical.

These people are homeland heroes, and we should not forget them, and we should hold them up in high regard because they truly are on the front line of an invasion.

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER
TIME

Ms. HARMAN. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

HONORING OUR VETERANS

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

Ms. HARMAN. Madam Speaker, "let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the Nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan," so Abraham Lincoln reminded the Nation at his second inaugural.

Regrettably, Congress is poised to forget those who bore the battle, the widow, the widower and the orphan.

To finance a huge and ill-timed tax cut, the House recently passed a budget resolution that calls for cutting the Veterans Affairs budget by \$15 billion in benefits and health care. It also calls for huge cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, two health programs critical to the well-being of many veterans and their spouses.

This is not the appropriate way to honor the men and women who bravely defended our freedom nor is it the way to honor the men and women currently in Operation Iraqi Freedom, nor those like 22-year-old Marine Lance Corporal Jose Gutierrez from the small town of Lomita in my district who was killed in action there.

Madam Speaker, honoring our veterans is a lifelong commitment, beginning with the warm welcome upon their return from war. It continues when we fly the POW-MIA flag, when we care for our veterans and their families and, ultimately, when we lay them to rest with appropriate remembrance and tribute.

Madam Speaker, deeds must match words. Our budget resolution must restore funding for valued veterans programs. To honor these veterans, our deeds must fund their services.

□ 1700

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FILNER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TREATMENT OF VETERANS IN FY
2004 BUDGET RESOLUTION

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

Mr. LANGEVIN. Madam Speaker, I rise today as a proud American and member of the House Committee on Armed Services to strongly condemn the cuts to our veterans health care that were pushed through in the House budget proposal for fiscal year 2004, and that we thankfully restored today when we voted overwhelmingly to instruct conferees to prevent those cuts from being considered by the conference committee.

It is outrageous that upwards of 90 percent of the mandatory spending that would have been cut came directly from programs that provide service-connected disability and education benefits to our Nation's bravest citizens. These programs are the heart of the Veterans Administration, and in fact they are the very reason the VA was created.

The across-the-board cuts did not stop there. Discretionary funding, which includes veterans health care, was also grievously cut by \$14.2 billion over the next 10 years. Health care takes up 96 percent of that spending, meaning we were slashing at least \$1.63 billion per year in health funding. At a time when this Congress is searching for ways to provide better health programs, like a prescription drug benefit to seniors, how could we have justified cutting into successful programs veterans currently receive? Many of these men and women would have no choice but to turn to Medicare because of our actions; and until the Spratt amendment, which was passed today, and spearheaded by so many of my colleagues on the Democratic side of the aisle, Medicare itself would have been cut as well.

The path this House almost chose to embark upon is even more troubling given the action our military is now engaged in overseas. Our courageous servicemembers are engaged in dangerous combat, and a number of them will inevitably sustain injuries. Madam Speaker, I will not return home and tell the brave men and women and families of those deployed overseas that we are not doing everything in our power to support them when they return. We have promised these benefits again and again as the very least we can do to repay the risk and sacrifice the men and women of our Armed Forces make on a daily basis. We must not break that promise now.

I choose to show our servicemembers that I support them and will continue to support them when they return home from combat. I want them to remain confident that they will be cared for should they be injured. I want the families to know that they will not be abandoned should, God forbid, their loved ones not return home to them.

Madam Speaker, the Republican budget resolution did none of these things and must be improved. We took that step today. Earlier today I voted for the Spratt motion to instruct conferees to eliminate proposed cuts in so many programs vital to veterans to

show our Armed Forces and veterans that they are not second-class citizens and that we value their efforts and sacrifice. This motion to instruct passed today, and I will continue to fight for our veterans just as hard as they have fought for us. It is the very least that they deserve.

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

(Mr. SCHIFF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MALONEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. CASE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Ms. HOOLEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. INSLEE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

VETERANS

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

Mr. STRICKLAND. Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to talk about our veterans, the way we are treating our veterans; and I would like to give a little history of what has happened in the recent past.

Until about 1 year ago, the veteran that went to one of our VA hospitals or our clinics to get medication was expected to pay \$2 in copayment for a prescription. That, unfortunately, was raised; and veterans across this country are aware of the fact that they are now required not to pay \$2 per prescription copayment, but they are required to pay \$7 per prescription. I thought that was an unwise decision on the part of the VA, and I introduced legislation to repeal that increase and to return it back to the \$2 per prescription level.

I was absolutely shocked when the President sent his budget to this House

and in the President's budget he requested that that copayment not be \$7 a prescription but increased to \$15 per prescription. Think of that. At a time of war, when we are creating more veterans, when we mouth the words in this Chamber about how thankful we are for those who have fought past battles, that we would actually take an action that could increase the cost of medicines for veterans who need those medicines, veterans who have served this country with honor, veterans who may be on fixed incomes.

Now, perhaps if a veteran only has one prescription, a \$15 copay would be tolerable. But many of our veterans get 10 or more prescriptions per month. Fifteen times 10 is \$150. I am shocked that this administration, that this President, at a time when he and the leadership of the other party are trying to give a \$726 billion tax cut that will mostly go to people who are already reasonably wealthy, that we would at the same time want to place an additional burden on our veterans in terms of the cost of their prescription medications. It does not make sense.

But, Madam Speaker, it gets worse. The President, in his budget, also asks that we impose a \$250 annual enrollment fee on many of our veterans just to participate in the VA health care system. Think of that, an increase in cost for prescription drugs from \$7 to \$15 and an imposition of an annual \$250 enrollment fee. But it gets worse. The VA also, under the direction of the President and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, has imposed what is, for all practical purposes, a gag order on the VA health care providers. They are no longer able to market VA services to our veterans.

In other words, this Congress has passed legislation guaranteeing certain benefits to our veterans. Some of those veterans may not be aware of what they are legally entitled to receive, but the VA is prohibiting the health care providers from proactively spreading the word informing veterans as to what they are entitled to receive. Very specifically, they have been told they cannot make public service announcements about VA health benefits programs. They cannot send out newsletters describing benefits and encouraging veterans to participate. And, quite frankly, most participation in health fairs has been prohibited.

I think these actions are shameful and shameful. I just simply do not understand. We are a wealthy country. We are so wealthy that we are taking our Federal resources and we have decided to give those resources in the form of tax breaks to some of the richest people in this country. Millionaires and billionaires will get up to a \$90,000 per-year tax cut; but at the same time, we are asking our veterans to pay more for medicine, to pay an annual enrollment fee, and we are prohibiting the marketing of veterans services.

This is just shameful. I do not understand it. I simply find it incredulous

that we would be pursuing these policies at this time, especially at this time, when we have so many of our young men and women in harm's way. I believe the best way to honor those who are fighting for us today is to show deep respect and to keep our promises to those who have fought our past wars, the people that Tom Brokaw and others have referred to as the Greatest Generation.

I think the American people need to be aware of some of the things that I have talked about this afternoon. I could go on, because the shortchanging of our veterans is something that is a deep problem. It is contradictory to much of what is spoken in this Chamber.

VETERANS

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

Mr. CROWLEY. Madam Speaker, I rise to address the vital needs of America's veterans, both of past wars and of our future veterans from the current war.

I voted to give our President the authorization to use force against Saddam Hussein, recognizing Saddam's threat to both global and international security, his support of global terrorism, and his mad desire to create and undoubtedly use weapons of mass destruction. That said, whether we voted to approve military force against Iraq or not, the time for that discussion has passed. Our troops are abroad, they are fighting as we speak, and we support them there and hope that they will return home quickly and safely.

My Republican colleagues have tried to use this conflict to paint Democrats as unpatriotic, trying to say if we oppose the war, we are against the cause of America. They forget that many of those who oppose this war are veterans themselves, veterans who know the pains of war better than many of those who would malign them. And just as importantly, these people, our veterans, understand what it is like when one returns home from battle. What we have seen from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle and from this White House with respect to veterans, in my opinion, is appalling.

Our President cautions the loyalty of those who do not walk lockstep with him on the issue of war but then turns his back on our military as soon as they return to our shores as veterans. Our President has dismissed centuries-old health care entitlements to veterans with the stroke of a pen, while simultaneously hitting them with increased taxes on their prescription drug benefits.

With respect to the care and treatment of America's veterans, the President's rhetoric does not match reality. It was offensive enough when our Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated that, and I quote, "The drafted

veterans of Vietnam added 'no value,' no advantage, really, to the United States Armed Services," a comment to which this President and my Republican colleagues remain silent on, as if to give credence to these ludicrous and untrue remarks. Unfortunately, these comments were less a slip of the tongue and more a precursor of this administration's attitude towards America's veterans.

For example, on January 16 of this year, the VA announced it was cutting health benefits for 174,000 veterans, including 13,000 veterans in my home State of New York, citing the high cost of care. They said this would affect only those 174,000 veterans in the highest income brackets, usually considered between \$30,000 and \$35,000 annually. Just days later, though, the administration released its budget, promoting an elimination in the tax dividend that would benefit mostly America's richest 5 percent, those making in excess of several hundred thousand dollars a year, well above the threshold for rich veterans of \$30,000 to \$35,000 a year.

□ 1715

This follows a 350 percent tax increase levied by the Bush administration against the veterans in the 2003 fiscal year budget.

In the President's 2003 budget, our President more than tripled the prescription drug copayment for veterans while also demanding the authority to raise it again if he deems it necessary. But this attack on our veterans hit a crescendo 2 weeks ago with a Republican budget that was to cut \$15 billion from veterans disability payments and pensions and almost \$900 million from VA hospitals.

The Disabled American Veterans organization stated it best by asking the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTER), "Has Congress no shame? Is there no honor left in the hallowed halls of our government that you choose to dishonor the sacrifices our Nation's heroes and rob our programs, health care and disability compensation to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy?"

Again, after much pressure from Democrats and veterans service organizations, the Republicans redrafted their budget to paper over these cuts, waiting for action from the Senate. They did not remedy these cuts to provide new money for veterans; they just said they would wait for the Senate to take action. In fact, this afternoon the Republicans repudiated their own budget by voting on a Democratic motion to strip out all \$14.6 million of Republican cuts from veterans programs regardless of what action the Senate may or may not take.

It is my hope that this new-found religion by the Republicans is a serious commitment and not just a cheap April Fool's joke.

But there is little reason to be optimistic about the Republican actions today. America has seen Republicans

drop veterans from what was once a guaranteed health care system, increase veterans prescription drug co-payments, and propose massive cuts to veterans pensions and health care. In fact, there has been no outrage by the Republicans over these actions against our veterans, but cut their tax in half, and we can hear their scream of pain.

Actions speak louder than words, and so far, this Congress has shown regardless of what they say, in fact they have no shame. Unfortunately, it appears that the Republicans are once again playing an April Fool's joke on our veterans, and this is not a laughing matter.

CONDITION OF THE U.S. ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. PEARCE. Madam Speaker, we have been talking about the budget in this body for several weeks now. As I visit back in the district, I find it instructive to deal with the questions that the voters are bringing to me, and so I have brought a series of slides tonight where we can discuss the budget, take a calm look at it, look at some of the factors that surround it and help voters make an assessment of the truth on the budget and the condition of the U.S. economy.

First of all, one of the most pressing questions is a concern of exactly what is the state of the economy today. I have got a chart here that shows the last 10 years of gross domestic product in the U.S., and we see a fairly consistent line of, generally, a 4.9 percent average. We had a slight recession in the period that I have marked here, 2001. It does not show up on the chart, but if we had an expanded chart, we would see that the recession flattened out and caused a depression in the receipts into the treasuries of the United States.

So basically, we can say overall that the economy in the United States is solid, it is in good shape. But people want to know exactly why did we go through this period in the last couple of years.

First of all, the stock market back with the dot-com expansions, we found stocks that were overvalued. They were based not on recognized profit or recognized product, but on the hopes and on some speculation. The stocks were overvalued, and it was necessary at some point for those stocks to collapse back down. They did that and put us into a mild recession that would not have lasted very long, except 9/11 came along.

We had a pretty big shock to our economy on 9/11. Forgetting the human impact, just talking about the impact financially on the country, the estimates range anywhere from a hundred

billion to several hundred billion, depending on how it is evaluated.

So first we had the collapse of the dot-coms and the stock market, and then we had 9/11.

Just about the time we were to come into a recovery, then the corporate scandals, the governance issues of Global Crossing and Enron and other corporations that had misused their accounting methods did not actually cause that much financial difficulty in the market, but actually did affect the confidence. So we found that our economy went into slight recession that was accentuated by later factors. Those factors are the reasons that we are running deficits today.

If we look at the next chart, Members can see the revenue line. This is revenue and taxes, and we see the bulge there in 2000-2001. It is interesting to note, if we were able to extend this line directly up, we would find that in fact our tax revenues are actually very stable, but our capital gains in that period where it deviates upward, were creating an anomaly, a bubble in revenues, that could not be sustained; and when the market collapsed back down, then our revenues fell right back in line with the predetermined historic perspective that we had established.

That is an interesting note because people want to assume that our economy is in bad shape, and our friends on the other side of the aisle talk in horrific, frightening terms to people, who are just paying their rent every month, about how desperate our economy is and the reasons for it. I think this chart begins to show that we have been quite predictable except for a little bit of a bubble that was on the positive side, frankly.

People want to know why are we running deficits. The deficits are caused because we oriented our spending to an increased revenue that could not be sustained, and now that our revenue has collapsed back down, we have got a problem with our spending exceeding the revenues that we are bringing in. That is the short answer to why we have a deficit.

People want to know, are we running historic high deficits. They are hearing the talk coming from Washington, and it causes fear among people who do not watch these figures closely. If the post-war average of 1.5 percent, the red line across here, is looked at, we can see that our deficits right now are nowhere near historic highs.

We also see that our surpluses in the period that just preceded us, our surpluses actually reached a very high level, but they were artificial, created by the capital gains on that over-inflated stock market.

So again, as we take a patient, honest look, we see that deficits are existing, but they do not necessarily mean that our economy is in horrific shape or that there is reason for fear and concern. There is reason for fiscal discipline.

A lot of people wonder that with deficits, then we create debt; that is, we do

not have the money to pay for the bills today, we spend negatively, we borrow money and we create longer-lasting debt. A lot of Americans ask, are we facing a skyrocketing debt. That again is an interesting question that deserves an answer.

Looking at the next chart, we again see the median line of 42.9 since World War II, and we find that our debt is actually quite low, somewhere around 36 percent. The projections there from 2002-2007 would show that if the projections are right that come from the economists, if we do in fact pass the tax relief, if we do in fact cause the economy to grow, that we can hold our debt at the level of 36 percent.

After World War II, our debt was almost 100 percent. Japan today has a debt of almost 160 percent. Our debt is approximately \$3.8 trillion. If we had the same percent of debt as Japan, then we would have \$17 trillion. As we look at some of these numbers that come from other developed economies, then we begin to put our numbers into perspective.

Madam Speaker, I would say that, so far, the discussions that come from our colleagues on the other side of the aisle are intended mostly to cause alarm rather than to cause understanding. I would say that right now our debt service, that amount that we pay for the debt is at an historic low. It is approximately 3 percent of our budget.

So if we have a period of deficits and we have a period of debt, why are Republicans calling for spending cuts? The next chart would show us that one of the critical elements, one of the critical measures that most economists agree on is that the level of growth in the private economy is going to be created by the level of spending as a percent of our gross domestic product, that is, how much the government spends as a percent of the overall economy in the United States should fall in a target of anywhere from 16 to 22 percent. As it exceeds above that, we find stagnation. We find that capital is not available for reinvestment by private firms because they are having to compete with the Federal Government, and we find that new jobs are not created.

We in this body have opted to keep our spending within restraints, understanding that if we just continue to spend without the tax revenues, that we will actually cause a dampening effect in our economy. And so a lot of people ask that question, and it is justified to ask why we would be seeking budget cuts at a time like this, and it is because we need to maintain that target in the range of 20-22 percent. We can see from this chart, we have had, historically, far less amounts and far greater amounts, but right now we do not have a situation in our economy that is due alarm.

There are those who complain that this Congress is cutting budgets tremendously, that we do not feel the needs of those people in society, and I have a series of charts all of which are

going to show about the same thing, that under Republican rule the actual amount spent on many budgets have increased dramatically from what it was previous to Republican control.

□ 1730

I will simply go through these charts and take a brief look at them to get an understanding of some of the historic perspectives in our spending to date.

We have complaints that we have cut in the agriculture sector, but we see the spending in 1996 versus 2003. Who among us would say that we are actually penalizing the agriculture market? I think reasonable people would assure themselves that we do need fiscal discipline and we need to be careful how we spend our money, but to say that we have not adequately invested in this program is lacking in full truth.

Similar arguments have been made about Medicaid and Medicare, that we have restricted spending, that we have given deep cuts. Again since 1995, about the time that Republicans took over, we can see the tremendous increase in spending in Medicaid and likewise in Medicare. We again find that we have had abrupt increases in the level of investment in these programs. If we are not getting the output in the programs that we need, it is because the programs themselves have flaws in their design, that the processes in which they choose how much and to whom to pay are the problems rather than the level of spending by the Republican Congress.

Much has been made of the situation of veterans. Again we would see that in 1995 we had \$20 billion and today we have \$30.6 billion. The slope of the line simply tells us that we have increased spending dramatically. This one abrupt drop here is simply due to an accounting anomaly where we had 13 payments in this period and 11 payments in the other period, and so those would even themselves out to show a fairly steady increase of almost 5.1 percent per year. President Clinton before he left office expanded the number of people who are able to tap into the veterans system. Prior to his regulatory change, veterans who were disabled in the line of duty were able to collect benefits, but those who were disabled in some other way were not allowed to collect benefits. That one change has created a tremendous demand for services that did not previously exist and so you can see that we are investing almost one-third more in the past 6 years, but the drains on it have kept the incremental amounts going to individuals, the amounts that people feel have been kept at a low level because of the increased demand by regulation change. If we have problems with veterans and if we have problems with other programs, the problems are problems of process. They are not problems of a failure to invest.

Many people wonder why we are asking for tax cuts at this time when we have deficits. Tax cuts are the way

that we grow our economy. Tax cuts become money that are placed back into the hands of investors. They allow businesses to increase their production, to increase their employment. The estimates if we pass the tax plans that the President has submitted are that we would create 500,000 jobs per year. Those are not insignificant in times of higher unemployment. We must cut taxes in order to reinvest in our economy to create growth. We are finding at this point that because of taxes, many of our corporations are not competitive in the international market. We are losing jobs because of our tax plans which penalize companies located in this country.

One of the things that our colleagues often talk about is the fact that we had corporations that have misused their accounting methods. Enron would be the example used most often. I would bring Global Crossing up as an extreme example. One of the things that happens when we cause companies to keep cash and not pay out dividends is that that cash builds up and there is stimulation to try to spend it, there is stimulation to try to create different sections of the company that would shelter and hide that cash from taxation.

It would be much easier if we simply gave the money back to stockholders in the form of dividends. That particular tax cut, which has been accused of being only for the extremely wealthy, needs closer inspection. Almost half of the savings of the dividend taxes would go to seniors 65 and older. The average tax saving for seniors receiving dividends would be \$936 per year. More than half of all American families today own stock. Eighty-four million Americans are invested in the stock market. Over half receive dividends. Over half of the ones who receive dividends have an income level of less than \$50,000, but that story is not told in this body, Mr. Speaker.

That story is not told because we are not always after the truth in this body, that we want to create fear and that we want to create illusions. But the truth is that many, many Americans would benefit from this dividend tax cut, the creation of jobs, the return of dollars to Americans. The fact that we are one of the last three countries in the world that causes double taxation of dividends cannot be overlooked.

Mr. Speaker, I stand fully in support of the President's tax cuts that would give 46 million married couples an immediate check for \$1,500 and continue it every year from now on. Mr. Speaker, I stand fully in favor of the President's tax plan which says just repeal the estate tax. Ben Franklin said that the only two things in life that are certain are death and taxes. He never envisioned the American Tax Code that would cause them to occur simultaneously. Mr. Speaker, we hear tremendous comments that this is just a tax cut for the wealthy. It is never explained that the top 25 percent of taxpayers, those people who have incomes

\$55,000 and over, pay 84 percent of the taxes, that if we are going to give a tax cut that is large enough to create economic growth and economic stimulus, that we must give it to the wealthy because we are describing as wealthy those households of \$55,000 and over.

Mr. Speaker, one of the best examples of the tax cut will occur with small businesses where they will be able to write off expense, up to \$75,000 of new equipment. As a small business owner, I know that that single tax cut would create jobs. Mr. Speaker, I think I will close with a quote from the Governor of New Mexico. Governor Bill Richardson, a Democrat who served in this body, now Governor of New Mexico, says that reducing taxes puts us on the road to economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, the other side knows the truth. They use it when it is important for them, but they refuse to discuss it on the floor of this House in this budget. Bill Richardson's plan this year passed in New Mexico's legislature reduced New Mexico's income tax rate by 40 percent from the current 8.2 percent to 4.9 percent by 2008. It cuts the State capital gains tax in half, to 10 percent. It offers tax credits to companies opening new facilities in the State. Richardson agrees that his plan sounds sort of like Bush's tax-cutting agenda, and he argues that Democrats nationwide should consider tax cutting a viable strategy. "We need to stop talking about class warfare and the distribution of wealth," he said. "Economic growth and reducing taxes puts us on the road to economic recovery."

Madam Speaker, we do not always get a full and honest discussion in this body. I wanted to share these comments on the budget today.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FEENEY).

Mr. FEENEY. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to come down to congratulate the gentleman from New Mexico for his advocacy for fiscal responsibility and his advocacy for taxpayers throughout America. I have been struck by the same sort of surreal, almost bizarre, arguments against this budget that the House has put together at this point and they seem to be in two categories that the gentleman has identified: number one, that we are having Draconian cuts in the budget; and, secondly, that somehow this tax cut proposal, the stimulus package, is designed to help the wealthy in America.

With respect to the first provision, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the Chicken Littles are out in big-time form these days. The sky is falling, the sky is falling, Draconian cuts, et cetera, when the fact of the matter is I have been hearing this argument for about 30, 40 years. I remember watching TV as a small boy when President Ford was a Republican leader in this House of Representatives, and he was accused of cutting the school lunch program. Thirty-five, 40 years later, Mr. Speaker, actually we have an obesity epidemic in America's school

grounds, unfortunately all too often, and so the truth of the matter is that whatever Republicans have been cutting in terms of school lunch programs has not done a very effective job if we have been trying to cut off the food supply. I would suggest that scaring teachers, scaring parents, scaring children, scaring veterans, scaring farmers is the wrong thing to do as a moral political policy; but more importantly it is empirically ignoring all of the facts.

As the gentleman suggested, agriculture spending in America as a consequence of Republican leadership has increased from 1996 to the year 2003 from \$6 billion to over \$24 billion. Veterans medical care from 1998 to 2003 has increased from \$17 billion to \$24 billion. Education spending at the Federal level from 1998 to the year 2003, under President Bush especially, has increased from \$30 billion to \$58 billion. Medicare spending has increased in America from 1996 to the year 2003 from \$175 billion to roughly \$240 billion.

Mr. Speaker, I am new to Washington; but this is the only place where you can increase your budget an average of 5, 6, 8 percent a year and people will call it a Draconian cut to punish seniors. As a matter of fact, total discretionary spending since 1996 when Republicans took the leadership here has increased from \$501 billion in programs throughout the budget to over \$740 billion. Those are hardly cuts. As everybody that can do math knows, this is an increase, the overall spending proposed by House leadership and the House of Representatives as a whole, of over 3.1 percent during tough economic times. It comes in the aftermath of really what is soaring spending.

Indeed, the truth of the matter is spending other people's money is an intoxicating experience, but it has consequences. It has effects on the average family. In fact, the Federal Government bites out of every family's budget on average \$16,000 per year. That is for every household budget in America. That has huge effects. That is \$16,000 worth of spending that families do not get to cut out for their own purposes. Much of this is in duplicative or superfluous spending, unnecessary. There is this appetite of the Federal Government and bureaucrats and politicians to be indiscriminately meddlesome in trying to organize our life's affairs; and unfortunately, that stifles all sorts of economic growth, family planning, business planning, and I could go on.

I have got about five pages of incredibly wasteful spending I could go through; but in the interest of time, I know I have some distinguished colleagues who would like to address this matter, I will skip the details. I will say that for example, however, the Federal Government cannot account, last year alone, for \$17.3 billion worth of spending according to our own records. \$17 billion just lost somewhere in the system. The Federal Government made \$20 billion in overpayments

in the year 2001 alone. The truth of the matter is that we are woefully irresponsible and inefficient.

On top of that, what the gentleman from New Mexico knows and that is never pointed out by the opponents of the President of the United States and his fiscally responsible budget is that our cuts, the only cuts that we have asked for in this budget, come out of waste, abuse and fraud. We have instructed all of the budget draft persons to emphasize and never touch any of the important services provided to our military veterans, to the education system, to the farm system, certainly not to homeland security and defense that each see significant increases.

We have instructed them to cut 1 percent out of abusive, wasteful and fraudulent spending. I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that not one person in my district does not believe that we could not cut one cent out of every dollar spent at the Federal level. The truth of the matter is that only one in 4,000 Federal employees is ever laid off because of bad performance. People in my district just do not believe you cannot find more bad performance than that, and they just do not believe that we cannot find one cent out of every dollar in terribly wasteful and abusive spending.

I think the gentleman did a wonderful job talking about the importance. If we want to get this economy moving again, we have got to support the President's tax proposal and stop all of this demagoguery. I applaud the gentleman. I do not know how he and other Republican leaders were able to convince a Democratic policymaker, the distinguished Governor of New Mexico who happens to be a Democrat, how you were able to educate him in terms of the reality of job creation, wealth creation, prosperity and investment; but the quote from him, we need to stop talking about class warfare and the distribution of wealth, we need to start talking about economic growth, and reducing taxes puts us on the road to economic growth.

□ 1745

I want to endorse the comments of the governor of New Mexico, and I am thrilled with the very notion that we can go back home to Florida and convince some of my friends and colleagues on the Democratic side that we can cut taxes and spur economic growth, spur job creation.

Here is the bottom-line truth. If we want employment, we cannot punish all the employers in our State or in our country. If we want job growth, we cannot punish the people who are creating jobs. If we want wealth, we cannot punish those that are busy creating wealth for all of us, and if we want savings, we cannot punish those that save and invest.

I will leave you with this. I am a big proponent of the President's dividend tax cut. The fact of the matter is that dividends in America today are taxed in a very punitive matter. The highest

rate at the corporate level is some 36.5 percent, but even after the corporation pays tax, it has only got about 65 cents or so left, and it pays that out in dividends to individual shareholders. Those shareholders may be subject to taxation rates of up to 39 percent. The effective rate of taxation therefore is that the Federal Government takes 70 percent of every dollar earned by corporate investments. No wonder we are having trouble creating new jobs, new economic prosperity, and new wealth.

On top of that, of course, there is a hodgepodge of other Federal taxes that are owed, State property taxes, State income taxes, State sales taxes that are collected by these corporations. It is a very punitive system that has effectively stifled much of the potential growth.

But I will leave the Members with this last thought. The notion that job creation should be continually punished in America, forever, I think hurts every family, but I will tell the Members that especially in Florida there are other portions of the President's tax cut program that make dramatic differences.

We have got some 92 million Americans that earn dividend income. We have got millions of families that will receive a huge benefit from the increase in the child credit. We have got small businesses that, as we expand the deduction for buying new equipment, will be huge beneficiaries. As we phase in the 10-year tax cuts on marginal rates, all sorts of families will save thousands of dollars.

The final thing I will leave the Members with is that the Democratic so-called tax cut proposal allows the average family to go out and buy a used television set on a one-time-only basis. The President's proposal puts an average of between \$1,000 and \$2,000 in every working family's pocket forever, every year. It will create jobs, it will free families, and it is the right thing to do.

I thank the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE).

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. BEAUPREZ).

Mr. BEAUPREZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Mexico for yielding.

I have been intrigued by this dialogue about the budget and especially the economic growth package, so-called, and there are a lot of ideas going around on this Hill. I want to focus for just a minute on something very near and dear to my heart, job creation.

I have been in the private sector all my life and only a brief while in this distinguished body as a Member of Congress. So my mind and perhaps a good share of my heart is still back home with the folks that actually are creating jobs and doing the work around this country.

In fact, just this afternoon I had an electric contractor, electrician, in my office and he was lamenting with me

the state of things back home, that he is actually for the first time in many years faced with laying people off, with eliminating jobs. And that is a tragedy because these people that work for him, he is a small business owner again, they become more than just employees, they become friends; and he knows that laying them off, especially in times like this, is a bad situation and it becomes a very personal situation.

So I think a concept that has tragically been lost in a great deal of this dialogue is the one of job creation and something that we really ought to be committed to. And I submit that all of us from either side of the aisle, all of us that run for public office say, we are for job creation, we are going to do that when we get to Congress. If we are ever going to do that, if we are wherever going to really mean it, what better time to mean it than right now when we see unemployment up, when we see people like my friend from back home in my home district saying he is going to have to lay people off, that we be serious about it?

Let me share a couple of statistics with the Members. Relative to this much-debated dividend tax elimination, the compelling part of that argument, the big part of it for me at least, is the number of jobs that it will create. Why would it create jobs? In our society, we typically get what we incentivize, and when we incent capital formation, capital which is critical to the creation of opportunity, the creation of an expanding economy, the creation of jobs, that is what we will get. When we incent it, we will get it. So when we incent the investment in capital, the equity side of business, it only stands to reason that we are going to get an expanding economy and jobs as a result.

Point of reference: It is estimated in this economic growth package that has passed this body that, on average, for the next 5 years, almost 1 million new jobs a year will be created. Some have suggested that this dividend tax elimination is not a good idea, that it just benefits the rich, and I will return to that, that it really will not benefit the average guy. The average guy is exactly who we are talking about here who needs a job.

If we eliminate that, we lose almost 60 percent of the job creation of the economic growth package that we are talking about here. We reduce from that almost 1 million new jobs a year, on average, for 5 years to less than 400,000. That is tragic. That hits people right where they live, in their pocketbook, at home, and that will cost us jobs which we need. Again, it defies logic why we do that.

Another critical piece of this economic growth package, if I might, is the increase in the investment credit tax deduction for small businesses from 25,000 to 75,000. Why is that such a big deal? My electrical contractor again, I asked him, If you had the option,

would you use that? Yes, he would. What would you do? Well, he would buy some new equipment. He would buy a badly needed new van. He would buy some shop equipment; they fabricate a little bit.

I submit to the gentleman the simple facts of life. If somebody is going to buy something, a washing machine, a drill press, a new computer, that means somebody has to design it. Somebody has to fabricate it. Somebody has to assemble it. Somebody has to ship it. Somebody has to make a box to ship it in. Somebody has to put it on a shelf. Somebody retails it. Somebody delivers it. Somebody installs it. Somebody services it. That creates jobs. That is how America works, and that is what we ought to be about in this body.

And we have got an opportunity not to just stimulate, and I do not like that word, not to just stimulate this economy because typically we poke it here and it comes out there, and then we will poke back later. We ought to do some sound, long-term economic planning. That is what we have an opportunity to do here, to incent job creation.

I submit to the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) this is a great package. I applaud him for taking leadership on the floor of this House tonight, and I pledge to him my support to seeing this economic package pass this body and, hopefully, become the law of the land. I thank him for yielding.

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I recognize the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO).

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Mexico. We have been standing here for some time listening to some of our friends on the other side of the aisle talk about what they saw as the doom and gloom of the tax package of a budget really that allows people to actually begin to operate, begin to do things that will bring this economy back.

It is amazing. If we had listened for any length of time to our friends on the other side of the aisle, we would have heard time and time and time again that the following rhetoric; we would have heard something like this: Oh, my God, they are going to take money from the people who are veterans and children and old people and everybody we can think of to cast in a sympathetic light, and they are going to give it to the rich.

Give it to the rich, this is a fascinating way of talking about letting people keep some of their money, but it is exactly what distinguishes the two sides in this debate. It really is a great way of explaining how one side of this debate looks at the whole issue of taxation and the whole issue of private development, the development of one's own resources and talents. To think that the Government of the United States or any government owns the money to begin with and that they, if they are nice, we are going to let them

keep some. But if they are not very nice, and even if they are wealthy, if they made a few bucks in the process, all of a sudden they are the bad guy and we are going to either keep money from them, but if we are going to pass a tax break, we are "going to give them money."

It is not giving anybody money to say that they can keep some of the money they earn, but it is only that if we think of it as being all the government's money to begin with, and that is exactly what the other side does, that is how they think about government: It is all government money. We will let them keep some if they are good. That is what really separates these two sides in this debate, and I hope that the people that listen to this debate understand and really are able to see that.

Mr. Speaker, there was a time when the leadership in the Democratic Party, not just a single governor like Governor Richardson today, but the leadership of that party could actually look beyond the whole concept of class warfare and did not try to incorporate that into the philosophy of the Democratic Party.

And there was a time that the leader of the Democratic Party actually came to the Congress of the United States, came to the people of the United States and said, You know what we need? You know what we have to have? We have to have a tax cut. Even though we have got deficits, huge deficits, the way to get us out of those deficits and back into a surplus is to let the economy begin to move again, and we have to do that by giving people tax cuts.

The Members know who that was, of course. It was John F. Kennedy, and he put through a huge tax cut in the face, by the way, of large deficits that were running at the time; and he did not talk about letting rich people keep some of their money. What he said is, we have to allow people to keep some of the money that they are laboring for because that is truly what makes an economy hum. And he was right.

There is another thing that we should pay special attention to, Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, especially my colleague from New Mexico, who I know understands this issue far better than most of us, and that is the importance of energy production and the importance of getting an energy bill through this Congress, the importance of getting the President's energy package through. This will do more to "stimulate" this economy than almost anything else we can do aside from letting people keep more of their own tax dollars.

We have to allow for the development of the economy and the stimulation of the economy to occur as the result of the production of energy resources in this country. No one, no one, believes that we should continue to rely upon foreign sources for our energy needs. That is why it is incumbent upon every single one of us in this body to do everything we can to put an energy bill

in front of the President, let him sign it, an energy bill that will begin to explore the resources that are available in the United States, the coal, the gas, the oil resources available to us here while simultaneously researching what is available to us in alternative resources and the use of alternative energy supplies.

That is what is desperately needed, and I hope we will begin to focus here, even for the remainder of the time we have available to us, on this issue of energy, because it is an extremely important part of this whole discussion of how we get an economy going again.

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, in summary, I just would say that, in perspective, people in this city are saying that the tax cut is just too large, that the original figure of \$726 billion over a 10-year period, that compares to \$120 trillion. Mr. Speaker, we are asking for seven-tenths of 1 cent back in taxes. Economists on both sides of the aisle declare that this tax cut, this tax relief package by the President of the United States to be the boldest tax plan ever presented, that if the dividend tax is repealed, it can surge our economy upward for a 50-year period with an immediate 10 to 15 percent increase in stock prices.

□ 1800

Mr. Speaker, again, I am going to close with the comments on March 31 of this year from Democrat Governor Bill Richardson from New Mexico when he passed a tax cut in New Mexico: "We need to stop talking about class warfare and the distribution of wealth," he said. "We need to start talking about economic growth, and reducing taxes puts us on the road to economic growth."

Mr. Speaker, I cannot say it better.

ENERGY POLICY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida.) Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CANNON) is recognized for the remainder of the leadership hour, which is now 20 minutes.

Mr. CANNON. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman from New Mexico yielding his time back so that we can take a few minutes to talk about energy policy issues. I would like to immediately turn the time over to our colleague, the gentleman from Montana (Mr. REHBERG).

Mr. REHBERG. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Utah for yielding to me on an issue that is so very important.

There is an old Chinese proverb that says, the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is today. Just think back to 1979 when we were standing in line to buy gasoline, and some of us from energy-producing States said, what happened? Will this ever happen again? It happened again in the 1980s. We continually find that

energy prices are going up. We find that OPEC ministers are holding us hostage, and yet this Congress and this country does not have an energy policy. Oh, it may not be the most sexy of issues, because every time the gasoline price in this country goes down, people go, whew, we solved the problem; now we do not have to deal with it.

But we do. Because there is one thing that will create a problem more than any other problem in this world in the future, and it is not the national debt that we talk about, and that is very serious; the national debt can either be solved through increasing revenue or decreasing expenditures. No, the most serious problem this Nation faces is an energy shortage. One day we will not have an opportunity to drill one more well or dig one more shovel full of coal. If we have not done the things, if we have not put in place the environment to create the next generation of energy production, then we have done more damage to the next generation, far surpassing anything else that we could have done with our financial debt.

Montana, my home State, is known as the Treasure State. Why? Because of the natural beauty, but also the natural resources that we can provide to the rest of this Nation under an energy policy. "Oro y Plata" is our motto: Gold and Silver. We have gold and silver, but beyond that, we have many of the things that this energy policy that we are discussing in this Congress have to offer.

A couple of the ones that are most important to my State are clean coal and clean coal technology. The energy policy talks about the opportunities. Think about the native Americans in our country. We have reservations in Montana that need economic development. Just in the Crow reservation alone, they have the potential for 1 billion tons of coal, or the Cheyenne reservation, 1 billion tons of coal.

One of the President's priorities was hydrogen fuel cell technology. We need electricity to put through the hydrogen fuel cells. How can it be created in America? Through coal. I traveled to Iceland last year. I watched them want to become the first nation to be entirely fossil-fuel free. How do they create the electricity for their hydrogen fuel cell technology? They use water, hydro, their dams. We certainly cannot do that. We need a source, whether it is natural gas or coal. Montana can fit into that, but we cannot without the incentives that are created in this energy policy. We need this bill.

Marginal well tax credit. Mr. Speaker, in Montana alone, we have 2,700 shut-in marginal wells. Why? Because they cannot afford to open them because the price of oil is so unstable that they do not know that if they open it, they will have to shut it down immediately or they will lose them. We are not talking about the major oil companies here. We are talking about independents; we are talking about Montanans, individuals who pay their

income taxes that need the help. Within the energy policy there is a tax credit for marginally producing wells. It could replace as many as 140,000 barrels of oil a day, oil that we will not have to bring in from places like Iraq.

Energy debt. That is what we are looking at in this country. I brought along a picture that I want to show my colleagues real quickly. This is my home State of Montana in the year 2000. These were the fires that burned a million acres of properties, a lot on Federal ground. Unfortunately, along with that, animals burned, pastures burned. We created an unhealthy environment and rather than doing that, we ought to do what other countries and, in some cases, States that are so far ahead of this Nation are doing.

I took a delegation over to Sweden last year to look at biomass. They have cogeneration facilities where they put wood products through those generation facilities to create energy for schools and hospitals. It can be done in America. It is not being done to the extent that it could be, because we do not have an energy policy.

When is America going to wake up? When are we going to say we are not going to let the opponents stop this plan because of one issue or another? And energy policy has a never-ending, expansive environment of creating an opportunity to become energy independent to fuel the economy and to fuel ourselves into the 21st century and beyond. Without it, we are creating an energy debt, and that is not fair to the next generation; and shame on us if we do not solve the problem.

I thank the gentleman from Utah for his leadership in the Western Caucus and for giving me an opportunity to speak today.

Mr. CANNON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Montana for his interest, intensity, and clarity on this issue that is so important to the American people right now.

I could not help but think as he spoke that, in fact, in America, the cost of energy is as regressive as any tax could be. That is that poor people drive cars and rich people drive cars. Sometimes the cars that are driven by the rich, though the car may cost more, uses the same kind of gas or even less gas than an old beater uses. The fact is, the cost of energy is significant to the people, even in a regressive way, to all segments of our society.

We are speaking today as the Western Caucus. I want to thank the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO), a member of the caucus who spoke earlier, and the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE). I hope we can get back to him. We also are joined by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON), who is the communications Chair for the Western Caucus and also by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP), who is the secretary of the Western Caucus. I would like to yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON).

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, it is great to join my friends from the West. I come from western Pennsylvania where the energy crisis started. I live 5 miles from Drake's Well, the first oil well ever drilled.

The question is, do we need an energy policy? In my view, it is the number one need of this country. There is no issue that makes this country more fragile economically or in our defense than availability of energy.

Why do we need to have a policy? We need a policy that will provide us with ample sources of all types of energy. There is no silver bullet in the energy issue. Every time we have an energy spike in this country, we then have a downturn in the economy because of the cost that takes out of our economy.

I want to share with my colleagues some numbers that are a little surprising. These are world numbers. We all think that we are just days away from new energy sources that are going to replace fossil fuels. Currently in the world, we consume 39 percent, which is oil, 23 percent of energy that is natural gas, and 23 percent that is coal. Now, when we add those three together, that is 85 percent of our energy is fossil fuel.

We have 8 percent nuclear and 7 percent renewable. Now, renewables are the ones we all hope and support and hope will be the supply of the future. But let us look at those numbers. Hydro is almost half of that 7 percent, or 3.22 percent. Wood is .0266 percent, or just under 3 percent. Wood waste is about a half a percent. When we add wind and solar together, we have just over a half a percent of the energy consumed in this country. Yet, we have a lot of people who keep talking like if we would just stop holding back wind and solar. Folks, nobody is holding back wind and solar. When the wind does not blow, we have to have a redundant source. When the sun does not shine, we have to have a redundant source. And it only blows about 38 percent of the time in the areas where wind power works. So those are not as quick a solution as many people would like to think.

Now, transportation is where we use our oil. Thirty-nine percent of our energy is oil, and the vast majority of that is an oil-based economy: our transportation system. We have a little bit of ethanol which is growing, and we have a little bit of natural gas in there. Sixty percent of the oil we purchase will soon come from foreign countries, unstable parts of the world.

Hydrogen fuel cells, I applaud the President. I have been supporting hydrogen for all of my 6 years in Congress. Hybrid cars is another one that has hope. But they are a long ways from solving the energy problems in this country.

If we quickly look at natural gas, which is 23 percent of our energy, that is home heating, commercial, industrial, and mass transit. Eighty-five percent of that is produced in this country

and creates wealth from the ground to the source of use. Many of our best fields, though, in this country, and we were really putting a lot of horses on natural gas because we have added it to electric generation, are locked up. Most of the west coast shoreline is locked up, most of the east coast shoreline is locked up. Under the Great Lakes where we drilled down, do not even drill down through the lakes is locked up. Canada drills under the lakes and sells gas to us, and many of our best fields in the Midwest and all around Florida are locked up.

Electric generation is today 52 percent coal, 20 percent nuclear, 60 percent natural gas, 7 percent hydro, and 3 percent oil. So the electric that we supply in this country has basically, in recent years, all the new electric plants have been natural gas. Now, I have never been a fan of that, because we have always kind of held natural gas back for home heating, for commercial and for industrial. And we found this winter what has happened. Now that we are hooking up these big generating plants, we had natural gas prices just a month or two ago that reached \$9 and \$10 a thousand, which is devastating to those who depend on it for home heating.

We should be using natural gas for mass transit and short-term transportation, in my view, not for future electric generation.

I will conclude my comments with the following: every downturn in our economy has been preceded by high energy prices. Home heating and transportation, when those two costs spike, it comes right out of the family budget. Seventy percent of our economy is from commerce, and that is the same family budget. When we have energy spikes for driving our cars and for heating our homes, it will hurt our economy every time. We must have an energy policy so that we have ample energy supply in this country.

Mr. CANNON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. I could not help but think today about some of the things that the gentleman from Pennsylvania just pointed out. When one of my staffers came in and told me that gas prices today are up to \$5.70 per therm, this is an amazing amount and an amazing jump in the springtime when energy demand is down for households, but forced up by this steady demand from large production, energy production facilities.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, there is not ample wells being drilled in this country to continue to hook up power plants to be produced by natural gas, from all of the experts I have talked to.

Mr. CANNON. Mr. Speaker, that appears to me to be the fact of our life today, that we do not have the gas coming out of the ground.

Now, the fact is, we have lots of gas. I mean, we could probably drill 50,000 gas wells in Wyoming alone today on where we know those reserves are; and

between Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah, in known reserves, we could probably drill a total of 100,000 wells that would make gas available to everybody and reduce that cost so we are not at \$5.70, but back to \$2 or so per therm that has been typical of the last 10 years.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. But so much of those best gas fields are locked up.

Mr. CANNON. Yes. They are locked up by policy. I might just point out that the Constitution gives this body the control of policy. Anything the administration does is based on delegation from this body to the administration; and that is what we need to look at, and that is what this bill does. It takes great strides in turning that around so that we get that locked-up gas flowing to the homes of people who only should be paying \$2 per therm instead of \$5.70 per therm.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, we only can import gas from Mexico and Canada. We can import it from ships, but we only have two ports that can take liquefied natural gas, so we are really limited. We are dependent on what we can drill.

Mr. CANNON. Mr. Speaker, I think we are in fact dependent for heating our homes with gas on the gas we produce here incrementally in America.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP).

□ 1815

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I thank my senior colleague from my home State of Utah for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman and I have been here 3 months. In that time, I have found nothing more exciting than what I wish to speak about today, the potential of an Energy Security Act of 2003.

This country has been for far too long without a comprehensive energy program. With energy prices rising and our dependence on foreign oil, we need to find a domestic source of our potential future energy. What this Congress needs to do to solve this problem and also to eliminate a future crisis is to look to the lands that are already controlled by the Federal Government.

In the coming days, Congress will have the opportunity to debate the Energy Security Act of 2003. Within this critical bill is the authorization allowing drilling in Section 1002 of the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge.

Now, contrary to popular belief, this is not the pristine cathedral of the wilderness or the last great unexplored frontier; it is thousands of acres of frozen tundra, uninhabitable, with its greatest summer crop being mosquitoes.

More importantly, when Congress created this ANWR, we realized that within that there was the great potential for oil. We specifically put a portion of it, the portion in green on this map, aside for future oil exploration for the needs of this particular country.

This section, known as 1002, it is noted, is not all to be used for oil development, only 2,000 acres within it. Let me try and explain what that means.

ANWR is approximately the size of the State of South Carolina, yet, within the northern portion of that, the area in red is the only portion we are talking about, a grand total of 2,000 acres, about the size of the footprint left by the airport in this city.

If we did another analogy, if we can consider a large conference table, we are talking about drilling in an area the size of a postage stamp. That is not, that is not an area that is going to despoil the future. Its disturbance is negligible.

This area does not have, as some critics have said, only 6 months' worth of oil. We are looking at an area that has between 5.7 billion and 16 billion, B, with a B, billion barrels of recoverable oil within ANWR. If Members consider that within every day we import 10 million barrels, we can recognize that clearly this would go a long way as we compare the potential of ANWR to our other sources of foreign oil in providing the kind of natural domestic security that we desperately need.

This cannot be minimized, it cannot be brushed aside. This is a crucial element of the puzzle. It is a crucial element for the long-term viability of our Nation and our energy.

One last point, very quickly. In addition to oil for the future energy needs of this country, we are producing spin-off jobs in almost every State of this Nation. These statistics are somewhat old, I have seen them elevated by as much as 20 percent, but we could produce between 500,000 and 700,000 jobs in this country. Can Members imagine what 500,000 to 700,000 jobs would do to spur this economy, well-paying jobs, in addition to the energy independence?

There are two elements we need, stability and predictability of our source of energy. That is what will spur the future. That is what will give us our independence, our independence from foreign oil and our security at home.

Mr. CANNON. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the gentleman from Utah, and I would like to thank all my colleagues from the Western Caucus for the relatively short time we have taken on the floor today. I can assure my colleagues we will be back in future special orders, trying to flesh out for the people of America these issues and how important they are to the future of America, to the future of jobs, half a million jobs based on a decision made by this body whether or not we will open up a small area in Alaska for drilling. I think that is an important issue.

The gentleman from Utah did a little magic trick with the chart and made it disappear for a moment. There is no magic, there is no magic for solving this problem of energy in America. We need to deal with the realities of these policy issues. We need to get away

from demagoguery and toward the very important issue of the price of gasoline for our cars, the price of gas for heating our homes, the price of energy for running our factories and creating jobs for the American people.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address an issue that some of us started to talk about last week. Mr. Speaker, last week 11 Members came to the floor to speak about the deep cuts in the President's budget. After we made our presentations on the floor, we were inundated with calls by veterans from all over America. They called us, they wrote us, and they are asking Members to join us. They want us to make a special appeal to our Republican friends, to the President, not to cut veterans services.

We are back here tonight. I have more Democratic Members who have joined me. They have come to the floor this evening to appeal to our Republican colleagues and to the President not to cut the veterans budget.

The budget is supposed to outline the Federal Government's priorities for the next year. Apparently, some of our colleagues have decided that their priorities are massive deficits, huge tax cuts that benefit only the most privileged, and drastic cuts to government programs that millions of people depend on. While the Republican budget did not include a dime in funding for the war in Iraq, it did cut the Department of Veterans Affairs by \$25 billion.

Mr. Speaker, on the same day that the President of the United States sent our soldiers into war, the Republicans in Congress pushed through a budget that slashed the very programs that our soldiers will count on when they return from their mission. This is unacceptable. I believe that we must live up to our duty and support the men and women who fought throughout our Nation's history to protect our freedom.

However, it seems that many of our colleagues have forgotten the promises we made to our veterans when we sent them to war. This budget, the President's budget, has slashed government spending so that veterans are being impacted in the most unusual and negative way.

The cuts that the veterans are being forced to take are simply unkind and unfair. For example, in January of 2003, Mr. Bush cut off access to the VA health care system for approximately 174,000 veterans. Specifically, the President announced that new VA care would no longer be available to so-called "Priority 8" veterans who are not already enrolled in the VA system;

that simply means veterans who earn about \$24,000.

It is ironic that the President announced this cut on the same day he did a photo op at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, touting veterans care for vets of the Afghanistan conflict.

It is also ironic that the President was touting care for the veterans of the Afghanistan conflict when we are still, in our districts on a daily basis, responding to the cries of veterans who served in the Vietnam-era War and who served in the Persian Gulf War, veterans who still are not able to access their benefits. We are still dealing with veterans who have been inflicted with all of the diseases that come from the exposure to Agent Orange and other kinds of exposures.

In July of 2002, the President had the Veterans Affairs Department direct all VA regional directors to stop, stop, all marketing activities to enroll new vets in the VA system. This was an effort to curb VA expenditures by not letting the public know about available services. According to several major veterans groups, the President's budget last year fell \$1.5 billion short of the inadequate funding that was exhibited in that budget.

THIS YEAR'S BUDGET

So it should not come as a surprise when our President or his party short-changes our veterans, yet again. History has shown that they will.

But Republicans decided that what they have done over the past couple of years was not enough. So when they drew up the Fiscal Year 2004 budget they called for even greater cuts to the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The budget will cut \$844 million from health programs next year.

In addition, the budget called for increased co-payments for pharmaceutical drugs and primary care that veterans need—something that used to be provided for free.

And mandatory spending would be cut by 463 million—this year alone. This means that the Montgomery GI Bill education benefits, vocational rehabilitation, and subsidies for VA home loans will be cut.

The Republicans even cut funding for headstones, markers and flag for deceased veterans.

Nor does the Republican's budget provide additional funding for the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act which is a comprehensive effort to eliminate chronic homelessness among veterans within a decade.

I would like to share with you two quotes that I think highlight the anger that many veterans felt after they saw the Republican Veterans' budget.

The first is from John Keaveney of New Directions, Inc, a veterans group located in Los Angeles. He says: "To propose cuts in VA nurses, doctors, hospitals and other important services to veterans at a time of war feels to many veterans like an act of treason. . . . It seems inexcusable at a time like this to virtually tear up the agreement America has had with veterans for more than 100 years which is to care for those who have borne the brunt of battle."

And the other is from Dwight Radcliff of US Vets also located in Los Angeles. He said: “. . . the men and women who fought for this country are still struggling to obtain the benefits and services to which they are entitled. In being pro-active, it is imperative that during this time of war, we begin to prepare to address the needs of those who are currently in service as well as the forgotten heroes who still sleep in the streets. It is extremely unfair to tell those who have waited so long and also those who will return shortly that their effort for this country was unappreciated.”

Mr. Speaker, I call on the President and the Republican leadership to restore the funding to the Department of Veterans' Affairs and to restore our veterans' confidence in their government which they so bravely defended.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to call on some of my colleagues who are here to make their presentations this evening. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY).

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding to me, and commend her for taking this time in a special order on such a timely matter, while our troops are in the deserts of Afghanistan and Iraq fighting for their lives and while this administration is attempting to cut the budget of the VA.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to voice my opposition to cuts in benefits due our Nation's veterans. I urge my Republican colleagues to reconsider the drastic cuts made to the Department of Veterans Affairs. I oppose these cuts, this mistreatment, and believe our Nation's heroes deserve better. I sincerely urge my colleagues and all Americans to consider just what a vote to reduce the budget to our veterans, both on and off the battlefield, really means.

Today, I submit, there is politics and then there is the presumption of politics; there is patriotism, and then there is the presumption of patriotism; there is support for our troops, and there is the presumption of support for our troops, all the contradictions involving the politics of war and peace.

The notion of who is a true patriot and who is not and the welfare of our troops in combat all have been played out recently in this very Chamber. For my part, I have opposed the war, supported our troops in combat, and now stand to support our troops upon their return.

For those who follow my votes, they may be confused. Do not be, because certainly I am not. Recently, on March 20, 2003, I placed into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD a statement that noted my long-standing opposition to the war in Iraq. Yet, with the fighting having begun, I offer my support and prayers for the men and women who, out of duty to their Nation, find themselves in harm's way.

On top of this budget, the current administration has also submitted a budget to pay for the war we are currently engaged in. That supplemental budget request is for \$75 billion to fight the war in Iraq for 6 months. With the prospect of a long and arduous cam-

paigned and occupation of Iraq, the costs will likely soar even higher.

We have 2.3 million disabled veterans who demand our patriotism, just as we demanded theirs in time of war. I echo the appeal of honor and dignity made on March 17, 2003, by some of the veterans groups in response to the GOP budget.

I quote: “Is there no honor left in the hallowed halls of our government that you choose to dishonor the sacrifices of our Nation's heroes and rob our programs, health care, and disability compensation to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy? You will be reducing benefits and services for disabled vets at a time when thousands of our service members are in harm's way, fighting terrorists around the world, and thousands more of our sons and daughters are preparing for war against Iraq.”

Needless to say, the shooting war started in earnest 2 days later.

I submit to Members, there is politics and then there is the presumption of politics; there is patriotism, and then there is the presumption of patriotism; and there is support for our troops, both on and off the battlefield, and there is the presumption of support for our troops.

In a world where the cost of everything, even our Federal budget, is increasing at breakneck speed, does it make sense to cut benefits to the very people who we promised to take care of if they stood at a post and took care of us in some foreign land, often under an obscure objective that only our highest leaders know about and understand?

In today's world, with the threat of international terrorism in our own backyard, war has come to us all. However, for those men and women who stand up, swear an oath of allegiance to defend our Nation at all costs, and do the bidding of Congress and our President, we are now being asked to turn our backs on them.

□ 1830

How can Congress, in the span of a few days, vote support for the troops fighting in Iraq and then seriously consider revoking by nearly a billion dollars the benefits we promised our warriors past, present, and future for the sacrifices they have sworn and continue to swear to make for the good of our Nation. This is an insult. This is an abomination. We know it. America knows it, and our veterans know it.

It is more patriotic to send our troops into battle with our congressional blessing but upon their return tell them their sacrifices are not deserving of benefits this Nation has traditionally offered those who risk injury, emotional stability and even their lives to keep this Nation secure.

I urge Congress to reject any reduction in benefits to our fighting men and women and support the Democratic alternative. At a time of war and sacrifice by the men and women of our Armed Forces, Congress cannot and must not let these cuts stand. The al-

ternative offered by the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT), the ranking member of the House Committee on the Budget, provides for \$1.1 billion in additional discretionary spending in FY 2004 and \$17 billion more over the course of 10 years to the Veterans department budget.

If we want their full measure on the battle fields, they deserve a full measure of benefits upon their return. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding to me.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. BACA).

(Mr. BACA asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) for taking the leadership on behalf of veterans.

As a veteran who has served in the 101st and 82nd Airborne Division in 1966 to 1968, I am outraged, I am outraged regarding the 2004 budget adopted by this House committee, \$28.8 billion cuts in veterans programs over 10 years; \$14.6 million in veterans benefits cut in mandatory veterans program; \$14.2 billion cuts in discretionary veterans health care. I speak on behalf of the 2.3 million disabled veterans including more than 1.2 million members of Disabled Veterans of America.

Is there no honor left in the halls of government? Is there no honor left in the halls of government that you would choose to dishonor the sacrifice of our Nation's heroes and rob them of their programs, health care and disability compensation? During this time of war it is crucial to let our soldiers know that they will be taken care of once they return home. I state once they return home that they will be taken care of. Unfortunately, I am ashamed by what the Republican Congress and President Bush have done to our veterans lately.

Since the troops have been deployed to the Persian Gulf, veterans benefits have been shipped away. Shame on you. Shame on you. They are fighting and dying for us. They are fighting and dying for us. And what are we doing? We are pulling the rug out from underneath them. The Republican budget resolution that passed last week cuts \$449 million from veterans health care programs. What kind of message does it send to the hundreds and thousands of American men and women in uniform currently risking their lives overseas? Is this the kind of message that we want to send to our young soldiers fighting for freedom and democracy?

Remember that we enjoy today the freedoms because of the sacrifices that many of our veterans made who have served this country, our country before. Is this the best way that we can do for the families of those who have died for this country?

Just recently, Corporal Jorge Gonzalez, a U.S. Marine from my district in Rialto that I happened to visit the

parents this week was killed in Iraq. His heroism is found in the battle field and at home. This occurs daily through this land and the homes of families of American men and women who are serving us, like those of my legislative field representative's husband who is now serving in Iraq. Our men and women in uniform should not have to come back and learn that the government they fought for refused to take care of them, and I state, refused to take care of them.

During the time of war, we all say to our troops, we support you, our thoughts and prayers are with you. And we do, and we do. We display the American flag on our cars, in our homes, and clothing with pride. While this display of patriotism is important, I say we have to do more than that.

We have a moral obligation to provide veterans with benefits and services that they have earned, and I state that they have earned through their honorable service to this country. We have a moral obligation to provide them with prescription drugs and access to care. Is that too much to ask? I ask, is that too much to ask?

I am here to tell the administration and my fellow Members of Congress not to forget those men and women who have served this country. Remember, the freedoms we have today are because the men and women were willing to step up and fight for those freedoms, the freedoms we enjoy every day. Let us not forget them. Let us not forget them. Let us restore the benefits to our veterans. Let them know we will take care of them today and tomorrow, and I state today and tomorrow. I say God bless America. Let us restore our veterans. God bless our veterans.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS).

(Mr. ANDREWS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from California for yielding and for organizing this chance for us to come to the floor and speak tonight.

Once a year in my district a group of people gather in the middle of a dusty field and they line up trucks and tents on either side of the field, and over the course of a weekend veterans from all over our area come to this field to receive counseling, health care services, clean clothes, a shower, a meal. This is called a Veterans Stand Down. Most of the veterans who come to the stand down are homeless or living on the street, battered by a mental illness.

Once a month in my district and in districts across the country, veterans look at the calendar as it heads toward the end of the month, and they look at their checkbook and they see nothing left in their checking account because the meager pensions and benefits that we pay veterans have run out before the end of the month.

Once a day in my district and in districts around this country, veterans

call health clinics and health care facilities and hear that the waiting list for an appointment is a month, 3 months, 6 months, 7 months to see a doctor that they were promised they would be able to see when they agreed to serve their country.

A few months ago, this Congress debated the use of force in Iraq. I am one who as a matter of deep personal conviction feels that the use of force in Iraq was justified and I voted "yes." I feel equal conviction tonight of a sense of shame that my country is disregarding the needs of men and women who served our country in the past and who serve it today.

Governing is choosing. And this body has already made a choice, which it is not too late to reverse, about honoring the men and women who have worn the uniform of this country. Veterans benefits and services are already insufficient to meet the needs of the veterans of this country. They are not good enough today to do what needs to be done. But just to restore this level of services for the next 10 years, we would need \$28 billion more than the majority has provided in the budget that it rammed through this Chamber just a few days ago. So we are going to do \$28 billion less in health care, in education, in disability benefits, in counseling, in housing, in burial benefits; \$28 billion dollars less than we are doing right now over the course of the next 10 years.

Now, there are only four ways that we can deal with this problem. The first way we can say is, that is just too bad. That is the way it is going to be. And despite all of the ceremonies they will attend at home, despite all of the speeches they will make this Memorial Day, that is the position that a majority of this House took when it voted to cut veterans benefits by \$28 billion.

The second choice we could take is to find the \$28 billion somewhere else, cut waste, fraud and abuse and come up with the money. Well, it was the majority's budget resolution that could have found that \$28 billion in waste, fraud and abuse. I remember the Committee on the Budget chairman came to the floor and stacked up reports from the General Accounting Office that purported to show waste, fraud and abuse and expressed his frustration that we were not cutting that. With all due respect, he was expressing frustration with himself because they wrote the resolution and they wrote the budget that could have cut \$28 billion from somewhere else in the budget other than in veterans benefits, and they chose not to do.

The third way to restore these cuts is to borrow the money from our children, which is what the majority chooses to do when it has a higher priority. That is the way they propose to pay for the war in Iraq. I support the effort in Iraq. I voted for it. I certainly support paying for it, but I do not think we should borrow the money from our children to pay for it. I do not

think that is a very justifiable response; but when it comes to higher priorities for the majority, that is what they do.

And the fourth way to pay for restoring these benefits is to choose veterans benefits over tax cuts. We are here tonight to say no vets cuts for tax cuts. No cuts in veterans services that are used to finance yet another drain on the Federal Treasury so the favored supporters of the majority can enjoy yet another tax break at the expense of the rest of the budget.

President Kennedy said, governing is choosing. Every Member of this House has a choice to make when it comes to veterans services. You can choose to let this \$28 billion in cuts stay in the budget and explain to your constituents why the American Legion, why the Disabled American Veterans, why veterans groups around this country oppose that budget. My colleagues can make that choice. Or my colleagues can choose to identify some other area in the budget that could be cut to pay for this. But it is a little late for that because the budget has already been passed. The third choice is to advocate borrowing more money to cover these benefits, which I think is an irresponsible fiscal position. Or just a few more on the majority side could join the 215 of us who voted to choose veterans benefits over tax cuts, who resolved to say we do not want veterans cuts to pay for tax cuts; and we believe that is the right choice.

So when we all go home, Mr. Speaker, to the American Legion and the VFW for the Memorial Day services this year and tell the veterans how much we appreciate what they have done, I would say to you that with all due respect talk is cheap. And the \$28 billion in cuts that are in the majority's budget are an affront and an insult to the people who have worn the uniform of this country. It is not too late to reverse this mistake.

The right thing to do is to repeal a part of the President's tax cut, to choose veterans benefits over this endless stream of worship at the idolatrous altar of tax cuts the majority seems to be engaged in.

So the next time there is a Veterans Stand Down in my district, I want to see doctors and nurses and counselors and therapists there to help the vets. And I want to see the pensions increased and broadened and enriched so veterans can make it to the end of the month and pay their bills. And I want to see the 90-day waiting list cut back to 9 days or 9 hours by hiring more nurses and clinicians and doctors at VA health care facilities across this country.

Governing is choosing. We choose not simply to honor the veterans of this country with our hollow words, a false honor indeed. We choose to honor the veterans of this country with our actions and our votes and to fulfill the promises we have made to them.

□ 1845

I would urge the majority, redress this wrong that you have committed in your budget. Fix this budget. Restore these veterans cuts and take it out of the tax cut you so unwisely passed.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I now yield to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY).

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman, not only for yielding to me, but for organizing this opportunity for us to come to the floor.

Last Friday, I spoke to a group of veterans in my district. They were mostly World War II and Korean War veterans, and of course, I thanked them profusely for their service to our country. And they appreciated it, but what they wanted to know and where most of the questions were was, what is happening to our benefits? I told them about the President's budget proposal, and they did not appreciate that.

We have all been making a lot of speeches lately and offering resolutions, and they are eloquent and they are flowery, and yes, they are heartfelt speeches and resolutions, expressing support for our troops; and I am not denying the sincerity or even the importance of making those supportive gestures. Speeches and resolutions do not provide health care, and they do not provide education, and they do not provide pensions, and they do not provide burial benefits.

Budgets are a statement of values and priorities, and what the veterans are finding out is that they are not a priority in the President's budget and they are not a priority of the Republican leadership. And not only that, despite all the sacrifices that they have made and, as we speak, the sacrifices that are being made, they are being asked to sacrifice yet again in the form of a \$28 billion cut in benefits and in health care.

What we know when it comes to dollars and cents is that veterans across Illinois are going to suffer from President Bush's proposed budget. A report that was released by the Democratic staff of the Committee on Government Reform concluded that the changes, that is, the \$28 billion in cuts, would cause over 65,000 Illinois veterans, including an estimated 36,000 veterans enrolled at VA facilities in the Chicago area, to be denied VA health care or to drop out of the VA system while increasing costs for thousands more.

First, President Bush would halt enrollment to Priority 8 veterans, denying them access to VA care. The report found that as a result of this proposed suspension, 173,000 veterans nationwide would be denied care, including 7,160 in Illinois, of which 4,000 are in the Chicago area.

Second, President Bush would require the VA to charge all Priority 7 and Priority 8 veterans currently in the system a \$250 annual enrollment fee in order to receive service. As a result of the fee, the VA estimates that 55 percent of enrolled Priority 7 and 8

veterans would be forced to drop out of the VA system nationwide, including 32,000 veterans in the Chicago area.

Finally, a third set of provisions would increase copayments for Priority 7 and 8 veterans who do stay enrolled in the VA program. The copayments for primary care payments would increase by 33 percent from \$15 per visit to \$20 per visit. The copayments for prescription drugs would more than double, increasing from \$7 to \$15 for 30-day prescriptions. On average, the report concluded, veterans would have to pay a \$97 a year increase in copayments, plus the new enrollment fee of \$250. However, many veterans can see an increase of almost \$600 a year.

I did not support the Republican budget resolution and instead supported the Democratic substitute which would have restored funding for mandatory veterans benefits, including compensation for service-connected disabilities, burial benefits, pensions for permanently disabled, low-income veterans, education benefits, rehabilitation benefits and housing loan programs. Unfortunately, for our veterans and our soldiers currently in the U.S. Armed Forces, the Democratic substitute was voted down.

While our veterans suffer, the administration continues to cut taxes that only favor the rich. While our veterans endure hardship, the administration continues to send our men and women into battle with no guarantees of a safe and healthy life for them and their families when they return home.

Speeches and resolutions are fine, but they are woefully insufficient. Our veterans, those who have served in the past and the veterans of the future, who are risking their lives right now, as we speak, deserve better. It is time for the Republican leadership to put its money where its mouth is.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON).

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from California for organizing this time.

Mr. Speaker, our Armed Forces have now been at war for almost 2 weeks. Over 40 members of the coalition have paid the ultimate sacrifice. Scores of others have been injured. Sadly, there is no doubt in our minds that U.S. casualties of war will rise, even as we all pray for their swift and safe return.

Later this week, each of us will be asked to support a \$75 billion supplemental appropriation. In part, it will pay for the war effort. A few weeks ago, we were asked to support a budget, minus money for the war effort, that drastically reduced funding for the veterans health care and other benefit programs, a cut of \$28.8 billion over 10 years; and today, we have been asked to support a motion to send to conference the same flawed Republican budget that slashes veterans benefits in order to preserve President Bush's tax cuts for wealthy Americans.

In effect, we have been asked by President Bush and the Republican

leadership to support funding for the war, support tax cuts for the wealthy and, at the same time, to drastically cut back our soldiers' benefits once they return from the battlefield in Iraq. And even more cruel, we have been asked by the President and Republican leadership to reduce survivor benefits, those that go to the spouses and the children of our service people who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Mr. Speaker, as others have said, there is no honor in this approach. It is shameful at a time when our dedicated men and women of the Armed Forces are in the field fighting, perhaps to be subjected to attack with chemical or biological weapons, that the President and the Republican leadership have made the choice to underfund our veterans programs.

How can this Congress even consider cutting benefits to our veterans during a time of war? What kind of message are we sending to American men and women in uniform overseas? When they come home, what do we tell them, Thanks for your service to our Nation, but now you are on your own, no thanks?

Mr. Speaker, our veterans deserve better than this. They deserve better than to come home and find that their health care coverage has been reduced, but their enrollment fees and copayments have been increased. They deserve better than to come home to discover that the President and the Republican leadership have decreased spending for Montgomery GI educational benefits and subsidies for VA home loans.

Mr. Speaker, the Republican budget simply disregards the needs of our veterans. It is so shameful in its disregard of their needs that the Disabled American Veterans asked the following question, and we have heard it quoted this evening: "Is there no honor left in the hallowed halls of our government that you choose to dishonor the sacrifices of our Nation's heroes and rob our programs, health care and disability compensation, to pay," to pay for what, to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy, those who lie back and say send them while I enjoy my luxury here at home?

That is reprehensible, Mr. Speaker, and I ask that we preserve the honor of this hallowed institution by restoring cuts to the veterans programs and do it now.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from California for her comments, and I yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND), who has been spending every waking moment trying to get these cuts restored to veterans of his district. And the State of Ohio can be very proud of him; he helped to organize this time on the floor last week and tonight.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend from California for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, we are here tonight talking about something that is close

to all of our hearts. I happen to be the youngest son in a family of nine children. My oldest brother was a World War II veteran. My brother-in-law, who is now deceased, lost his leg by stepping on a land mine in Germany during World War II, worked his final years in a Wal-Mart, walking around on an artificial limb; much of the time it was sore. And I just stand here tonight, and I think that we are able to enjoy the kind of freedoms that we all enjoy because of the sacrifices of those who have gone before us, who have suffered immensely.

I think of the mothers who grieved. I think of my own mother. Some of my earliest memories as a child were of my mother weeping as she worried about whether or not my brother was safe as he participated in that great war. We ought to honor those who went before us, who have fought for us, who have sacrificed their time and have lost their health, and that is not what we are doing.

It is almost beyond belief to me that we, at this time when we have young Americans engaged in a battle, even now risking their lives, that we would be so callous, so callous in our decision-making here in this Chamber that we would pass a budget, and I used the word "we." It certainly did not include most of my Democratic colleagues, but a budget was passed in this House by the majority party, supported by the administration, that cuts benefits, health care benefits and other benefits, to our Nation's veterans by \$28 billion. Think of that, \$28 billion at the same time that the President and majority party is pushing to pass a \$726 billion tax cut, and most of that money is going to go to the richest people in this country.

□ 1900

The President has a choice to make. He can either fully fund veterans health care and veterans benefits, or he can ask for his complete \$726 billion tax cut. It is a fairly clear choice. We have a unified budget. There is only so much money. If we use the resources we have for this big tax cut, there is going to be an insufficient amount of resources to take care of our other needs, including the needs of our veterans.

I have talked on this House floor before about the outrageous things that are being done: increasing the cost of prescription drugs. It went from \$2 to \$7 a prescription. Now the President is saying we want to charge veterans, many of them, \$15 a prescription. Many veterans in my district get 10 or more prescriptions a month. If we take 10 times 15, that is \$150 a month. A lot of these veterans are living on fixed incomes. This is simply outrageous.

And then they created an entirely new priority group of veterans. They call them priority group 8. These are high-income veterans. Of course, you can be one of those priority group 8 veterans and make as little as \$24,000 a

year. Now, maybe a lot of my colleagues do not want people watching to know that those of us in this Chamber make about \$150,000 or so a year. So maybe a \$15 copay would not hurt us. It would not hurt me. I could pay \$15 if I was going to have to take medication. I can do that. I make \$150,000 a year. But what about the veteran who makes \$24,000 a year? And we have the gall to suggest that they are high income and so they just can no longer enroll in the VA health care system. They are priority group 8.

And then others who may make a little more than that are priority group 7. Those veterans, those men and women who have honorably served our country, are being told, well, you are in priority group 7 so you can enroll in the VA health care system and continue to participate, but in order to do so you have to pay an annual enrollment fee of \$250. And then if you go for a doctor visit, we will increase the cost of that.

It is as if we are singling out our veterans for a disproportionate share of the burden for caring for this country. I just find it amazing, amazing that at a time when nearly all of us in here find that we want to associate with the military, we want to show our support for our fighting men and women, that we would take these actions that would be so harmful to our veterans.

I have talked before about the gag order. I mean, it is unbelievable that the VA decides that too many veterans are coming in for health care. We just do not have the resources to provide that health care, with having long waiting lists and many veterans waiting 6 months or more just to see a doctor. In order to correct that, we should just say we need more money. We need more resources. But the VA has a different approach. They say, well, in order to correct that problem, we will just limit information that is being given to veterans so that fewer veterans will understand what they are entitled to and fewer will come in for services. That is how we are going to solve this problem.

It is almost unbelievable. When is it going to stop? When are we going to have our actions match our words? A couple of Fridays ago, about 3 a.m. in the morning, 3 a.m. in the morning, when most of the country was asleep, we were here in this Chamber and we voted a resolution of thankfulness and support for our fighting men and women who are currently risking their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere around the world. Within minutes of casting that vote, we cast another vote for the budget. And in that budget we voted to cut veterans benefits and health care by \$28 billion.

With one hand we saluted the veterans and said thanks, thanks to our servicemen and women. And with the other hand we took our voting card, and we put it in this little gizmo on the back of our chairs here and cast a vote to cut veterans benefits by \$28 billion. In my judgment that is sheer hypocr-

isy. How can we justify those two actions? How can we say on the one hand we honor and appreciate the service of our military men and women and on the other hand cast a vote that cuts benefits to those who have already served?

I think the veterans in this country are coming to understand what is going on. I think they are coming to realize that they have to listen not only to the words but they have to watch the actions of those of us who serve in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I will finish by telling my colleagues this. Talk is cheap. And we do a lot of talking in this Chamber. Talk is cheap, but health care for veterans costs money. And unless we are willing to spend the money, our words are empty.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from Ohio for all of the work he is doing on this issue, and I now yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER).

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding to me, and I speak this evening from the Republican side of the aisle in the hope that my words, and the words of all my colleagues here tonight, will nestle in the empty seats that are here this evening and, by osmosis, maybe change the hearts and the minds of those who, as the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) just said, just last week in one minute voted to support the troops in Iraq, and in the very next vote voting to cut veterans benefits by the \$28 billion he mentioned. What sheer hypocrisy, my colleague said; and I think the American people must understand this.

We say they have cut this \$28 billion over 10 years. That means \$2 billion or \$3 billion every year from the budget from what it should have been. Now, \$2 billion or \$3 billion around here sounds like a little bit of money, but \$2 billion or \$3 billion out in the countryside sounds like some unimaginable figure. And it really is.

What could we do with that \$2 billion or \$3 billion every year for our veterans? What should we do with that which is going to be cut by the Republican budget? Here is what we could do with that. Right now there are a quarter million veterans waiting for their first appointment, their first appointment with the VA. They have been waiting for over 6 months. Some of these veterans will die before they have their first appointment the way our system works right now.

There are almost a half million veterans who have made claims for disability to the Veterans Administration that are pending. They may be pending for 2, 3, 4, some even 5 years; 125,000 appeals are pending for years. Why is that the case? Because the VA does not have enough resources to solve those cases within the 30, 60, or 90 days, the way they should be solved. Why is a veteran kept waiting for years? There are veterans in my district who have

died while waiting for their appeals to be adjudicated, as we said. That is what the \$2 billion will buy. It will get the veterans the service they need, get them the disability justice that they deserve. That is what the \$2 billion will buy.

It will buy full funding of the Montgomery GI bill. For many young people that bill is the only entrance into the economy of today, to get an education. We have the Montgomery GI bill to do it, except we do not fund it. We fund it at a few hundred bucks a month. We need to have the full funding of that so our veterans can get funding.

I could go on with what this \$2 billion will buy, and we will be doing that for the next few weeks. We will have colloquies on this. But I will just end by saying that our veterans are being mistreated by this Nation. The folks in Iraq will come home as veterans. What do my colleagues think their morale will be when they know they have to wait years before they can ever get their claim adjudicated? It is time for veterans around the Nation to watch what we do, not what we say. I believe they should be here when the appropriations process occurs. I have suggested they should surround the Capitol while we do that bill until we do the right thing. They should set up tents, bivouacs. Be here so their representatives do the right thing. Let us support our veterans the way we should.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman very much. I now yield to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, let me first of all thank the gentlewoman from California. I know that many of my colleagues are aware of her long years of work on the issue of veterans, and I am delighted to be able to join my colleagues. With the sound of my voice, I will be hopefully as potent and as brief as I possibly can be, but one cannot look into the midst of this storm of water and not come to the floor to speak about those who are actually putting their lives on the line and sacrificing so that I might be here today to acknowledge the truth of their predicament.

Mr. Speaker, I come from a State that is noted as one of the States with the largest number of veterans in the Nation. I happen to come from Harris County, which has the largest number of veterans in the State of Texas. In the State of Texas we have almost 2 million veterans. Those that are 65 and older number about 65,000. We have about 100,000 women veterans. In Harris County, where I live, we have about 250,000 veterans. As I speak today, the hospital which is in my district, the Veterans Hospital, is de-enrolling, or closing the door to veterans who are seeking health care.

One of the most disturbing aspects of this is that there are reports that se-

verely disabled veterans have to wait months, and in some cases more than a year, for basic health care and specialized services. A few weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, we passed a budget resolution of shame. And the reason why it was a budget resolution of shame is because it required the Department of Veterans Affairs to cut \$14 million from the lives of our veterans. We did that, Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that young men and women are now on the front lines of Iraq.

It is very clear, Mr. Speaker, that many of us did not vote for the war resolution in October, and we have persisted to press the case of peace; but at the same time we have acknowledged those who fight for us, fight for us because they believe in freedom. And so, Mr. Speaker, I have joined my colleagues today to say that the motion to instruct was not enough. Even though today we have added back the \$14 million, what we must do as colleagues is to insist that we never come to this floor to commit an act of shame again.

I know it will happen again, because my colleagues on the other side of the aisle keep asking over and over again for these cuts, in light of or in support of a \$726 billion tax cut. But as I close, Mr. Speaker, let me make a personal commitment. As I join my colleagues today, with this voice that is broken but a spirit that is strong, we will not allow a vote of shame to continue unexposed. We will continue to reinforce the values of this Nation; we will continue to support those young men and women, as we have through the years, my relatives and uncles in World War II, those in the Korean War, and Vietnam War and others. We will continue to stand on their side. There will be not one veteran who will have the dishonor to be dishonored if any of us are able to stand. We stand with the veterans and stand with the reinforcement of their resources, and we stand with those who fight for us in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, as we debate the emergency supplemental request from the President to fund the war, the fiscal year 2004 budget resolution, and the appropriations' bills, and as Iraq war escalates and casualties mount, it is only fitting that we honor our nation's veterans. Their sacrifices on behalf of our civil liberties have too often been overlooked and forgotten.

It is astonishing that as we ask for even more sacrifices from our men and women in the Armed Forces, that this Congress would seek to cut veterans' benefits. America owes our nation's veterans so much.

There are more than 25.3 million veterans in our nation; family members and survivors of veterans total about 41 million. One-third of veterans live in 1 of 5 states: California, Florida, Texas, New York, and Pennsylvania.

The increasing average age of veterans means additional demands for medical services. As we know, the Department of Veterans Affairs operates the nation's largest health care system, with 172 hospitals, 137 nursing homes, 43 domiciliaries, 206 readjustment counseling centers, home health-care programs, and nearly 900 outpatient clinics.

So, as the need for services for our veterans increases it is disturbing that this Congress would consider cutting veterans benefits.

We must be committed to investing resources to improve the efficiency, quality and breadth of the VA medical care system, and to ensure that care is accessible to more veterans. I am particularly concerned about our nation's African-American veterans—African-Americans comprise a substantial percentage of our enlisted men and women. African-Americans comprise 20% of the enlisted in the Armed Forces.

They should be provided with the highest standard of care. African-Americans have served in the Civil War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam Conflict, the Persian Gulf War, and now many African-Americans are on the frontlines in Iraq.

I have met with many veterans from Texas and what they want is so reasonable: They want our nation to honor the promises we made to our veterans to provide them with decent livelihoods for their sacrifices to our nation. We should not cut benefits to veterans, in order to provide tax cuts to the wealthy.

Many veterans who served in the Gulf War suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and substance abuse. Our nation owes an obligation to veterans who incur injury, disease, or aggravating existing conditions while in service to the country. Not only must we provide health care to our nation's veterans but we must ensure that veterans have adequate access to education, housing, and other benefits.

Access to priority health care for our nation's service-connected disabled veterans have been seriously eroded over the years due to insufficient health care funding. The veterans health care system is in crisis.

Continued budget shortfalls, combined with rising costs for medical care and increased demand for VA health care, have resulted in unprecedented waiting times for routine and specialty care nationwide.

According to the VA, in December 2002, nearly 236,000 veterans are either waiting for their first appointment or waiting at least six months for care. Additionally, the VA reports that many of its facilities have reached capacity with closed enrollment at some hospitals and clinics.

But most disturbing are reports of severely disabled veterans having to wait months, and, in some cases, more than a year, for basic health care and specialized services.

I was honored to be joined by many veterans' groups, who supported legislation that I introduced, H. Con. Res. 2, to re-examine the issue of sending our troops to Iraq in a preemptive strike. Veterans who have served in foreign wars know the risks, the hazards, and the dangers of combat.

African-Americans have a rich history of serving in the Armed Forces. Today, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the University of Michigan affirmative action case. I have to note that the Armed Forces are a model of integration—the Armed Forces were one of the first areas of our society to be integrated.

In Houston, Texas, Dr. Michael Ellis DeBaKey is an internationally recognized pioneer of modern medicine. He is an ingenious medical inventor and innovator, a gifted and dedicated teacher, a premier surgeon, and an international medical statesman. I have introduced legislation supported by veterans to re-

name the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Veterans Medical Center.

Last week, I received disturbing news. Corporal Brian Kennedy, a Houston native, lost his life on the battlefields. I want to pay a special tribute to this young man and his family. He bravely put his life on the line for the liberties we enjoy in this country. I salute Brian for the service and the sacrifice he made to our country. Our prayers go out to Brian, his family, and the troops stationed in Iraq.

The Origins of Veterans' Day:

In 1921, an unknown World War I American soldier was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. This site, on a hillside overlooking the Potomac River and the city of Washington, became the focal point of reverence for America's veterans.

Our troops embody the ideals of our country: Courage, valor and a sense of pride in country.

Dr. Martin Luther King once said, "There ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." Our men and women on the frontlines in Iraq truly deserve our support.

Our veterans and our active duty troops deserve our highest respect and our commitment as a nation to providing them the best in care and services—they have given us so much as a nation, that it is our moral obligation to return to them the benefits they have given to us. We call on our armed forces to protect us both here and abroad.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Texas, and I now yield to the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON).

□ 1915

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) for their leadership in bringing this important matter to the floor.

The last thing I thought there would be a bipartisan split on would be veterans benefits. We talk about unity around the troops. What about unity around the veterans? Members want to wave the flag. Let us begin with those who have already served.

Instead, we are talking about the great differences between the Democratic budget and the Republican budget. The Democratic budget was more than \$30 billion over a 10-year period than the Republican budget. That tells Members something about the different priorities of the two parties in this Chamber, particularly today when what we are talking about is a volunteer Army. We should be going out of our way to make sure that every "t" is crossed and every "i" is dotted.

We have used all kinds of inducements to attract these men and women into the Army, and we have a class- and race-based Army. A lot of folks are going in there because there are not a lot of opportunities in society, and they are depending on those education and health benefits.

What have we done? We have spared no cost when it comes to the equip-

ment that they have to go to war, but we are pinching pennies on the health consequences of their going to war. Shame on us. We enticed them into service. We make no sacrifice ourselves, and we ask them to sacrifice when they come home.

Who has made a sacrifice during this war? The only folks I can think about who has made a sacrifice since 9/11 are the people who died in the Twin Towers and at the Pentagon. None of us has been asked to make a sacrifice. Instead, we have been offered a big, fat tax cut.

In this way, we separate ourselves from our ancestors and our forefathers. When they went to war, they said, we are going to pay for war and our veterans, and they raised taxes. These were not folks that liked to raise taxes. Indeed, we had our first Federal income tax during World War I, and nobody had even heard of taxes; but they said, if we are going to war, we are in for a dime, we are in for a dollar. We have raised taxes; and during every war, including the Persian Gulf War, we have never cut taxes in time of war.

We have not asked the other side of the aisle to raise taxes, but we have asked them not to sacrifice veterans benefits in order to offer tax cuts to the wealthy. The veterans who are most offended are veterans who live in the District of Columbia, who have gone to war since our first war, without having full representation in this House.

In their name, I ask that these cuts be restored.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS) to close.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of statistics which show how grave the problem is. Last fall, I had a town meeting of veterans in my district, and those were some of the angriest people I have ever seen. These are members of our society who have been betrayed, and who are continuously betrayed. Those who are fortunate enough to come back, there are 58,000 who died in Vietnam, 300,000 were wounded, and some of the wounded were in that audience, and on and on it goes with the insults they have to endure, like the long waiting lists.

It is important for us to note that those of us who are against war are not against soldiers or veterans. Anybody who places his life at risk, whether as a volunteer or drafted, deserves to have the medal of greatness placed upon them. Out of the nearly 300 million people in our population, those few people become great people. There is no such thing as a greatest generation just because they fought World War II. All veterans, Vietnam, Korea, whoever was able to come back, deserves the maximum that we can do in terms of housing, education and certainly medical benefits.

It is a commentary, which I think has been pointed to several times here, on the heartlessness of this administra-

tion that at a time like this they would dare have a \$28 billion cut in the benefits for veterans over a 10-year period. Veterans deserve all we can give them. They are all part of a great generation no matter which war they have fought in.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD a communication from New Directions, signed by Mr. JOHN Keaveney, who is head of this New Directions organization, a fine organization rehabilitating veterans in the greater Los Angeles area; a communication from Mr. Dwight Radcliff from United States Veterans Initiative, another organization providing drug rehabilitation services, providing job training services for our veterans from the Vietnam era and from the Persian Gulf; and a communication from the National Veterans Foundation that is signed by Shad Meshad.

UNITED STATES

VETERANS INITIATIVE, INC.,

Inglewood, CA, March 27, 2003.

MAXINE WATERS,

Member of Congress, 35th Congressional District, California.

DEAR CONGRESSWOMAN WATERS: I have reviewed the findings of Congressman Lane Evans, ranking Democratic member of the House Veterans' Affairs committee regarding the budget adopted by the house budget committee which results in drastic reductions in funding for veterans benefits and services. As the director of the largest veterans-specific program in the country, I am appalled that this administration would consider decreasing the amount of funding available to the Department of Veterans Affairs and the special programs and services provided by community based organizations such as ours.

United States Veterans Initiative provides outreach, housing, employment assistance, case management, counseling, legal assistance, and food services to over 2500 homeless veterans per year at our Inglewood site. At our other sites across the country, we provide services to an additional 3000 veterans annually. The majority of the veterans that we serve are Vietnam Veterans. Today, over thirty years after the war in Vietnam, the men and women who fought for this country are still struggling to obtain the benefits and services to which they are entitled. In being proactive, it is imperative that during this time of war, we begin to prepare to address the needs of those who are currently in service as well as the forgotten heroes who still sleep in the streets of this country each night. It is extremely unfair to tell those who have waited so long and also those who will return shortly that their effort for this country was unappreciated. This is our time to fight for them.

As our congressional representative I am requesting that you strongly oppose any effort to cut funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs. Without this crucial funding, those veterans that are in desperate need of benefits and assistance will not be able to access the needed resources such as medical, psychiatric, housing, and employment.

Sincerely,

DWIGHT RADCLIFF,
Los Angeles Services Director,
United States Veterans Initiative.

NEW DIRECTIONS, INC.,

Los Angeles, CA, March 26, 2003.

To: Representative Maxine Waters.

From: John Keaveney.

Subject: Department of Veterans Affairs Funding Cuts.

DEAR CONGRESSWOMAN WATERS: I am writing for your help Congresswoman Waters because you have always been a strong advocate for veterans, protecting veterans' benefits and defending veterans from special interests in Congress and here locally. I am pleading with you once again to help our Nation's veterans. It has come to our attention that the House Budget Committee chaired by Congressman Jim Nussle (R-IA) pushed through a bill to cut \$25 billion from the Veterans' Administration over the next 10 years. I know you agree that if the government can consider funding tax breaks for the rich and businesses, then they certainly can make it a priority to help our Nation's veterans and homeless by not allowing a major cut in benefits to veterans.

The shame of this is that this was done on March 13, as America was asking hundreds of thousands of servicemen and women to lay their lives on the line as our country was making final preparations to go to war with Iraq. I find it difficult to describe my feelings about this development especially considering that this Nation is now engaged in a war and simultaneously enacting legislation making huge cuts in funding for veterans' services. To propose cuts in V.A. nurses, doctors, hospitals and other important services to veterans at a time of war feels to many veterans like an act of treason. I do not believe that the American public is informed properly about this issue. Just imagine, how would our troops in the Middle East feel about this? It seems inexcusable at a time like this to virtually tear up the agreement America has had with veterans for more than 100 years which is to care for those who have borne the brunt of battle.

Veterans expect the promises made to them to be honored as this should be considered a sacred agreement. Thank you for your time and devotion to serving our country in honor of our nation's servicemen and women.

God bless you.

JOHN KEAVENEY.

NATIONAL VETERANS FOUNDATION,

Los Angeles, CA, March 27, 2003.

Congresswoman MAXINE WATERS,

Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSWOMAN WATERS: As author and founder of the National Vet Center program (Public Law 96-22), and founder and president of the National Veterans Foundation which has been operating since 1987, I want to express my extreme shock and dismay over the recent announcement concerning the House Veterans Affairs Committee decision to drastically cut Veterans' health-care benefits.

We have seen many disturbing things with past administrations concerning veterans support, but this present attempt to slash budgets supporting our nation's veterans is the most shameful. A \$25 billion cut from the Veterans Administration over the next 10 years is a staggering amount to an already severely reduced and diminished program. Veterans comprise 30% of the nation's homeless, many of them are in desperate need of services . . . many more are at the brink of homelessness and what is probably worse, a crisis of hopelessness.

Where is the logic of cutting these programs precisely when we are sending our young men and women into the field to secure the peace and safety not just of our nation, but of the world?

Cuts in VA hospitals, in doctors and nurses, in rehabilitation and retraining, and

in counseling to heal wounded psyches, seems cruel and treasonous. What kind of country asks its citizens to be prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice, and then penalizes those who rise to the challenge?

Lincoln's Address at Gettysburg dictates our responsibility to these brave men and women: to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan.

We are barely doing that now. How is it possible for our existing system to undergo these savings cuts and still offer services to the hundreds of thousands of troops now engaged in Iraq? Then there's Afghanistan, not to mention the countless thousands of military personnel in support positions all over the world. We are looking at a vast increase in the number of those we must serve. To cut funding for veterans services in a time of war while simultaneously offering a tax break that would have its greatest impact on the affluent and on business seems indefensible.

You have always been a strong advocate for veterans. You have protected veterans' benefits from special interests locally and in our Congress. Please help us now. We need your strong, clear voice.

Sincerely,

SHAD MESHAD,

President and Founder.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to express my deep concern and stringent opposition to the proposed cuts in veterans health care contained in the President's 2004 Budget. While a tax cut may require us to discuss reductions in many vital programs, there are few cuts that are as unkind as the cuts the President wishes to visit upon those brave men and women who were willing to serve and if necessary die for this country.

Mr. Speaker, this House recently voted on a 2004 budget from the President which will cut funding for veterans health care and benefit programs by nearly \$25 billion over the next ten years. These cuts would require the Veterans' Administration for the first time in its history to require monetary payment from those who have already paid with their service to this nation. According to the Veterans' Administration, approximately one out of every two veterans could lose their only source of medical care under the President's budget plan. What should the VA say to a veteran who needs treatment but cannot afford to pay? I cannot believe that we would honor their service by turning them away. And yet, under the President's plan, rejection may be the only response that a fiscally-strapped health care system can give.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the veterans who served this country responded affirmatively to this nation's call to service. We cannot now respond negatively to their call for help.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, as we stand here today in Washington, DC, thousands of our men and women in uniform are in harm's way, fighting for the freedom and the values that we hold dear.

They are in our thoughts and our prayers. They do not know what fate awaits them, but they know they are fulfilling their duty and serving their country.

When these brave Americans return home, they will join the ranks of over 26 million American veterans.

In my state of North Carolina, we are home to more than 150,000 veterans.

I served in the United States Army for two years. I never fought in combat or served overseas. And I'm certainly no hero, but I understand the sacrifices that our veterans have made.

Our troops fighting overseas today should know that when they come home the country that they have served will not turn its back on them.

Once the fighting is over, veterans should know that the government will fulfill its promises to take care of those injured in battle and to provide for health care and education assistance.

It is absolutely outrageous that the majority in the U.S. House of Representatives wants to push through a budget that severely cuts funding for our nation's veterans.

They passed this budget under the cover of darkness because they knew it could not stand the light of day.

That budget breaks the solemn promise made to the very men and women who fight for our freedom.

You've heard my colleagues tell you how the budget cuts would affect veterans' programs nationwide, but I want to tell you about one specific proposal that would significantly impact North Carolina's veterans.

The budget cuts mean that many North Carolina veterans won't be able to continue receiving VA health care because of new \$250 enrollment fees.

The VA estimates that 1.25 million veterans who are already a part of the health care system will be forced out because of these steep new fees.

In North Carolina this could translate into over 27,000 veterans cut out of health care.

For those who can afford to stay in the VA health care system, many will be forced to pay significant new costs.

An estimated 22,000 North Carolina veterans, referred to as Priority 7 and Priority 8 veterans, will pay a new \$250 enrollment fee, increased copays for physician benefits and prescription drug fees.

All in all, this will mean a total average increase of \$347 each year. Others could be forced to pay even more, as much as \$600 annually.

The budget passed by the House means that 4,100 veterans in North Carolina will not even have the opportunity to enroll in VA health system.

These so-called Priority 8 veterans, who were not injured in service and who make above a level between \$24,450 and \$38,100 depending on location and situation, will be denied care.

Our country made a promise to the men and women in our armed forces. Our troops and our veterans have fulfilled their duty to their country. Now it is our turn to make good on our promises.

Congress should reject the Republican budget and honor our commitments to our veterans.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of my special order.

THE SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Texas?

There was no objection.

DISTORTION OF BILL EMERSON
HUMANITARIAN TRUST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. NETHERCUTT) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. NETHERCUTT. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak tonight on an issue that deals with American agriculture. Today, as a member of the Committee on Appropriations and the Subcommittee on Agriculture, the House full committee passed a supplemental appropriations bill to assist our soldiers and military folks with respect to the prosecution of the war in Iraq, and provide other humanitarian aid and other financial assistance to the region of the Middle East and assist in the war effort there, and recognize the importance of supporting our fighting men and women in that theater.

Also, as part of the appropriations measure that passed the House Committee on Appropriations today, there was a provision that relates to food assistance for the people of Iraq, and a preparation for the understanding that our country has committed itself to try to help the people of the Middle East region, and certainly the people in Iraq, who are the innocent victims of a tyrannical regime of Saddam Hussein.

I want to address a portion of the appropriations bill that deals with the agriculture commitment that the country has made in the supplemental appropriations bill.

It is a good measure. It is a supplemental that is supported by the President, by the majority party, by I think a unanimous vote in the Committee on Appropriations today, to provide assistance to the troops and make sure that our military receives all that it needs.

The section that I want to refer to in the appropriations bill that we will have a chance to debate and vote on later this week, and certainly in conference with the Senate, the other body, next week and hopefully to get this measure signed into law by the President before April 11, is a measure that has to do with the integrity of the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust.

Bill Emerson was a former Member, a wonderful man from Missouri, a dear friend and a colleague of many Members of Congress, who passed away; and the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust Fund was created in his memory, and properly so. That Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust was created to provide food aid on an emergency basis to countries around the world who are struggling for food in times of emergency and dire straits and national consequence.

Our country has been very forthright in providing this assistance and making sure that the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust is not only stocked with adequate commodities, but also cash to purchase commodities when the need arises; and it has done millions and millions of people a world of good in

making sure that they are able to eat. And it is out of the goodness of the American taxpayer and the American system that we provide that assistance.

What we have seen in the use of the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust, administered by the Department of Agriculture in our country, is what I perceive to be a distortion of the operation of the trust. About a year ago, last summer in fact, there was a determination made by USDA to sell onto the open market soft white wheat, which is manufactured, grown, produced in my part of the country, the State of Washington. In doing so, the actions by the U.S. Department of Agriculture depressed the price on the open market of soft white wheat. Over the course of the last few months, since November, additional efforts have been undertaken by USDA to sell wheat stocks, soft white wheat stocks, in anticipation of humanitarian needs around the world.

In the most recent activity in the trust, there has been a move by USDA to monetize soft white wheat in order to obtain cash, which would then be used to buy other commodities, rice and others, which may be useful in Iraq.

Now, I have no quarrel with the idea that we need to provide food aid to Iraq. This is a war-torn country with people starving at the hands of Saddam Hussein. America, as it has in the past, is ready at the present to provide assistance to the people of Iraq. So it is not an issue with me over how or whether we should provide food aid to the people of Iraq.

There is an issue as to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's operation, administration of the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust.

What we have seen is the monetization of soft white wheat at the expense of the farmers who grow soft white wheat and at the expense of the market which is driven by the amount of wheat that is on the market at any one time. The price of wheat, we have seen in my farm country, has gone from \$4.80 cents a bushel in November to a range of about \$3.15 cents to \$3.25 cents per bushel currently. The market collapsed to a no-bid market on March 21, just a week or so ago, on the rumor that the Department of Agriculture was going to dump more wheat on the market and raise cash for other commodities.

What my admonition to the USDA has been is, do not monetize soft white wheat so you can buy other commodities. Let us make sure, as we face the needs of the people of Iraq and the humanitarian commitment that our country is willing and able to make, let us make sure this is a wartime cost which is necessary to assist people in other parts of the world who may be facing disasters, natural or otherwise.

So what we are trying to do is make sure that the USDA, number one, follows the intent of the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust, and that the process

is in place to do so in a fair manner, commodity to commodity, around the country, and not place a monetization practice in place which then puts soft white wheat farmers, for example, at odds with rice growers in different parts of the country.

So the monetization prohibition, which I think is sensible for our government to operate and administer the food aid programs of our country, is part of the appropriations bill that passed in the Committee on Appropriations today and will be before the House of Representatives, most likely later this week. So that is one restriction that needs to be in place. And the Department of Agriculture must listen to this development which has been undertaken by the House, by the legislative branch of our government, and not do more monetization, not undertake more monetization of one commodity which places farmers which grow that commodity against farmers of another commodity that may be suitable for distribution in Iraq.

In addition, the House has put \$69 million additional food aid money, unrestricted, able to have any commodity on the market be purchased, to meet the needs of the people of Iraq; and that is an acceptable and appropriate activity development on the part of the Committee on Appropriations and this House and the legislative branch.

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It is likely to stay in the bill all the way through the process in dealing with the other body as well as the reconciliation with the House conferees to come up with a final supplemental appropriations package that will assist in the war effort, including humanitarian aid assistance.

I am here, Mr. Speaker, to emphasize most definitively that monetization of commodity that places one grower against another is bad agriculture policy in this country. It is a disservice to the agriculture community, which is struggling for price support and market price in any event; and it puts farmer against farmer, which is an unacceptable condition. In addition, the misuse, I would argue, of the Bill Emerson humanitarian trust to assist in Iraq when additional moneys are being poured into the war effort as part of the defense bill, as part of the supplemental appropriations bill to assist those good people of Iraq who need the assistance from food aid, there is no need to further monetize or further distort the market for soft white wheat or rice or any other commodity that is subject to administration under the Bill Emerson humanitarian trust.

The third point I want to raise is that in depressing the market by government action, which puts more commodities on the market and lowers the price of any commodity, what we are doing is then under the loan deficiency payment program of the farm bill, the agriculture policy in this country, what it is doing is subjecting the taxpayer to additional expense by virtue

of that market price going down below the loan deficiency payment level that then kicks in so that there is more taxpayer assistance to farmers because of that low price. My strong point and my strong message to USDA is the U.S. Department of Agriculture should not be taking actions which depress the price which then expose the taxpayer to other liability in aid to the farmer. Instead, let the market decide what the commodities market price should be. And so when you monetize and sell one commodity to buy another, you distort the market, and that is what USDA in my opinion has been doing and doing improperly.

I come to the floor tonight to make this very strong message to USDA and any others of the eight government agencies who are involved in the decision to monetize soft white wheat. This is bad policy. We should not be doing it, especially in light of the prohibition on monetization that exists in the current House appropriations bill that passed the Appropriations Committee today and will likely come to this House floor sometime this week, hopefully, and then be reconciled with the other body's version of the supplemental appropriations bill and then be signed by the President most likely at the end of next week.

I am urging caution on the part of the USDA. I have had conversations with the agency. I have had conversations with USAID to try to make the point that help is on the way in terms of money and prohibition on monetization; and my great hope is that the agencies of government who are committed to helping the agriculture industry in this country, the farmers who grow the products that you and I consume, that there will be some restraint on the part of the USDA, that there will be a cancellation of any other notices to monetize soft white wheat so that rice can be purchased, because there is additional money in the pipeline that is going to be coming to the rice growers of the country or the wheat growers of the country to provide the commodity needs that will meet the expectations and the requirements of the people who are suffering in Iraq.

We have 69 million additional dollars. We have \$250 million for PL-480 assistance. There is additional money that will help the poor, starving people of this war-torn region. We will do that and we should do that but not at the expense of the commodity growers in the eastern district of Washington State or other States around the country who are affected by a misuse or mismanagement or a distorting impact that comes with monetizing the Bill Emerson humanitarian trust.

I will be pursuing this issue in due course to make sure that the U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies understand the consequences of monetization, the impact on the markets and the impact on the taxpayer. Ultimately, the taxpayers when prices go

way down in the soft white wheat market are going to have to bear the burden. That is not what the farmer wants. The farmer wants a market price. We had a market price of \$4.80 a bushel some several months ago but because of, in part, additional dumping on the market of U.S. Government agency stocks, the price has gone down, and we now have a further crisis in farm country.

We cannot afford to lose the agriculture infrastructure in this Nation. If prices are so low that farmers are not going to grow commodities, we are going to find ourselves in days and months and years ahead, hopefully not, we are going to find ourselves facing the challenge of being independent agriculturally. We are going to be dependent on other countries of the world for our agriculture. That is unacceptable, and that is what we are trying to prevent by allowing market forces to have an important part in agriculture policy, not a distorting impact because of determinations made by USDA, our own Agriculture Department, which has the mission to help the farmers and the food needs of people in this country.

I would just say, too, as we look at the dependence that we have on fossil fuels, on oil from the Middle East countries, we are now in a war that has as a factor in it the issue of oil reserves and who is producing oil reserves. We are dependent on foreign countries. We cannot allow that to happen in America as it relates to our dependence on agriculture commodities from overseas. That is why we need a robust agriculture economy here and proper administration of the Bill Emerson trust, the humanitarian trust, proper administration of the food aid programs, proper respect for agriculture interests and the value of markets and the value of the movement of markets, prices go up and down; but let the markets operate what the prices are rather than have the government be involved in distorting the market. If we have a hands-off policy or a helpful policy, as opposed to a hurtful policy by our U.S. Department of Agriculture, we will be a lot better off.

I would say to the Speaker and my colleagues, be on the lookout for any market distortion that might be coming out of government agencies as it relates to agriculture, and I urge my colleagues to support this idea that monetization is not a good thing when you are trying to put farmer against farmer by our own Department of Agriculture, because the goal ultimately is to have a robust agriculture economy providing enough food so that we can continue to provide assistance to natural disaster consequences and the people who are subject to natural disasters or food shortages or drought or any other consequence that comes around this great world, that America can help solve by providing food aid.

COMMEMORATING THE BIRTH OF CESAR CHAVEZ, AMERICAN LABOR LEADER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURGESS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I want to take time tonight as chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus to pay tribute to an inspiring and beloved man, Cesar Estrada Chavez. Cesar Chavez, 76 years ago this Monday, marked the beginning of his life dedicated to improving the quality of life for all Americans. We honor and pay respect to a man who brought awareness of the labor injustices to the national light and helped pave the path to educating people about the importance of the plight of the working individuals in the fields of this country. He cleared the way for progress and opportunity. Tonight, we have here members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus; and I want to make tribute to one of our members, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA), and ask him to say a few words in behalf of Cesar Chavez.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Texas for the opportunity to come and speak today. It is my honor to rise today in this House to acknowledge the birth date of Cesar Chavez. Yesterday would have been his 76th birthday. Cesar Chavez, cofounder, along with Dolores Huerta, of the United Farm Workers' Union, led a historic struggle to give voice to the voiceless and empower the poor and powerless, inspiring a people beyond the limits and barriers that had been artificially placed before them.

Cesar Chavez was born and died in the district that I represent, in Yuma and San Luis, Arizona. It is vital that all Americans acknowledge the profound contributions that Cesar Chavez has made to our country. These contributions were not in the form of money, false praise, or the trappings of power. He reinforced the values of this Nation, values such as commitment and of purpose and strength of cause.

Allow me, Mr. Speaker, to quote directly from Cesar Chavez: "In this world, it is possible to achieve great material wealth, to live an opulent life. But a life built upon those things alone leaves a shallow legacy. In the end, we will be judged by other standards."

Another value that Cesar imparted and reinforced for our country is the value of struggle and perseverance. Again let me quote Cesar Chavez: "When we are really honest to ourselves, we must admit that our lives are all that really belong to us, so it is how we use our lives that determines what kind of men we are. It is my deepest belief that only by giving life do we find life, that the truest act of courage, the strongest act of manliness is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally nonviolent struggle for justice. To be a man or woman is to suffer for

others. God help us be men and women."

But the legacy of Cesar Chavez is a legacy of change that he brought to this country, and we are all obligated in our own way to continue and finish a change that sought equality for all people and the opportunity to live without the yokes of poverty, racism and the domination of others. It is time that this great Nation formally declares support for Cesar Chavez through a holiday, a holiday that celebrates nonviolence, the rights of all workers and the strong spirit of all people to overcome. I am proud that in my community where I formerly served as a county supervisor we have a paid holiday for the employees, we have a livable wage for employees as an acknowledgment to the struggles and as an acknowledgment to the goals of Cesar Chavez. In this country, we face tough times, war, peace, our Nation's obligation to the poor and underrepresented in this country. These are issues that this Congress struggles with on a daily basis.

But let me speak for a second on one issue that intertwines what we are facing today in Iraq and what we are facing today on the question of immigration in this country. Even in this Chamber, we hear the shrill anti-immigrant babblings that Cesar Chavez fought so hard against his entire life. I want to pause and read a letter to the editor that appeared in our local newspaper, the Arizona Daily Star, today. The letter starts "Truly Ironic."

It is in reference to a March 26 article entitled "Immigrant Marine Pledged His Life as a Matter of Honor." The gentleman who wrote this letter goes on to say: "I found this story truly interesting. Lance Corporal Jose Gutierrez from Guatemala was an illegal immigrant, or criminal as the haters and vigilantes would call him, who instead of dying in the Arizona desert was able to find a foster family, go to school in America, then die in the Iraqi desert protecting these haters' and vigilantes' right to keep on hating the so-called illegals." Mr. Dennis Jones from Kearny, Arizona, wrote that letter. I think it fits well to the times, and it fits well to the dilemmas that this Congress must face and resolve.

By recognizing Cesar Chavez, we recognize ourselves. We extend to ourselves all the traditions and the realities of the faces in this country. Chavez once said, "It is possible to become discouraged about the injustice we see everywhere, but God did not promise us that this world would be humane and just. He gives us the gift of life and allows us to choose the way we will use our limited time on earth. It is an awesome opportunity."

In this time when we anguish about the future and confront the present struggles, it is indeed a fitting time to pause and recommit ourselves to the legacy and the challenge that Cesar Chavez has given us, a legacy of hope, compassion and fairness, and a chal-

lenge before this Congress to act to help the people of this country, to act to stabilize our world, to act to assure that opportunity and fairness still is and will continue to be one of the cornerstone traditions of this country.

□ 1945

It has indeed been a pleasure for me to make these comments about someone who influenced my life, and I will be very frank. His motivation, his spirit, his tenacity to lead people that were never represented is a legacy and a tradition that should be part of the history of this country. It is indeed my pleasure.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA).

Let me take this opportunity to thank the gentleman for his words and I want to thank him for his leadership. I know that, as a freshman, he has already made some great impacts here at the Congress, and it is great to see two Hispanics from the great State of Arizona representing that State.

As we talk about Cesar Chavez, he was a person who grew up in the fruit and vegetable fields and knew what it meant to work them from dawn to dusk. He knew the injustices that faced labor workers on a daily basis and he knew that something had to be done; and from those fields Cesar rose to head of the United Farm Workers of America, instilling the UFW, the principles of nonviolence practiced by Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King.

When the UFW began strikes in the 1960s to protest the treatment of farm workers, the strikers took a pledge of nonviolence, determined not to detract from the message of improving labor conditions; and I want to tell the Members this was a critical time in my life and in my wife's life, Carolina, because this was a time that we had an individual in our community who talked about nonviolence, one of the first. I had been involved in the civil rights movement during that time, and I was involved in Mexican-American youth organizations during that time, working to get single-member districts and getting Hispanics registered to vote.

My wife also, while in college, worked with Cesar Chavez in those efforts. So both of our lives met both as she struggled to help Cesar Chavez, and I worked with voter education and voter registration. And for those of us who have lived through this time period, we heard of the great odds Chavez faced as he led the successful 5-year strike, boycott. Through this boycott, Chavez was able to forge a national support coalition of unions, church groups, students, minorities, consumers. And everyone came together; everyone understood the struggle of the worker. By the end of the boycott, everyone knew the chant that unified all workers, *Si se puede*, yes, it can be done. It was a chant of encouragement, of pride and dignity.

Chavez continued to speak out in other areas and helped communities to

mobilize by assisting them with voter registration efforts and voter registration drives and insisting that the minority communities had just as much a right to have equitable access to educational opportunities as anyone else.

Cesar Chavez's legacy continues to live on today. His influences can be seen in the legislation that comes to our floor, legislation that aims to provide for our children's education, legislation that aims to help improve our children's health care in our communities, legislation that helps and comes forward in the area of civil rights and liberties and respect for human beings.

We must also continue the fight to ensure that in today's world, the rights of workers are still protected, whether it is the workers in the fields, in the kitchens, or in our factories. The blue collar workers are invaluable to America and to the American economy. It is important that these Americans be treated with the respect and dignity that they deserve, and that all rights afforded to those working in air-conditioned offices be provided to those that work in the sun-heated fields and the like.

America has seen few leaders like Cesar Chavez. He is among a rare group who have left a lasting imprint in American history. We can only hope to fulfill this vision as we walk through the halls of Congress, to create a better tomorrow for the Hispanic community and all Americans.

I want to take this particular time and opportunity to also indicate that as Cesar Chavez struggled and worked, we could see the strength in the man's face as we saw his eyes. He was a man of nonviolence, a person who, as we met this humble individual, gave us strength; and I recall distinctly having the opportunity at various times to meet with him and, various times, to be able to share with him and take some pictures with him as well as helping those boycotts that he had as the struggle continued.

He was a unique individual that had a very strong sense of perseverance that was there and that just his presence, as humble as he was, gave us that strength. So that is why, when we look throughout America, if we look at any Hispanic community whether we are in Arizona or California or Texas, anywhere throughout the Southwest and beyond, we see the street names of Cesar Chavez. We see the building names. Especially, I know in my district in south Texas we have a school named after Cesar Chavez. We see the highways that are named after Cesar Chavez, one of the Hispanics who we can say, here is an individual that has really represented us well, an individual that has not only represented the Hispanic community, but the American community, with the strength of nonviolence and the strength to move forward.

As we celebrate his birthday on March 31 throughout this country, and I know like in San Antonio we have

had marches and we had banquets that allow for the opportunity to continue the struggle, continue the education, that we still have people that are out there. We still have individuals that are working the fields. We still have individuals that need our respect and need the services and need to be treated in a dignified way; and it is important for us not to lose track of the fact that these individuals are the ones that either pick the strawberries or pick the fruits and the foods that we eat, and that we need to treat them in a dignified way. And he brought that to us and he brought that education.

And I know that people like President Kennedy had a great deal of respect and would come to him, and he was able to have those contacts during the time when few Hispanics were able to reach those levels.

Cesar Chavez will never be forgotten, mainly because of what he did and what he represents. So I wanted to take this opportunity tonight to talk about this man and talk a little bit about the things that he talked about, because as we talk about those things now, Cesar Chavez began this road of change, but it is up to those of us who come here after him to continue that struggle, to continue that work, and to continue that vision for a better tomorrow, that commitment to the community, that commitment to making sure that we make things better. And it is important as individuals and it is important as a community that we continue those efforts.

I want to ask every American, because I know Cesar Chavez would operate from the same perspective, that each one of us has a responsibility and an obligation. Just like he started without a formal education, he educated himself, and I know that he would want all Americans, both Hispanic and non-Hispanic, to continue that struggle of continuing to further their education, whether it be formal or informal, that effort of trying to better themselves and making sure that whether they are out there as janitors that they continue to move forward to become whatever they can in terms of either, if nothing else, head janitor of that school and then move forward in advancing themselves.

I know that Cesar Chavez valued education, and he stressed the importance of education, and he worked to try to get the migrant workers to get access to education. And as we talk about education, I know that right now we have those struggles that are going on in education. We know that our present budget, when it comes to Leave No Child Behind, is actually \$9 billion behind; and I know that he would be talking about the importance of investing in our kids, the importance of investing in our country, and that education is key to fulfilling that American dream. And to him I know that that American dream would be just to fulfill their lives in a way that would allow them to move forward, whether it

would be getting a better education, getting better protection, moving forward in obtaining a home, whatever it was.

He lived in humble ways even up to his death, but I know that as he talked about the importance of education, that we must continue. I know, as Latinos and Hispanics throughout this country, that he would argue about the fact that we still have a long way to go.

We still have too many youngsters that are dropping out of school. I know among the Mexican American community in the State of Texas, some districts have up to 50 percent of our kids that drop out. That is too many. Each one of us has a responsibility, starting with those parents, of making sure that their kids stay in school, starting also with the school system, making sure that they also do everything they can to keep those kids in school, starting with those communities that have an obligation and responsibility to also work with the school system and the teachers to help the teachers out in assuring that those kids remain in school.

Because our Nation is a powerful nation. It is a superpower, and the only reason it is a superpower is because we also have a super economy, and that is directly tied into our education. So it becomes really important. And I know that Cesar Chavez would say that education is key, whether it be a formal education or an education where one begins to educate oneself informally about what needs to happen and what needs to occur. That is important.

I know that Cesar Chavez would also feel very strongly when it comes to the issue of health care, and I know that in the area of health care, Cesar worked very hard to try to get access to health care for our young people; and I know as we look at that issue of health care and we look at the issue of the CHIP program that we have right now, the CHIP program is a program that responds to those kids that are out there, to those constituents and those Americans that are out there that are working, making \$20,000, \$30,000, maybe more, but find themselves without insurance. A lot of them are working for small companies. A lot of them are working individually and find themselves unable to get the coverage that they need. So that CHIP program that provides that health care is one that is extremely important, one that is critical. So at this point in time we need to be supportive of those kinds of programs.

In addition, I know that the administration is looking at taking the CHIP program, the Medicaid program, which is a program that helps our indigents, those that are the most vulnerable of this country, those that do not have access to resources, those that cannot afford to pay for their access to health care.

That Medicaid program is key. Both the Medicaid and the CHIP program

are vital programs in this country, and I know the administration is looking at taking both the Medicaid and the CHIP, in addition to that, taking the disproportional share of moneys that go to our hospitals. Those are moneys that go directly to our hospitals, especially those hospitals that provide the indigent care, where they do not get compensated for the type of care that they provide. So these three programs, the proposal is to lump them up and send them to the State.

I know that it goes also with a cap, but it is important for us, and those programs have worked well independently, and we ask that we work hard to keep them independent. In fact, we need additional resources for Medicaid. We need initial resources for the CHIP program, and our hospitals are having difficulty, our trauma centers, in the type of care that they provide throughout this country.

This is the time for us, instead of looking at a tax cut, to move forward and provide access to care, and those three programs are the most vulnerable of this country.

□ 2000

Mr. Speaker, I know Chavez was always supportive of access to health care. In this country that has the best health care in the world, it makes no sense that that access to that health care is not affordable and not accessible to a lot of Americans. So as we celebrate and pay tribute to Cesar Chavez, it is important that we continue that struggle. And I ask all Americans out there and say that we need to zero in and continue those efforts as it deals with education and as it deals with health care.

In the area of education, one of the best programs that we have ever had that has reached out to the young people has been the program on Head Start. Head Start has been a program that was originally designed to meet a need, because States were not going out and reaching out to those young people, pre-schoolers. We knew that if the States were not doing that, that as a Federal Government we had a responsibility and an obligation to do that. So we started the Head Start program.

The studies that we have for the Head Start program reveal that it is a great program. It has great statistics, although it needs more resources. Right now it is only covering about 40 percent of the young people that are qualified for it. So we still have a large number of young people that could qualify for that. So Head Start is a great program. Of the early childhood programs, we only cover 2 percent of early childhood under Head Start. So it is a minimal program that could be expanded. It is under the Department of Health for a good reason, because it also reaches out to those families; it reaches out to the parents of those kids. The data shows that a Head Start baby, a Head Start youngster does a lot better in school and is able to go

through, and the data shows and the statistics indicate that that youngster and those kids under Head Start can do a lot better.

So Cesar Chavez would be extremely supportive of those kinds of programs. As we once again take this time to pay tribute to the legacy of Cesar Chavez, we look at the struggles that he had in meeting the needs of those farm workers, in meeting the needs of those people that work out in the field. And those kids and those Head Start programs that are out there, meeting their needs is important, and it is one of the areas that we need to continue.

This administration is choosing to basically do away with Head Start. Right now it is locally controlled. It is a program that has been doing well and we will say, why mess with it? Well, I think they see the resources there, they are choosing to send out those monies to the State and do away with it. We are hoping that that does not happen. So I ask Americans, if we have a good thing and we have a good program, it is doing well, why mess with it? So as we look at programs such as Head Start, we know that we can improve on those programs and we need resources. So this is the time to look at investing in Americans, investing in the educational opportunities of individuals.

When I was elected, and I have been in public office now for 29 years, I see my responsibility is the responsibility of making things happen, of being able to fulfill and solve the problems that confront us both in our back yards, in our States, in our communities, and in our country as a whole. As we look at those problems, one of the things that we know is that we have to continue to enhance our educational capability as a Nation. It is important. A lot of people will talk about the fact that we have too much immigration coming, but we forget that immigration has also been healthy. And if we do cut immigration, then we better educate our people, because we have also been a brain drain on the rest of the world.

When we look at the figures from 9–11, Mr. Speaker, we had, on the average, we produced 12,000 to 13,000 doctors and bring in 5,000 doctors from abroad. Here we have five people that are qualified to go to our medical schools, and yet we tell two of them, two of those young people, I am sorry, we do not have room for you, we can only accept three to our medical schools; and yet we bring in on the average about 5,000 from abroad. And that is just in the medical field. In engineering and all of the others, it is the same. So if we decide to stop immigration, then we better start educating our own, we better start getting our own engineers, we better start building our medical schools to produce more doctors. I have not seen the will in the House. We have to create that vision of investing in ourselves. We have to be able to make sure that as we move forward we have the qualified people to be able to be our

professors, to be able to be our doctors, and to be able to be our engineers in this country.

As we look in terms of our future, we know that in our universities, the expense of higher education, and we have to make sure that we provide that education that is needed.

So I would challenge all Americans out there, in the form of Cesar Chavez, to continue that struggle, to making sure that people can fulfill their American dream, whether they want to become an attorney, whether they want to get the job training to be able to get a better job, whatever it is, we have to make those programs available, we have to make those opportunities available. Sure, they have to be able to come up to the plate and be able to get the work done in order to make it happen. But it is important for us to make sure that we provide those opportunities and not to cut those opportunities. Because we have great people out there. We have youngsters that can be attorneys, but they need that help and that assistance at an early age. They need those programs such as Head Start that can be the basis for making something happen. They need those programs, those after-school programs that are required in order for them to be able to excel and be able to move forward.

I wanted to take this opportunity, as we pay tribute to Cesar Chavez, not only to talk about his work, but the work that also needs to take place now, the work that each one of us has an obligation, each one of us has a responsibility as Americans to make sure that our elected officials are held accountable, to make sure that our communities do the right thing, that our school boards do the right thing when it comes to education. As we move forward, each one of us has a responsibility to participate in the democratic process and to vote.

One of the things that concerns me is that as Americans we take our freedoms very lightly. It is not something that should be taken lightly. Just as we have a right right now, that right might not be there tomorrow. Freedom comes through struggle, and it is an endless process. It does not stop now; it continues. It is one that we have to be vigilant and be able to move forward, especially as we find ourselves now in war with terrorism, because a war with terrorism is also a war of ideologies. So we have to make sure that we move forward in a positive way and that we do not forget the reason why we have been a powerful country and that is that we have been a country of opportunities, we have been a country of immigrants, we have been a country that allows a person to fulfill their greatest potential individually.

So as we take this time, once again, to pay tribute to a great man, Cesar Chavez, who was there for the most needy of this country, those that work out in the fields, those that pick our foods, those individuals that have the

least power as we foresee, here is a person who gave a great deal and gave his life to that struggle, a person who saw a problem and worked at it and was persistent about it. So I want to encourage each one of us to look at his life and see in what ways we can participate in our community and in what ways we can come forward and help.

One of the big things about Cesar Chavez is that he never spoke negatively against anyone. He always was an extremely polite individual, was always positive. One of the things that I noticed about him was that he always took personal responsibility for what he did. That personal responsibility is one thing of saying, we all have an obligation to making sure that everyone and every American has an opportunity for an education. We might say, well, they do, but in some cases the reality is that we still do not have that access for everyone. We still do not have that opportunity for where every American is able to go into the universities of this country. That is why we have programs such as the affirmative action or programs such as that that allows an opportunity for minorities to enter universities throughout this country.

Today, the Supreme Court began to hear the cases on affirmative action; and I know that as we look at those cases, as they look at those cases, it is going to be important, the results of what comes about. I know that President Bush basically, by deciding to go against the affirmative action and fighting those opportunities, is basically closing the doors on minority access to higher education. While saying that he supports diversity, his lawyers are working to outlaw affirmative action at the University of Michigan.

The President says that considering race and ethnic background is unfair. Let us look at a system that most of Americans in history silently penalized minority applicants and led the alarming disparity that we have now. Today, less than 10 percent of college-age Hispanics go to higher education. Only 16 percent of Hispanics between the age of 25 to 29 have a bachelor's degree. We have a serious education gap in this country, and we should not tolerate this disparity. We cannot accept excuses. We cannot justify smoke and mirrors. Affirmative action or taking affirmative steps to try to correct this situation in universities' admissions will not solve all the problems, but it is an important tool that is available to schools seeking that diversity, and we should not throw out a system until we have a fix.

The attempt now is to try to throw out a system without providing alternatives. Achieving racial diversity, at least until the vestiges of past racial discrimination are erased, is a legitimate and compelling goal. We know and everyone out there knows that we still do not have the appropriate numbers throughout our universities. In fact, things are getting worse. In

Texas, since the Hopwood case, and I will talk to my colleagues briefly about that, but President Bush said that we should not be satisfied with our current numbers of minorities on American college campuses. He is right. But other than nice words, what does he offer? Allowing a set percentage of top high school graduates is better than nothing, but it is not certainly better than affirmative action. Percentage programs will not even begin to work unless we have States with large, highly segregated minority populations. And even then, it is still second best.

Hispanics will increase by 18 million in the next 25 years. We must ensure that the increase adds up to success, with an educated workforce and a growing economy that provides better lives for all our children and all our populations.

When we look at the issue of affirmative action, the purpose of affirmative action, and it was established during the Nixon years, was an attempt to basically come up with steps that allowed an opportunity to seek out qualified African Americans, qualified Hispanics, and, yes, qualified women. And because of the fact that we knew that there was disparities, and just like coaches went out and got qualified football players, that same effort could be done to get people to go into law school, those same efforts could be done to get people into medical school, and into other professions. So affirmative action, all it means is that we are going to make a sincere effort to taking steps to bringing up the numbers and to make sure that we have that variety of individuals that will be able to be representative of our Nation and have the African American and the Hispanic numbers that are key.

□ 2015

I know that since I have worked, when it came to the issues of injustice, when it came to the issues of equality, those are the issues that I know he fought for extremely strongly. He felt that everyone needed to be given an opportunity, that everyone had a responsibility to work on making sure that everyone was treated appropriately.

If we look at taking affirmative steps to get representation, I want to share a little bit about what the administration is talking about, a 10 percent bill. The only reason I mention that is because the administration mentioned that as an alternative to affirmative action.

I am here to tell the Members that I am the author of the 10 percent bill, although it was 15 percent when I was in the Texas House, before I came to the Congress. The reason why we came up then with 15 and 20 percent, and it became 10 percent, was because we knew we needed an alternative. They just wiped out under Hopwood the affirmative action efforts in the State of Texas. We needed to come up with something that would help out in as-

uring that Hispanics and minorities had an opportunity to further their education in Texas.

During a conference that I had, we came up with what we called the 20 percent piece of legislation. I filed it during that time I ran for Congress, and then turned over the piece of legislation to a State representative who just passed away. We were able to pass it under the 10 percent rule.

Let me give a little background what it does. It basically says if you graduate in the top 10 percent of your class, that the State of Texas has to bring you in and allow you to start school.

It is also based on the premise that it is also discriminatory. I will tell the Members right out, that is why we passed it, because if we have segregated schools with a concentration of Hispanic Americans, then we have an opportunity to get the top 10 percent to be able to go to those schools.

We were successful in doing that, and the program has been somewhat successful; but it is not as good as affirmative action. The data can show that. But it is a program that works in segregated areas. It is not a program that is going to be successful throughout this country; but it is also, once again, based on the negativism of segregation, and the fact that we have segregated schools in Texas, where there are a large concentration, 80 or 90 percent Hispanics in some of our schools.

The 10 percent has not been that good for African Americans in Texas. In fact, the numbers are a little lower. Yet, despite the gains, it also shows that, and I want to share that one of the other things that the 10 percent rule shows, and this is important to note, that the youngsters who do graduate at the top 10 percent, some of them come up with scores that are much lower, and they show about 1000 or 1100 on the SAT. They were able to get in, and are 200 to 300 points below some of the others, and do just as well as the other students.

If nothing else, the 10 percent has disapproved the test scores that show that even up to 300 points, that those youngsters can outperform those other youngsters that do better in those major tests when it comes to performing in those universities. If nothing else, this particular bill has helped to do away with that.

If Members really want to come up with a good affirmative action effort, we would do away with those test scores and do what we have always said: use a combination of things to really look at the youngster's performance. You look at the youngster's grades, you look at the youngster's tests, you look at his standing in the schools, and look, if you can, at the background of the individual. Because no one can really judge the motivation and the drive that someone has to be able to move forward. That will never show up on an instrument, on an exam or a test. It becomes important that we use multiple criteria for admission.

We have always argued that we should not use one test or another, that it should be multiple criteria that should be utilized for admissions, and that every effort ought to be made.

I have worked since I was in the seventh grade all through high school, and there is no way that we can compare someone who, in all honesty, did not work and had an opportunity to do their homework. Yet I can tell the Members, I sit here, and when I went to college I was able to eat their lunch when I started there. I mean that. Because other people have to do a variety of other things as they move forward, whether because of economics or whatever.

The reality is that we do have youngsters out there that do extremely well; yet they might be youngsters that have dropped out of school for one reason or another. If we look at the dropout rates, we see a lot of youngsters that drop out. It is not, a lot of times, for academic reasons. I can tell the Members that because I have also been responsible for some of the assessments on dropout rates, the reasons why youngsters drop out, especially Mexican Americans. We know that they do well.

My predecessor, Mr. Tejeda, had dropped out of school. Yet he later got a bachelor's and a master's and a law degree, and became the U.S. Congressman for this same district, and was in the military. Now, under these conditions, if he had dropped out now, he could not be even eligible to get into the military because the military does not accept individuals unless they have a high school diploma. They only accept GEDs up to 1 percent in the Air Force and 10 percent in the Army, so those are issues that need to be dealt with.

Education is key. We need to continue to emphasize the Federal role in education, the fact that we have a responsibility to make sure that our constituency throughout this country is well educated.

There is a direct correlation between education and our economy; and I would attest to the Members, there is a direct correlation between our economy and the fact that we are a superpower. If we want to continue to be a superpower, we have to continue to invest in our kids. We need to continue to invest in our people, in getting them opportunities to be able to advance themselves and be able to fulfill their American dream, whether it be getting a better job or being able to buy a home.

I think as we look at those issues, and as we pay tribute to Cesar Chavez, I know that he would be continuing the struggle for the workers in this country. That struggle is a continuation of making sure that everyone is treated in an equitable manner, that everyone will have opportunities to be able to advance themselves, either educationally or in terms of job training that might be offered. That becomes real important.

Let me take this opportunity also to indicate that Cesar Chavez was a humble individual who, as he worked in the fields, was able to organize, was able to educate not only the farm workers but our entire community. I would ask Americans to look at Cesar Chavez and the work that he did, because it is an inspiring work. It is an inspiring thing that we need to continue to come to and educate ourselves about.

Also, Members should ask ourselves in terms of our role as individuals, in terms of our role in the community, our role in the Nation as we continue our struggle on the war on terrorism and the war on Iraq, we need to make sure that we do not lose sight of the fact that we also have a struggle in this country. That is to make sure we turn the economy around. Part of that is a continuous effort in those areas of both education and health.

In the area of health, as I have indicated earlier, health is one of the areas where we continue to make inroads. Yet, it does not make any sense if our constituencies do not have access.

Right now, our seniors are having a great deal of difficulty being able to get access to prescription drug coverage. I have had seniors come to me and talk about the fact that we had a struggle in that area in that they have to sometimes not buy the food that they need in order to buy their prescriptions. That should not be happening in this country.

We argue about on the border we have a lot of problems, and we argue about people coming from abroad and from across the border to access the health care; but a lot of Americans also go across to get access to health care. A recent study revealed that half or 50 percent of those surveyed actually went into Mexico to get access to health care, buying prescriptions and getting medical treatment and dental treatment, because they could not afford it in this country.

So we need to make sure not only that we try to make it affordable but also accessible. That is important. So those specific issues of both education and health were two primary issues beyond the issues of worker rights that Cesar Chavez worked on.

Worker rights need to continue to be on the forefront. We need to understand, and it is unfortunate, yes, that we have to have a minimum wage; but we have a minimum wage because we also understand and recognize that there are still some people in this country that if they could get away with it, that they would pay fifty cents for someone to cut their yard instead of paying them appropriately in order to help them out, and being able to do the work that it entails.

Also, in closing, let me take this opportunity. I know we had some Democrats that were out here. One of the things they talked about was our veterans. I want to take this opportunity to shift, as we pay tribute to Cesar Chavez, to talk a little bit about our veterans.

Tonight we had an opportunity to hear some of our Members talk about the needs of our veterans. I sit on the Committee on Armed Services, and I also sit on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. We must honor our veterans. We honor them by ensuring that they have access to quality benefits and services once they come home. That is so important and so key.

With our troops in the field, and sadly, with many Americans already experiencing war's devastating effects, it is shameful that the House passed a budget resolution on the same day, Mr. Speaker, on the same day that our soldiers began Operation Iraqi Freedom, cutting \$15 billion from the veterans disability compensation programs and \$9.7 billion from the veterans health care.

It is clear that this proposal will have a devastating effect on the veterans, the VA health care and the benefit programs, and would serve as a further insult to the millions of veterans already facing reductions in health care, in compensation, in pensions, and in education benefits.

The administration's budget was already inadequate to meet the health care needs of our veterans. Now the Republicans have gone further and cut \$844 million above the President's request for veterans health care next year. The proposal, approximately \$1.3 billion above 2003 appropriations, will not even begin to cover the inflationary impact and anticipated salary increases for VA health care workers.

That budget relies on unrealistic management efficiencies, increasing copayments. It also relies on new annual enrollment of veterans using the VA health care system when they are going to be taxed, and other efficiencies such as eliminating 5,000 VA nursing home beds. At the same time, we are asking our veterans to fight in Iraq and to continue the struggle in Afghanistan, to continue the difficulties that we encounter in Colombia, and we are eliminating 5,000 veteran nursing home beds.

The budget resolution also calls for cutting \$15 billion over 10 years, \$463 million in 2004 alone. The VA mandatory spending under the disguise of eliminating fraud, waste and abuse, is cut. Mr. Speaker, when we look at this disguise of fraud, waste and abuse, 90 percent of the spending for VA entitlement is paid out of monthly payments to disabled veterans. I do not consider payments to our disabled veterans and pensions for the poorest disabled veterans in the GI bill, benefits for soldiers returning from Afghanistan, to be fraud, waste, or abuse.

□ 2030

I recently joined my colleagues on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and I have a great deal of respect for our leader, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), a Republican, in a bipartisan recommendation to the Committee on the Budget which would

have added \$3 billion. And I want to personally thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) for those efforts. But next year alone for veterans discretionary programs including Medicare and research construction and programs that fund the administration cost benefits such as compensation pensions and education programs, that is important. That is drastically needed.

I urge all of my colleagues to do the right thing and honor our commitment to our veterans. These cuts are shameful and unacceptable. We must do everything we can in a bipartisan way to make sure that our veterans get those services that they are entitled to.

Let me also just say that people argue, well, the budget is growing. It is growing because of the fact that our veterans are reaching, especially the World War II veterans, are reaching that age where they need us now. They are getting old. They are getting ill. They need our help. And, yes, our roles are increasing. But we have got to assume as those that fought World War II and fought in Korea and Vietnam begin to reach those levels, we have got to be there for them. This is not the time to cut. After that, the numbers are going to get smaller, but we have got to be there for them. And for us to argue, well, we are going to increase it and we have been increasing it and we ought to be comfortable that that is not sufficient, we are actually cutting priority 7 veterans. We are cutting priority 8 veterans. And we have got to be sure that we do the right thing when it comes to our veterans.

So I want to take this time to thank the veterans who have taken the time to come out here. I want to appeal to the Republicans when it goes to conference to do the right thing when this comes to our veterans. We have asked them to go to Afghanistan. We have asked them to go to the Gulf War. We have asked them to go to Vietnam and Korea; and now as they reach their twilight years, they need our help. And what are we saying? Our priority is a tax cut. That is not right. That is not right.

Every single war, we have the data, has shown that we have had a tax increase to pay for the war. But now we got on a tax cut. And I can understand those conservatives that feel that sometimes in order to stimulate the economy that you would need a tax cut. But after looking at that tax cut, Mr. Speaker, I saw that it was \$674 billion initially. Thank God it has been cut now. I do not know where it is going to wind up, but it was \$674 billion. Of that, if you would argue from a conservative perspective that it is going to go to business, the majority of it, and that would help stimulate the economy, you would also have to take into consideration the fact that 80 percent of new jobs are created in small businesses, not major corporations. So of that \$674 billion, less than \$18 billion actually goes to small businesses.

So even from a conservative perspective, it does not make any sense. It really does not if you are trying to stimulate the economy. And that is if you believe in that way, which I personally do not, and I think we could really help stimulate the economy and solve problems. I really feel that I have been elected here to solve problems, and we are not doing that here.

One of the problems that we are encountering is that the States have difficulties with their budgets. For homeland defense, we could be providing resources to them. The VA, for example, just since 9-11 it has cost them close to 50, \$55 million just from going to code orange every time with more security and other things that they have to do. So it is costing them money and so we have to help our States, and we could help them by addressing the issue of health care and providing resources to health care. Not only would it help the States, but it also would solve a problem in a very critical area, which is the area of health care that would allow an opportunity for consumers to have access to health care.

It would allow an opportunity for the industry, the hospitals and the doctors who are having a rough time, in trauma centers who are thinking of closing down, it would have that opportunity for them to be able to get access to those resources and do the job they are required to do and do the job that is needed, so we would solve a problem and provide that access to those individual consumers out there that need access to health care. But we would also help in solving the issue and the problem that the States are having with the budgets, which is one of the issues of health care.

So instead of that \$675 billion in the form of a tax cut, we can utilize that in a much better way in the area of health care, in the area of education, in the area of meeting the needs of our veterans.

So tonight I take pride in coming up and talking about a variety of issues, but our most important issue once again to pay tribute to the visionary Cesar Chavez who helped to inspire a great number of Americans in this country in a nonviolent way.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity in allowing me to be here tonight, and I want to take this opportunity to say thank you very much and good night.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. SIMMONS (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of attending the funeral of a constituent who was a member of the Armed Forces who was killed while serving in Iraq.

Mr. MCINNIS (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of surgery.

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 Mr. HOLT) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. CARSON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CROWLEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. FILNER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SCHIFF, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MILLER of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MALONEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. LANGEVIN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CASE, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. INSLEE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. STRICKLAND, for 5 minutes, today.

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

Mr. PAUL, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. WELDON of Florida, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. TANCREDO, for 5 minutes, today.

SENATE BILL REFERRED

A bill of the Senate of the following title was taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 318. An act to provide emergency assistance to nonfarm-related small business concerns that have suffered substantial economic harm from drought; to the Committee on Small Business.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 36 minutes p.m.) the House adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, April 2, 2003, 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:

1613. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a copy of the Presidential Determination No. 2003-10, on Waiver of Conditions on Obligation and Expenditure of Funds for Planning, Design, and Construction of a Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility in Russia; to the Committee on Armed Services.

1614. A letter from the Assistant General Counsel for Regulations, Department of

Housing and Urban Development, transmitting the Department's final rule—Public Housing Homeownership Program [Docket No. FR-4504-F-02] (RIN: 2577-AC15) received March 31, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

1615. A letter from the Deputy Congressional Liaison, Federal Reserve Board, transmitting the Board's final rule—Truth in Lending [Regulation Z; Docket No. R-1136] received March 31, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

1616. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule—Enforcement of Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in Department of Homeland Security Programs or Activities (RIN: 1601-AA05) received February 28, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

1617. A letter from the Administrator, Energy Information Administration, Department of Energy, transmitting notification regarding the Energy Information Administration's report entitled, "Performance Profiles of Major Energy Producers 2001"; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1618. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Energy, transmitting the Department's report entitled, "Fleet Alternative Fuel Vehicle Acquisition Report For Fiscal Year 2001," pursuant to Public Law 105-388 section 310 112 stat. 3481; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1619. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a listing of gifts by the U.S. Government to foreign individuals for the period of January 1 through September 30, 2002, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2694(2); to the Committee on International Relations.

1620. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Export Administration, Department of Commerce, transmitting the Department's final rule—Exports and Reexports of Explosives Detection Equipment and Related Software and Technology; Imposition and Expansion of Foreign Policy Controls [Docket No. 030213032-3032-01] (RIN: 0694-AB87) received April 1, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on International Relations.

1621. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Transportation, transmitting the semiannual report of the Inspector General for the period ending September 30, 2002, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. app. (Insp. Gen. Act) section 5(b); to the Committee on Government Reform.

1622. A letter from the Acting Director, Congressional Budget Office, transmitting the report to waive deduction of pay requirement for two reemployed annuitants; to the Committee on Government Reform.

1623. A letter from the Assistant Director, Executive and Political Personnel, Department of the Navy, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

1624. A letter from the Assistant Director, Executive and Political Personnel, Department of the Navy, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

1625. A letter from the Assistant Director, Executive and Political Personnel, Department of Defense, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

1626. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Education, transmitting the annual report concerning surplus Federal real property disposed of to educational institutions,

pursuant to 40 U.S.C. 484(o); to the Committee on Government Reform.

1627. A letter from the Director, Office of White House Liaison, Department of Education, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

1628. A letter from the Attorney/Advisor, Department of Transportation, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

1629. A letter from the Chairman, Federal Maritime Commission, transmitting the Annual Program Performance Report for FY 2002; to the Committee on Government Reform.

1630. A letter from the Chairman, Federal Trade Commission, transmitting the semi-annual report on the activities of the Office of Inspector General for the period ending September 30, 2002, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. app. (Insp. Gen. Act) section 5(b); to the Committee on Government Reform.

1631. A letter from the Comptroller General, General Accounting Office, transmitting information concerning GAO employees who were assigned to congressional committees as of January 21, 2003; to the Committee on Government Reform.

1632. A letter from the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule—Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Seasonal Area Closure to Trawl, Pot, and Hook-and-Line Fishing in Waters off Cape Sarichef [Docket No. 03114012-3046-02; I.D. 121902F] (RIN: 0648-AQ46) received March 31, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Resources.

1633. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule—Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northeast (NE) Multispecies Fishery; Commercial Haddock Harvest [Docket No. 000407096-01; I.D. 031003B] received March 31, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Resources.

1634. A letter from the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the 2002 report on the Apportionment of Membership on the Regional Fishery Management Councils pursuant to section 302 (b)(2)(B) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; to the Committee on Resources.

1635. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule—Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the Gulf of Alaska [Docket No. 021122286-3036-02; I.D. 030703A] received March 31, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Resources.

1636. A letter from the Chief, Regulations Unit, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule—Constructive Sales Treatment for Appreciated Financial Positions—received March 18, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

1637. A letter from the Chairman, MedPac, transmitting the Commission's preliminary comments on the Department of Health and Human Services per diem prospective system for inpatient psychiatric facility care; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk

for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows:

Mr. LINDER: Committee on Rules. House Resolution 168. Resolution providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 743) to amend the Social Security Act and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide additional safeguards for Social Security and Supplemental Security Income beneficiaries with representative payees, to enhance program protections, and for other purposes (Rept. 108-54). Referred to the House Calendar.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mr. YOUNG of Alaska (for himself, Mr. MICA, Mr. OBERSTAR, and Mr. DEFazio):

H.R. 1527. A bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to authorize appropriations for the National Transportation Safety Board for fiscal years 2003 through 2006, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

By Mr. PORTMAN:

H.R. 1528. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to protect taxpayers and ensure accountability of the Internal Revenue Service; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. SENSENBRENNER:

H.R. 1529. A bill to amend title 11 of the United States Code with respect to the dismissal of certain involuntary cases; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. NUSSLE (for himself, Mr. RAMSTAD, Mr. LUCAS of Kentucky, Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin, Mr. GRAVES, and Mr. PAUL):

H.R. 1530. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to clarify the exemption from tax for small property and casualty insurance companies; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. MCCREERY:

H.R. 1531. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to enhance energy conservation and to provide for reliability and diversity in the energy supply for the American people, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland (for himself, Mr. ANDREWS, Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, Mr. ACKERMAN, Mr. TANCREDO, and Mr. BLUMENAUER):

H.R. 1532. A bill to amend the Animal Welfare Act to strengthen enforcement of provisions relating to animal fighting, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture.

By Mrs. BIGGERT (for herself and Mr. FORD):

H.R. 1533. A bill to amend the securities laws to permit church pension plans to be invested in collective trusts; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. STARK, Mr. LEVIN, and Mr. MCDERMOTT):

H.R. 1534. A bill to improve the ability of the child welfare system to prevent and respond to child abuse and place children in safe, loving, and permanent homes; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. ENGLISH:

H.R. 1535. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the mid-quarter convention for depreciable property; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. HERGER (for himself, Mr. JEFFERSON, Mr. CRANE, Mr. HAYWORTH, Mr. MCINNIS, Mr. RAMSTAD, Mr. SAM

JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. BECERRA, Mr. HOUGHTON, and Mr. FOLEY):

H.R. 1536. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to treat distributions from publicly traded partnerships as qualifying income of regulated investment companies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. JOHN:

H.R. 1537. A bill to amend the Migratory Bird Treaty Act to clarify that restrictions on baiting of migratory game birds do not prohibit the taking of a migratory game bird on or over manipulated re-growth of a harvested rice crop; to the Committee on Resources.

By Mr. KING of New York (for himself, Mrs. MALONEY, Mr. ENGEL, and Mr. STEARNS):

H.R. 1538. A bill to posthumously award congressional gold medals to government workers and others who responded to the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and perished and to people aboard United Airlines Flight 93 who helped resist the hijackers and caused the plane to crash, to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of the Spirit of America, recognizing the tragic events of September 11, 2001, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. KLECZKA (for himself and Mr. STARK):

H.R. 1539. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to limit the hospital ownership exception to physician self-referral restrictions to interests purchased on terms generally available to the public; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. LANGEVIN (for himself, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, Mr. CASE, Mr. CLAY, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. DELAUNO, Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Ms. LOFGREN, Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. MEEHAN, Mr. MORAN of Virginia, Ms. NORTON, Mr. PASCRELL, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. LANTOS, Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. WEXLER, and Ms. WOOLSEY):

H.R. 1540. A bill to ensure greater accountability by licensed firearms dealers; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. MALONEY (for herself, Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Ms. WOOLSEY, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, and Mr. WYNN):

H.R. 1541. A bill to amend title 13, United States Code, to provide for a just apportionment of Representatives in Congress for all States; to the Committee on Government Reform.

By Mrs. MALONEY (for herself, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. HINCHEY, Mr. TOWNS, Mr. MCNULTY, Mr. OWENS, Mr. NADLER, Mr. ISRAEL, Mr. CROWLEY, and Mrs. LOWEY):

H.R. 1542. A bill to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to modify the terms of the community disaster loan program, to authorize assistance under that program for losses related to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

By Mr. SESSIONS (for himself, Mr. BAKER, Mr. PAUL, Mr. MOORE, Mr. SHAYS, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas,

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, and Mr. ROYCE):

H.R. 1543. A bill to amend the Fair Credit Reporting Act to exempt certain communications from the definition of consumer report, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. NADLER:

H.R. 1544. A bill to amend the Bank Protection Act of 1968 and the Federal Credit Union Act to require enhanced security measures at depository institutions and automated teller machines sufficient to provide surveillance pictures which can be used effectively as evidence in criminal prosecutions, to amend title 28, United States Code, to require the Federal Bureau of Investigation to make technical recommendations with regard to such security measures, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. PAUL:

H.R. 1545. A bill to prohibit Federal officials from paying any Federal funds to any individual or entity that performs partial-birth abortions; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. PAUL:

H.R. 1546. A bill to provide that the inferior courts of the United States do not have jurisdiction to hear abortion-related cases; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. PAUL:

H.R. 1547. A bill to restore first amendment protections of religion and religious speech; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. PAUL:

H.R. 1548. A bill to prohibit any Federal official from expending any Federal funds for any population control or population planning program or any family planning activity; to the Committee on International Relations, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. RANGEL:

H.R. 1549. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to restore and make permanent the exclusion from gross income for amounts received under qualified group legal services plans and to increase the maximum amount of the exclusion; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. REHBERG (for himself, Mr. MCINNIS, and Mr. RENZI):

H.R. 1550. A bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to make grants to improve the commercial value of forest biomass for electric energy, useful heat, transportation fuels, petroleum-based product substitutes, and other commercial purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, and in addition to the Committees on Resources, and Science, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. SCHAKOWSKY (for herself and Mr. DELAURO):

H.R. 1551. A bill to amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to ensure the safety of meals served under the school lunch program and the school breakfast program; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

By Mr. WELDON of Florida (for himself and Mr. JOHN):

H.R. 1552. A bill to establish a Federal program to provide reinsurance to improve the

availability of homeowners' insurance; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. LANTOS:

H. Con. Res. 133. Concurrent resolution expressing the concern of Congress over Russian and Syrian actions in support of Iraq; to the Committee on International Relations.

By Mr. ROYCE (for himself, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. FLAKE, and Mr. JEFFERSON):

H. Con. Res. 134. Concurrent resolution acknowledging the deepening relationship between the United States and the Republic of Djibouti and recognizing Djibouti's role in combating terrorism; to the Committee on International Relations.

By Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania (for himself, Mr. FATTAH, Mr. HOFFFEL, Mr. HOYER, Mr. KANJORSKI, Ms. WATERS, Mr. HOLT, Mr. WYNN, Mr. DOYLE, Mr. HOLDEN, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. TOWNS, Mr. MOORE, Mr. McNULTY, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, Mr. HINCHEY, Ms. WATSON, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. DELAHUNT, Ms. BORDALLO, Mr. BALLANCE, Mr. WALSH, Ms. NORTON, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Mr. CONYERS, Ms. KILPATRICK, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. OWENS, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mr. GERLACH, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mr. CLAY, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Ms. CARSON of Indiana, Mr. ENGLISH, Mr. BROWN of Ohio, Mr. GREENWOOD, Mrs. JONES of Ohio, Mr. FROST, Mr. MURTHA, Ms. HART, Mr. TOOMEY, Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. SHERWOOD, Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania, Mr. PASCRELL, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mr. DINGELL, Mr. McDERMOTT, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. JEFFERSON, Mr. GRIJALVA, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA, Mr. GEPHARDT, Mr. WATT, Mrs. LOWEY, Mr. SHUSTER, Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. CAPUANO, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. PALLONE, Mr. SKELTON, Mr. ACKERMAN, Mr. WEINER, Mr. FORD, Mr. NADLER, Mr. SPRATT, Ms. PELOSI, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Mr. MENENDEZ, Ms. VELAZQUEZ, Mr. SAXTON, Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi, Mr. MEEHAN, Mr. ANDREWS, Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. LOBIONDO, and Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California):

H. Res. 169. A resolution honoring the life and faithful service of former Congressman Lucien E. Blackwell of Pennsylvania; to the Committee on House Administration.

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions as follows:

H.R. 2: Mrs. MUSGRAVE.

H.R. 40: Mr. PAYNE.

H.R. 49: Mr. SHADEGG, Mr. DOOLEY of California, and Mr. FROST.

H.R. 109: Mr. FEENEY and Mr. ABERCROMBIE.

H.R. 126: Mrs. MALONEY and Mr. RYAN of Ohio.

H.R. 185: Mr. DOOLEY of California, Mr. FROST, and Mr. CARDOZA.

H.R. 218: Mr. TANCREDO.

H.R. 260: Mr. LANGEVIN.

H.R. 284: Mr. PAUL, Mr. NETHERCUTT, Mr. DOOLITTLE, Mr. ROGERS of Michigan, Mrs. MUSGRAVE, Mr. HINCHEY, Mr. LAMPSON, Mr. GONZALEZ, Mr. BECERRA, Mr. THOMPSON of California, Mr. INSLLEE, AND MS. CARSON of Indiana.

H.R. 343: Ms. DELAURO and Mr. MICHAUD.

H.R. 401: Mr. GERLACH, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, and Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania.

H.R. 434: Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. GREENWOOD, Mrs. CUBIN, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. SOUDER, Mr. HERGER, Mr. SESSIONS, and Mr. BACHUS.

H.R. 440: Ms. LINDA T. SANCHEZ of California, Mr. McDERMOTT, and Mr. MENENDEZ.

H.R. 442: Mr. LANTOS and Ms. SLAUGHTER.

H.R. 463: Mr. CARDOZA, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. GONZALEZ, Mr. HONDA, and Mr. FROST.

H.R. 466: Mr. TURNER of Ohio.

H.R. 490: Mr. MCHUGH and Mr. GONZALEZ.

H.R. 501: Ms. BERKLEY.

H.R. 577: Mr. MICHAUD.

H.R. 584: Mr. YOUNG of Alaska and Mr. ACKERMAN.

H.R. 594: Mr. MATHESON, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, and Mr. LARSON of Connecticut.

H.R. 614: Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee.

H.R. 643: Ms. BALDWIN and Mr. ANDREWS.

H.R. 648: Mr. HOSTETTLER, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, Mr. WICKER, Mr. SOUDER, and Mr. NETHERCUTT.

H.R. 660: Mr. KIRK, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Mr. WICKER, Mr. WYNN, Mr. HEFLEY, and Mr. ROGERS of Alabama.

H.R. 664: Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, and Mr. KILDEE.

H.R. 666: Mr. MCHUGH.

H.R. 685: Mr. FATTAH.

H.R. 707: Ms. BERKLEY and Mr. DOYLE.

H.R. 737: Mr. ORTIZ.

H.R. 745: Mr. HOFFFEL.

H.R. 761: Ms. BERKLEY.

H.R. 767: Mr. FEENEY, Mr. OTTER, Mr. OSE, and Mr. JENKINS.

H.R. 774: Mr. HINCHEY.

H.R. 776: Mr. LANTOS.

H.R. 785: Mr. LANTOS, Mr. JEFFERSON, and Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida.

H.R. 786: Mr. MOORE, Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida, and Mr. WALDEN of Oregon.

H.R. 804: Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida.

H.R. 806: Mr. WYNN and Mr. MENENDEZ.

H.R. 807: Mr. HULSHOF.

H.R. 808: Ms. DUNN.

H.R. 811: Ms. KAPTUR.

H.R. 813: Mr. CASE, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. MURTHA, and Mr. GILCHREST.

H.R. 816: Ms. CARSON of Indiana.

H.R. 817: Mr. PICKERING.

H.R. 854: Mr. LANTOS.

H.R. 871: Mr. BERRY and Mr. SHIMKUS.

H.R. 872: Mr. HERGER.

H.R. 880: Mr. OWENS and Mr. STUPAK.

H.R. 882: Mr. KING of New York and Mr. GOODE.

H.R. 886: Mr. BISHOP of Georgia.

H.R. 898: Mr. MARKEY.

H.R. 927: Mr. BRADY of Texas, Mr. SMITH of Michigan, and Mr. HEFLEY.

H.R. 935: Ms. LINDA T. SANCHEZ of California.

H.R. 943: Mr. LYNCH and Mr. FEENEY.

H.R. 953: Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts and Mr. HILL.

H.R. 965: Mr. ISRAEL, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. MICHAUD, and Mr. KLECZKA.

H.R. 966: Ms. BERKLEY.

H.R. 977: Mr. NUNES and Mr. RENZI.

H.R. 997: Mr. BROWN of South Carolina and Mr. JENKINS.

H.R. 1006: Mr. LEACH, Mr. ACKERMAN, Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, and Mr. DOYLE.

H.R. 1039: Ms. SOLIS.

H.R. 1048: Ms. BERKLEY.

H.R. 1049: Mr. HOSTETTLER and Mr. KLINE.

H.R. 1057: Mr. BRADY of Texas, Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN, Mrs. NORTHUP, Mr. PUTNAM, and Mr. COOPER.

H.R. 1068: Mr. KIRK, Mr. STRICKLAND, Mr. DEUTSCH, Ms. WATSON, Mr. McDERMOTT, and Ms. BERKLEY.

H.R. 1077: Mr. EMANUEL and Mr. ETHERIDGE.
 H.R. 1097: Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island, and Mr. SCHIFF.
 H.R. 1108: Mr. BISHOP of Georgia and Mr. DAVIS of Alabama.
 H.R. 1122: Mr. STARK, Ms. SOLIS, Mr. HONDA, Ms. BORDALLO, Mr. BERMAN, and Mr. SCHIFF.
 H.R. 1136: Mr. KOLBE.
 H.R. 1154: Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina.
 H.R. 1210: Mr. LAMPSON, Mr. LATOURETTE, Mr. BISHOP of New York, and Mr. DOYLE.
 H.R. 1233: Mr. NORWOOD.
 H.R. 1244: Mr. CARDOZA and Mr. GRAVES.
 H.R. 1252: Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland.
 H.R. 1267: Mr. HOLT, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Ms. WATSON, Ms. HARMAN, Mrs. JONES of Ohio, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. HONDA, Mr. COSTELLO, and Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania.
 H.R. 1276: Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida, Mr. OSE, Mr. QUINN, Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania, and Mr. HOEFFEL.
 H.R. 1279: Mr. GRAVES, Mr. TANNER, Mr. BOSWELL, and Mr. NORWOOD.
 H.R. 1290: Ms. ESHOO.
 H.R. 1291: Mr. HINCHEY and Mr. DAVIS of Alabama.
 H.R. 1294: Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas and Mr. DEFAZIO.
 H.R. 1340: Mr. HINCHEY and Ms. DELAURO.
 H.R. 1348: Mr. PASCRELL.
 H.R. 1358: Mr. WEXLER, Mr. McNULTY, Mr. FROST, and Mr. RANGEL.
 H.R. 1359: Ms. KAPTUR.
 H.R. 1366: Mr. LUCAS of Kentucky.
 H.R. 1374: Mr. DINGELL.
 H.R. 1389: Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas.
 H.R. 1412: Mr. DEMINT, Mr. WU, Mr. BROWN of South Carolina, Mr. RYUN of Kansas, Mr. TERRY, Mr. MILLER of Florida, Mr. SOUDER, Mr. BURNS, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. ROSS, Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota, Mr. NEY, Mr. BALLENGER, Mr. CASTLE, Mr. MCINTYRE, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. PORTER, Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey, Mr. EHLERS, Mrs. BIGGERT, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. VITTER, and Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida.
 H.R. 1415: Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Mr. BROWN of Ohio, Mr. ACKERMAN, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. ROGERS of Michigan, Mr. CONYERS, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. LEE, Mr. UPTON, and Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin.
 H.R. 1422: Mr. MCINTYRE, Mr. PALLONE, Mr. MATSUI, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. GREEN of Texas, and Mr. McNULTY.
 H.R. 1425: Mr. MORAN of Virginia.
 H.R. 1429: Mr. BROWN of Ohio and Ms. KAPTUR.
 H.R. 1448: Mr. DEUTSCH.
 H.R. 1451: Mr. SOUDER AND MR. BARRETT of South Carolina.
 H.R. 1466: Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas and Mr. RANGEL.
 H.R. 1467: Mr. BURGESS and Mr. SULLIVAN.
 H.R. 1480: Mr. BERRY, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Mr. CLAY, Mr.

DOOLEY of California, Mr. WAMP, and Mr. PAYNE.
 H.R. 1483: Mr. KILDEE and Ms. CARSON of Indiana.
 H.R. 1485: Mr. RANGEL.
 H.R. 1499: Mr. ANDREWS and Mr. SNYDER.
 H.R. 1508: Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD.
 H.R. 1519: Mr. RADANOVICH and Mr. GORDON.
 H.R. 1522: Mr. MCDERMOTT.
 H.J. Res. 22: Mr. BALLENGER and Mr. BOSWELL.
 H. Con. Res. 19: Mr. LUCAS of Kentucky, Mr. DOYLE, Mrs. CAPPS, Mr. COOPER, Mr. MICHAUD, and Mr. WATT.
 H. Con. Res. 49: Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. RODRIGUEZ, Mrs. MALONEY, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. SHERMAN, and Mr. KIRK.
 H. Con. Res. 109: Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. PORTER, and Mr. GREENWOOD.
 H. Con. Res. 119: Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Mr. SOUDER, Mr. SHADEGG, and Mr. SULLIVAN.
 H. Res. 121: Mr. SMITH of Michigan.
 H. Res. 127: Mr. DAVIS of Alabama.
 H. Res. 136: Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky.

H.R. 522

OFFERED BY: MR. OSE

AMENDMENT NO. 1: Page 4, beginning on line 10, strike "means—" and all that follows through page 7, line 2, and insert "means \$100,000.'" (and conform any cross references appropriately).

Page 19, strike line 20 and all that follows through page 20, line 4, and insert "means \$100,000.'".

H.R. 522

OFFERED BY: MR. ROHRBACHER

AMENDMENT NO. 2: Page 3, strike line 19 and all that follows through page 20, line 13 [section 3 of the bill] (and redesignate subsequent sections and any cross reference to any such section, and conform the table of contents, accordingly).

H.R. 735

OFFERED BY: MR. WAXMAN

AMENDMENT NO. 1: In section 8348(h)(1)(B)(i) of title 5, United States Code (as proposed to be amended by section 2(c) of the bill), strike "include" and insert "exclude".

In section 8348(h)(1)(B)(ii) of title 5, United States Code (as proposed to be amended by section 2(c) of the bill), strike "included shall not" and insert "excluded shall".

H.R. 735

OFFERED BY: MR. TOM DAVIS OF VIRGINIA

AMENDMENT NO. 2: Page 9, after line 15, insert the following:

(e) MILITARY SERVICE PROPOSALS.—

(1) PROPOSALS.—The United States Postal Service, the Department of the Treasury, and the Office of Personnel Management shall, by September 30, 2003, each prepare and submit to the President, the Congress, and the General Accounting Office proposals detailing whether and to what extent the Department of the Treasury or the Postal Service should be responsible for the funding of benefits attributable to the military service of current and former employees of the Postal Service that, prior to the date of the enactment of this Act, were provided for under section 8348(g)(2) of title 5, United States Code.

(2) GAO REVIEW AND REPORT.—Not later than 60 days after the Postal Service, the Department of the Treasury, and the Office of Personnel Management have submitted their proposals under paragraph (1), the General Accounting Office shall prepare and submit a written evaluation of each such proposal to the Committee on Government Reform of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Governmental Affairs of the Senate.

Page 12, line 15, strike "the President and the Congress" and insert "the President, the Congress, and the General Accounting Office".

DELETIONS OF SPONSORS FROM PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were deleted from public bills and resolutions as follows:

H.R. 1006: Mr. ALEXANDER.

PETITIONS, ETC.

Under clause 3 of rule XII, petitions and papers were laid on the clerk's desk and referred as follows:

5. The SPEAKER presented a petition of the Legislature of Rockland County, New York, relative to Resolution No. 707 petitioning the United States Congress to include a renewable energy requirement in the Energy Policy Act of 2002; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6. Also, a petition of the Legislature of Rockland County, New York, relative to Resolution No. 816 petitioning the United States Congress to call for a flood damage reduction project along the Ramapo and Mahwah Rivers in the Village of Suffern in accordance with the original plan authorized by the Water Resources Development Act of 1986; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

7. Also, a petition of the Legislature of Rockland County, New York, relative to Resolution No. 706 petitioning the United States Congress to restore the Medicare funding for skilled nursing care to the level approved by Congress in 1999 and 2000; jointly to the Committees on Ways and Means and Energy and Commerce.

AMENDMENTS

Under clause 8 of rule XVIII, proposed amendments were submitted as follows: