

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the Citadel, down in South Carolina, is reviewing its policy since that Federal court ruling. And also, Mr. Speaker, I hate to even mention this, but the academy in Annapolis is also reviewing its policy. The American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland is calling on the academy to review its practices of leading the students in prayer.

Mr. Speaker, let me also share with my colleagues that it was just a few months ago that the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled to have "under God" taken from our Pledge of Allegiance.

How much longer will we stand by and allow others to ignore the very God upon whom our Nation was founded? Our Constitution demands the freedom to worship freely; and our future leaders, our men and women in the military academies across the country, are now being denied the very freedom that many have died to ensure for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, it is not just sad; it is completely detestable. And on this National Day of Prayer, let us honor our heroes, those who have returned home and those who sacrificed their lives, by standing against those liberals who would seek to challenge their God-given right to pray for a living Lord.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I believe this quote says it best, and it comes from the days of Jefferson and Adams. And the quote is this, Mr. Speaker: "Religion can survive in the absence of freedom. But freedom without religion is dangerous and unstable."

Mr. Speaker, I have three military bases in my district, Camp Lejeune, Cherry Point, and Seymour Johnson Air Force Base. I want to close by asking God to please bless our men and women in uniform and their families, and the families of those who have lost loved ones defending freedom in this country. I close by asking three times, "God, please, God, please, God, please continue to bless America."

COMING HOME: WELCOMING OUR TROOPS WITH CUTS IN VETERANS PROGRAMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my concern for the men and women of our armed services who will be returning and are returning from Iraq. My colleagues are aware that our troops were funded during the period of fighting last month at the rate of about \$1 billion, \$1 billion, every 2 or 3 days.

Now, we did not want our troops to go without having everything that they needed for success, but if we have the money to send our troops to war, we must, Mr. Speaker, have the money for them when they return. To abandon them upon their return shows disrespect for those who have willingly

risked all when their Nation called them to serve.

In the next few months, Congress will be voting on the veterans budget. The House Republican budget that came through this House was outrageous. It cut veterans benefits by \$25 billion over the next 10 years, and they took that vote right after a resolution expressing support for our troops. Now, the final budget resolution we passed corrected some of the most glaring problems in that budget, but it is still \$1 billion less for the health care for our veterans in the coming year. One billion dollars. That would fund approximately 5,000 doctors, 10,000 nurses, or three million additional outpatient visits.

Over the next 10 years, the budget falls far short of what will be needed to keep up with inflation and with the growing number of veterans who were using the veterans health care system. We must fight during the appropriation process for a budget that is worthy of our returning veterans. We cannot ignore their rights and their needs. Veterans health care is one of the most important issues that we fund.

We hope and pray that we do not have veterans from the current conflict who become ill with Gulf War illness, but we must prepare for that possibility. And we must not forget the warriors of the first Gulf War who are sick, tens of thousands of them, and are still waiting to learn the cause and the cure for their illnesses.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, we need to change the whole process of funding our veterans health care. Right now, each year in Congress, as we are doing this year, we have to fight for a health care budget. In the last session, there was legislation to change VA health care funding so that the amount of funding would automatically, automatically rise each year to accommodate inflation and new enrollees, that is, for example, to accommodate the returning veterans from Iraq. I will again, and I urge all my colleagues, to cosponsor this bill when it is reintroduced this session. And we must work hard for its passage.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, 200,000 veterans are waiting more than 6 months for their first health care appointment. In fact, veterans will die while waiting for that first appointment. We must resolve to change this immoral situation.

When our active-duty soldiers from the war in Iraq leave service, many are qualified for educational benefits under the Montgomery GI bill. This is an earned benefit that allows them to re-enter civilian life as educated and productive members. But the current GI bill benefits are woefully inadequate to do the job. Back in 1944, this bill paid for the full cost of college tuition. But now it barely pays for two-thirds of the average cost of attending a 4-year public college. We must work to provide funding for the full cost of tuition fees, books, and supplies for those who do serve 4 years of active duty in the military service.

I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker, because there are so many other areas that need more funding than is currently budgeted. We will soon be commemorating Memorial Day. We will be hearing words of support for our veterans from all Members of Congress as they speak to Memorial Day crowds. But words can be cheap. What is important is how we vote.

We have the money. We have the resources. It is a question of priorities. It is a question of will. Let us make our veterans, who are returning from war, proud of us.

There is one final thing I want to say. A substantive way we can assist our veterans is to guarantee them jobs with companies that are awarded government contracts to rebuild Iraq, and I have introduced a bill to do just that. It is called the Let U.S. Veterans Rebuild Iraq Act, which will treat our veterans with the respect they deserve and provide a tangible way to better their lives. They fought for freedom in Iraq, who better to get involved in securing the future for Iraq?

H.R. 361, THE SPORTS AGENT RESPONSIBILITY AND TRUST ACT (SPARTA)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, last weekend, the National Football League draft was conducted. Over 200 players were selected in the draft. Each player eventually will be represented by an agent. The difficult thing is that many of these people who call themselves agents have no special qualifications.

We find that many of them have no legal training, no expertise in writing contracts, some misrepresent themselves, some offer illegal inducements, particularly to undergraduates, such as cars, cash, clothes, and sometimes even drugs, to get young people to commit to a contract while they still have eligibility, which makes them ineligible, of course. A few even have criminal records. Most of them will tell a player that they will get them drafted higher.

The NFL committee will say, well, you are going to be a fourth-round pick; and these agents say, well, if you come with me, I will get you a trainer and a nutritionist, and we will make you a first-round pick, which obviously does not happen. And then some even get the power of attorney, which sometimes bankrupts these individuals.

The National Football League Players Association currently says that roughly one-half of the players leaving the National Football League have no money. The minimum salary is several hundred thousand dollars. Some guys make millions of dollars; some sign for \$10 million or \$11 million. Yet at the end of their career, nearly one-half have no money left. A lot of that is due simply to the issue of the way they are treated by their agents.