

I will tell my colleagues that Ronald Reagan once defined the American taxpayer as somebody that worked for the Federal Government but did not have to take the civil service exam. Unfortunately, that is all too often too true.

The Americans for Tax Reform group actually estimates, based on economic estimates, that the average American has to work this year 193 days, well into July, just to pay their cost of Federal, State, and local taxes and regulations. That is obscene. It is a big problem.

I will tell my colleagues that P.J. O'Rourke once said that trusting your money to government bureaucrats and politicians was a little bit like giving whiskey and car keys to teenage boys. It is just a bad idea.

So I am delighted to join the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING), the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) and most of the Republican freshman class who enthusiastically have said we are going to come down here to the well on a regular basis every week and we are going to talk about some of the outrageous misexpenditures of our constituents' money that offend us so badly.

We are grateful for the fact that we can stand here and talk to people around the country about the fact that we want every politician that serves with us and every bureaucrat and administrator that serves with us to know one thing: They do not want to be the victim of next week's most outrageous expenditure. They do not want to be, if you are the procurement officer in a specific government agency, the topic of the major speech that week. We intend to, for example, have some awards for the most outrageous abuse of taxpayers' dollars.

Now, I will tell my colleagues that 2 years ago there was at least \$17 billion worth of expenditures for which there was no accountability. The agencies that spent the money could not tell us what happened to the money.

Aside from misexpenditures, there is the problem of duplication. We have a homeless problem in America, but there is something wrong when there are over 50 different Federal agencies dealing with the issue of the homeless. The duplication of services is a big problem.

We will regularly be coming and talking to our colleagues about the Washington Waste Watchers led by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART), led by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING), led by the Republican freshman class in 2003 to talk about how we can make government more accountable to all of our taxpayers.

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I will tell you that, finally, there is something fundamentally wrong when, for example, the National Parks Service 4 years ago purchased an outhouse, a place where people could relieve themselves, and spent more than

\$800,000. Imagine that. Think for a second about what the bears did in that park, in that forest; but we spent \$800,000 for people to relieve themselves.

We want everybody in charge of government dollars to know we will be here on a daily basis, on a weekly basis reminding them that we know spending other people's money is an intoxicating experience, but we intend to hold you accountable.

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

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my time out of order.

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

There was no objection.

INVESTIGATE IRAQ'S WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Marin and Sonoma counties in California are as deeply concerned as the gentlewoman from Illinois' (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) constituents are about their sons and their daughters dying in Iraq and the rationale the Republican administration has used to put them there.

Americans are willing to sacrifice, Mr. Speaker, but only when those sacrifices are clearly justified. The lack of confidence my constituents show in our current White House results in the American people being unsure that their sacrifice in Iraq is justified.

One of my constituents, Nina, from Sausalito writes, "I believe the majority of Americans are good-hearted people who would not have supported the war on Iraq had they understood the true motivations for it. I believe that the administration knew this, and actively distorted information it gave the people in order to gain public support. We are supposed to live in a democracy, but how can we truly be a nation run by the people and for the people if our government is not open and honest in its communications with us?"

Some people think that Nina's suspicions, Mr. Speaker, are ridiculous. They cannot imagine how anyone could mistrust their leadership.

I understand that. After 9-11 we all wanted to trust our Nation's leaders completely, but now our complacency is being shaken. A Walter Pincus article in today's Washington Post reads:

"Between October 7, when President Bush made a speech laying out the case for military action against Hussein, and January 28, when he gave his State of the Union address, almost all the other evidence had either been undercut or disproved by U.N. inspectors."

The issue, Mr. Speaker, is that people like Nina believe that when you are talking about war, it is not morally acceptable to send soldiers to early graves unless the evidence is absolutely overwhelming.

People who supported war in Iraq argue that the evidence was overwhelming, but that begs the question. If the evidence was so overwhelming, why was the indisputable evidence kept secret while citing disputed evidence over and over again?

My constituents do not think that adds up.

Paul from Mill Valley says it very simply: "We, the people, deserve to know if the principal justification that was used to commit this country to war in Iraq was true or a fabrication to manipulate public opinion."

And James from Greenbrae writes that the disgust is bipartisan: "As a registered Republican, I too have had it." That is a very serious statement, and that is why we need a thorough bipartisan investigation into Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Stephanie from Sonoma had some instructions for me also: "Support an independent commission to investigate the Bush administration's distortion of evidence. The facts that have begun to come out are so alarming it would be a travesty to let this go without investigation."

Graham from Santa Rosa also had some advice about an investigation: "If there was no wrong doing, then the Bush administration should have nothing to worry about."

Mr. Speaker, it is time to get the facts. I urge all of my colleagues to support the Waxman bill, H.R. 2625, for an independent bipartisan commission to investigate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. We should not be afraid of the truth.

WASHINGTON WASTE WATCHERS

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

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a co-founder of the Washington Waste Watchers, a project of Republican freshmen dealing not with calorie counting but with counting all of the different wasteful programs of the Federal Government. We are dedicated to bringing the disinfectant of sunshine into the shadowy corners of the wasteful Washington bureaucracy. From this point forward we will be highlighting a myriad of examples of how the Federal Government routinely squanders the hard-earned money of the American families, and we will offer reforms to end these long-held Washington wasteful practices.