

shocking. Of the 400,000 individuals that should have been deported, 80,000 of those are criminal aliens, meaning that they have been charged and convicted of committing criminal acts, some of which include the most heinous and atrocious deeds one can possibly imagine. Yet these 80,000 convicted criminals, rapists, murderers, pedophiles and the like among them, who were in the hands of law enforcement officials, were simply turned loose because of an outmanned, inefficient, and unaccountable immigration system that is failing both the law-abiding citizens of our Nation who live here legally and peacefully and the courageous, hardworking men and women who wear the badge who protect us who must face the prospects of arresting and rearresting these criminals over and over again.

Mr. Speaker, it is also worth noting, again looking back at earlier this month's somber anniversary, that an estimated 3,800 of these individuals are from countries with a known presence of al Qaeda. Unfortunately, America's criminal alien crisis has been allowed to continue and worsen because our Federal Government and this Congress are not serious about addressing it. Today there are only 2,000 Federal agents who have the job of finding any of the 400,000 I mentioned earlier. Mr. Speaker, that is not a fair fight, and it is not the right message to send to the American people.

Recently, along with the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD), the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. HART), and the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DEAL), I introduced the CLEAR Act. This is a bill that makes clear that our Nation's 600,000 local and State law enforcement officers have the authority to enforce immigration laws, gives those 600,000 men and women wearing the badge the training, access to data and appropriate funding they deserve, and gives the 2,000 Federal agents in the field the assistance they so badly need.

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And that, finally, provides the needed accountability that our immigration system has lacked for far too long.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to join me in sending a strong message that this Congress is serious about protecting Americans from this crisis within our own borders, and I encourage my colleagues to support the CLEAR Act.

OPPOSITION TO CUTS IN LOAN GUARANTEES TO ISRAEL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to express my concern regarding reports that President Bush has already approved cuts in loan guar-

antees to Israel and is considering further cuts. Last week I spoke on the House floor regarding a decision by the Bush administration to cut loan guarantees to oppose Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. As I stated last week, I oppose any cuts in loan guarantees. These guarantees allow Israel to rebuild after years of violence and economic decline and are critical to Israel's future.

I am further disturbed by reports that the Bush administration is considering additional cuts in loan guarantees to protest Israel's construction of a security fence along the West Bank.

Mr. Speaker, on a recent trip to Israel in August along with, I think, 29 other Democratic Members, I had the opportunity to view the security fence firsthand. While in Jerusalem, I toured border communities where Israeli citizens live in constant fear of sniper attacks and suicide bombings. This fence will provide a sense of safety and security to these border families and will help prevent continued attempts to derail the peace process through violence.

In my meetings with government officials in Jerusalem, they acknowledged that the fences are temporary and can be moved or removed pending future peace agreements. Furthermore, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has shown that he is willing to work with the United States and has sent a diplomatic delegation here to continue discussions on the fence. However, until the Palestinian Authority dismantles the terrorist infrastructure, Israel must be permitted to take steps to protect their citizens from violence without financial retribution from the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I just think this is the wrong decision by the Bush administration. That is why today I sent a letter to President Bush to urge him to reverse his decision to restrict loan guarantees to Israel and to reconsider any future restrictions. With the continued rise in violence, now is not the time to take punitive action against the Israeli Government. It is critical to our role in the region that the United States maintains its steadfast support of Israel and not undercut Israel's military and diplomatic authority or, most important, their ability to protect their citizens from harm and terrorism.

PURCHASE CARD AND TRAVEL CARD ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2003

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, today's Washington Waste Watch highlights the vast amount of waste, fraud, and abuse throughout the government purchase card and travel card programs. Mr. Speaker, such waste steals from the hard-working taxpayers in order to line the pockets of some career bureaucrats

who seek to profit from the obviously broken system.

Mr. Speaker, Americans should and would be outraged at the consistent abuse of their tax dollars within the purchase card and travel card program. These cards are paid for by the taxpayers, and they are supposed to be used, obviously, for official government business. However, Mr. Speaker, I think taxpayers would be horrified and outraged of the fact that these cards have purchased, among other things, Elvis Presley pictures, vacations and cruises, designer leather goods, Internet pornography, power tools and toys, music, designer clothing, luggage, fine china, jewelry, escort services, electronics, and televisions and even a pet dog. And yet our friends on the other side of the aisle, the Democrats, insist still on sometimes introducing bills to raise taxes to do more of this, Mr. Speaker?

If this abuse, Mr. Speaker, happened within the private sector, these individuals would clearly get thrown out of their jobs and in many cases would be turned over to law enforcement agencies. But when it is the taxpayers who are paying for it, when it is the taxpayers who are footing the bill, these people do not lose their jobs. They just stay in their careers. Many times they get their annual pay increases. Very few of these employees, Mr. Speaker, are ever appropriately disciplined for this improper use of purchase cards and travel cards.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I will introduce the Purchase Card and Travel Card Accountability Act of 2003, which will create a uniform system of accountability for all Federal agencies. This system will include repayment to the Federal agencies by those who have used those cards incorrectly. It would also, furthermore, ask the inspector general to report regularly to Congress on disciplinary actions taken against employees for abuse of purchase cards and travel cards, and, yes, it will also create a uniform system of accountability for all Federal agencies, which will include termination.

Only, Mr. Speaker, in the Federal Government, a place where billions of dollars, billions of dollars, are just lost every year, can people go shopping with a card that the taxpayer pays for on things, as I said, for china and designer leather products, \$163,000, for example, worth of designer leather goods and a billiard table, and nothing happens. And, again, the Democrats want to raise taxes to do more of this?

Mr. Speaker, for too long the bureaucracy have been given free rein to do what they want with taxpayers' money with no accountability. That is why we are filing this bill, Mr. Speaker. Purchase cards provide a great avenue to continue this waste. The American taxpayers deserve better. They should not support irresponsible spending. They do not support it.