

The sad thing is that this debate is over religion in public life and has moved away from what the Founders intended. The Founders understood that religion, like all other ideas, should be thoroughly debated and considered as part of representative government. It should not be used to impose a lifestyle on anyone, but should play a role in our discussion. That is democracy.

Congress can and should take action, before this country is ruled by judicial fiat instead of the consent of the people.

NATIONAL DEBT CONTINUES TO INCREASE

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

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, it has been 867 days since the administration began implementation of their economic plan for our country. During that time our national debt has increased by \$1,159,358,743,968, according to the Bureau of the Public Debt at the Treasury Department. Yesterday at 4:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, the Nation's outstanding debt, the total debt, was \$6,799,684,130,327. Further, in fiscal year 2003, the interest on our national debt, what I call the debt tax, D-E-B-T tax, is \$304,978,878,641 through August 31.

Mr. Speaker, our country, the administration and Congress needs to return to fiscal responsibility.

CONDEMNING OUTRAGEOUS STATEMENTS REGARDING U.S. POLICY IN IRAQ

(Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, as I am sure you know by now, last week the war in Iraq was called "a fraud made up in Texas to give Republicans a political boost."

I am sure that our military, who are putting their lives on the line for this war, do not appreciate this characterization of their mission.

Yesterday I visited Walter Reed Hospital. I spoke with our military who were wounded and with their family members. To a person, they support what we are doing in Iraq. They firmly believe that it is in the benefit of not only this country, but certainly the Iraqi people.

However, we should be outraged at what was said. We should be outraged that the statements were based not on facts, but on disinformation.

Mr. Speaker, misinformation is mistaken information. However, disinformation is just plain lying, and that is a shame.

It is for this reason that I stand before this body to condemn these outrageous statements. They remind us all

of the value that some people in this country place on political gain and the lengths that they are willing to go to to achieve it.

SUPPORTING ISRAEL IN ITS FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

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

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about my commitment to an Israel that can live in a safe and secure environment.

Over August I had the opportunity to travel to Israel with 28 of my colleagues. This trip was the largest congressional delegation ever to travel to the state of Israel. We had the opportunity to see the strength and resilience of the Israeli people as they face the threat of terrorism on a daily basis.

The United States must not stand in the way of Israel protecting its citizens from terrorists who threaten them. Israel did not ask us to restrain ourselves when we acted against the terrorists responsible for the 9/11 attacks, and we should not ask that from them.

For a true and lasting peace to come about, the Palestinian Authority must act against the terrorist groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad. But before the Palestinian Authority can act against these terrorists, they must clean up their own acts. The first step is to remove Yasser Arafat from any position of power. Arafat has done enough to destroy the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

Recently we all read in the paper how the IMF discovered that Arafat diverted \$900 million of public funds to a special bank account under his control. Arafat is not a partner for peace. We know that. We need to convince our allies of that as well. The Palestinian Authority must rid itself of Yasser Arafat if it truly wants to bring about a peaceful coexistence with the state of Israel.

EXPRESSING HEARTFELT SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

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

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I returned from Israel this summer inspired by its ability to resist terror. On September 11, Americans learned what it was like to lose friends and neighbors to fanatics on a suicide mission. Israel has been living with terror, and during this trip we got a glimpse of their daily reality.

A day after our visit to the border between Israel and Lebanon, a missile killed a 16-year-old boy near where we had been. When we toured Hadassah Hospital, we met with a doctor who had stayed up all night saving a woman's life. She had been struck by a

sniper's bullet. Both attacks came during the so-called cease-fire, a time no one was supposed to die.

We have a lot to learn from Israel about improving communication, coordination and intelligence. After 9/11 we were supposed to have a governmentwide database on terrorism. Two years later, there are nine Federal agencies maintaining 12 different lists of terrorist organizations.

Israel is our greatest ally in the Middle East. It deserves our heartfelt support.

STANDING SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH ISRAEL

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

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to travel to Israel with the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) and over 20 of my Democratic colleagues.

As timing would have it, our visit preceded the departure of Palestinian Prime Minister Abu Mazen by 1 week. We met with the Prime Minister, who told us that he was trying to implement important reforms within the Palestinian Authority. But during the Prime Minister's 4-month tenure, Mr. Arafat consistently opposed his reform efforts and took steps to maintain his hold on power and erode support for Mr. Abbas among the Palestinian people.

As these events have demonstrated, measurable progress will not be realized as long as Mr. Arafat remains in power.

If the Palestinian Authority will not or cannot destroy Palestinian terrorist groups, the Israeli Government has every right to defend its citizens against further violence. The Israeli Government has started building a security fence for exactly that purpose. I believe the United States should support Israel's efforts, which is a reasonable measure of self-defense against suicide bombers.

Further, I believe it would be a terrible mistake for the U.S. to reduce its loan guarantees to the State of Israel. At this time of great peril, we must stand side by side with Israel and its citizens in the fight against terrorism.

EXPRESSING STRONG SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

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

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my strong support for Israel, as well as my frustration and anger over the continued Palestinian terrorist attacks on innocent men, women and children.

I am especially angered over the action, or rather inaction, of the so-

called Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

The Palestinians were given a unique and exceptional opportunity 3 years ago at Camp David when Israel offered nearly all the land in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, control of the Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem and billions of dollars guaranteed to build an infrastructure and a new Palestinian state in exchange for two simple things: peace and an end to terrorism.

□ 1015

Arafat was in a unique historical position to finally bring peace. Instead, Arafat chose violence rather than compromises, terrorism rather than harmony. He chose to embrace cowardice and fear rather than to lead the Palestinians on the path to peace and statehood.

The United States and Israel stand together in a worldwide struggle against terrorism. However, instead of standing decisively with our strongest ally, the only democracy in the Middle East, we continue to threaten our level of aid, subjecting Israel to a quid pro quo better befitting an adolescent child than a sovereign nation. I speak of Israel's need for a security fence in order to protect its citizens against continued terrorist attacks. Let us not deduct the cost of the fence from our loan guarantees.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

(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. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Hispanic Heritage Month and to honor all of the contributions of the Latino community in the United States.

Right now, the Latino community is the largest minority group in America, with over 37 million people. We continue to become more powerful and a more dominant force in the United States. In fact, this year, we will have a purchasing power within the Latino community reaching almost \$600 billion. Marketers and advertisers, CEOs and companies are realizing that we are a target for consuming, and we are becoming the fastest growing consumer sector in this Nation.

Our increasing power and influence in this country cannot be ignored. So this week, so many Latino groups are in town preparing an agenda for the future, and a good Hispanic agenda is a good agenda for America.

WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2555, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up

House Resolution 374 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 374

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 2555) making appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2004, and for other purposes. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DUNCAN). The gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

(Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 374 is a rule that provides for the consideration of the conference report for the fiscal year 2004 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act. This is a standard rule for a conference report, providing for 1 hour of general debate, evenly divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations.

As we continue the 2004 appropriations cycle, Mr. Speaker, it is fitting that the first appropriations bill, and now the first conference report this House considers, is the Homeland Security Appropriations Act. It has been over 2 years since the Nation was savagely attacked by a group of cowardly terrorists on September 11, 2001. Appropriate, decisive, and necessary steps in our defense and foreign policy have been evident under the leadership of President Bush through successful efforts to eliminate al Qaeda from its government-sponsored haven of Afghanistan, the elimination of the Taliban regime and, recently, to remove the ruthless dictator Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and operations throughout the world in furtherance of U.S. national security.

The U.S. military has performed and succeeded with distinction each and every time we have called upon their gallant services. But much more work has to be accomplished in the homeland; and this legislation, Mr. Speaker, provides communities the necessary tools to effect necessary security efforts.

In this conference report, Congress is providing almost \$30 billion to protect the homeland, \$1 billion above the President's request.

The legislation provides \$4.2 billion to the Office of Domestic Preparedness.

I have seen firsthand the work of Federal dollars when supplemented with State and local funding to make our communities safe. In south Florida, the local governments and municipalities have taken extensive steps to ensure the safety of airports, seaports, utilities, and water supplies; but they still require the supplemental funding and grants that this legislation provides. With over 7,500 miles of land borders and 361 seaports, local authorities will always be the frontline of defense.

First responders are the key to the effective protection of our communities. In addition to many other programs, this conference report provides \$1.7 billion for basic formula grants under the Office of Domestic Preparedness; \$500 million for State and local enforcement terrorism prevention grants; \$750 million for firefighter grants, and \$725 million for high-threat, high-density urban areas.

To further ensure the safety of the American people, we have instituted very clear guidelines for grant eligibility. Local and State officials must create a multiyear homeland security plan. This will ensure that we are not just throwing money at the problem, but we are working to find comprehensive, long-term solutions to problems.

The Department of Homeland Security is also working hard to protect our ports of entry. There is \$62 million in this bill for the Container Security Initiative. It is our belief that security at our ports should be the last line of defense, not a first.

Through the Container Security Initiative, the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection is working with the world's largest ports to screen cargo before it leaves for the United States. We now require 24-hour advanced notice for manifests of any cargo ship heading to the United States. This allows the Department of Homeland Security to see what is on a ship before it gets anywhere near the coasts of the United States. Through a sophisticated database screening system and ground personnel working with host countries, the Department is creating a frontline of defense hundreds, sometimes even thousands of miles away.

This conference report also provides \$236 million for immigration services, \$80 million of which is dedicated to alleviating the current unsatisfactory backlog of immigration applications. Under President Bush's Blueprint for New Beginnings, Director Aduardo Aguirre of the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services is committed to achieving a maximum term of 6 months for immigration applications between the time of application and the time of swearing in, including for citizenship, specifically. Some parts of our Nation have seen the wait for citizenship applications grow and grow to the point that now it is not anywhere near 6 months, but rather years, in many instances. Effective funding to eliminate this backlog and streamline the process is essential, as is congressional oversight; and I want to thank