

In Houston, Texas, since 1978, we have had a large, fair and moderate majority who have wanted to see rail implemented in our community. During the course of that time, we have had a number of elections, perhaps thousands of community hearings and meetings, and many times came nearly to the brink of success in seeing rail voted in in Houston. But each time there was something to thwart its way: Politics, differences of opinions, or mayoral races. But never did that reflect the total voice of the people. Special interests have been involved and engaged, and they have used elected officials in any way that they can.

As we move toward FY 2004, I am very proud to say that the Houston Metro has done something that probably no other agency advocating rail or light rail or commuter rail in Houston has done. They have put forward plans that have had any number of extensive hearings in our community. They have worked with small cities, they have worked with surrounding counties, and they have come up with a regional mobility plan. They worked with elected officials, county officials, county commissioners, the mayor's office, the small, local, city mayoral offices, various Members of Congress, and United States Senators. All of them have been engaged in this much-needed effort in Houston, a city that is a friendly city, full of wonderful neighborhoods, the fourth largest city in the Nation, but number seven on the vulnerability list for terrorist acts, and a city that has been grappling with environmental concerns as it relates to clean air.

So we have reached the point of consensus of a 72-mile project, 39 miles, and just as we are about to get the unanimous vote of our board, or close to unanimous vote, the intervention of special interests drew the attention of the mayor to the point of compromise, so that we have moved on a 22-mile project and not a 39-mile project. When we moved forward, we were told that we would be able to go to the voters now with a unified voice; that even those who were against it would be joining us.

Lo and behold, we have come to find out that there are Members of this body who are willing yet to undermine local constituencies. They are using agencies like the Department of Transportation and the FTA to thwart the efforts and desires of thousands, maybe millions, of Houstonians and those in Harris County. We now find that the Department of Transportation was used to issue opinions that are half-baked and without total facts. Those opinions have been issued without getting the complete facts from the actual agency, without calling the actual agency, and misrepresenting the agency's position. And then Members of this body have utilized that agency to represent that they would go to the United States Attorney under the Department of Justice in order to attack or challenge or accuse these Metro

board members of having committed criminal offenses.

Mr. Speaker this is an abomination. This is a precedent not worth setting. This is a horrific act that can be bad news, if you will, for the rest of our colleagues. We realize that this body has oversight responsibilities. We realize, in fact, that we, as Members of Congress, have oversight responsibilities. But, Mr. Speaker, we should not abuse the power that is given to us. It is an outrage that agencies would be used to thwart the desires and the commitment and work of our local communities.

Mr. Speaker, I close by simply saying I will stand with thousands in Houston and Harris County. We will have regional mobility, we will have light rail, and I look forward to putting forward a motion to instruct, so we can stop this bad precedent occurring in this House.

IRAQ

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

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, 165 years ago, conservatives in this House of Representatives passed a rule banning the discussion and debate of slavery in the United States House of Representatives. In those days, former President, then Congressman, John Quincy Adams, trooped to the House floor night after night, week after week, protesting that the issues of slavery were not being debated, and he then shared letters from his constituents, many of them women who could not vote, so that Members of Congress and the American people would learn more about why he believed slavery should be abolished.

In like manner today, Mr. Speaker, conservative leadership in this House of Representatives has not really allowed full debate on whether or not the Bush administration told us the truth on his reasons for taking us into Iraq; whether leaders in the Bush administration, all the way up and down, were actually leveling with the American people; whether and how the \$87 billion the President has asked for should be spent, whether we should spend it. Questions and concerns about that \$87 billion that the American people have raised are not being debated, and especially the concern that my constituents are expressing about the safety of our troops.

And so similar to John Quincy Adams, Mr. Speaker, I have brought letters tonight from my constituents, as I have night after night since July, expressing the concerns of people in my district about whether or not the Bush administration told the truth, about the Halliburton connections with Vice President CHENEY, the company that is getting literally hundreds of millions of dollars in contracts, even though Vice President CHENEY is receiving from that company still, sitting this

close to the oval office, \$13,000 a month from Halliburton, and just concerns that people in my district have about all of this.

Melissa, from Akron, writes: "We truly need to change our course of action in Iraq. Mr. Rumsfeld's arrogant, bombastic, my-way-or-the-highway way of thinking, speaking, and acting have put this country and our soldiers, especially our soldiers, in a precarious position, some ways worse than Vietnam. Our own country is falling apart: The energy grid, highway infrastructure, schools, health care, child care, industry, personal freedom, the environment, as well as employment. The money wasted on this fool's errand could have been used to rebuild this country, to find Osama bin Laden, to really deal with terrorism, not by providing Halliburton," the Vice President's company, that as I said is paying him \$13,000 a month still, "not by providing Halliburton with a steady income."

Jessica of Akron Ohio writes: "The \$87 billion President Bush has asked for could be spent in so many other ways that would benefit Americans directly. Manufacturing, education, and health care are just a few areas that have been put on the back burner since the administration has taken office."

What Jessica is referring to, surely, is the fact we have lost 3½ million jobs since President Bush took office, 2½ million manufacturing jobs. In Ohio, literally one out of every seven manufacturing jobs has vanished without any real response from the President.

Howard from Akron writes: "The Bush administration bungling in Iraq must be challenged. Before any more money is approved for this misadventure, Congress must insist on seeing a comprehensive plan, with time lines for restoring basic services, establishing home rule, and removing U.S. troops."

Howard's letter suggests what so many of these letters do; that people are concerned about the safety of the troops first, they want answers about where the \$87 billion is going, how much of it is going to private contractors, like Halliburton and other unbid contracts, that happen to be to people who happen to be very good friends and often contributors of the President, and just when there is going to be a timetable to wrap this up in Iraq.

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Liane and George from Avon write, "Please don't give the President the added funds he requested. We need a guarantee that our troops are coming home and all rebuilding responsibility is transferred to the United Nations."

Evelyn of Akron writes, "Please vote against giving the President \$87 billion without his relinquishing part of the power to the U.N. and any countries that are willing to send troops and money to Iraq."

We have already spent \$69 billion in Iraq, more than a billion dollars a

week, an \$87 billion request has come forward from the President, and we are not getting much help at all obviously from other nations in terms of troops or money, as Evelyn points out.

Stephanie from Strongsville, Ohio writes, "Millions of Americans are out of work and thousands more are laid off every day. State and county taxes are increasing to cover the cost of Mr. Bush's huge refund for the wealthy. And now Mr. Bush wants billions more to fund the disaster that he, Cheney and Rumsfeld created in Iraq?"

Mr. Speaker, Stephanie is referring to the budget cuts and the tax increases that Ohio has done. I think people in my district and around the country are very concerned about the \$87 billion.

KEEPING SOCIAL SECURITY SOLVENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I am going to talk for a little while about another dilemma facing this country, and that is the problem of keeping Social Security solvent.

We developed a program back in 1934 that provided that existing workers pay in their taxes, and then immediately those taxes were sent out to retirees. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, after the Great Depression, seeing many American families going over the hill to the poor house, like Will Carlton wrote about in Hillsdale County, Michigan, where I am from, provided a program which said let us have some forced savings during your working years so you have greater social security in your retirement years.

It is interesting searching the archives in which the Senate said that these accounts should be in privately owned accounts, but you can only take them out when you retire. The House, on the other hand, passed a bill which said the government should collect all of the money and then send out the money to existing retirees as those individuals reach 65 years of age. This pay-as-you-go program worked very well in those early years because there was a growing number in the workforce, and most people died before they reached 65. Actually, up until 1939, the average age of death was 62 years of age. So if a person paid in all their life and never reached 65, the program worked very well.

Now we are faced with the dilemma of two colliding forces hitting us and many other countries of the world. Those two colliding forces are the fact that we are living longer and the birth rate is declining. That means that there are fewer workers paying in their taxes to accommodate the needs of a growing number of retirees in relation to the number of workers paying in their taxes.

I would ask all my colleagues to agree to three goals of retirement security. We are going to have to deal with it. We have known that for the last 12 years, that Social Security was going broke, that it could not stay solvent. The three requirements that I think everyone should agree to are, one, continue to provide retirement security for the elderly; number two, give young people an opportunity to improve their retirement prospects; and, number three, benefit the economy instead of burdening it.

Now we are faced with a situation where every State in the Nation has changed their retirement program from a fixed benefit after people retire to a fixed contribution. Most companies, most of our industry and companies have also made that change simply because the fact is very clear that with a declining number of workers and an increasing number of retirees in relation to the number of workers simply because we are living longer, requires that the only program that can continue and be solvent is moving towards a fixed contribution program.

Here is the dilemma that I would like to call to the attention of my colleagues, and that dilemma is the fact that every time this country has run into problems of not having enough Social Security tax money coming in through the FICA tax, one of two things have happened: we have either increased taxes or we have cut benefits, or we have done both.

This chart represents how much we have increased taxes over the years. In 1940, the rate was 2 percent on the first \$3,000 for a maximum tax on any individual worker in this country of \$60 a year. By 1960, we decided to up that tax rate, and we increased it threefold to 6 percent on the first \$4,800 for a total tax that was payable by workers in this country of \$288.

In 1980, up to 10.16 percent, jumped it up to \$25,900, up to almost \$26,000, and the total tax paid in by any individual increased also to \$2,631.

By 2000, we are paying 12.4 percent; it is on \$76,200. That is indexed back in the so-called Greenspan Commission in 1983 where we changed the Social Security laws to cut benefits to increase the retirement age and to again increase taxes, and so the age today is the first 12.4 percent on \$84,000 because it is indexed to inflation.

I just cannot stress strongly enough, if we put off the solution to this problem, Washington, Congress, the House and the Senate and the President, are going to repeat what they have done so many times in the past until disaster is upon us and then simply wait until the disaster is upon us and then say we are going to have to increase taxes and cut benefits.

I call on my colleagues as aggressively as I can to say, look, the longer we put off the solution, the more drastic that solution is going to have to be, and it is unfair to American workers. The fact is that most American work-

ers today, 76 percent, pay more in Social Security tax than they do for income tax.

This is a pie chart that I thought would be good to represent how big Social Security has become as a portion of total State and Federal Government spending. Social Security now takes 22 percent of the total spending of the Federal Government. Defense, even with the problems in Iraq, Afghanistan, are still only 18 percent, growing up now to 19 percent.

Domestic discretionary, all of the arguments that we do from February through most of the year on the 13 appropriations bills uses up 19 percent of the total Federal budget compared to 22 percent for Social Security. Other entitlements, 14 percent; Medicaid, 6 percent; Medicare, 11 percent. But here again, if we add prescription drugs to Medicare, Medicare eventually over the next 30 years could overtake Social Security as far as the portion of the Federal budget that is used for that particular program.

It is easy for Members of Congress to try to do good and solve more problems for the people. In fact, I see part of the dilemma is a Member of Congress coming up with new problems to help solve some of those problems back home probably increases his or her chances of being reelected because they are on television and the front page of the newspaper cutting the ribbon for the new jogging trail or the new library or the new pork project or the new social program that they have introduced and passed in this Congress.

What do we do in a Congress that we have today where more and more Members of Congress represent a population that wants more from government? Right now over 50 percent of the people in the United States get more from government in government programs than they pay in in taxes, so we can understand a lot of those individuals go to their Member of Congress, or their Senator, and say I do not care about the increased taxes. And that is because they do not pay into the income tax contribution part of our programs here in this country, and so we have over 50 percent of the American people that now get more from government than they pay in taxes, and so the tendency of a lot of those individuals is to suggest to their representatives, let us have more government. I think this is a huge danger of taking away some of the things that has made this country great.

When our forefathers started this country 227 years ago, I think I am right on that, they said we want a Constitution that provides that those people that work hard, that save, that study and use that education end up better off than those that do not. And now we have a Congress that says let us sort of level the playing field and make sure that everybody has about the same, so we take away from the people that have been successful and give it to those individuals, maybe that