

will be over \$500 billion, and our national debt, which is now at \$7 trillion. Some of you may have heard the other day that Alan Greenspan, the Chairman of the Fed, he has a response to this growing deficit. Greenspan, who supported hundreds of billions of dollars in tax breaks for the wealthiest people, who supported the President's tax proposal, which in a decade will cost us \$1 trillion, he has a solution to the problem. His solution is let us cut Social Security, let us cut Medicare. In other words, tax breaks for billionaires, run up a deficit, and then you deal with the deficit crisis by cutting back on the cost-of-living increases for our seniors in Social Security and in Medicare and making the retirement age when people receive Social Security later and later. I think that is an outrage.

That is why I have asked the President, who appointed Mr. Greenspan to his position, that is why I have asked the President to fire Mr. Greenspan. You do not support policies which give huge tax breaks to the rich, run up the deficit and then tell the elderly and the sick that they are the ones who will have to balance the budget.

We should be very, very clear that these tax breaks, not only are they, in my view, immoral in terms of providing scant resources to people who do not need them, while we have children sleeping out on the street, but, in fact, what they are doing is leaving a terrible legacy for our children and our grandchildren. Think for a moment about the morality of tax breaks for people who do not need it today and telling our kids and grandchildren that they are going to have to pay off that debt either in higher taxes or in cuts in such programs as education, veterans' needs, affordable housing and many other needs facing the middle class.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you something else. I think that there is more behind this than one would initially think, and I think that there is really an ulterior motivation in driving up this deficit, in driving up the national debt, and I think we heard Mr. Greenspan tell us what it is. If this President drives up the national debt, what we will be hearing in years to come is we cannot afford to retain those government services which protect the middle class, protect the seniors, protect the sick, protect the children, protect low-income people.

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In my view, Mr. Speaker, this President is the most extreme, reactionary President in the modern history of this country. And I think that he and his right wing friends want to bring us back to the 19th century, when ordinary people had almost no rights at all. I think behind their driving up the national debt is their desire to cut back and eliminate one program after another which the middle class and working families of this country depend upon.

Greenspan now says, well, let us lower COLA benefits for seniors. Let us raise the retirement age. Ultimately, in my view, and I speak only for myself, I think they want to destroy Social Security completely and privatize it. And then, if they are successful, the day will come where if you are a senior citizen and you do not have a lot of money and you did not invest well, or the stock market goes down, you know what, you do not have anything.

I think they want to privatize Medicare, not just cut back. And if they are successful in doing that, what happens if you are a low-income senior who is quite sick? Do you think there are private insurance companies who are going to provide benefits to you? Why? They cannot make any money out of you.

These people want to eliminate the minimum wage. There are dozens and dozens, if not a majority of Republicans on the floor of the House, and Alan Greenspan, I should add, who not only do not want to raise the minimum wage above \$5.15 an hour; they want to abolish the minimum wage. Their belief is that if an employer can get somebody to work for them for \$2 an hour, government should not be involved.

There are people who want to weaken environmental standards so that our children have to breathe more and more pollution.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude my remarks by suggesting that if any of the Members here want more information on any of these issues they can find it on my Web site, bernie.house.gov.

TRIBUTE TO ELIZABETH BENSON FORER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEARCE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I stand to commend a great citizen and a contributing member to the betterment of family life in the greater Los Angeles area. Her name is Elizabeth Benson Forer. She is the chief executive officer and executive director of the Venice Family Clinic.

The Venice Family Clinic is the largest free clinic in the Nation, providing services to 18,500 people in 93 patient visits. Ms. Forer joined the clinic in 1994, and under her leadership, board, staff, and volunteers have doubled the clinic's capacity and capabilities. The budget has gone from \$5 million to \$14 million and additional sites have been added. Sites most recently in place include a teen clinic on the campus of Culver City High School, a primary care facility located at Mar Vista Gardens, and a public housing project, all sites that she founded.

Ms. Forer holds a Master's degree in Social Work and Public Health from Columbia University. Prior to coming to the Venice Family Clinic, she served

for 5 years as executive director of Settlement Health and Medical Services, a nonprofit community health center in east Harlem, New York. She also directed a department at the Metropolitan Hospital in New York City, where her mission was to make the hospital more accessible to local residents.

As Venice Family Clinic's CEO and executive director, she reports to the board of directors, which guides the development of services and fund-raising. She also is responsible for the administration of the clinic's 220-member staff and 1,900 volunteers.

Ms. Forer is currently a board member of the Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County and the secretary and founding board member of the National Association of Free Clinics. Through these organizations and her direct advocacy work, Ms. Forer is involved at the local, State, and national levels in developing health care legislation and policy initiatives that will help people with low incomes and no health insurance.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Elizabeth Benson Forer for her commendable works and her commitment to families in our greater Los Angeles area.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 5 o'clock and 20 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 2005

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. PEARCE) at 8 o'clock and 5 minutes p.m.

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION EXTENSION ACT OF 2004

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, the Committee on Ways and Means, the Committee on Science, and the Committee on Resources be discharged from further consideration of the bill (H.R. 3850) to provide an extension of highway, highway safety, motor carrier safety, transit, and other programs funded out of the Highway Trust Fund pending enactment of a law reauthorizing the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

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

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, I simply observe that there is included in this legislation a 2-month extension of the existing 5-month extension of the surface