

UNDER REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP
CONGRESS IS A QUICKSAND OF
IDEOLOGY AND INTRANSIGENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, in February, the former majority leader in this House, Dick Armey, stated the obvious: "I am sitting here and I am upset about the deficit, and I am upset about spending," said the former Republican leader. And he added, "There is no way I can pin that on the Democrats. Republicans own the town now."

Yes, they do, Mr. Speaker, the House, the Senate, and the White House. Yet, under Republican leadership this Congress has become a quicksand of ideology and intransigence that is swallowing up America's priorities and performing a disservice to the American people.

The annual budget is a blueprint of our Nation's priorities and values. But with a Memorial Day recess approaching and the April 15 budget deadline long passed, House Republicans have tied the process in knots.

They refuse to pay for tax cuts even as they have run up the largest budget deficit and deficits as far as the eye can see in American history.

Republicans' intraparty bickering continues to get in the way of other priorities. In addition to the budget, two job creation bills, a tax measure for domestic manufacturing called the FSC/ETI bill, and a major transportation bill have been stymied, held up, not moving since last year. The transportation bill could create millions of jobs in a tough job market, and the FSC bill would end harmful European Union sanctions against struggling American manufacturers. Both of these bills could have been passed, should have been passed last year with broad support in both Houses of Congress. But with House Republicans it is my way or the highway.

Our friends on the other side of the aisle have even rejected progress on an issue that has broad bipartisan support, tax cuts for the middle-class and working families. They have done so not once, not twice, but three times in 3 weeks. And they are poised to do so for a fourth time this week.

By refusing to offset the cost of their tax bills, Republicans are not only endangering support for tax cuts which Members on both sides want to see become law, but also putting themselves on record in favor of placing an enormous debt tax on future generation of American children.

House Republican leaders may be content with inertia in the people's House. Democrats are not.

Last week the Washington Post shined a light on the Republican strategy of biding their time until the election. The Post story observed that, and I quote, "Despite the burgeoning scandal over U.S. treatment of Iraqi pris-

oners and persistent concerns about the economy and the deficit, the House has been keeping banking hours." Frankly, the bank would be bankrupt if it kept our hours.

In contrast to Republican leaders of the other body, House Republican leaders have refused to fully investigate the abuse of Iraqi prisoners. This is just the latest example of an abdication of this body's constitutional responsibility to oversee the executive branch.

Even a prominent Republican from the other body has said, and I quote, "We Republicans have never quite reached the level of competent oversight that the Democrats developed over their 40 years that they controlled Congress."

He continued, major Republican leader, "We tried to emphasize legislating and we have delegated so much authority to the executive branch of government and we ought to devote more time to oversight than we do."

This House must not abdicate its constitutional responsibility as an independent, coequal branch of government. Failure in this regard is not an option.

Failure is not an option in Iraq. And Democrats will support the funding necessary to support our troops and finish the job. But we want to see where that money is spent, how it is spent, and how effectively it is being used. But there is absolutely no question that Democrats as well as Republicans should want to hold this administration accountable for how it is spending tens of billions of taxpayer dollars in so many different areas.

As a senior member of the Committee on Appropriations, Mr. Speaker, I will continue my efforts to attach accountability to the billions of dollars being spent on the war in Iraq. There are no checks and no balances in Washington today. Right now we need to focus on the oversight responsibility that our Founding Fathers expected, particularly the people's House, to exercise.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that notwithstanding the performance of the first 5 months, we will soon see such responsibility exercised.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD MUST GO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, what the administration said and did not say removes any doubt: Secretary Rumsfeld must go.

A Los Angeles Times story dated May 12, which I will enter into the RECORD, may prove to be the defining moment when the administration could no longer hide behind the PR spin because their own words were spinning out of control.

Not only did this administration fail to tell Congress about the prisoner abuse in Iraq, it also failed to tell the United States Supreme Court at a time and a place when it should have. On the very day that CBS News first broadcast pictures of prisoner abuse, the administration stood before the United States Supreme Court. The case involved the rights of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay.

The administration claims that prisoners held in Cuba are enemy combatants who can be held indefinitely without charges and without the protection of the Geneva Convention. The Deputy Solicitor General representing the United States invoked the "Trust us" defense in urging the Nation's highest court to side with the President.

The lawyer did not know about the abuses in Iraq and the photos, but his client, Rumsfeld's Department of War knew, and said nothing. The Supreme Court, like the rest of America, like the entire world, was kept in the dark.

On the very day that the prisoner abuse pictures were first shown, a lawyer for the administration stood before the Supreme Court and said only the executive branch should have the power to decide the fate of detainees.

In response to that line of reasoning, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg asked, "Suppose the executive says mild torture will help get a little information?" The question was asked with no knowledge that torture had been used in Iraq. What answer did the administration's lawyer give Justice Ginsburg? The Deputy Solicitor General told the court that abuses would be a crime.

The Supreme Court justice asked the attorney to elaborate on his remarks. The administration attorney said, quote, "Our executive does not commit such abuses." The administration's attorney added, and again I quote, "You have to recognize that in situations where there is a war, where the government is on war footing, then you have to trust the executive."

"Trust us." Well, Mr. Speaker, America did and look what happened. At last count 1,600 pictures of prisoner abuse have scarred the Nation and shocked the world. Instead of full disclosure, the administration remains in full denial. The President says the Secretary is doing a superb job. Superb job of what? Destroying our credibility overseas? Demoralizing the American people? Denying that soldiers follow orders?

The administration says, "Trust us," then blames a handful of low-ranking soldiers instead of looking up the chain of command, right up to the very top.

"Trust us." Well, Mr. Speaker, America did, and the administration sent soldiers off to war without adequate body armor.

"Trust us." Well, Mr. Speaker, America did, and the administration unilaterally told thousands of soldiers they were staying in Iraq instead of coming home as they were promised.

"Trust us." Mr. President, we did and look what happened.