CREDIT CARD ABUSE AT HOMELAND SECURITY

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

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, the GAO recently reported that 9,000 credit card holders at the Department of Homeland Security used their official cards for more than $420 million worth of goods and services last year, making it the top purchasing agency in the Federal Government.

The purchases were made using government credit cards with a congressionally approved spending limit of $250,000 that the GAO said resulted in numerous cases of fraud and abuse of taxpayers' dollars.

Nearly half the purchases were made without prior written authorization, and 63 percent did not have evidence that the goods or services were actually received, the report said. How terrible and outrageous this abuse is. Surely the spending limit is too high.

It is very important that this agency enforce adequate internal controls to ensure that card holders are responsibly using their cards. I call upon the homeland security officials to stop this abuse.

REPUBLICANS CHANGE TUNE ON IRAQ

(Mr. EMANUEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, just 6 weeks ago, Zarqawi was killed in Iraq. Five weeks ago, the House held a debate on Iraq in which Republicans belittled Democrats for questioning the President's strategy.

Said my colleague from North Carolina: ''There are those who want to deny that we are making progress in Iraq.''

But no matter how hard my Republican colleagues try, they cannot escape the facts on the ground. After the most violent month in Iraq and a U.N. report estimating that more than 100 Iraqis are being killed per day, the Republicans are singing a different tune.

This morning's Washington Post reads: ''GOP Lawmakers Edge Away from Optimism on Iraq.'' And that same North Carolina lawmaker is quoted as saying: ''We can't look like we won't face reality.''

Well, here's reality: when the President went to war with too few troops, not enough body armor, and not enough armed Humvees, and without a plan for occupation, the Republican Congress failed their oversight responsibilities.

Lieutenant General Greg Newbold said, ''To be sure, the Bush administration and senior military officials are not alone in their culpability.'' Members of Congress defaulted in fulfilling their constitutional responsibility of oversight.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for a change. It is time for a new direction.

NATIONAL SECURITY

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

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, you know, we are seeing it on the front page of Roll Call today, talking about the security message, where the leadership in this House has been focused for a long time now.

We know that national security is securing this country, making an aggressive move in the war on terror, being sure that we support our troops, making sure that we have a Nation that is safe, where we can live, where we can work, go to school, go to our businesses, have secure communities and be secure in our American hopes and dreams.

We also know that a key component of this national security agenda is border security, and I commend the House leadership for staying focused on securing the border first.

It is an imperative for us, Mr. Speaker. We have to stop illegal entry into this country. Illegal entry has turned every State into a border State, every town into a border town, and the people of this Nation know that it will not change until we secure our border.

RAMAPO AMONG BEST PLACES TO LIVE

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

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that Money Magazine has just named the town of Ramapo, in Rockland County in my district, as one of the 100 best places to live in the United States, ranking Ramapo as 49.

I congratulate Ramapo and its town supervisor, Christopher St. Lawrence, who has done a wonderful job in leading that town. Ramapo, with a population of 110,000 residents, is the largest town in Rockland County, with a third of Rockland's inhabitants. It combines such densely populated places as Spring Valley, Muncie, New Square with the country settings of Chestnut Ridge, Suffern, and Wesley Hills.

Half of Ramapo is designated park land. Businesses have invested more than $1 billion in the past 4 years. The town has the highest bond rating in the country. A new state-of-the-art cardiac care unit has opened at Good Samaritan Hospital in Suffern. They have great schools, and $125 million has been invested in a water treatment plant.

Three years ago, Money Magazine named Ramapo as the second best place to live in the Northeast. This year the ranking was done on a nationwide basis.

I am proud to represent Rockland and Ramapo in the U.S. Congress, and I congratulate the people of Ramapo on achieving this great honor.

THE WAYWARD REID-KENNEDY SENATE IMMIGRATION BILL

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, some have asked why the House will be holding hearings around our country about illegal immigration. Well, the concise reason is the out-of-touch Reid-Kennedy Senate bill.

The Senate passed legislation that clearly flies in the face of common sense. The American people don't want amnesty. The Reid-Kennedy Bill includes it. The American people don't want to provide Social Security benefits to illegal aliens. The Reid-Kennedy bill includes it.

The Senate voted to give illegals things that American citizens, legal American citizens, don't get, like in-state college tuition for all.

This makes no sense. It is unacceptable and it is unbelievable and it is just plain wrong.

The American people are fed up with this reckless attitude and poor policy. Acceptance of the Senate plan is something for which the House will not stand; and once the American people know about it, through our hearings, they won't stand for it either. Then the American people will speak with such passion and vehemence and clarity that the House and Senate may act together and do the right thing first, control our borders and enforce current law.

HOUSE REPUBLICANS DISTRACT AND DIVIDE

(Mr. CARNAHAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Speaker, it is bad enough that out of the 201 days this year this House has only been in session for 63. We are on track for this House to meet even less than the notorious ''Do Nothing Congress'' that Missouri's Harry Truman ran against in 1948.

But now the House Republican leadership has dedicated themselves to a distract and divide agenda, even while we face growing challenges at home and crisis abroad.

This week their agenda called for supporting President Bush's veto of the landmark stem cell bill that would move us closer to lifesaving cures for diseases like Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, and cancer. Majority Republicans are cutting off hope for millions of Americans, all so they can satisfy their base on the far right. Do they really want to keep research from finding cures to these diseases so we can save millions of lives? Their agenda is not our agenda.

With only one week left before the August recess, House Republicans

refuse to address the issues that are of real concern to American people. It is time we take America in a new direction.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, President Bush issued the first veto of his Presidency yesterday, and it was the right thing to do.

By sustaining that veto last night, after more than a year of rhetoric, much of it misleading, we have come down on the side of protecting human life. And we have saved the American taxpayer from being forced to fund unethical and unsuccessful research involving the destruction of human embryos.

Though a chapter in this debate has now been closed, this issue is not going away. As we move forward, I hope we will keep in mind what we have learned. The choice doesn't have to be between doing stem cell research and not doing stem cell research. There are ethical, life-affirming methods of doing this research that are producing successful treatments today using adult stem cells.

Let's move forward with stem cell research, Mr. Speaker, but let's do it in an ethical way.

□ 1030

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 5684, UNITED STATES-OMAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 925 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 925

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order without intervention of any point of order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 5684) to implement the United States-Oman Free Trade Agreement. The bill shall be considered as read. The bill shall be debatable for two hours equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Ways and Means. Pursuant to section 151 of the Trade Act of 1974, the previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill to final passage without intervening motion.

SEC. 2. During consideration of H.R. 5684 pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to a time designated by the Speaker in consonance with section 151 of the Trade Act of 1974.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KOLBE). The gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MATSUI), 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. HASTINGS of Washington asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 925 is a closed rule providing for 2 hours of debate in the House, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

The rule waives all points of order against consideration of the bill. It also provides that pursuant to section 151 of the Trade Act of 1974, the previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill to final passage without intervening motion.

Lastly, the resolution provides that during consideration of the bill, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to a time designated by the Speaker in consonance with section 151 of the Trade Act of 1974.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 925 provides for the consideration of H.R. 5684, a bill to implement the United States-Oman Free Trade Agreement, in accordance with trade measures negotiated under the Trade Promotion Authority. Under these procedures, once the administration formally submits the final legislative language to Congress, it may not be amended.

Former United States Trade Rep Rob Portman signed the United States-Oman Free Trade Agreement on January 19, 2006. Under the agreement, all consumer and industrial goods traded between the U.S. and Oman will immediately be duty free, and 87 percent of the U.S. agriculture tariff lines will gain immediate duty-free access with the remaining tariffs phased out over a 10-year period. It provides wide access and sets a strong precedent for opening up opportunities for services for U.S. firms, contains robust protections for U.S. intellectual property rights holders, and includes strong labor and environmental provisions.

Oman enacted broad labor reforms in 2003, Mr. Speaker, and has followed up with specific commitments to ensure that its laws provide strong protections for workers consistent with international standards. Oman enacted many of these reforms earlier this month and has pledged to enact the remaining reforms by this November. This agreement makes it clear that it is inappropriate for Oman to weaken or reduce domestic labor protections or environmental laws to encourage trade or investment and that this obligation is enforceable through specific dispute settlement procedures.

Mr. Speaker, the United States makes up only 4 percent of the world's population. Therefore, we must recognize that we have an opportunity to create and expand the marketplace for U.S. goods and services by reaching fair trade agreements with our international trading partners. This agreement will contribute to economic growth and trade between the U.S. and Oman; generate export opportunities for U.S. companies, farmers, and ranchers; help create jobs in both countries; and help American consumers save money while offering them greater choices.

My home State of Washington, for example, is one of the most trade-dependent States in the Nation, and our economy depends on fair trade. From agriculture to high tech to manufacturing industries, Washington State and our Nation are in a position to benefit by having more trading partners.

One area where trade with Oman shows great promise for America is in the area of commercial aircraft. Oman Air recently purchased Boeing 737 airplanes valued at $200 million at catalog prices. We want to continue to encourage these kinds of sales to Oman and in the broader Middle East, which, of course, creates new jobs here at home.

In addition to the new commercial opportunities it provides, this agreement will support many of the recent government, legal, and economic reforms in Oman, which are important to bringing stability to the Middle East region. In 2003 President Bush proposed completion of a Middle East Free Trade Area by 2013 as part of a plan to fight terrorism by supporting Middle East economic growth and democracy through trade.

The United States-Oman Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act would be the fifth bilateral trade agreement reached between the United States and a Middle Eastern country. It is yet another step in the right direction toward integrating fair trade policies and economic reforms to support a more stable and prosperous Middle East. This agreement will send a strong signal to countries in that region about the benefits of closer economic and political ties to the United States.

The Committee on Ways and Means favorably reported H.R. 5684 last May. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support House Resolution 925 and the underlying bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Washington for yielding me this time, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Ms. MATSUI asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, today we debate another free trade agreement. We all know well-crafted trade policy is capable of spreading benefits to a broad portion of the population while promoting innovation and solidifying partnerships between and among nations.

As a leader in the global economy, the United States has the ability and