reports that appear in the media, that it is unraveling in Iraq. But the Prime Minister has time to go to Iran, and, actually now, Iran is giving the Prime Minister some advice.

□ 1930

What he is suggesting is, everything will be good, the region will be stabilized. Let's just get the Americans out. That is his answer.

After hundreds of billions of dollars and the loss of more than 2,600 American personnel, this is where we are at: Mission accomplished, Mr. President. Right. Mission accomplished by finally doing what you said you would do. But you missed the wrong country. It isn't this country that you are uniting. You are dividing this country and uniting Iran and Iraq in a situation that portends danger for American national security. That is what is happening, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. INSLEE. I think when we talk about the wrong country, it has been the wrong country in two different ways. First, the President has united Iran, part of the ''axis of evil,'' with Iraq, rather than uniting America. He got the countries wrong in that regard.

But, more importantly, he got the countries wrong about which country is a nuclear threat to the United States of America. He invaded Iraq, when the nuclear threat to the United States of America is Iran. As a result of Mr. Bush's war, he has made the nuclear threat to the United States of America, Iran, more powerful by uniting it with Iraq, making Iran a more powerful figure in the Mideast by taking our eye off the ball, reducing our ability to build an international consensus to impose sanctions against Iran, because he invaded the wrong country.

Do you know what? I was so astounded that the Vice President of the United States made a statement last weekend that made me think there is some hallucinogen in the water that people are drinking in this administration when he said, and this is a paraphrase, it is not an exact quote, even if we knew that the weapons were in Iran, not in Iraq, that there was no relationship between Saddam Hussein and the attack on 9/11, that we were going to lose 2,600 troops dead and 15,000 injured, the destruction of our international coalition, even if I knew that all the things we told Americans were misstatements, were falsehoods, even with all of those falsehoods, I would have done just the same thing again.

That attitude, as long as that attitude prevails in this country, as long as we don't have a Congress to ride herd on those people in the White House, including the Vice President, our people are going to be in a dark, dark hole in Iraq. That is why we need a new Congress and a new government, to get a policy in Iraq, to get our people home.

Mr. DELAHUNT. With the end game being the forging of an alliance between Iran and Iraq, what we have done is, the policies of this administration, without a single question being posed by this majority, we have created a hegemony in the Middle East, and that is the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Don't think that this photo is the last time we will see these gentlemen together. The current prime minister during the Saddam Hussein years spent considerable time in Tehran and in Syria. I am not even blaming him.

Where is the administration? Where is the House International Relations Committee, which I serve on with my friend and colleague from California, DIANE WATSON? Why isn't there hearing after hearing after hearing asking these questions?

Mr. INSLEE. It is not us asking where Congress has been challenging these failures by the administration, it is our constituents. I went for a walk last weekend, and I ran across an old friend whose son is serving in Iraq today, and he has just been moved to Baghdad because we have stripped our forces from Al Anbar Province where they are needed to put them in Baghdad, because we have never had enough troops there to get the job done, the President has never been willing to do it. The mother of their child is also serving in Iraq, so they are essentially raising this 1-year-old.

He asked me this question: Why isn't anyone in Congress insisting that the President get serious about telling the Iraqi Shiites to strike a deal about oil with the Sunnis so they can finally form a real government and our troops can come home? Why isn't there anybody in Congress asking that question?

I said, Hal, I am happy to ask that question. He said, go do it. Be vocal about this. Make sure the administration gets their feet held to the fire, for my son and everybody else serving in Iraq.

So we are doing this tonight. But, frankly, we need a new majority in this House to do it with hearings. That is what we really need.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, as Mr. DELAHUNT so eloquently pointed out, and has time and again, the Iraq Watch, which you four Members initiated along with Mr. ABERCROMBIE and Mr. KUCINICH, has done a great job for the Nation.

People often ask, why do you come down and speak in what is an empty Chamber? And my response is, out of love of country. It is for love of country that you get to ask the unwelcome questions to this administration. But in a one-party town where the administration controls every agency and both Houses of Congress, we can't penetrate through, except for all of those meetings that are taking place in town halls and at forums and now on the blogs, that people all across this country get it.

Someone who has gotten it throughout his entire career and someone who has served his Nation out of love of country and a great city is MAJOR OWENS. I would like to recognize him at this time.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I just want to associate myself with the remarks that I have heard made by my colleagues, and I particularly think that the point relating to the oil needs to be stressed more.

The American people are way out there ahead of us. We must run to catch up with them and provide greater leadership. We must focus in more on the problem of oil.

What is the problem with the negotiations on oil? Why can't we take a position that the distribution of oil should be guaranteed on a per capita basis of oil throughout Iraq, so the Iraqi citizens get the oil on the basis of where they live?

Also, understand, I don't know why we are so surprised, but there are two major religions in conflict there, Sunni and Shiite. They have always been in conflict. We have handed over that region to the Shiites, and it is inevitable that Iran will dominate that region. It is inevitable now that Iran will become a dominant force in the whole Middle East. We have done that. We blundered.

We should still take JOHN MURTHA's advice and get out, redeploy to the friendly nations, whatever we have to do, but we should not be stuck with more lives lost and more of our taxpayer money down the drain.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. I thank the gentleman from New York.

For the final word, our former senator and ambassador and now great Congresswoman from the City of Los Angeles, DIANE WATSON.

Ms. WATSON. Very quickly, I want to thank you, Mr. LARSON, for having us come to herald the fact that we are indulging in an unwinnable battle, because the war against terrorism is a war against an ideology, and the only way you are going to change an ideology is to change people's hearts and minds. You will never do that at the end of a barrel.

Thank you so much for gathering us.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. I thank the gentlewoman from California, and my distinguished colleagues from Massachusetts and Washington State.

THE REPUBLICAN VISION FOR THE NEXT CENTURY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCHENRY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIAHRT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here tonight. We have some good discussions planned.

I am joined by the gentleman from California, Mr. DOOLITTLE. We want to take this opportunity to show some of the contrasts that are going on as far as the debates are concerned here on the floor of the House and across the Nation.

We have had some great opportunities for us to get together as Republicans and talk about our plans for the

future and pull together a vision for where we think this country ought to go. I thought I would just start out with giving us some of the words that have been agreed to by the Republican Conference to start our vision for the next century.

For the next century, the Republicans have agreed that we will promote the dignity and future of every individual by building a free society under a limited, accountable government that protects liberty, security and prosperity for a brighter American dream.

Mr. Speaker, we have looked through the material that is available from the minority leader's office and other publications. We have yet to find the vision that the Democrats are presenting. They have no such vision. They have been lately the ''party of no,'' and they have really developed no plan to lead this Nation.

We have uncovered some statements they have made on what they would like to do, and tonight we will be sharing those contrasts. One of the things we are going to start out with is talking about our economy.

President Bush said over and over again at the State of the Union that the state of our economy is strong, and today's economic numbers prove that. Our Nation has bounced back from the blow the economy took after the attacks from September 11, 2001. Our economy between September 11, 2001, and the end of 2001, in that short period, took a $2 trillion hit. Our economy was reduced by $2 trillion.

That is a lot of money. We don't write checks for $1 trillion. But to give you an idea, Mr. Speaker, of how much $1 trillion is, if you had started a business the day after Jesus Christ rose from the dead and made $1 million that first day with your business, and the next day you made another $1 million, and the next day until today, every day until today you made $1 million, in other words, $1 million a day for 2000 years is not yet $1 trillion. It is only about three-fourths of the way there. So this is a tremendous hit to our economy following September 11, 2001, a hit of over $2 trillion.

Now, since that time, we have done things under the leadership of the President and the Republican House to revive our economy. We cut taxes. We have held the line on regulations. We have looked at making sure that health care costs do not grow too fast. We have made some minor changes to litigation, to our liability. And we have seen the employment gains continue. In fact, in August, 128,000 new payroll jobs were created.

Today, there are more Americans working than ever before in the history of our Nation, and the average wage of those workers is higher than it has ever been in the history of our Nation. In fact, there are more homeowners today than ever before in the history of our Nation and more minority homeowners than ever before in the history of our Nation.

Total jobs created since August of 2003, after we saw the final bottom of the hit following September 11, 2001, since August of 2003 this economy has created 5.7 million new jobs and the unemployment rate is down to 4.7 percent. That is lower than the average of the 1990s, 1980s and the 1970s. It is a tremendous statement on the strength of our economy.

Many of you have noticed recently that gas prices are now down below $2.70 a gallon, in fact, in Wichita last week, I saw gas at Sam's Wholesale, gas for $2.259 per gallon. Now, that is a long ways down.

I remember seeing the articles in our newspapers across the Nation where it said gasoline prices, and an arrow was poking up in the air. They did rise. They rose up above $3 per gallon. But now, when gas prices are coming down, we are all waiting to see where is the article to say, Congratulations, Republicans, gas prices are down. Thank you for expanding our refineries. Thank you for expanding our production. Thank you for expediting the things through the regulatory process so we can get more product on the market so we can lower the prices of gasoline. Thank you for changing the number of boutique fuels, which shortened supply and made prices rise. The article was never printed. I haven't seen it.

But the fact is, energy prices are down, and they are down because of the policies of a Republican House, not down because of the naysaying Democrats, the obstructocrats, that have been trying to stop everything that has come through this House floor in the last year.

□ 1945

Majority Leader BOEHNER said that ''while Capitol Hill Democrats' rhetoric may be misleading, their hypocrisy always gives them away. There is a clear choice between Republicans who are working to enact serious reforms that grow our economy and reduce our deficit and Capitol Hill Democrats who want to spend more of America's taxpayer dollars on wasteful government programs as they see fit.''

Well, the economic recovery was successful even though the Democrats opposed the reforms every step of the way. And it is clear the Democrats have no clear plan to strengthen our economy, as Republicans do.

Now, off the Web site of the minority leader, there is a document that is available. It is called ''A New Direction for America.'' And in that they have their idea of how we are going to strengthen the economy. According to this document and according to the minority leader of the Democrats, prosperity for a better America and better pay: We are going to raise the Nation's minimum wage, and we are going to end the tax giveaways for companies that are moving oversees.

Let us just talk about those two things for just a little bit because I believe the best policy for America so that we can keep and create jobs is to free those who create jobs, free those who create jobs, and not punish them for doing things that are demanded by the marketplace.

Now, let us just talk a little bit about raising the minimum wage because the concept that we always hear is that this is not a livable wage and if you raise the minimum wage then people will have more money. They can have a livable income now. So we are going to raise it $1.15 an hour. Friends, that is not going to make a living wage. And the fact is, according to a Duke University study, the people they say they are trying to help actually become hindered and they do not get hired. In fact, the people who get hired are teenagers and people in their early 20s from middle-income families. They get hired instead of the working poor. So the minimum wage actually ends up punishing the working poor. And another interesting thing that they found out is that employers, when they are forced to pay more in wages, forced by the government to raise their wages, they come up with new innovations.

Have you ever been to your local grocery store and had the ability to check yourself out or gone to a Home Depot or to a Wal-Mart or to other businesses where you shop, you pick your products out of your basket, you run them across the scanner yourself, you stick in your credit card, you put your purchased products in your own bags, and then you load them up after you pay your bill and go out the door. What does that mean? That means there is no checker. Why is there no checker? Because we forced the minimum wage up so much that it is cheaper for that company to bring in this new automation because they cannot afford to pay the additional wages.

So the first step in their plan is to punish employers by forcing them with a new regulation on wages.

The second one is to end tax giveaways for people who have moved jobs overseas. Why do jobs go overseas? Why are we losing American jobs? It is really pretty interesting. I sat down with the CEO of Raytheon in Wichita, Kansas. He was moving 400 jobs over the border to Mexico. And I said to him, Have you looked at working with the union to make sure that we can save these jobs?

He said, Yes, we sat down. We did everything we could. We went to productivity. We tried new ideas. We sketched it all out. And he said, Todd, I realized that even if my workers came in and worked for me for free, I would still have to look at moving those jobs to Mexico.

Well, it dawned on me then it is not about wages. And from my previous experience I can verify that. I used to work at the Boeing Company. My job was to bring jobs into the Wichita area. When I was asked to bid a job, I had a predetermined rate that I could use based on a manufacturing hour or an engineering hour or a modification

hour for the Boeing Company in Wichita. And for a manufacturing hour, the going rate back in 1994 was $150 per hour, and yet the average wage was about $15 an hour. In other words, 10 percent of the cost of making a product in Wichita, Kansas was wages, and the other 90 percent, a large part of which was driven by the cost forced on that company and every company in America by the Federal Government, barriers placed on these businesses by the Federal Government, keeping them from being more competitive and creating and keeping more jobs.

I have something that we have been working on, the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLITTLE) and I have been working on, in the Economic Competitive Caucus. We have decided that we can identify the areas where the Federal Government has created barriers to new jobs and we are going to try to eliminate those barriers. And one of the first ones that we are going to try to eliminate is the tax system that is so punitive on new jobs.

One of the things that is in the document the Democrats have is ending tax giveaways. We have very little ways that we can getting things done that we hope to see done. For example, we want to have alternative fuels in America. So what we have done is we have the process. We have used tax credits and tax relief to see that we have alternative fuel sources available. Well, the Democrats want to end these tax giveaways because they think they are just a giveaway. They want to hold that money and create more bureaucracy.

But we think we can get some better results if we trust these companies to take a little of their money and reinvest it into creating more jobs in America. So we want to change the tax system. We want it to be fair, and we want to see some tax relief because people do three things when they get a little extra money in their pocket: They save it or they spend it or they invest it. If they save it, that goes into saving accounts which create money for mortgages so people can go out and buy new homes. If they invest it, they invest it in companies that sell their stock. The companies take that stock and they build more facilities and they hire more people. That is also good for the economy. The third thing is they spend it. When they spend it, that is a demand for goods. Those goods then are off the shelf and they have to hire people and create new products and bring products in so that they can replace what has been taken from the shelf when people spend their money.

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. TIAHRT. I would be glad to yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Talking about one of the big differences that we have between the Republicans and the Democrats in this House and in this Nation in terms of what goes on nationally here in Congress, there didn't used to be such a difference. In fact, President Kennedy said, ''A rising tide lifts all boats'' and promoted broad-based tax cuts to stimulate economic growth in the early 1960s upon taking office, and it definitely worked. I think with our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, the Democrats, they tend to view it as what they call a zero sum game. In other words, if somebody wins in that situation, that means somebody else has to lose.

And the thing I like about President Bush and the Republican policy is that we kind of harken back to the Reagan era and the Kennedy era, where we try to provide broad-based tax relief to everyone, recognizing that when we do that everyone will benefit, rich and poor. And that has happened, by the way. And, in fact, our standard of living is on the rise. And real after tax income, according to the figures I have, are up by 11 percent since December of 2000. That is substantially better than the gains following the last recession.

And I also note just in terms of the effects of tax relief that despite the collapse of the stock market and the commencement of a recession in 2000; the terrorist attacks of 2001, which we just commemorated here earlier this week, the fifth anniversary of 9/11; and the ongoing war against terror, the economy has expanded by more than $1 trillion since President Bush took office.

Our Speaker addressed this. I wrote this down a couple of years ago. He said our job is to leave this country a better place for our children and grandchildren, and I think that is really what it is all about.

And this is something I think is really unfortunate, that the two parties cannot come to better agreement on this because we have had that in the past. And right now there is such sharp division with the other party constantly clamoring. They are promising higher taxes. That is one of the planks in their presidential platform. It is one of the planks in many congressional candidates that are running this year. And whenever we hike taxes, it takes money out of the people's pocket and puts it in the pocket of the government and puts the money out of the families' control and into the hands of government bureaucrats. It seems to me that our policies empower the individual.

Taxes are way too high. Even after the Bush tax cuts, they are way too high and need to be cut further. And that is something that we constantly try to do as Republicans. I think every year, the Republican majority, we have introduced and passed bills to cut taxes. We are still trying to eliminate the horribly unfair death tax that is nothing more than a vicious socialistic scheme to punish the rich that was enacted back in the early part of the 20th century. We would be so much better off, as the gentleman observed, to change our tax system so that we are not all spending so much money to comply.

And I really appreciate the gentleman's efforts in leading this discussion tonight and look forward to work with him to improve economic competitiveness, to empower families and individuals, to reduce the burden of government on their lives.

By the way, the overwhelming impact of government regulation I think actually has a greater economic burden on families and individuals than direct taxation. I think it is astounding to see what this is costing us. When everybody wonders why are houses so expensive, you have got to look at all the built-in government regulation that causes the price to be probably 50 percent higher than it would need to be.

Mr. TIAHRT. And also in that regulation, it is all based on an adversarial system between government and the private sector.

One of the things that I look through is how we can improve the relationship between the Federal Government and how they do business with the private sector because everything is set up as an adversarial relationship. The EPA, for example, the Environmental Protection Agency, spends over half of their budget on lawyers. The reason they spend it on lawyers is because they are taking companies to court and suing them, and that means that these companies are spending more of their money just to defend themselves.

And we had a very good example happen in Wichita, Kansas about how the government could actually work as an advocate instead of an adversary and still get the accomplished goal completed. I got a call from the Wichita Area Builders Association, and they told me that the home building industry in Wichita, Kansas had been shut down. This was three summers ago. I started looking into it, and I found out that OSHA had targeted that county in South Central Kansas, Sedgwick County, where Wichita is located, and they brought all their personnel down there and they started going through all these job sites and writing citations and assessing fines, and everybody just left and went home. And as one subcontractor told me, he said, When I build a house, my portion is very small. I am just a framing contractor, and my profit is probably only about $2,500 per job as an average; so if I get a $5,000 fine, I may as well not go to work. So they have stayed home.

So I called up the regional director of OSHA, and I got them together with the people from Wichita, the Wichita Area Builders Association, and they worked out an agreement where OSHA would announce that they were coming and then they would go through the job site together with the contractor and make a list of any potential violations, and then they would leave them alone without any fines, any citations, and let them work out the problems. They would come back in 6 weeks and check on them. They did this. In the meantime the Wichita Area Builders Association hired someone out of the insurance industry that taught workplace safety, and he started sending them

around to job sites. At the job sites, they realized that the biggest problem that employers were facing was the inability to talk effectively with their workers. There was a language barrier. Many of the workers were Hispanic. They didn't have good English skills. And how do you tell somebody that you cannot prop a ladder up against a wall at 45 degrees, that you need to prop it up at 60 degrees? Well, if you don't have good language skills, it is difficult to do that. So they hired an interpreter to go around with this insurance safety engineer, visited all the job sites, and then they completed that process. OSHA came back and they found out that all the checklists had been completed and everybody was back to work. So here was an instance when OSHA, working with the private sector as an advocate for a safe workplace, brought everybody back to work. Costs were reduced. Everyone went back to work. The same goal was accomplished. The goal that OSHA has of a safe work environment and the goal that the workers have, keeping their workers from being injured and raising the Workers' Compensation claims.

□ 2000

Mr. DOOLITTLE. You make a very, very good point, and I have occasionally seen a talented government official who is a problem solver. And so they get out of the adversarial mode where they are doing inspections and levying fines, and they are actually trying to create solutions for the businesses and the interests over whom they preside in order to make things work. We don't see that nearly often enough. And I think that is exactly the type of direction we need to move in.

All the business people I know and all the working people are trying to accomplish a good thing, and it is extremely unfortunate when the government gets so heavy-handed, and instead of solving the problem they create many more problems. We have had a lot of this in the environmental regulation area in the Sacramento region with, really, an unhelpful approach by certain Federal agencies.

I think that maybe the winds may be shifting a little bit after considerable prodding from the congressional delegation, and we may see a more friendly attitude in, say, the regulatory area of some of these agencies. And I certainly hope so, because I really like the example that you gave where you saw the good results that came from a different approach, where it is a helpful, solution-oriented approach as to this heavy-handed, traditional bureaucratic government, adversarial approach.

Mr. TIAHRT. And what is interesting is that when we have put this legislation together to codify the very example that I gave you before, Republicans are for that, the Democrats are against it. And here we see this, once again this contrast, and it goes through all eight barriers that have been created by Congress over the last generation. Most of these barriers, in fact probably 99 percent of them, were created under a Democrat Congress and we are still trying to undo the mess that has been done.

And, more recently, we are trying to make health care less expensive in America. We are trying to do it by innovative practices, by bringing market forces to bear on things like prescription drug and insurance sales. And one good example is associated health plans, where we would allow Americans in associations like your real estate agent or your insurance agents or farm bureau members, where they could join as an association to purchase health care. But the Democrats have opposed those innovative ideas because they want a single-payer plan. They want universal health care. They want socialized medicine.

Now, we have seen a lot of socialized medicine. We have seen it in the United Kingdom, we have seen it all through Europe, we have seen it in Cuba, we have seen it in Canada. In fact, if you look at our northern border, look at the hospitals in Seattle, Detroit, Buffalo, they are filled with Canadians who are unable to get health care in Canada. So they come down to America and they pay right out of their pockets; they are so glad to get it. But they have limited health care in all of these places, because if you have a single-payer plan it is like every contract is a cost-plus contract.

You know, the government right now, when they purchase things, they want to have a competitive contract. We see that whether they are buying tankers or toilet paper. They want a competitive contract. Why is that? Because when two companies compete, it brings the price down. When you have a single, sole-source contract which is based on all the costs plus a little profit on top of it, then there is a real incentive for all these people who are providing services to the government to drive up their costs higher and higher, because that means the profit margin, which is a percentage of cost, is greater and greater. So the costs go up dramatically.

And in socialized health care where it is a cost-plus contract for every service provider in health care, it drives the costs up, and so the government has no choice but to limit health care access.

And my dad is a good example. When he was 82 years old, because we have a free market system, he was able to get open-heart surgery. Had he been a Canadian citizen, he wouldn't be with me today. But he is 87 years old, he is healthy, he just had a trip to the West Coast, and he did that because he got open-heart surgery at age 82, something he could not have gotten in socialized medicine.

Our system is very good, but we have opposition in trying to make it more innovative and market responsive, from the Democrats.

Mr. DOOLITTLE. We do. We have some friends that lived in Germany, and when they would come over to the United States, one was an American citizen married to a German national, they would come over and they would spend the first day or two at the dentist's office, which I always thought was odd. That wouldn't be the first thing I would want to do if I came back home to the United States. But in Germany, you can't get preventive dental care, and so you have to wait until they have a tooth fall out or a cavity or something.

And it was real frustrating. They would come over and get their teeth cleaned and have different kinds of work done. But I always thought, what a strange thing.

You know, you hear about these socialistic single-payer systems; for years they were extolled. I think the glamour of this has sort of worn off. In fact, I have heard it said that those kinds of systems are great if you are healthy, but if you have a serious problem like you were talking about with your father, people come here, because we have the competition, we have the highly trained experts that can diagnose, that can treat, that can perform these miraculous types of surgeries.

And we need to improve the system because it still isn't really driven enough by market forces. And that is what really the seeds for transformation of the whole health care system, private and public, were in that Medicare prescription drug bill.

And you and I both know that the Democrat party did everything they could to deny the prescription drugs to senior citizens. Why? Because it is a good issue for them to not solve but to talk about and campaign upon.

And I have noticed they are very good about not solving things. I can't think of a single thing they have solved. But they are good about bringing up problems and stirring up emotions and promoting reasons why they should be elected. But we actually got that through, and it has just been very, very well received.

The premiums are actually dropping as a result of this Medicare prescription drug program. And what I really liked about it was, it contained for the first time the ability of any American in this country to invest money in a health savings account and to be able to get a tax deduction for it. And there has been a huge expansion in the number of health savings accounts as a result of that.

And my hope is, and our hope at the time we enacted it was that this would begin to put the consumer in charge of his own health care, and through competitive forces, finding out who was a quality provider and who offered the best price, you begin to bring the cost of health care down. And I think we really have a bright future in that area.

Mr. TIAHRT. That is an interesting concept, because the two things that we need the most in our economy are a good education system and a good

health care system, and those are the two things that the Democrats do not want to trust to the free market.

Mr. DOOLITTLE. And yet they talk about it all the time and blame us for being antihealth care and antieducation. And yet all the innovations that have occurred in the last dozen years have occurred under Republican leadership.

Mr. TIAHRT. I think a good example is phonics versus word recognition. They went through the education system, they went through the education bureaucracy that is controlled by the government, this concept that young kids just need to learn words. They don't need to learn phonics, they just need to learn words, and if they do that, they will have control of the English language.

Now, that kind of experiment wouldn't have gone very far if we had a competitive system for education where parents had the ability to take their money and choose their own school, because most parents didn't believe that using something other than phonics would work.

Now, this grand experiment about word recognition is gone now and we are back to phonics because it did not work. We have got thousands of kids across America that have a very difficult time reading. They have a hard time understanding new words, they have a difficult time pronouncing the words that they do know because they don't have a good grasp of phonics. Instead, they were taught under this archaic system that was forced on our kids by a bureaucratic, government-controlled system void of the free market.

On the side of health care—and by the way, the Republican Party is for the free market, they are for a new concept in education and they are for accountability, and it is a contrast from the Democrats.

Moving back to health care, what would it be like if you could go to a Web site and shop around for, say, a physical? You could see the list of doctors and what they bid for a physical and what services they would provide.

Right now, what the Democrats are proposing is a single-payer system where you are assigned a doctor, and that is where you go, and there is a set fee that he is going to be paid. And if your costs go above that, you may have your health care limited. So it is a different concept. In the two parts of our culture that we really need innovation because the future depends on it, we depend on health care, but we depend on our kids having a bright future by a good education. And yet the Democrats won't trust the free market system. In fact, they are really against the free market system on a lot of issues.

Let's go back for just a moment on energy, because I just want to show the contrast between what the Republican House has done and what the Democrats have tried to stop.

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Would you yield before you get to energy? Because I want to comment on that.

Mr. TIAHRT. I would be glad to yield.

Mr. DOOLITTLE. This is something I find that is very, very encouraging. Young people in general do trust the free market, and that is something that I find as a beacon of hope as they are coming up, because they are going to be the next generation that takes power. And I really think a lot of these heavy-handed sort of antifree market ideas which are embodied basically in a liberal Democrat philosophy, I just think that rings very hollow to the coming generation. And I take great hope in that.

Just before you go to energy, I want to mention, speaking of young people, education. One aspect of the President's No Child Left Behind plan, which we enacted in Congress, which we passed and he signed into law and became enacted into law, is competition in education.

You know, we have great schools in our area, and they were great before No Child Left Behind. In some ways there have been some unfortunate issues with that legislation for our areas, but one of the real areas of transformation has been in the inner city.

In no place, I think, have we seen greater success for lifting people out of a hopeless future and putting them into a situation where finally they are going to be able to compete with the skills that they are learning in school than in Washington, D.C. Washington, D.C. has more charter schools than any other place in the country. These charter schools are actually educating children.

When people do criticize the President's plan, I wish they would keep in mind that for the inner cities across this country this has brought a renaissance in education that has not been seen in this country for over 50 years. And in our inner cities we have had a lot of social problems festering that spill over into the suburbs in areas that you and I and many of us represent.

I just really want to commend the President. I really feel that he has made a huge difference improving the lives of people, young people and their parents, by encouraging accountability and encouraging competition in education. And I just want to say to the Nation at large, they really should look at Washington, D.C. to see what is happening here in the public schools, because opportunities have been created and lives have been blessed that never were before.

Mr. TIAHRT. When I first came to Congress, I was on the District of Columbia Subcommittee on Appropriations, and took some time to look at the D.C. schools. And in 1995, the dropout rate in Washington, D.C. schools was 60 percent. Six out of ten kids that started school never got to the graduation line.

Now, since we have made some changes, since President Bush has been involved with enhancing charter schools and since some of the private sector government involved with vouchers, we have seen the dropout rate go down. Now it is down to 47 percent, which is a significant improvement. But they have still got a long ways to go.

I cannot imagine the schools in Kansas tolerating a 47 percent dropout rate, but it is tolerated here for some reason. And the difference between 60 percent and 47 percent has been these Republican principles where the free markets got involved, either through vouchers or through charter schools, and giving these kids hope, hope that if they complete their high school degree, they will have a better future.

And I think that is a significant advancement, brought on by Republican policies and the free market system that have changed the education system right here in the District of Columbia; and we could see advances all across America if we could carry them out.

Mr. DOOLITTLE. And one of our former colleagues, Frank Riggs, has been a real leader in this charter schools movement, and he continues to be involved these days in the private sector for education now, and is still involved in a nonprofit involving charter schools.

I just think the Nation should be aware that this is a Republican idea that has been fostered, that has been legislated, and we are seeing clear results.

You yourself mentioned the dramatic decline. It has a ways to go, but someone once said it doesn't matter so much where you are as it does in which direction you are headed. And in education in the inner cities, we are headed in a positive direction, and it is positive for the first time in many decades. And we just have to keep up the positive flow in that area, and I think we will be blessed in many different ways in this Nation.

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Mr. TIAHRT. I want to go back to energy just a little to talk about the contrast about how the opposition the Democrat Party has made to trying to create jobs here in America.

The House has passed the Energy Policy Act, H.R. 6, with 183 Democrats, including the Democrat leadership, opposing this bill. In this bill was the advancement of production in the Alaskan National Wildlife Reserve, or ANWR, it is called for short. What is the term, the abbreviated term? It is an acronym.

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, ANWR.

Mr. TIAHRT. It is basically the North Slope of Alaska, which is approximately the size of California. There were also many other things in the Energy Policy Act. It included conservation, it included wind energy,

wind-generated electricity, for example, which we have about eight wind generating farms in Kansas today. It included ethanol production. It included research and development for hydrogen-based energy. It had a lot of good things in it, yet 183 Democrats, including the Democrat leadership, opposed that bill.

I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Kansas have been producing oil for over 100 years. In fact, just in August I was at Coffeyville Resources, in Coffeyville, Kansas, where they have had a refinery for 100 years. They were celebrating 100 years of producing gasoline. It was very interesting.

Now, contrast that to the Democrat policies of not drilling in ANWR. Here we have Kansas, and we think it is beautiful country. We love the people there. The production of oil is done in an environmentally safe manner. We all live there, our kids are healthy. In fact, we just had a couple in Kansas that celebrated their 80th wedding anniversary. Isn't that wonderful? An 80th wedding anniversary. Well, it is a healthy place to live.

But the Democrats didn't want us to drill in ANWR. ANWR is basically a frozen tundra, but it has been romanticized to be this glorious place with huge, beautiful green mountains and reindeer running everywhere, caribou everywhere, and polar bears everywhere. But basically it is a frozen tundra. It is moss on top of a flat plain. Well, all the space we were asking for in H.R. 6, the Energy Policy Act, was 1,600 acres.

That is about three sections. If you are a farmer, you know what a section is. It is a square mile. It is about three square miles, basically. That was all that was needed to produce oil, and oil that would make a significant reduction in the cost of gasoline in America. But it was opposed by the Democrats, the Energy Policy Act.

We passed a bill called the Refinery Permit Process Schedule Act, a piece of legislation that I worked on, to help us move the regulatory process along so that we could update our refineries. We haven't built a new refinery in this country for about, what, 25 years?

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Yes, that is right.

Mr. TIAHRT. So now we are trying to expand the ones we have now and accelerate the permit process. It was opposed by 176 Democrats. They did not want to see our refineries expanded, because they knew that would reduce the price of gasoline, and they are opposed to that. They smile when the gasoline prices are up; they frown when gasoline prices are down.

They also opposed the Deep Ocean Energy Resources Act. This is where we drill more than 100 miles off the shores of America. And 156 Democrats, including the Democrat leadership, opposed this bill of expanding our production so that we could reduce the cost of energy in America.

The Democrats have no plan for reducing energy other than just saying we are going to get rid of imported oil. Well, how do you do that? You have to impose, what, restrictions on trade? No, the better way to do it is to allow the free market system to work, develop new technologies, like cellulose ethanol.

I met this morning with a Kansas company that is going to develop a new technology for cellulose. And I want to tell you about that for a minute. Cellulose, or excuse me, ethanol today is produced from the kernel of a corn, is the example I use. The kernel of a corn. Once it is processed, there is a by-product they take to the feed lot, and it is very good for the cattle. Right now, the cost of ethanol is somewhere around $2 to produce, sometimes it is $3, based on how much they can get for their by-products. But if we can successfully develop this cellulose, they not only use the kernel, but they use the cob, they use the husk around it, they use the stalk, they use the tassel, and they can even use the root. And they can chop all that up and process it and use that cellulose to make the ethanol.

If the technology advances, as it is proposed, they can produce it not for $4 a gallon, not for $2 a gallon, but for $1.07 per gallon. Some believe they can get below $1. Can you imagine how nice it would be if we could go to the gas pump and buy E–85, 85 percent ethanol, 15 percent gas? Fifteen percent of that would be $3 a gallon, and 85 percent would be at $1 a gallon. What is the composition there? It is significantly lower than what we are seeing today. It would be below $2 a gallon. That would be a good step forward to reducing the cost of energy.

But those research and development policies, those new ideas were opposed by the Democrats. We are trying to lower the price of fuel; they are opposing us every step of the way.

Mr. DOOLITTLE. If the gentleman will yield. You know, ethanol is very exciting. The President has proposed the hydrogen initiative, which the burning of hydrogen has no by-product except good old H2O coming out of the tailpipe. These things, I know, sound futuristic, but, actually, hydrogen fuel cells exist. I drove a hand-built, million dollar Toyota Highlander around Roseville that was a hydrogen fuel cell. It was quiet and powerful. It was excellent.

Now, one of the problems that is not quite worked out is they do not have the longevity they need to have. But it is the Republicans' intent to get us completely off of petroleum. We shouldn't have to be dependent on something that comes from foreign countries, who, by the way, for the most part, are hostile foreign countries. And it is time that we, just as a matter of national security, get off of our dependence on oil.

We are moving, I am voting, and I believe you are too, just as fast as we can to get into something else. And there are some transitional technologies, like the gas-electric hybrids, like the E–85, like the vehicles that are battery powered that move people around their own local community. We have two such communities now that are approved for, I think they call them EAVs, and those are my communities of Rockland and Lincoln, which are both approved for that. We have the hydrogen area going on in Lake Tahoe, one of the five or six or eight areas in the country where they are doing research work on the fuel cells.

There are lots of exciting things. But in the meantime, though, as the gentleman pointed out initially, and we are going to push these alternative technologies, solar and wind and all of them as far and as fast as we can, but in the meantime, we need to continue to develop the new sources of petroleum.

One of the problems we have, as the gentleman observed, we haven't built new refineries in the last 25 years. It is true that we have expanded capacity within the existing locations, so that has helped us get through what would otherwise be an insurmountable problem. But the fact of the matter is that now third world countries like China and India are coming into their own. There is greatly increased competition for petroleum.

This country has increased its gasoline usage enough that if you have a natural disaster, like we had last year in the Gulf of Mexico, where we have quite a bit of refining capacity, then we don't have enough, and then there is a shortage and then the price goes way up. We ought to, just to protect our national security, develop more refinery sites.

And it is true that the Democrats tend to oppose this every step of the way. And what happens then, when we do get these huge price spikes, people need to understand that we could avoid a lot of that if we took some steps now and built some more refineries. We could avoid a lot of that if we would drill in ANWR. Fortunately, we made the biggest discovery of new oil in the gulf since the discovery of oil at Prudhoe Bay, and that just happened here in the last week, so that is very, very fortunate, but we ought to be enacting this deep water bill that Mr. POMBO has sponsored out of the Resources Committee because it would vastly increase the reserves of petroleum and natural gas and would lower the price for people in this country. And it would be a huge boon.

It is frustrating to see that there is such partisan antipathy towards, and almost unanimous opposition from the Democrats to us moving ahead. It just slows down our ability to get things done.

Mr. TIAHRT. And you are talking about the contrast that we have between the philosophy the Republicans have, trusting people, believing in the free market, and the philosophy that the Democrats and liberals have of telling people what to do because they are not smart enough themselves.

There is a real good article that was in today's Washington Post that was written by George Will, and it talks about a Wal-Mart that is located in Evergreen Park, Illinois. This is a suburb just a few miles from Chicago's city limit, and that suburb is 88 percent white. But at this Wal-Mart, 90 percent of the customers are African American.

Now, one of the women that were interviewed there was pushing a shopping cart, and she had a 3-year-old along, but she had kind of a chip on her shoulder. And she told this interviewer that, well, she applied for a job here and they didn't hire her because the person that was doing the hiring had an attitude. So the interviewer says, well, why are you here? And she looks at the questioner as though he was dimwitted, and directs his attention to the low prices at the DVDs on the rack next to her. Well, it turns out 25,000 people had applied for the 325 openings in that store.

Now, this really vexes the liberals, according to what Mr. Will says in his article, liberals, such as John Kerry. He called Wal-Mart disgraceful and symbolic of what is wrong with America. What is wrong with America.

That is kind of puzzling, because the median household income of Wal-Mart shoppers is under $40,000, but it is a huge job creator. In fact, they have 1.3 million jobs, almost as many as we have people in uniform for the entire U.S. Army. And according to a McKinsey Company study, Wal-Mart accounted for 13 percent of the Nation's productivity gains in the second half of the 1990s. In other words, Wal-Mart was one of the reasons the Clinton administration looked so good economically, yet they think that is what is exactly wrong with America.

The article goes on to say that they have accounted for more than $200 billion in savings a year, which dwarfs the government's programs for the poor, of food stamps of $28.6 billion and the earned income tax credit of only $34.6 billion. In other words, Wal-Mart has increased the standard of living for working poor people and people who earn below $40,000 here in America. In fact, people who buy their groceries at Wal-Mart save 17 percent.

Now, I am not here to advocate for Wal-Mart, but I am here advocating for the free market system and contrast the Democrat policies with the Republican policies.

The Chicago City Council, unconcerned about the sales tax they would get, passed a resolution saying that Wal-Mart would have to pay certain wages. They wanted to dictate the wages. They wanted to tell them what to do and to tell them what benefits they were going to give. Wal-Mart said, if you are going to do that, we are not going to build any stores in Chicago, so Mayor Daley vetoed that.

But the liberals think their campaign against Wal-Mart is a way of introducing the subject of class warfare in the American political process. They are more right than they realize, but it is not how they anticipated. Before they went after Wal-Mart, which has 127 million customers a week, they went after McDonald's and tried to sue them for people being too fat. They have 175 million customers per week.

Then, in an article written by the liberal magazine American Prospect, they gave full page ads talking about who was responsible for lies, deception, immorality, corruption, and the widespread labor, human rights, and environmental abuses, and having brought great hardship and despair to the people and communities throughout the world? What villain were they talking about? Were they talking about North Korea? No. Were they talking about the Bush administration? One would think that would be one of them, but, no. Were they talking about Fox News network? No. They were talking about Coca Cola.

The liberals are opposed to the free market system. They are opposed to a company like Coca Cola, which sells 2.5 billion servings of Coca Cola every week.

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It goes on to say when the liberal Presidential nominees consistently failed to carry Kansas. And I am from Kansas. Liberals do not rush out to read the book titled, ''What's the Matter with Liberal Nominees.'' No, they look to a book turned into a best seller that is called, ''What's the Matter With Kansas?'' And it ends with saying, notice the pattern here, the book ''What's the Matter With Kansas?'' says that the people in Kansas don't get it.

They vote for conservatives, they should be voting for liberals. People are going to vote for people that they feel best represent their ideas of supporting the free market, personal liberty, trying to give them the opportunity to make their dreams come true.

Liberals want to tell even places like Wal-Mart and McDonald's and Coca-Cola and voters what to do. So there is a sharp contrast between the Republican and Democratic Parties.

It carries over into Federal spending control. Republicans have had strong plans to hold the line on nondefense, nonhomeland security spending. Even in time of war, when we have a threat of terrorism, we want to make sure that we protect this country. But when it comes to the other part of the government, we are holding the line on spending.

Last year, in the Appropriations Committee that Mr. DOOLITTLE and I serve on, we eliminated 53 programs, saving taxpayers $3.5 billion. We cut earmark spending by $3 billion without any legislation, and we passed, each year, our bills on time, under budget, and avoided massive year-end omnibus packages.

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Nondefense discretionary spending was cut for the first time in 19 years. Ronald Reagan was President the last time that happened.

Mr. TIAHRT. House Republicans also proposed 95 program terminations for a savings of $4 billion. This year, Members' requests for projects was reduced by 37 percent, and the dollars spent on projects declined in every spending bill. Overall, spending on Member projects was reduced by $7.5 billion this year.

Mr. DOOLITTLE. And the increase in mandatory spending, and two-thirds of the budget is mandatory spending, we slowed the growth rate of mandatory spending for the first time in 9 years. 1997 was the last time that happened.

Those are two huge accomplishments.

Mr. TIAHRT. Today, through the rules of the House, we enacted earmark reform to make sure there is clarity and visibility in what we are doing through the earmark process.

In contrast, the Democrats have no plan. They have not proposed any plan to improve mandatory spending programs. They have tried to add $45 billion in new spending in the Appropriations Committee alone. More was attempted to be added on the floor, and over the past 4 years, the Democrats, had they been in control, they would have increased discretionary spending by over $106 billion.

They voted against the Deficit Reduction Act. The Democrats unanimously voted against H.R. 4241 in November of 2005. The final vote was 217–215. The Republicans held the line on the deficit. We reduced it.

The Line Item Veto Act, which would save money, 156 Democrats, including the Democratic leadership, voted against it. The final vote was 247–172.

Earmark reform bill, H.R. 4975, Lobbying Accountability and Transparency Act, 192 Democrats were opposed to that act, including the leadership.

To make matters worse, they are eager to raise taxes which will have a horrible impact on the economy. They want more revenue to increase government spending. That is what they propose.

In our final time here, I want to talk a little bit about the September 11 resolution that was passed yesterday on the floor of the House and show the contrast.

JOHN BOEHNER said on Wednesday, when we adopted this overdue resolution marking the fifth anniversary, but only after a lengthy and partisan debate which further exposed the sour relationship between the Democrats and the Republicans, we finally passed the bill. Why was there some opposition to it? According to JANE HARMAN, a Democrat from California, ''I wish we could have considered a different resolution today.''

I thought we ought to spend a little time talking about that resolution.

House Resolution 994 was a commemoration of the fifth anniversary of September 11. Most was very generous and general in its verbiage. For example, the resolution, ''Expressing the

sense of the House of Representatives on the fifth anniversary of the terrorist attacks launched against the United States on September 11, 2001.'' No problem with that.

''Whereas on the morning of September 11, 2001, while Americans were attending their daily routines, terrorists hijacked four civilian aircraft, crashing two of them into the towers of the World Trade Center in New York City and a third into the Pentagon outside Washington.''

No problem there.

It talks about the nearly 3,000 lives that were lost and about how it was al Qaeda who declared war on us, which is all in the news and everybody agrees. Why was it controversial? It was controversial because the resolution talks about what the Republicans have accomplished to respond to the terrorist threat.

''Congress passed and the President signed numerous laws to assist victims, combat the forces of terrorism, protect the homeland and support members of the Armed Forces who defend American interests at home and abroad, including the U.S. PATRIOT Act of 2001 and its 2006 reauthorization, the Homeland Security Act of 2002, and the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2004, the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002, and the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004.''

Now the Democrats don't want the people in America to be reminded that Republicans have responded to the threat and passed good legislation which has become effective and now is making a difference. It is hard to argue with success. We have not had a successful attack in the United States of America since September 11, 2001.

I have heard it said on the floor, we are not safer than we were before September 11, 2001. I say we are safer than we were before September 11, 2001. Thanks to the Republican leadership and the President of the United States, thanks to the young men and women in uniform who have taken the fight to the terrorists.

This battle is going to be fought somewhere. The al Qaeda membership tells us that on their Web sites, in their interviews, and when we catch their data off laptops or printed material. They are going to bring this fight to us.

I observed an interview in Guantanamo Bay at the facility there. I heard through an interpreter what one al Qaeda member said while sipping tea while being interviewed. He said, ''When I get out of here,'' not if, but when, ''it is death to America, death to America, death to America.''

Now there are many people here that think we are going to be safe, these guys are just criminals. We don't need to be in Iraq. I have to tell you, for one, I hope that this war is fought over there where the terrorists are, where every American carries a gun instead of fighting it on the streets of Washington, D.C., or New York City or Wichita, Kansas. For us to get out of the Iraq early would be a horrible mistake.

The stated goals of al Qaeda and Al Zawahiri, the spiritual leader for bin Laden, he said our stated goal is to get the Americans out of Iraq. They could declare victory if we took the policies that the Democrats have been reporting of leaving Iraq and getting out. We have to complete this job.

There will be a time to leave Iraq when the country is a safe democracy, when it is controlling its own borders, when it is controlling its own criminals, when it has a government that continues to be effective as a democracy. That is when it is time for us to get out. We cannot afford to allow a safe haven for al Qaeda, and that is their stated goal. By pulling out early it would simply give them a victory and make us less safe.

This battle needs to be fought where every American carries a gun. That is what the 9/11 resolution was leading to. I supported this, but it was opposed on the floor by the Democratic leadership and the Democrats. But when the chips were down and everyone thought about November 7, a majority voted for this resolution.

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Osama bin Laden said the center of the war on terror is in Iraq, yet we hear Democrats asserting Iraq has no connection to the war on terror. Osama bin Laden declared that, and that is why we need to understand it is important that we succeed in Iraq against the terrorists.

Mr. TIAHRT. The policy of Howard Dean and many of the liberals in the Democratic Party has been, let's not fight them, let's not capture them, let's not interrogate them, let's not bother them. If we leave them alone, they will leave us alone. We knew, going back into the 1970s when we were leaving them alone, that they were going to come after us. They came after us in Lebanon in the 1980s and they killed 241 of our Marines. They went after our embassies in Africa, they went after the USS *Cole*, they went after the World Trade Center in 1993, and came back in 2001. And since then, even though this country has not been attacked on its home soil, there have been attempts.

Thanks to our police force, the United States Government, the CIA, the FBI, those who try to protect us, the President and his leadership, we have not had a successful attack by terrorists on American soil since September 11, 2001.

The policies proposed by the liberal Democrats are dangerous for America. The Republican policies will lead to a bright future where this country is safe, where the economy is strong, and where every American will have an opportunity to make their dreams come true. That is the stated goal of the Republican House. It was the very goal that we read, our vision for the future. I would like to close with that.

The vision statement is, ''We will promote the dignity and future of every individual by building a free society under a limited, accountable government that protects our liberty, security and prosperity for a brighter American dream.'' That is what the Republican Party is about. That is what the Republican-controlled House is about.

We are pleased that we can talk to the American public and the Speaker tonight about what we have been doing to show the contrast and carry out the possibility for every American to pursue their dream successfully.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to come before the House once again. As you know, the 30-Something Working Group has been coming to the floor for 3½ years with great intensity in the last 2 years because a lot has been happening to America versus for America as it relates to national policy in the area of health care, education, economic development, helping small businesses and large businesses provide health care insurance for their workers.

We can go from as large a company as General Motors having to cut back on their employee workforce and having to make major cutbacks at U.S. companies because of a lack of a policy dealing with health care. You can go all of the way down to the small business that only has 5 or 6 employees that are encouraging their employees to get on Medicaid because they can't afford to give them a package that is affordable for those individuals to provide health care insurance for their families.

Those of us in the 30-Something Working Group, we don't come to the floor to say Republicans, Democrats, Independents, what have you. We come to the floor to give the American people the straight talk and also Members of Congress straight talk about what they are not doing for their constituents and Americans in general.

We are the leader of the free world as it relates to a democracy, but our democracy and economy is suffering because of a lack of oversight, a lack of adhering to Article I, section 1, of the U.S. Constitution that says we are supposed to be the legislative body.

Mr. Speaker, I must say there are a number of Republican Members that are coming down to the floor because I can tell you, if I was on the majority side, I would be quite nervous right now. When the election is 50-some-odd days away and the American people are looking around and saying, why don't we have the essentials, such as a health care policy?