

Now, it is wholly possible that something at some point in the future may result in the ability to use embryonic stem cells for the treatment of disease, but I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, and my colleagues here and to anybody who truly is interested in the factual nature of this scientific question, a very complex question, and that is that the scientists are way ahead of the politicians on this.

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Congresswoman FOXX mentioned one of the wonderful breakthroughs that was just announced from Wake Forest earlier this week, and that is the use of amniotic fluid to find and recover, capture, if you will, embryonic stem cells that have none of the ethical dilemma of whether or not life is being destroyed in order to advance science. None. None of that ethical dilemma.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to recognize that science ought to be listened to in this, and we ought to pay attention to facts. There is no reason to move forward with a bill that will not necessarily result in significant cures for diseases and that will only, only, result in the demagoguing of an issue and hold out a false hope for individuals for whom they believe that if we just pass this bill that their disease will be cured tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, that simply is not the case. The biggest bang for the buck in terms of utilizing taxpayer money, Federal taxpayer money, which is hard-earned taxpayer money, for appropriate research is in the area of adult and cord stem cells and possibly embryonic stem cells that are recovered in a way that has none of the ethical dilemma or challenge.

Mr. Speaker, I was honored to be with you this evening.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIRES). The gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to come before the House again.

The 30-Something Working Group, as you know, has been coming to the floor now in the 108th and 109th Congresses and now in the 110th Congress to share with the Members of the House and the American people information about what is happening here under the Capitol dome, and I am very excited to report that there is an awful lot that is happening. More work has been done as it relates to assisting the American people over the last couple of days or the last hours, which is historic in many ways, than happened in the entire 109th Congress. It was talked about, it was promised, but it never happened. So I am glad to come to the floor with my colleagues who will be joining me shortly.

I think it is very important, Mr. Speaker, to not only commend those

that have been consistent on message, not only message, but action. I can tell you that hearing my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, you would think that they have been in the minority for the last 14 or 16 years, because they sound like all of a sudden they are ready to do something about the problems that are facing this country.

I can tell you also, Mr. Speaker, that the fact is that we moved in the right direction in securing this country and passing the 9/11 Commission recommendations, and, like we promised, Mr. Speaker, in the 109th Congress, the last Congress, we worked in a bipartisan way. When we passed that piece of legislation, we had not only overwhelming, full support from the Democratic side of the aisle but a high number of Republican Members joined Democratic Members in voting for those recommendations to be placed into law pass this House.

Today is a very historic, very emotional time for those of us that fought on behalf of Americans that punch in and punch out every day to be able to receive a hike in the minimum wage to \$7.25. Again, we said we would work in a bipartisan way along with our Republican colleagues, and over 300 individuals voted for, including a number of Republicans, I think 80 or 81 Republicans, joined the entire Democratic Caucus who voted in the affirmative for an increase in the minimum wage to give the American worker a well-overdue raise. That will move on to the Senate and hopefully to the President's desk.

I think it is important, Mr. Speaker, to look at the way we have moved in the right direction on ethics, saying we are willing to hold this House to standards that the American people would like for us to be held to and to also have a committee that will review any question of conduct as it relates to any Member of the House and that will consider that in a bipartisan way and report back to the appropriate overseers of the House here so that people know that we have checks and balances.

Just mentioning those three items, Mr. Speaker, and looking at how Republicans have voted with Democrats because we have taken the lead to bring these issues to the floor, it is a perfect example of what we talked about for 3 years here on this floor. The good thing that I like about what we talk about and then what we do is the fact that we follow through, Mr. Speaker, on what we have shared, not only with the Members on the majority and the minority side, now the Democratic majority side, but what we would do if given the opportunity. I think the Members should pay very close attention, because the American people responded in a very positive way.

It has been said there will be mistakes made, and it will be painful in some instances when we look at PAYGO regulations that we have imposed on ourselves. That is another ini-

tiative that passed this floor, that we will not start a program or send money out of the door of the U.S. House of Representatives unless we can show how we can pay for it.

We know there are some war issues there and some other issues, but as it relates to what we call here on the floor, Mr. Speaker, regular order, where a Member files a bill and says I want to do X, Y and Z, and don't worry about it, we will borrow it from a number of the countries I have identified in the past that own a piece of the American apple pie. As we continue to move on, Mr. DELAHUNT, we want to start peeling these numbers off, showing how America is now starting to make itself whole as we start to pass policy.

I think it is also very, very important, Mr. Speaker, to note that there will be a lot of things said on this floor. That has been the case since the beginning of the country. That is a good part of our democracy. Members can come to the floor and say what they wish to say. They are representing their constituents back home, and their constituents every 2 years have an opportunity to vote if they want them to return back.

Mr. DELAHUNT, before I yield to you, I guess I would just like to put a word of caution out there. To those who feel they can come to this floor of the People's House and share information, to make an argument or an action or inaction sound appropriate, now, I know many of my friends on the other side, and I do call them friends, because we all are friends, we see each other, but we weren't elected to come up here and pat each other on the back and say "I am more dedicated to you than I am to the folks back home or the American people." I will say this. We are all in the spirit of doing the right thing.

But I just want to caution, because I think what got the Republican majority in the 109th Congress and the Congresses before that in trouble was the fact that there was more allegiance to the Republican leadership.

When we start talking about these bipartisan bills, Mr. DELAHUNT, which I would like to do, I stood here at this podium, this mike on this floor a similar night several months ago, starting a couple of years ago, and said bipartisanship is only allowed if the majority allows it.

I didn't have a problem with the frontline or the everyday Republican Member of this Congress. I had a problem with the Republican leadership that led their caucus in the direction of special interests and in the direction opposite of what the American people said they wanted.

So what we are doing now is we are moving in the direction the American people wanted. They said they wanted ethics. We voted for it on the floor. We received Republican votes on those issues.

The American people said they wanted to raise the minimum wage. We voted here on this floor, and 80 or 81

Republican Members voted saying that they support it.

We voted to implement all of the 9/11 recommendations. We said that we would do it. Republicans on that side followed suit, many of them, and voted to secure America.

So when we move the embryonic stem cell legislation and prescription drugs, all of these issues are based on leadership. We start talking about a bipartisan spirit, and we will let the record, Mr. RYAN and Mr. DELAHUNT, reflect our intentions and what we want to do.

Yes, we are going to have some partisan votes in this House. But these are major issues. I don't care what anyone, any pundit, says, some Member going back home saying "I voted against that." It is going to be hard for them to say they voted against the person that is making \$5.15 an hour. "You voted against that? Oh, you are real tough, Congressman." Goodness gracious. These are people who can't even afford to buy gas.

But we are not going to focus on that, Mr. Speaker. We are going to focus on the 80-plus Republicans and the entire Democratic Caucus that voted to give the American people a raise.

Mr. DELAHUNT, Uncle Bill, we are so happy, sir, that you are a part of the 30-Something Working Group. We are so happy that this is your inaugural night in the 110th Congress, where we are in the majority, your joining us here on this floor.

We talked about your contributions last night. We said that we have a Medicare recipient within our midst. We talked about individuals that are drawing down on one of the pensions that maybe you received in your long career of public service. But we appreciate the fact that you are continuing, and we said we will continue our commitment.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Long, long, long years.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Well, again, I am honored to be here. I heard that last evening my name was mentioned here in the House, and I presume that it was mentioned in a way that was kind and generous to a senior citizen, a senior citizen that has the Medicare card to prove that.

Talking about Medicare, we are going to address Medicare in this session of Congress, and we are going to do something about that so-called prescription drug benefit program that was passed over the objections of almost every Democrat and a few courageous Republicans several years ago. Because as you know, Mr. MEEK, and you know, Tim RYAN, there was a provision in that particular legislation that prohibited the Medicare Trust Fund from negotiating with the large pharmaceutical companies for a discount.

In other words, whoever is the director of the Medicare Trust Fund can't go into a room and sit down with the drug companies and say, "Let's discuss

a fair price, because we are going to purchase in large quantities prescription drug benefits," for people like myself, "and we are going to effect real savings, like they do in the Veterans Administration."

I have seen estimates of savings that range from 30 to 80 percent on drugs where discounts could be made available and effected, drugs that save the lives of people and enhance the quality of life for those of us who have reached the golden years.

It is extraordinary in terms of helping people who have worked hard all their lives from not having to make those tough choices between food and heat, or air conditioning in the case of Mr. MEEK and the young lady who just became the chair of a very powerful subcommittee here in the House, who is now known as Cardinal WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. She is a rabbi.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I guess. I am just using a term that we often use here. But she is certainly dressed like a cardinal this evening.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you, Mr. DELAHUNT.

Mr. DELAHUNT. But I have to tell you, I am really proud of the work that your generation has done over the course of the 109th Congress to bring home that message to the American people. You did it effectively. You are helping my generation and you have our profound gratitude. Because it was clear the message that the three of you and other colleagues of ours in the Democratic Caucus spoke to over the course of 2 years resonated with the American people.

I am so proud of each and every one of you. Congratulations. I think we can all share great pride in what has been accomplished since we took our oath of office just a week ago. It is extraordinary. There is a new tone.

You know what is particularly gratifying to me is to see so many of our colleagues, our Republican colleagues, our good friends, our dear friends, join with us in really moving forward an agenda that benefits all Americans.

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Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. To the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I think maybe I should yield to the gentleman from Ohio because he wants to say something.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. You are the cardinal, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. No, that is okay. I defer to the senior Member.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I think for those watching we have to explain what the term cardinal means, in terms of a new position.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. No, we really don't.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Could you amplify on that, Mr. RYAN?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I would be happy to. In the Appropriations Committee, I think we have now maybe 11 or 12 sub-

committees, and the chairs of the subcommittees are referred to in the body as cardinals. Well, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, as the cardinal and the chair, carries the gavel for the Legislative Appropriations Subcommittee. So we are very, very proud of our 30-Something member.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Ratified by the Democratic Caucus.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Ratified by the Democratic Caucus.

But what I think is interesting about all of this is that when you look at today we passed the minimum wage bill. Historic. Look at what we have been able to do with the 9/11 Commission report; what we were able to do with ethics reform; what we are going to do with negotiating drug prices; what we are going to do with stem cell research. When you look at what will be done in just a few weeks, the light of government and the power of government over the past 10, 12 years has been used really to take and help the top 1 percent of the people in the country, whether it was for tax cuts for millionaires or corporate welfare for oil companies or energy companies, whether it was for corporate welfare for the pharmaceutical industry, but the resources and the energy of this body were being used and the levers of government were being used to help that very small percentile of the American people who had the ability to invest in stocks, who have the ability to move their investments abroad to China and other countries and ship their goods back here and who take advantage of the tax cuts and make money off of corporate welfare. They just benefitted in every single way.

But if you look at what we have done and what we are going to do in the next couple of days, we raised the minimum wage, which will affect millions of Americans, 3½ million women and children, lifting them out of poverty. And you can pull all the stats you want, but the bottom line is that people who make minimum wage are going to make more now in the United States of America. And that is not saying we have done anything tremendous. That should have been done years ago.

When you look at what we are going to do with student loans, cutting the rates for student loans in half for both students and parents, loans that have come out. Cut the interest rate in half. That will save the average person who takes out a loan \$5,000 over the course of the loan.

So now you have an increase in the minimum wage, now you have a reduced loan payment because the interest rate has been cut in half and you are going to save money on that, and then, if you are parents or grandparents, like Mr. DELAHUNT, and qualify for Medicare, there is going to be less money out of your pocket to spend on prescription drugs because we are going to use the ability and the power of this program to reduce the cost of drugs for our senior citizens.

I will be happy to yield, but just in those three things, those three areas, Mr. DELAHUNT, average people are going to benefit, and we have only been here 2 weeks.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Right. And I look forward to the proposal that will reduce the interest on student loans, because I know so many families in my district back in the South Shore of Boston and Cape Cod and the islands, where the families and specifically the students themselves take a loan and find themselves graduating from college with a debt, on the average, of approximately \$20,000. We know that over time they are catching up for a significant number of years, preventing them from putting that bonus that they receive at the end of the year for a down payment on a home to ensure their future or maybe just putting it into an IRA.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And the time will come, as you have proven.

Mr. DELAHUNT. And it comes real quick.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. What I thought was funny today, or yesterday, in one of the local Capitol Hill newspapers, Roll Call or The Hill, the financial sector, the folks who lend money to the students were squawking, and it was blatant right in the article, because they are going to have reduced profits. Well, I am sorry, we are not here to make sure that you get good profits. We are here to make sure that students in the United States of America can afford to go to college and that they can go out and make good profits. This is not an enterprise here for you to tap into and let the money come shooting out.

And I am happy to yield to my colleague, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you. And I want to go back to the minimum wage for just a second, because this is the second day now that we have had the opportunity to watch Speaker PELOSI preside over our legislation that is passing out of the House of Representatives with the speed that we want, which should demonstrate to the American people that we share their priorities.

Yesterday was H.R. 1. Today was H.R. 2. And one of the things that, combined with the Six in 2006 agenda and our commitment to move this country in a new direction, that she committed to on our behalf was bipartisanship and making sure that this is the most inclusive bipartisan House of Representatives in history. And what I thought was the most emblematic of that and that was really telling of the difference between the way we are running this institution versus the way the Republican leadership ran it is that I looked up on that board with the vote tally at the end, and this is the first opportunity that we have had in the time that I have been here, in 10 years, as the gentleman from California (Mr. MILLER) indicated, the first opportunity we have had to have a straight

up-or-down, clean vote on the minimum wage. The first chance.

Before, we had to go through all this rigmarole and shenanigans, and we had to do motions to recommit and use procedural moves in both the Appropriations Committee and on this floor to get remotely close to a vote on the minimum wage. And you know how in the last Congress, in the 109th, when we would come on the floor as the 30-Something Working Group and we would lament the antics of the Republican leadership and the arm-twisting that they did, and even on those procedural motions where we were trying to get a vote even close to the minimum wage, they would wrench the arms of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle behind their backs and make them vote "no."

Well, what was the vote today? That vote on H.R. 2, on the minimum wage, there were 201 Members more that voted "yes" than voted "no". There was a 201 vote difference. Now, we have fewer than a 201 vote margin here. We are in the majority, but our majority is about 30 or 32. It is not 201. So look at what bipartisanship and inclusiveness does. And when you are finally allowed a free vote, a straight up-or-down vote on the American people's priorities, we had a huge bipartisan margin to increase the minimum wage. And that is beautiful. That is what democracy is all about.

Now, without violating rules and directly addressing the Speaker, it is so refreshing to see my good friend from Florida in the Chair tonight, and that is about as close as I will come to naming the gentleman from Florida, but I really was so gratified to watch us begin to go through the Six in 2006 agenda and finally deal with the priorities of the American people.

Lastly, Mr. DELAHUNT, I want to thank you for your kind words. The thing that makes me so humble and proud and excited about the opportunity that I have to chair a subcommittee in appropriations is, if you recall, Speaker PELOSI last week, when she took the gavel from the gentleman from Ohio, she talked about how she was able to bust through the marble ceiling. And the wonderful thing about Speaker PELOSI is that when she did it, like the leader that she is, she took other people with her. She didn't just bust through it for herself. Her busting through the marble ceiling gave so many of us, the diversity of this caucus, an opportunity to be a participant in making the world a better place for the American people.

Mr. DELAHUNT. And hope.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. And hope.

Mr. DELAHUNT. And I believe there is a palpable sense of optimism for the first time. And I think much of it is predicated on that bipartisanship that we are talking about that was reflected in that vote.

Now, partisanship is good in the sense that there is a diversity of ideas,

and out of that debate on ideas comes sound public policy.

We have had debate after debate, 10 years' worth of debate on the minimum wage. Workers in this country have been waiting for this moment, even if they make more than the minimum wage, because it sends a message that finally the U.S. Congress is listening to them. And so there is hope.

And it is not just Democrats. As all of you have indicated, there was a significant minority of Republicans who voted for it. So I think, not only should we be proud, but I think the American people should begin to understand that something is happening. Something good is happening, Mr. Speaker, and it is going to take time. It is not going to be all roses. There will be speed bumps. But finally we are turning into a new direction. And I know that every Member on the Democratic side is excited about working with our Republican colleagues to advance the agenda that will truly impact the lives of most American families.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DELAHUNT. Of course.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I think the good part about this whole first 100 hours and what we have been able to do, Mr. Speaker, is that we are making some structural changes. We are not petering around the edges. I think the people out there that wanted us to be bold, they are seeing bold. The minimum wage, now, obviously it hasn't been done in 10 or 12 years, since 1997, so it is bold.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Tim, could we go back? And, again, I promise I won't interrupt. I know sometimes I have a tendency to do that.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We like your passion.

Mr. DELAHUNT. But I have to tell you, the fact that one of the first orders of business was to institute the so-called PAYGO rules, which means we recognize that there is a deficit out there that has to be addressed, it is not going to be easy. I know the American people understand that. But again, it goes back to that optimism and that hope that is beginning to emerge.

Yes, it is going to be tough, but we are a resilient people. We are a tough people. And we might have to make some sacrifices, but we are going to get back to the time where the deficit and the national debt was declining dramatically and our national economy was booming and the disparity in this country between those that have and those that don't have was narrowing. Narrowing, Mr. Speaker.

So the issue of inequality of income and wealth will be addressed. It will be addressed, and we can do it. We can do it together. We can do it in a bipartisan fashion because the Members of this Congress, I believe, have heard loud and clear this past November from the American people.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I would reclaim my time, but I forgot what I was going

to say. So I will yield to my friend from Miami.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I hate when that happens.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Who we haven't heard from in 20 minutes. We are all excited to hear what you have to say.

Mr. DELAHUNT. We are waiting.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. On the edge of our seat.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Want me to yield back to you, Mr. RYAN? Maybe you can remember. Are you having a senior moment?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I am having a senior moment.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Okay. A 33-year-old senior moment.

I just wanted to mention something real quick that I think is important.

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There is going to be a lot of talk tomorrow. We are going to do some good legislation. We have stem cell research that is coming up, and we have negotiating as it relates to prescription drugs is coming up before the weekend. Something that is going to be common now, was uncommon in the 109th Congress, we are actually going to work a 5-day work week or a 4-day work week as it relates to the congressional calendar.

But I just want to mention something. I don't want us to leave this floor tonight unless we have an opportunity to talk about what the President's going to talk about an hour or so from now. I think it is important. I have served, Mr. RYAN and I have served on Armed Services in the last two Congresses; and you, DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, have served here in the last Congress and now this Congress at war.

Mr. DELAHUNT, you were here when this House voted to give the President authority to go or not, what have you. And now we are after the election in November, the American people, everyone thought, Mr. Speaker, that the election was going to be about the economy. They thought it was going to be about health care. They thought it was going to be about whatever the issue may be. But it was about Iraq, and it was about the decisions that were made, and the lack thereof, out of this Congress of asking the questions and oversight.

Now what is going to happen, Members, you are going to have the Armed Services Committee, you are going to have the Defense Appropriations Committee, you are going to have the Government Operations Committee, you are going to have a number of committees that have oversight responsibility on the committee level, providing the oversight for this war.

Now the President is going to come out tonight and he is going to ask, he is going to say, I call it an escalation, he calls it something else, of 20,000 new troops on the ground, boots on the ground. 3,017 men and women are no longer with us tonight; and we appreciate

their honor, we appreciate their service to the country. We have several thousand, over 15,000, who have been injured and that are a part of our medical veterans programs throughout this country. Some are learning how to walk now. Many of our injuries come by what we call IEDs, improvised explosive devices.

Many of the troops, as we look at, you look at your local television station, I know you see it in Ohio. I know you see it in Massachusetts. We see it in South Florida. We even see it here in Washington, DC. There was a new reserve unit that just left in Maryland. And I was watching the interview, and I think about when I have to travel as a Congressman, you know, my family's up here, I go back to the District. You know, that is 2 or 3 days I am away from my family. I say, oh, my goodness, I miss the kids. Imagine if I was leaving for 15 months for the second or third time. Just imagine that. How much of, how my kids would be taken away, you know. They won't get what they need from me. Just thinking about it, I can't help but get a little emotional when you think about this kind of thing.

And we know that they are being sent to do what, secure Iraq. So they are on a security mission. They are not there to say, well, you know, we are here to provide technical assistance. No, they are there to armor up.

I have been there twice. Mr. RYAN, we went together. And when they go out the gates of that base in Mosul or Baghdad or Tikrit, they may not come back.

Now we know it is a volunteer force and we know all of that. But I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, this has great gravity tonight, and I am so glad that I am hearing voices out of this Congress saying, we said during the campaign and during the election season, we will not defund the troops that are on the ground.

But no one, including the President, including the Iraq Study Commission, including all of the folks, General Colin Powell, I mean, General Colin Powell said it is a civil war going on, and if we send additional troops into a civil war it is the wrong thing to do. It is right here.

So if the Republicans or the President wants to say when someone is smart or when someone is credible, when they are carrying their message, here is a man that has served, Secretary of State, General, four-star, Joint Chiefs of Staff, well respected in this country, along with a number of other folks that are out there. So I think, Mr. Speaker, it is important that we shed light on this.

I know Mr. DELAHUNT has an hour that he does on a weekly basis on Iraq. But, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, I think it is time, no matter what, if you are a Democrat or a Republican, to be able to say, listen, I just came from the election, especially to Members that are new to the Congress, either in the

Senate or in the House, and they heard what the American people had to say.

So, the President, I think, and this democracy needs to really speak up and say, hey, listen, we hear what you are saying. We know what the study group has said. But it seems like you are kind of out there by yourself.

Because, one other thing I just want to add and then I am going to be quiet probably for another 20 minutes, like Mr. DELAHUNT identified, is the fact that we see how many troops that have died.

All right, let's look at the U.S. contractors, these mercenaries we have out there, that are playing a role of when these countries are pulling out, Great Britain, they are out. They are coming out this year. A number of the other, quote, unquote, allies are pulling out of Iraq. So before we even get an opportunity to light the bulbs up in the committee room and start asking the questions about what has been going on over at the Department of Defense since everything has been classified and secret and no one has come and testified in front of these committees of jurisdiction, the President now wants to say, let's send 20,000 troops.

These are not new troops. These are individuals that are what we call a back draft. Folks want to leave. We have folks signing checks, giving them \$40,000 to stay on. Are you going to go back to wherever you came from where the poverty is? Here is 40 grand. Take it to your family. Sign up for another 3 years. That is what we are talking about here.

And I am seeing these individuals that are hired, that are former military, by these companies, they are dying. When we went to the hospital over in Germany, there were contract fighters that carry out those convoys sitting there without a leg, Mr. Speaker. No one is thinking about these individuals because they are not wearing a U.S. uniform. They are veterans, and they want to work for these private contracting companies. So there is a lot of loss of life going on here, leave alone what could be happening with members of the CIA that we would never know how many of those individuals that have died in this conflict. So we have to bring the oversight management. I am saying that on the side of common sense.

I yield to any Member that wishes to pick up from this point, but it must be addressed.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I appreciate my friend from Florida, and I have, it is getting late for me and I am going to have to excuse myself for the remaining 15 minutes. But I want to pick up on something that you just referenced, and that is the American people have to understand that we are now alone. We are now alone with this issue.

Just this past week there was a report in the British press that the withdrawal of the troops from the United Kingdom would not be slowed. There are no plans on the part of the British,

or anyone else, any other nation, state on this planet, to introduce additional troops as part of this escalation. We are alone. There is no more coalition, if there was ever one to begin with, other than in name only.

America is now alone, because the rest of the world has concluded that the invasion of Iraq was a mistake, a mistake for reasons that I think we all know but are not going to list them here today.

But let's remember this, Mr. Speaker. In the past 6 or 7 months, there was a poll that was commissioned by our own Department of State, and the results were painful because this was the conclusion on two questions. The first question was, do you believe it is better for American troops to leave? This was asked in a way that presumably was done in a survey that was accurate. It was commissioned by our own Department of State. And 70 percent of the Iraqi people said, yes, we would be better off if the American troops left.

But what was more disturbing and painful was that in excess of 60 percent of the Iraqi people, according to this poll, said that it was okay to kill a member of the American military.

What are we fighting for now? What are we fighting for? Saddam Hussein is gone. There were no weapons of mass destruction. There were never any links to al Qaeda.

What have we accomplished? Well, I dare say that what we have done is we have managed to create an even stronger Iran that has a relationship with Iraq, that includes all kinds of agreements, including a military cooperation agreement between the government of Iraq and the government of Iran. Does anyone ever talk about that? Can anyone explain to me what the terms of that agreement are?

What are we fighting for? What are we fighting for?

And, with that, I yield to the gentleman and ask to be excused.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you to my good friend.

Before you are excused, though, I do want to tell you, you were so kind in your words about the three of us and you have been so helpful to us over the last 2 years and joining us here night after night on the floor. But, quite honestly, I really want to commend you on your eloquence and your commitment on this issue in particular. You have been one of the key leaders of the Out of Iraq Caucus. You have kept this caucus focused on those issues that are incredibly important.

As my good friend, the gentleman from Florida, indicated in his remarks earlier, one of the major reasons that we were returned to the majority of this institution is because of how strongly people feel about the situation with the war in Iraq. And so thank you very much for helping with that effort.

With that having been said, one of the things that I think that is going to be important in about an hour from now for the American people to note

when the President makes his remarks to the Nation is that what we heard the President say repeatedly, Mr. RYAN, Mr. MEEK, over and over again over the last several years, was that his strategy was going to be tied to the advice from his military leaders; that he was going to listen to the generals; that he was going to take a page from their book, take their lead, use whatever expression is applicable.

But I guess he was just kidding, or maybe he was just saying that he meant that until he wasn't hearing what he wanted to hear. Because at the point that his belief in the direction that we should be going in Iraq departed or parted company with the advice of his military leadership, that is the point that he decided to stop listening to them. We have now shifted the military leadership in Iraq. And I certainly realize that, particularly in a democracy, there is going to be a wide range of opinions even among military leaders. But the current military leadership that President Bush has brought in does support the strategy and the direction that he is planning on taking America tonight and in this war on Iraq. And it is just astonishing that this continues the pattern of this administration, where they ask their questions, or make statements and pursue a goal, an agenda and surround themselves only with people who agree with them.

I just, one of the things that I know we are going to hear from the President tonight is a caution that victory, if we achieve it, won't be similar to other military victories. He will talk about, as opposed to the Mission Accomplished banner that was emblazoned over his head on the deck of a battleship, he will caution us tonight apparently that that is not what victory will look like if we ever achieve it in Iraq.

□ 2000

It will not be perfect, and that the outcome will not be traditional. Well, it sure will not. It is hard to imagine that we are ever going to achieve a semblance of victory. One of the things that we intend on doing as Democrats and aggressively doing is holding this administration accountable. The question has been asked repeatedly by commentators and by our friends on the other side of the aisle.

There has been a question mark about whether or not Democrats will have the nerve to actually address the issue of funding these additional troops. And Speaker PELOSI has talked about how we absolutely are committed and will continue to be supportive with funding and every other measure of support for the troops that are there.

There is no question we would never pull the rug out from under the troops that are there fighting on behalf of America and fighting on behalf of democracy. But we absolutely should question this strategy, which is com-

pletely contrary to the goals and desires of the American people, and which is contrary to the advice of the military leadership.

There is no question, I believe there is no question about Democrats' nerve; no question about whether we plan on holding the administration accountable, which hasn't occurred in years. There has been, like you said, no opportunity to question the administration's choices and direction on Iraq; no opportunity to actually cast a vote on whether this new direction would receive and was worthy of funding.

I truly believe that is an opportunity that we will be having and that we should have and that we should accept, because the American people elected us to make bold decisions and make sure that we can move this country in a new direction, domestically and in terms of our foreign and military policy. I look forward to finally being able to reassert this institution, the United States House of Representatives' role in the system of checks and balances, because the unitary philosophy the executive branch in this administration supports is wholly contrary to the Constitution.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I appreciate your points. One of the things that we now expressed in the last Congress was having these third-party validators.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. That is right.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. This is not just Democrats. I have not talked to a Democrat yet who thinks that escalating this war is a good idea, and our new direction is not just continuing down the same war with more troops. But I just want to share a few quotes that I did some research on and pulled out that I think are indicative of what's going on here.

Colin Powell, as my friend from Florida said earlier, quote: I am not persuaded that another surge of troops into Baghdad for the purposes of suppressing this communitarian violence, this civil war, will work. That is Colin Powell, who basically led us into this mess that we are in.

Oliver North said, quote: A surge, or targeted increase in U.S. troop strength, for whatever the politicians want to call dispatching more combat troops to Iraq, isn't the answer. Adding more trainers and helping the Iraqis to help themselves is. Sending more U.S. combat troops is simply sending more targets. That is Oliver North. I found that in Human Events online.

Major General Don Shepherd, United States Air Force retired: I would not even consider increasing troop strength in Iraq. Shepherd, who works as a CNN military analyst, offered this analysis of what should be done next after he was briefed by members of the Iraqi Study Group. He wrote, quote: I would not even consider, again, I would not even consider increasing troop strength.

And I will give you one more, as we are going through this. Michael Vickers, former Special Forces officer, who

said the security situation is inextricably linked to politics. If you can solve some of the Iraqi political problems, the security situation becomes manageable.

If you cannot, all the forces in the world aren't going to change that, and I found that on the NewsHour with Jim Lehrer on PBS of December 12 of 2006.

So this is coming from Republicans. This is coming from Democrats. This is coming from people all over the country.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, I just get so excited whenever you do your own research, and you find quotes and all.

But I can tell you what's important here is to make sure that we follow through on what we told the American people. The American people voted for representation, and I am not just talking about proud Democrats, Republicans, independents, some young people that voted for the first time in their lives because they believe that there will be balance in this democracy that we call on.

So many of the issues that we talk about here, and so many issues that are within our first 100 hours that we want to work on, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, and that we said we would do in our Six in 2006 plan, the American people said they were for it overwhelmingly.

We have to be able to understand here in this House that we would carry out what we said would do. Now that is a paradigm shift here in this U.S. House. A lot has been said. Very little has been done, but we are moving in that direction.

I was in a meeting earlier today and saying that we need an escalation in the truth and not the troops. We need an escalation in the truth and not the troops.

The truth is that the U.K. is pulling 3,000 troops out by May. The truth is, several other countries that are, quote/unquote, allies in Iraq, they are paying ransom for their troops that are captured by insurgents, because of the lack of security there. The truth very well may be, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. RYAN and Members, the President is trying to say, well, I am going to send this in light of security, what have you.

Security missions to secure Iraq. What does that mean? Troops having to go out on patrol. What does that mean? IEDs, improvised explosive devices that will be on those roads. What does that mean? Fifteen months away from your family once again on the second or third deployment. What does that mean also when you look at the overall two theaters that we have now? Over 1.4 million troops, U.S. troops, have gone into theater over and over again.

What is our situation right now? Two-thirds of our military not ready to move as it relates to readiness if something was to happen. We have one-third that is ready. I am not giving out national secrets. You can read this in the newspaper.

So what's our job is to govern. What's also our job is to make sure that we provide oversight. That is what this U.S. House is all about. We're the People's House. You have to be elected to get here. One person said, in the Constitution, you can appoint a speaker, whatever the case may be, but mainly there is an election if a Member was to say, I no longer want to serve, whatever that reason may be.

Saying all of that, I am glad we touched on the issue. I think it is important because I know there will be a lot of talk tomorrow, because the President is the Commander in Chief. We committed during the election, when I say we, those of us that are in the majority, that we will not leave, that we will have the troops back, and we will not leave them underfunded, and that we will not pull the funding of the troops that are in Iraq now.

No one, I mean, no one, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, no one, I want to say this again, not even the bipartisan study commission, none of them, endorsed what the President is talking about right now.

The President had a meeting with some folks that he has been having a meeting with for the last 6-plus years, having a meeting with the same people, having the same input, the same advisors, and it is a merry-go-round of trust. I don't know if it is, you know, in all due respect to the folks that are making the decisions, I don't know if new people are being put into this circle of trust of saying, well, you know, maybe if I haven't been given good advice in the past, maybe I need to bring some different folks in to give me some input.

No, the only thing that happens in this circle of trust within the Bush administration is that sometimes people get off and they write a book about how bad the circle of trust was. That is what's happening.

Now, Donald Rumsfeld was the last one to jump off the merry-go-round. We don't know what he is going to say, but I think he is going to take it all the way, and he is not going to say anything at all. But there are a lot of bad decisions that have been made, and if you disagree within the circle of trust, you are out.

So I want the American people, I want the Members to pay very close attention, and, I am talking to my Republican friends as well as my Democratic friends, that we have the leader up and represent the American people on this issue as it relates to this escalation in troops. We need an escalation in the truth and not the troops, and that is where it is right now.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I know our good friend from Rhode Island wants to talk about H.R. 3, which we will be considering tomorrow. But the Iraq Study Group, which you briefly touched on a few minutes ago. It is amazing how that just almost has faded into oblivion; that their recommendations, the number of months

they worked, the expertise that was put together, led by former Secretary of State Mr. Baker and Mr. Hamilton, very well respected.

Nowhere in their recommendations, am I right, was there an escalation of troops. Was there any indication in the Iraq Study Group, who arguably is the finest group of experts that could have been put together to make recommendations, nowhere in there was an escalation of troops. At least from what I noticed, and you can correct me if I am wrong, the President essentially just dismissed their recommendation and moved on and went in the direction that he chose to go.

I would like to take this opportunity to yield to my good friend, to our good friend, the gentleman from Rhode Island, because we are dealing with an important piece of legislation tomorrow that has already been put on the President's desk once. And as part of the new direction for our Six in 2006 agenda, we are going to put it on his desk again, because maybe he will get it right a second time.

Mr. LANGEVIN. I want to thank the gentlelady, and before I begin on my comments on H.R. 3, the stem cell research enhancement act, I want to just thank my colleagues for their important comments on Iraq and the direction that the Iraq war has taken and the failed policy that we have seen in Iraq and the strain that it has put on the families of soldiers, the soldiers themselves. Clearly, we need a change in direction in America. That is what the American people expect.

This 100 hours agenda, obviously, is an important topic. I rise in strong support of the 100 hours agenda. As a four-term Member of Congress, it has been exhilarating for me to return to Washington and tackle the issues of the American people which have long been ignored. I am so proud to be a part of this new direction and a Member of this Chamber.

As we prepare for the embryonic stem cell research debate which will take place tomorrow, I am reminded that one of the primary reasons I ran for Congress, which was to make a positive difference in people's lives. The 110th Congress is being ushered in with a tremendous sense of hope and optimism. In the first legislative week, we have taken great strides towards improving the lives of hardworking Americans by increasing the minimum wage and fully implementing the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission.

H.R. 3, the stem cell research enhancement act, is yet another example of this agenda of hope. This legislation will remove the restrictions that current administration has placed on the advancement of medicine and the hopes of millions.

Tomorrow, we will hear from both sides of the stem cell debate about whether the Federal Government should support this type of research. We will hear promises and stories of tremendous scientific advancement.

We will hear the limitations on these advancements, and we will also hear some distortions. But I come before you tonight with confidence; confidence in the science of stem cell research; confidence that the American people overwhelmingly support this legislation; confidence that tomorrow a great majority of my colleagues will once again vote in favor of the stem cell research enhancement act; and confidence that, one day, once all of our Nation's leaders will rally all around all types of stem cell research, and we will see big changes in the field of medicine and in the lives of so many people who are suffering today.

So tonight, I rise, I rise to help spread this message of hope and optimism to our constituents who are watching at home; for the 400,000 Americans who are living with MS; the 60,000 American family whose have faced the fear of a loved one's Parkinson's diagnosis this year; the thousands of Americans who have seen family members come to Alzheimer's disease; the 250,000 Americans who, like me, live with the constant challenges of a spinal cord injury, and so many others. To all of you, I say: Help and hope are on the way.

I want to thank my colleagues for giving me time tonight and being part of this 100 hours agenda debate, particularly, again, what you have done for enlightening the American people on our position of the war on Iraq and the new direction that we need to take in this country.

Thank you very much.

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Mr. MEEK of Florida. We look forward to the debate tomorrow. I know Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ is going to give the e-mail address out, and then we are going to close out.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. We want to thank the people in the chamber for listening, and encourage people to come to our Web site www.speaker.gov/30something, and we also look forward to having a graphic so we don't all have to make sure we remember the Web site. Thank you.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Life is getting better, Mr. Speaker, and we will get the tools necessary, visual aids as we usually have here on the floor. We keep the chart companies in business.

Mr. Speaker, it was good to come to the floor again, 30-Something Working Group. We will be returning back next week with some of our new members that have joined us. Once again, we want to thank the Democratic leadership for allowing us to have this hour.

Mr. Speaker, historic days in the Capitol. Tomorrow will be the same. Friday will be the same. We thank God for the opportunity to be in the majority.

THE DEMOCRATIC AGENDA AND THE PRESIDENT'S AGENDA ON IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MAHONEY of Florida). The gentleman

from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the privilege to address you and of course all the Members here on this floor of the United States Congress. I would point out here in the beginning that it is about 8:15 here this evening, and the President will be giving his major address on Iraq at about 9:01 and so I intend to be asking for an adjournment just right before 9:00 so there is an opportunity to do that transition and that the President does have an opportunity to use this channel to speak to the American people.

To begin this presentation this evening, and we listened to the members on the other side of the aisle talk about supporting the 100-hour agenda, Mr. Speaker, I point out that this 100-hour agenda was a number just kind of picked out of the air or off the wall and it turned into a promise. And inside of that promise of 100 hours and to accomplish these five or six things within 100 hours are a whole series of other promises, and it appears as though the most important promise of all is we are going to do all this in 100 hours. The 100-hour promise. And not the promise for bipartisanship and not the promise for the most open Congress in history, and probably not the promise for the most ethical Congress in history. The jury is still out on that, Mr. Speaker, but this thing that preempts all, that trumps all is this idea of 100 hours.

Well, 100 hours to the American people might mean at midnight on December 31 when the ball dropped and hit the bottom in Times Square, the clock might start to tick on the 100 hours here in 2007, the new 110th Congress. But I don't take that position necessarily, Mr. Speaker. I take the position that when we gavel in and went to work here, if you want to count 100 hours, that is fine; if you want to make a promise to get something done in 100 hours, that is also fine. But that 100 hours didn't start for the first week. It didn't start for the first week because we were voting on things other than the six things on the agenda to be accomplished in the 100 hours.

And so then the promise that it was going to be bipartisan and an open process, we found out, I guess after Congress began, this 110th Congress, that this open process couldn't be opened up until the 100 hours were over, or otherwise they couldn't get everything accomplished in the first 100 hours. So bipartisanship went out the window a victim of the 100-hour promise, and so did the open kind of a system. The bills didn't go through subcommittee. They didn't go through committee. They didn't go through rules. No amendments are allowed. And yet that was all decided before the 100-hour clock began.

So we set up a clock, a legitimate clock, one that actually keeps the time here that Congress is in session. From when we gavel in this 110th Congress, we gavel in the morning, open with a

prayer and the pledge, and we gavel out in the evening. That clock has got a tick on that. We are paying people here to work around this Capitol the whole time the 100 hours is moving.

So I set up this clock so the American people can keep track of what the hours are, and I point out this: When we started this morning, we were at 31 hours that ticked away since. And these are just business hours. It is not a stretch; it is not 24 hours a day. It is the hours that this floor is in operation. In fact, yesterday, it was scheduled to be at 10:00, so a lot of people made their plans to be here at 10:00. It didn't work on Monday because of the football game. And I will just reserve my opinion of that tonight, Mr. Speaker. But the 10:00 time to start got moved back to 10:30, got moved back to noon and then got moved back to first votes at 5:30 yesterday afternoon. So some of that is not taken into account here, but as of about now, this 100 hours has clicked up to 42 hours, Mr. Speaker, have ticked away. And there have been a couple of things that have been passed, and some will claim that to be an accomplishment. And I don't intend to take up that issue either tonight, Mr. Speaker. But I would point out to the American people that we are at 42 hours and counting.

If you can't count time, you also can't count dollars or people. And it is important to understand the cost to the United States of America and the taxpayers that fund it. And we will be doing some of these tallies after hours tonight to come back with some better numbers tomorrow, and I will bring this chart then to the floor every day until the 100 hours ticks over, and we can make this 100-hour promise something that goes into the dust bin of history.

But this 100-hour promise has trumped the other promises. It has been more important than an open system of government. It has been more important than allowing anyone to offer a single amendment to any bill that has come forward here, and each one of those bills are going to change the destiny of America. Maybe a little bit, maybe a lot. But each one will change the destiny of America some. And the people I feel sorry for, all of those new freshmen Democrats, the ones that were elected to office having promised that they were going to represent their constituents here, they would have a voice, they would be effective. They bring with them the vitality of America. They bring the new ideas into this Congress, the fresh blood. The best responsiveness to constituents that you ever will see on average comes with the freshmen. We are glad when they come here every new Congress because it adds new vitality.

But that large crop of Democrat freshmen and that smaller crop of Republican freshmen I think have gotten their eyes opened up a little bit. I think they believed they would come here and they would be able to come to