

The next phrase is "In order to form a more perfect Union." The Founders simply believed that the new government would be stronger than the one under the Articles of Confederation. You see, the loose confederation of States had led to bickering and ineffective government. But this new arrangement of States has allowed the States to retain their power, but also work together for the common good.

Thomas Jefferson wrote therefore, The union is the last anchor of our hope.

The third phrase is "to establish Justice."

□ 1915

This refers to a problem that had arisen in the State court systems. And so by creating a Supreme Court of the land, the Framers hoped to prevent egregious examples of trampled rights. But the Framers had a higher purpose in mind, too. In Federalist No. 51, James Madison wrote: "Justice is the end of government. It is the end of civil society. It ever has been and ever will be pursued until it be obtained, or until liberty be lost in the pursuit."

The next section is to provide for the common defense. This phrase is perhaps the most evident today. See, the War for Independence had been fought for that very reason; and in the years following the war, our fledgling Nation had been unable to defend itself against the Barbary pirates and also from Spain and England threats. So the States realized they needed to unite to preserve the Union.

The next one is very important for today. The phrase "to promote the general welfare," this has been commonly interpreted to mean that the Federal Government can do almost anything as long as it accomplishes something beneficial. But you see, this definition ignores the Founders' real intent. See, they deliberately used qualifying words such as "general" because they meant to limit the powers rather than expand it. Think about it. Would it be proper and fair for the Federal Government to recognize certain groups over other ones, certain States over others? If the Founding Fathers didn't intend to create these special rights or special privileges or socioeconomic programs, there would not have been any reason to list the specific powers that are listed in the Constitution.

James Madison even stated that the "general welfare" clause was not intended to give Congress an open hand "to exercise every power which may be alleged to be necessary for the common defense or general welfare."

The final section reads "to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity." These words come from the previous phrase, for without law, it is impossible to achieve liberty for future generations.

I will close by saying we look forward each week to come to the floor on Tuesdays as we walk through the Constitution week after week to better un-

derstand this important document for this House and for this country.

RURAL VETERANS ACCESS TO CARE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, as many in this House of Representatives know, I represent one of the largest congressional districts in this country of over 53,000 square miles. The district is about the size of the State of Illinois. It is bigger than 25 of 26 States east of the Mississippi River. It has more hospitals than any other congressional district, but it has no Veterans Administration Hospital.

Some veterans in my rural district have experienced great difficulty in traveling to distant VA health facilities to access care. Though we have been successful in opening several VA outpatient clinics in the First Congressional District, access to care remains a real challenge for veterans living in rural Kansas.

I would like to share a couple of stories from Kansans who have written me recently. I received the following letter from the wife of a World War II veteran: "My husband and I have been residents of a long-term care facility for 2 years, and he is unable to travel 65 miles to take a physical at the Hays Kansas VA clinic, as is required by the VA to receive prescription benefits. They have stopped filling his prescription medicine. Veterans like Ralph gave several years of their lives for our country, and I feel it is a very ungrateful way to treat them."

The second case involves an elderly veteran from Hoxie, Kansas, who is in need of a pair of glasses. This veteran was told he must travel over 4 hours to the Wichita VA Hospital to get a new pair of glasses, a distance of about 260 miles, and it doesn't make sense to him because his community's optometrist is just across the street.

No, it doesn't make sense to any of us. Lack of access to VA care is a problem felt around the country by veterans living in rural America. Veterans who live in rural America are one in five of the veterans enrolled in the health care system. Rural veterans face unique challenges like long drives to VA facilities, bad weather, and lack of specialists. Limited access to VA care too often means rural veterans simply forgo the care and treatment they need. Studies have found that rural veterans are in poorer health than their urban counterparts. A policy change is needed. It isn't right to penalize some veterans because of where they live. It is time to provide these veterans the health care benefits they have earned and that have been promised to them.

I have introduced the Rural Veterans Access to Care Act with the goal of ending these disparities in access. This

legislation requires the VA to contract with qualified outside health providers to give our most underserved veterans more options to receive care. Rather than traveling long distances to reach VA facilities or deciding not to make the trip at all, these veterans would be given the choice to receive care closer to home at their local hospital or their community clinic or their local physician's office. Additionally, the VA would be required to fill prescriptions written by outside doctors to eligible veterans.

To meet the needs of highly rural veterans, the VA would contract and partner with community physicians as well as local hospitals, community health centers, and rural health clinics. These providers already supply high-quality care to America's rural population, and yet their services are denied to America's veterans.

Since our Nation's founding, rural communities have always responded to the Nation's call. Today, 44 percent of our country's military recruits come from rural America. When these rural soldiers return home from war, our Nation must be prepared to care for them. Let's take advantage of the successes of existing rural health infrastructure in order to meet the unmet needs of America's rural veterans.

For our elderly World War II veterans, our young soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, and those who served in all of the conflicts in between, this is a commonsense and life-saving approach that our Nation owes its rural veterans.

AMERICA CANNOT REPEAT MISTAKE OF 1938

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, in the year 1938 domestic needs were great in this country. The New Deal programs that FDR had actually failed, and the Depression had deepened during his second term to the point that the P-51 fighter plane was considered so insignificant and so costly it was not funded that year.

When World War II started, the bombing runs that we took as a country produced 20 percent casualties for us to the point that we suspended bombing runs until we could build enough P-51 fighters to accompany them. It was not until the winter of 1943 that we were able to have superiority over the sky in Europe.

The technology of today has made this world so much smaller and so much faster that we cannot afford to make the same mistake this country did in 1938. We cannot predict the type of future combat we will be called upon to participate in. We must be prepared for that future.

Decisions we make today, because basically it takes 8 years from design to construction of a plane, decisions we

make today have the impact of what kind of options we have both in the military and diplomatic sphere 10 and 15 years from now.

This country has controlled the skies since the Korean War, and we take it for granted. We have forgotten that we have flown a military sortie every day of every year for the past 16 years, and we have done so with the oldest fleet in the history of this country. Our newest plane, the F-16, is 30 years old. It is older than the pilots who fly it. There are F-16s at this time that are restricted as to the speed and the distance in which they can fly. We have 63 C-130 cargo planes that cannot fly if they actually have any cargo. We have KC-135s that generals in the field will not accept because the age of the plane makes it impossible to protect.

Despite our best efforts at our depots to try and fix these planes and patch them up, we cannot ignore the reality and forget we are in a difficult situation with the capacity of our military equipment. It may take, indeed, a catastrophe, the wings falling off, until we recognize the situation we are in, or find ourselves shorthanded in a time of need.

The Air Force has asked for the ability of recapitalization, taking 1,000 planes they have determined to be excess and no longer funding those planes and instead putting that money into new technology. This Congress has failed to allow them to do so on many of those planes.

If we had sufficient F-22s, we could get rid of all of our F-117s and save this country over a billion dollars a year over a 5-year period of time.

While we have been playing around in America, our enemies, our allies, and maybe those who in the future will become our enemies have not been sitting still. The Chinese have added 10 percent to their military budget every year since 1990. That is a 200 percent increase over the past 17 years. Their navy is expanding. Their medium-range missiles are expanding. In January, they conducted a test to shoot down one of their own satellites which is the same type we depend upon for communications in the United States. And more significantly, their Jian-10 is a sleek new fighter aircraft designed to narrow the gap between the Chinese and the American Air Force to give them numerical compatibility and technical equality to the United States Air Force.

The Russians have a new Sukov fighter airplane that they have already fielded which is technologically equal to what we have.

We have even found a Third World country like the Indian Air Force has put so much money into their technology and training of their pilots that in many respects they are equal to the United States.

We cannot afford to wait for the future. This country needs to build the fifth generation of fighters, the F-22. We need all 183. Actually, we need 300,

not just the 183 we have authorized. We need to put money directly into the new F-35s. That is the future: 1,500 planes for both the Navy, the Marines and the Air Force to be the next generation to give us technological superiority in the skies and maintain superiority in the skies into the next decade.

If we do not do that, we are desperately playing and gambling with our own future. We forget how long it took to ramp up to be producing the F-16s we fly today. This country should be producing 200 planes a year. Instead, in our budget for next year, we have scheduled to produce six, and two in the supplemental that were taken out. We are gambling with the future of this country because we have taken the past for granted.

In fact, as one general half jokingly said, if we are not willing to appropriate the money to let our Air Force build the new equipment and planes they need, maybe we should at least give them the opportunity to purchase the Russian planes so they can be flying something that is new.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot gamble with the future of this country. We cannot make the same mistakes we did in 1938. We need to put money into the building of the F-22 and the F-35 for the future of this Air Force.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. KING of Iowa addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. POE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to address the House once again. I am glad to see you there in the Chair. Also, I am glad to be joined by Mr. MURPHY and also Mr. RYAN. We are pleased Mr. RYAN can be here at the top of the 30-Something Working Group hour.

We come to the floor every week, sometimes two or three times a week, to talk about the great things that are happening here in the House, talk about how we are getting better not only as to oversight but appropriations, and also budgeting, making sure that we budget so we no longer have to borrow money from foreign nations.

The discussion here tonight is important because we have the emergency

war supplemental that is coming to the floor on Thursday. The Appropriations Committee dealt with that today. To have such an important Member like Mr. RYAN who is a member of the Appropriations Committee, they have been doing quite a bit of work. I know he has a lot to share with us making sure that we sling-shot the troops in for a win, and also the folks who have served our country, the men and women who have served our country in the past.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to note there is \$1.7 billion in this bill for health care; it is \$1.7 billion more than the President has asked for. Also as relates to veterans health care, there is \$1.7 billion more than what the President requested.

We had a chart on the floor last week that talked about Democrats when we were in the minority putting forth proposals to make sure that our veterans had what they needed once they left Afghanistan and Iraq, and even for those still in the service.

We have also put additional dollars in as relates to readiness, and we will talk about that because we have some definitions we want to share with Members.

But since Mr. RYAN has been spending a lot of time in the Appropriations Committee working on these very issues, I thought I would yield to my good friend and allow him to elaborate on the very work they have been doing over the last couple of weeks. I said before you came in, Mr. RYAN, that we are so happy you are here at the top of the 30-Something Working Group hour because you are an appropriator and that is an important position.

□ 1930

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate it, and no more important than the Ways and Means Committee, of which you serve on, and all your hard work over the past 4 years in the United States Congress, previous to that in the Florida Senate, previous to that in the Florida House, following in your mom's footsteps, who was also an appropriator in the United States Congress. So it is an honor to follow in her footsteps.

I think there is a couple of very important points that we want to make in regards to this bill that we have before us on Thursday. It passed out of the Appropriations Committee last Thursday, and this, in essence, in fact, in reality, is the piece of legislation that will help change the course of our Iraq policy.

The President has had free rein for the past 5 years from a Republican Congress that just went along with everything that he wanted to do, and I found it funny this weekend, as we were watching some of the weekend shows, and I was watching Meet the Press and former Congressman Tom DeLay was on, Richard Perle, one of the top, President's top defense advisers was on, and they were arguing that