

America from San Francisco to Cincinnati laying out the facts about the future financial condition of our country, discussing possible options and preparing the way for tough choices that those of us in Congress are going to have to make.

When you look at this tour, you see groups who usually disagree more than they agree on policy issues. That makes it even more extraordinary that they all agree that we need to sit down and work together to make sure our country doesn't fall into a financial canyon that we can never climb out of.

That's the message that is resonating with folks who hear them: the need to come together and work to find bipartisan answers to ensure a secure financial future for America.

What the tour has told us, too, is that we shouldn't underestimate the willingness and ability of the American people to hear the truth and support the decisions necessary to change our financial course, and that's encouraging.

Many of you may recall the Simon and Garfunkel song, "The Boxer," with the refrain, "Man hears what he wants to hear and disregards the rest." The Fiscal Wake-Up Tour offers hope that with education Americans may be more ready than we think to accept the fact that Federal spending cannot continue to balloon without consequences. It is time that we tell the American people what they need to hear and not just what they want to hear. "The Boxer" song, "Man hears what he wants to hear and disregards the rest."

Thirty years from now we won't be arguing in Congress over discretionary spending anymore because there will be no funding left in that category.

I'm not an expert in economics, but simple math tells us that little money will be left to ensure that our highways and bridges are safe, that there will be no money for cancer research and to solve the riddles of Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, that there won't be money to care for veterans.

Resources will be scarce to ensure our schools are the best in the world so that our children and grandchildren can get the necessary tools, particularly in math and science, to compete in the world marketplace.

We owe it to our young people to start the process today. Reining in spending is both an economic and it is a moral issue.

We cannot continue to avoid our responsibility to future generations of Americans by passing on a broken system in the form of unfunded Social Security and Medicare obligations and unsustainable spending.

We cannot continue to borrow and mortgage our future to countries like China, which has a terrible human rights record and has plundered Tibet, and has Catholic bishops in jail and Protestant pastors in jail and others in jail, or the Saudi Arabia that is funding Wahabism around the world, that

they carry obscene amounts of our debt.

But I'm going to be candid. Congress, on its own, unfortunately can't get it done in this politically charged atmosphere of Washington today. The Congress today is dysfunctional. The latest public opinion polls perhaps validate my assessment.

The American people expect us to put our partisan differences aside and to work together to get things done. We must move beyond the politics and come to grips with the fact that the financial future of our country is an American issue. It's not a red issue or blue issue. It's a red, white and blue issue. It's an issue that, as Americans, we should be working together to deal with.

Under the SAFE Commission process, Congress is the ultimate decision-maker obviously, but it will be the SAFE Commission, after holding hearings across the country, listening to the American people and putting everything on the table for discussion, entitlements and tax policies, which will send its recommendations to Congress for a mandatory up-or-down vote, similar to what we do on the base closing commission.

Congress will be the major part in the SAFE process. It will be at the table. We even hold out hope that Congress could find its way and act on its own.

First, at least four of the 14 congressionally appointed commission members must be sitting Members of Congress.

Second, if Congress enacts significant legislation aimed at addressing this looming crisis, the SAFE commission would terminate and cease to exist.

We hope this happens, but, quite frankly, I don't think it will. Abraham Lincoln once said: "You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today."

I believe there is a moral component to this issue that goes to the heart of who we are as Americans. By that I mean have we lost a national will to make the tough decisions.

The SAFE Commission offers us the opportunity to find a way forward to protect our future. Is it right for one generation to live very well knowing that its debts will be left to be paid for by their children and their grandchildren? No, it is not right, but it is immoral.

I'm challenging our colleagues today to come together—to know that while you served in Congress you did everything in your power to provide the kind of security and way of life for your children and grandchildren that your parents and grandparents worked so hard to provide for you.

The challenge, too, goes out to the leadership in Congress and the Administration to make this a truly bipartisan effort and put the SAFE Commission on the fast track to enactment.

How can we lack leadership on such a fundamental issue?

Leadership by definition requires taking initiative—to act before others, to develop fresh approaches.

This issue is timely and critical.

I urge you to review the bipartisan Cooper-Wolf legislation.

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IMPROPER OVERSIGHT OF BLACKWATER AND THE PASSAGE OF H.R. 3087 IS A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION TO RESPONSIBLY REDEPLOY OUR TROOPS FROM IRAQ

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

Mr. CUMMINGS. Madam Speaker, today in the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, my colleagues and I questioned the CEO of Blackwater and lead figures in the Department of State regarding private security contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

During the course of this hearing, I was absolutely alarmed and shocked by the stark reality that private contractors such as Blackwater have possibly created a shadow military of mercenary troops that are not accountable to the United States Government or to anyone else.

With 180,000 Americans, Iraqis and nationals from other countries who operate under an array of Federal contracts provide everything from security and intelligence gathering to infrastructure building and transporting supplies to a country nearly the size of California.

Even more alarming is the fact that Blackwater and similar private contractors make up the largest security force in Iraq. There are currently over 20,000 more contractors than the total U.S. military forces.

With these numbers, one may suspect the contractors are being utilized, in part, to mask the true extent of our involvement in Iraq. I am also concerned with the fact that many contractors such as those working for Blackwater are simply held to a different standard, where circumventing criminal law, rules of engagement and even the Geneva Conventions have become far too commonplace.

There have been 195 escalation of force incidents from Blackwater alone since 2005, including several previously unreported killings of Iraqi civilians. In 80 percent of these instances, Blackwater fired first. This "shoot now and ask questions later" attitude has resulted in further distrust amongst Iraqis for American military forces and the Iraqi Interior Ministry demanding that Blackwater cease its operations in Iraq, all during a time when winning the cooperation of Iraqi civilians and government is critical for our success for our mission.

Due to these and other incidents, Blackwater has undermined our strategic mission in Iraq and possibly stifled our already sensitive relationship with Iraq's neighboring states, those

same countries where garnering multi-lateral and bilateral support is critical to solidifying political reconciliation in Iraq.

The President has consistently stated that he wants to win the hearts and the minds of Iraqis. However, the ongoing use of Blackwater contractors that are consistently beyond legal reach is not the way to achieve that goal. Blackwater is clearly the realization of former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's vision of a "hollow military," where everything that can be privatized and outsourced will be.

Blackwater appears to be held above the law, as the State Department continues to make little effort to hold it accountable, while continuing to award contracts amounting to over \$1 billion since 2000, \$300 million of which were awarded as no-bid contracts. Clearly it is time for a new direction beyond the failed policy in Iraq, which has been further deteriorated by the administration's use of inept privatized security contractors.

That new direction begins with outlining a clear statement on appropriate and detailed contingency plans for a reasonable redeployment of troops from Iraq, including consideration of force protection for military and civilian personnel and a need to continue to protect our vital national security interests as mandated in Representatives ABERCROMBIE, TANNER and TURNER's bill, H.R. 3087.

As such, the passage of H.R. 3087 is a clear step in the right direction, that our men and women in uniform not sacrifice another 3,800 lives without a clear strategy for redeploying our troops. We recognize that, since the planning of the redeployment of our troops from Iraq is a complex status, we must plan accordingly as to not repeat the mistakes made in the original planning for the Iraq invasion and post-war occupation.

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

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana 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 New York (Mr. HALL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

HONORING OWSLEY BROWN

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

Mr. YARMUTH. Madam Speaker, it is my distinct honor to rise today in recognition of my good friend and a

great citizen of my hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, Owsley Brown II, as we mark the end of his 46-year career at Brown-Forman.

In Louisville, Owsley is well known for his success in business. He worked his way up to the top of his family business, and his leadership turned it into a giant in the wine and spirits industry. That fact is all the more astounding, considering that among the top companies in the industry 50 years ago, only his Brown-Forman remains a leader in the field.

The global expansion has taken the company to heights only dreamed of back then, and the branding under his watch was absolutely unprecedented. Jack Daniel's, a tiny acquisition of a half century ago, has practically superseded the term whisky itself. But in Kentucky, of course, we take the most pride in Brown-Forman's home-grown bourbons: Early Times, Old Forester and Woodford Reserve.

Owsley Brown's reputation in business comes not only from making money, but from creating an environment in which people want to work. Owsley himself takes great pride in the fact that the average tenure at Brown-Forman, 14 years, is three times the average for a Fortune 500 Company. The reason for this is simple. For many of these employees, Owsley Brown gave them more than a job; he gave them a home.

But Owsley's place in our community only begins with what happens in the walls and barrels at Brown-Forman Corporation. Through the philanthropy of Brown-Forman, Owsley set the standard for what it means to be a good corporate citizen. His commitment to social responsibility can be seen throughout his work for the Century Council, of which Brown-Forman is a founding member, and in every facet of Louisville life.

His dedication to the arts has been critical to Louisville's developing a scene in which music, theater, independent film and visual arts of every stripe have thrived, helping to forge our community's unique and exciting character. His philanthropic devotion to health care has helped make Louisville home to some of the best facilities, doctors, and medical innovation in the world.

What's more, as Owsley helped to make Louisville a vibrant 21st-century city, he never lost sight of the need to preserve Kentucky's natural beauty. In fact, he has served as a powerful force in protecting land from overdevelopment, particularly along Louisville's scenic riverfront. Long before conservation hit the mainstream, Brown-Forman began implementing policies to reduce the company's environmental footprint and enhance the environment around us.

So as Owsley took Brown-Forman to new heights worldwide, our community reaped the rewards. We are fortunate in Louisville, for even as a corporation sees its leader pass the torch into other

capable hands, Mr. BROWN remains one of our most generous and responsible citizens. His triumph and business exceeds the success of the bottom line. The true achievement he oversaw and engineered was creating a company of fine character and impeccable integrity, just like the man himself.

I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring my good friend, Owsley Brown, thanking him for all he has done and wishing him luck as he enters this next chapter of life.

Owsley, you and Christy now have time to see the world, and I have no doubt that you will use that time to change it.

COSTA RICA CAFTA REFERENDUM

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

Mr. MICHAUD. Madam Speaker, I rise tonight in strong opposition to the lies being told to the good people of Costa Rica about the importance of the CAFTA referendum they are about to vote on.

I went to Costa Rica last night to share some basic truths. The pro-CAFTA government is now telling the people of Costa Rica how wonderful passage of CAFTA will be for them.

Remember when the Mexican Government said exactly the same thing to the people of Mexico during a debate on NAFTA in 1993? What happened with the passage of NAFTA, 1.3 million Mexican farmers have been displaced.

The country's growth rate has stagnated. Wages have actually declined, and the country's environmental policies have been successfully challenged and chilled throughout NAFTA's outrageous corporate regime.

NAFTA and CAFTA have actually increased protectionism by restricting free commerce in lifesaving medicine. One hundred priests in Costa Rica have come out against the flawed trade model; and just this past weekend, hundreds of thousands of good Costa Rican citizens protested this referendum. Out of a country of 4 million people, that shows how strong opposition is, and it should be.

Voters are being told by the United States Government that we will retaliate if they do not vote in favor of this referendum. The people of Costa Rica can rest assured that the U.S. Government will not retaliate. In fact, let me quote a letter last week sent from our Senate majority leader, HARRY REID, and the Speaker of the House to the Ambassador of Costa Rica: "The decision as to whether or not Costa Rica joins CAFTA and votes yes or no on their referendum on October 7 is the decision of the people of Costa Rica."

The letter goes on to say: "We understand that it has been asserted by some that there is a link between the referendum vote and Costa Rica's continued participation in the Caribbean Basin Initiative. We are not aware of