

Congressional Democrats have already begun reforming the earmark process. We realized reform was necessary after the number of earmarks in appropriations bills skyrocketed under the Republicans. You didn't hear the President complaining then. In fact, he signed every appropriations bill that came to his desk.

Democrats, in stark contrast, have led the way in bringing transparency and accountability to the earmark process. We instituted a 1-year moratorium on earmarks in 2007 until a reformed process could be put into place. We also adopted rules that provided for unprecedented transparency in earmarks and then significantly reduced the number of earmarks last year.

Mr. Speaker, House Democrats are pleased to hear that the President is interested in reforming the earmark process. The Bush White House requests and receives funding for hundreds of earmarks each year, and we look forward to working with the President to both limit and bring increased transparency to the Presidential and congressional earmarks.

#### HONORING ARMY SERGEANT JON M. SCHOOLCRAFT III

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

Mr. JORDAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and recognize the ultimate sacrifice of a brave Ohio soldier, Army Sergeant Jon Michael "Mike" Schoolcraft III.

Mike attended high school in Wapakoneta and went on to study auto body repair at the Apollo Career Center in Lima. Teachers, coaches, family members, and friends all described Mike as a remarkable, reliable, hard-working young man who excelled at every activity in which he was engaged.

In his time on this Earth, Mike had a positive impact on people in his life. When he decided to join the military shortly after the September 11 attacks, he touched the life of every American family that lived under the blanket of safety he helped provide.

Mike Schoolcraft died on Saturday, January 19, while serving America in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In recognition of his valorous service, he was posthumously promoted to sergeant.

Mike is survived by his new wife, Amber, who lives in Hawaii. Mike's mother, Cynthia, along with many friends and loving family members, lives near his boyhood home. His father, Jon, lives in Indiana.

Mike stood up and volunteered to serve this great country. He fought to promote freedom. He gave his life in defense of his family, his community, his State and his Nation.

For this, each and every American owes him and his family a great debt of gratitude.

#### EXTENDING PROTECT AMERICA ACT UNNECESSARY

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

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, the House made a serious mistake last August when it passed the Protect America Act. I opposed the legislation at the time because it authorized a massive, unregulated electronic fishing expedition, an approach guaranteed to ensnare innocent Americans and a sloppy, inefficient way to collect intelligence. It lacks the basic standard of court review of the government's actions.

If we have learned anything, it is when officials must establish before an independent court that they know what they are doing when they collect communications, we get better intelligence than we do through indiscriminate collection and fishing expeditions.

Extending the PAA is unnecessary because existing orders issued under it will continue for a year and are broad enough in scope to deal with any contingencies that may arise.

In November we passed in this body a good bill to replace the PAA. Congress should never pass legislation under duress brought on by propaganda, misinformation, and fear-mongering. I urge my colleagues to remember this when we debate the topic today.

#### PASS ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE

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

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, economists say the most important thing Congress can do to stimulate our struggling economy is to act quickly, and that is exactly what this House is going to do today.

House leaders from both parties worked with the President to craft the bipartisan agreement that is before us. We came together, and by acting quickly, we are hoping that our actions spark our economy.

The package is going to provide some relief to middle-income families who have been left behind in many ways over the last 7 years. This bill gives 117 million Americans a tax rebate so they can begin to breathe a little easier when paying their bills in the coming months.

Equally important, this economic package also gives tax breaks to small businesses to help spur investment and job creation.

Mr. Speaker, economists said we need to act fast, and that is what we did. Let's get to work and pass this economic stimulus package today.

#### PASS ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE

(Mr. HALL of New York asked and was given permission to address the

House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HALL of New York. Mr. Speaker, times are rough right now. Signs of economic turmoil are multiplying, and we seem to be headed for, or already are in, a recession. Last week stock markets around the world dropped precipitously, and only an emergency rate change by the Federal Reserve prevented them from falling even farther.

The people I represent in the Hudson Valley have been particularly hard hit. Oil has passed the \$100-a-barrel mark, making it more expensive than ever for people to heat their homes and drive their cars. In suburban communities in the Northeast, like the area I represent, home heating bills are up by more than 30 percent over last year.

Expenses are rising; wages are stagnating. As a result, families struggle to pay their everyday costs. Our debts increase and investment in our future plummets.

Congress must act quickly. I am proud that this Congress will pass legislation today to stimulate the economy to help people and businesses, but especially the working families who need it most.

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#### HEALTH CARE TAX DEDUCTION

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

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues, last night while attending our President's final State of the Union, I was encouraged to hear him say: Ending the bias in the Tax Code against those who do not get their health insurance through their employer is one reform that would put private coverage within reach for millions, and I call on the Congress to pass this piece of legislation this year.

My colleagues, I'd like to draw your attention to the Health Care Tax Deduction Act of 2007, a bill which I have offered, and one that accomplishes this goal of insuring every American man, woman and child. This bill will allow individuals a tax deduction from gross income for health insurance premiums and unreimbursed prescription drug expenses for themselves and their family.

I urge you to cosponsor this bill and attack this problem with meaningful and responsible legislation. With this legislation, we can end the debate over inefficient government-run health care.

#### FISA

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, in August of last year, Congress passed the Protect America Act to close a dangerous loophole in our ability to collect intelligence information on foreign targets in foreign countries.