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House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes and each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

THE PELOSI PREMIUM

The SPEAKER. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm here to talk about the Pelosi Premium. Once a nightmare scenario, $4 gasoline may soon become a harsh reality on Speaker PELOSI's watch. Today, drivers are paying a dollar more per gallon at the pump than when the Speaker took office. This Pelosi Premium is hitting working families hard at a time when they are confronting soaring costs, a slowing economy and a housing crunch. Middle-class families and their increasingly tight budgets need relief, not more broken promises. We're operating under a set of broken promises.

Speaker PELOSI promised the American people a commonsense plan to lower gasoline prices, but House Democrats have not only failed to offer any meaningful solutions, they've put forward policies that will have precisely the opposite effect. We cannot tax middle-class families' and truckers' tanks from empty to full.

Speaker NANCY PELOSI on 4–18–2006: The Democrats have a plan to lower gas prices.

Speaker NANCY PELOSI on 4–24–2006: Democrats have a commonsense plan to help bring down skyrocketing gas prices.

August 4, 2007, Democrats have voted those four times to raise taxes in the 110th Congress: January 18, August 4, December 6, 2007, February 27, 2008. The Pelosi Premium continues.

Since Democrats took control of Congress, gasoline prices have skyrocketed by more than $1 per gallon forcing worker families to pay a Pelosi Premium at the pump. With reports indicating gasoline prices are beginning to hit $4 per gallon, the Pelosi Premium couldn't come at a worse time for middle-class families already being squeezed by the soaring costs of living.

The price we pay for both gasoline and oil is fundamentally an issue of supply and demand, but while U.S. oil consumption has largely remained the same over the past few years, world oil consumption has spiraled to 84 million barrels a day, up nearly 25 percent from 68 million barrels a decade ago. This results in a tremendous increase in prices.

As you are fully aware, gas prices have increased by $1.05 per gallon since NANCY PELOSI took control of Congress on January 4, 2007. This represents an increase of nearly 45 percent.

At the same time that world oil consumption has skyrocketed, access to world energy supplies has struggled to keep pace. Nowhere has this trend been worse than in the United States which stands today as the only industrialized Nation in the world that refuses to tap 85 percent of our available deep sea energy resources.

While the U.S. has held its consumption steady, more needs to be done to build a bridge from where we are today to the renewable and alternative energy future in which we all want to live. In fact, under the Democrats in Congress, we've gone from 50 percent of our oil imports coming from OPEC to 57 percent coming from OPEC in 1 year.

But before we achieve those things in the future, we'll have to figure out a way to live, work, and prosper in the present. For too many Democrats, growing our economy today, tomorrow, and next month isn't much of a priority. In fact, the majority has voted four separate times to raise energy taxes in the 110th Congress. But even if we had access to all of the oil in the world, we would need places to turn that oil into gasoline. Regrettably, the U.S. hasn't built a new refinery in 32 years and, in fact, has successfully shut down several at that time. The results are stunning. Today, the U.S. has only 149 operable oil refineries compared with 321 in 1981. That means roughly double the demand now must be handled with half of the number of refineries.

Let's remember this fall the broken promises made in 2006 and the Pelosi Premium which is costing us so much money.

THE PELOSI PREMIUM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISRAEL). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to read to you, Mr. Speaker, a memo from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee that was sent out in 2006. This was sent out to the Democratic candidates, and it was obtained by the Chicago Tribune.

''Demonstrate your dedication for fighting for middle-class families by clearly explaining how you will work to keep down the price of gas if elected to Congress. Hold an event at a gas station or other logical locations where you will call for real commitment to bringing down gas prices and pledge that, as a Member of Congress, you will fight for families in your district, not the oil and gas executives for which

this Republican Congress has fought so hard.''

Now those are some pretty interesting comments coming from the DCCC. On May 10, 2006, BARON HILL said this: ''In Congress, I will support measures that will strengthen our economy and lower gas prices instead of rewarding big oil companies and special interest lobbies.''

Mr. Speaker, once Mr. HILL got elected to Congress and voted to raise taxes on the American energy producers, he was somehow shocked when higher taxes resulted in higher gas prices.

March 12, 2007, in a press release Mr. HILL said, ''Gasoline prices have increased significantly over the past few weeks, with little explanation for higher prices.'' The explanation for higher prices is because of higher taxes.

Mr. JOE DONNELLY in a July 3, 2006, interview: ''I will be an independent voice who will represent the people of the second district. Not the wealthy oil and pharmaceutical companies that have bought our Congress and are running our country. We need leaders who will stand up for good jobs, a better prescription drug plan for our seniors, and a real energy plan that will work to drive down skyrocketing gas prices.''

Mr. DONNELLY, I'm sure your constituents and the people of this country are waiting for that energy to go forth in some results.

April 26, 2006, press release by Mr. ED MARKEY: ''Congress once again has an opportunity to help the American people through this financial pinch.'' Keep in mind, the Republicans were in charge and the Democrats were trying to win votes, Mr. Speaker.

''But by ignoring legislation like the Windfall Profits and Consumer Assistance Act, Congress has shown, once again, that it would rather put the needs of the special interests ahead of the needs of the American people. There is a cost to this kind of corruption in Washington, and it's at $75 a barrel and climbing.''

Mr. MARKEY, the price today is $113 a barrel, and you have not reintroduced your Windfall Profits and Consumer Assistance Act to Congress.

But what have we done? I tell you what we have done. The chairman of Energy and Commerce has got a solution: raise gasoline tax by 50 cents a gallon. I don't think that's what the American people had in mind.

July 26, 2006, in a town hall meeting, JIM CLYBURN, who is now the majority whip, says this: ''Thomas from Orangeburg asks: What are you doing about gas prices? They're ridiculously high.'' Mr. CLYBURN answered, ''House Democrats have a plan to help curb rising gas prices. We have outlined our plan in a proposal called Energizing America. I join my fellow Democrats in believing that drilling for more oil is not a long-term solution to our Nation's energy crisis.''

What is it? Buying bicycles? The Pelosi plan? Thirty bicycles for $30,000? Raising taxes? Fifty cents a gallon by the chairman of Energy and Commerce proposal? Five cents a gallon by the chairman of Transportation? A dollar a barrel of oil from the chairman of Transportation? Those are some great ideas.

April 27, 2006, when gas was $2.91 a gallon, and I will remind you that it's $3.44 today, a letter to Speaker Hastert signed by 88 Democratic Members of Congress, they said this: ''Just this week, the price for oil increased to over $70 a barrel.'' Don't we yearn for those days of $70 a barrel when it's $113 today?

We believe Congress has an obligation to determine the underlying causes behind the skyrocketing prices. Congress has an obligation to take action on behalf of the consumer. Where is the action?

All bark, no bite.

GOP: THE GRAND OIL PARTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Well, the Grand Oil Party is at it again. $500 billion in profits to the oil industry since George Bush, the oil man, and DICK CHENEY, the oil man, took office. Remember what they told us? They could deal with the industry. They'd talk the prices down. They could deal with OPEC. They'd talk the prices down. OPEC is violating international law. The President won't file a complaint in the World Trade Organization for their illegal constraint of production which is driving up the price. The President refuses to take any action against his friends in the OPEC consortium or cartel.

Now the big oil companies, $40 billion in profits for one, ExxonMobil, last year, their generous campaign contributors, the GOP, Grand Oil Party, is doing very well. But now they're crying crocodile tears here on the floor and saying they really care about consumers, after the Bush-Cheney energy bill, which gave subsidies to ExxonMobil who made $40 billion last year after the Republicans refused last year to strip those subsidies from the oil companies? They complain about the high price to consumers. They're born-again consumer advocates. That's great.

I've been a consumer advocate for a long time. I have consistently supported a windfall profits tax. I've also consistently said we've got to go after the OPEC cartel and file the complaints. And we need new technologies, and we need new fuels, and we need conservation. None of those things were in the Bush-Cheney energy bills written behind closed doors by big oil and the GOP, the Grand Oil Party.

But now, their presumptive political nominee, Mr. MCCAIN, has come up with a great idea, let's suspend the gas tax. Now, let's see. In 1993, the gas tax was 18.3 cents a gallon, and gas was $1.05 a gallon. Today, in my district, gas is $3.50 a gallon, and guess what? The Federal gas tax is still 18.3 cents a gallon. That money is a tax. It's a tax going to big oil and OPEC and to hedge fund speculators who are driving up the price of oil. That's the tax the American consumers are paying. They won't take on OPEC, and they sure as heck aren't going to take on their friends in big oil.

We're willing to do that. And suspending the gas tax, now I would ask the presumptive Republican nominee, Mr. MCCAIN, if we suspend the gas tax, how many highway projects and bridge projects are you going to cancel? How many thousand people are you going to put out of work when you already have a deficit in the trust fund? If you want to give relief to the American consumers, target the real culprits. It is not the gas tax that's been flat for the last 15 years; it's big oil and it's the OPEC companies and the hedge fund speculators on Wall Street. Let's go after them.

HOPE AND CHANGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVID DAVIS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to tell you something about my district. I go home every single weekend because I take the word ''representative'' very seriously. I go home and speak with people living and working in my district because they are the ones who sent me to Washington to express their ideas and their concerns. Two common themes come up from the people in northeast Tennessee: hope and change. We hear a lot about those words today.

They hope that sometime in the future they won't have to spend over $50 to fill up their pick-up truck. They want change, a change that will take them from dependence on foreign oil to clean, safe, and available American energy. Energy is the foundation and lifeblood of the American economy creating the conditions to help us support good-paying jobs here in the United States and allow our industrial base to compete with the rest of the world.

We all know that the middle-class families are feeling significant pain at the pump. But the American family isn't the only place where the strain of spiking fuel prices can be felt. According to recent news reports, local schools, law enforcement agencies, and other community services are paying the price for a record high-fuel cost. Unfortunately, Democrats in the House, who are now in charge, have been consistent in offering so-called energy legislation that weakens our ability to compete with emerging titans such as China, India, and Russia.

In the United States today, we are 63 percent dependent on foreign sources of energy. 63 percent. And that percentage is growing every year. Gasoline

prices have increased more than $1 per gallon since the majority party, under Speaker PELOSI, took control of the House last year, increasing from a nationwide average of $2.33 per gallon on the first day of the 110th Congress to now $3.34 a gallon. When Speaker PELOSI took office and had a plan to fix the energy cost, oil was selling for $56 a barrel. Now, it's selling for $113 a barrel. People are looking for hope and change.

Figures from the Energy Information Administration indicate the U.S. reliance on the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, commonly known as OPEC, grew from 50.9 percent of our total crude imports in 2006 to 57.6 percent in 2007. Not only has the majority party failed to end our reliance on Middle Eastern oil for our essential energy needs, they've actually helped grow our dependence to historic and dangerous levels.

We need to make sure that we're not dependent on our energy needs from people that hate us and hate our freedoms all because of their refusal to allow responsible energy production here at home. We cannot tax and regulate our way out of an energy crisis. The American people want an energy policy that's comprehensive and addresses our needs for wind, water, solar, safe nuclear, clean coal technology and, most importantly, the use of American oil.

The American middle class deserves better. They deserve an energy policy that is dependent on American energy, not foreign energy.

CRISIS IN LEADERSHIP IN WASHINGTON AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, today is April 15th. It's a momentous day for Americans as all Americans know it's Tax Day. And it's a day that Americans tend to focus a little more attention on the amount of money that they send to Washington. And it's a lot of money. It's a lot of money, Mr. Speaker.

And most folks that I talk to say that would be okay, a lot of them have said that would be okay if they were getting good things for their money, if they were seeing progress happen here in Washington. But that's just not the case.

I, like most of my colleagues, go home every weekend. I went home last weekend, and what I hear from my constituents is what is happening? Where is the leadership in Washington? Mr. Speaker, I believe there is a crisis in leadership in Washington and here in the House of Representatives.

Whether it is supporting our troops, the leadership here apparently is determined that they are going to use our military troops as pack mules to carry their special projects across the finish line. Mr. Speaker, that's leadership lacking.

Whether it's protecting our Nation in the area of intelligence, this leadership believes that our intelligence community doesn't need to have the tools necessary to tell what the bad guys are going to do before they do it. Mr. Speaker, that's leadership lacking.

You have heard a lot about gas prices this morning. Sixteen months ago when this leadership took charge, a barrel of gasoline cost about $52, $53 a barrel. Today, it is about $112, $113 a barrel. Mr. Speaker, that's leadership lacking.

What's changed in Washington since that time? New leadership here in the House of Representatives. Mr. Speaker, that's not the kind of change that America voted for.

We need to work together in the area of energy. We need to make certain that we, as Americans, conserve more. We need to make certain that we utilize American resources for Americans. There's incredible resources in our land. We could utilize those resources in environmentally sensitive and technologically sound ways to make certain that we decrease our dependence on foreign oil.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, we need to make certain that we accelerate the use of alternative fuel, not picking winners and losers like this leadership in this majority wants to do, pick ethanol and raise the gas prices significantly by that, raise food prices around the world because of the action of this leadership. Mr. Speaker, that's leadership lacking.

Where else is leadership lacking here in the House? Well, Mr. Speaker, it is in helping our friends around the world. We have a former President meeting with Hamas terrorists. Where is the outcry from this leadership saying that that's not the correct thing to do for a former leader of our Nation?

In the area of fair trade, free trade, last week this leadership decided they were going to take one of our friends, Colombia and South America, who have worked with us time and time again, one of the glimmering hopes for democracy in South America, and what does this leadership do? Kick them in the teeth.

It is not just me saying that. Headlines all across the Nation last week: Financial Times, ''A setback on trade in Washington;'' Knoxville News Sentinel, ''House Democrats holding free trade hostage;'' Corpus Christi Caller Times, ''Congress should pass Colombia trade deal;'' Charleston Post Courier, ''Politics trump free trade;'' Orange County Register, ''Trading on ignorance;'' the Plain Dealer, ''Sidetracking American trade deal hurts U.S. businesses and workers;'' the Chicago Tribune, ''Caving on Colombia;'' Los Angeles Times, ''Pelosi plays politics;'' The Oklahoman, ''Pelosi's ploy: Colombia Deal Succumbs to Politics;'' New York Times, ''Time for the Colombian Free Trade Pact;'' the Denver Post, ''Historical failure on Colombia trade pact;'' San Francisco Chronicle, ''Trade pandering;'' New York Post, ''Pelosi's Putrid Sellout;'' Seattle Times, ''The Washington 6: tampering with trade;'' the Boston Herald, ''The Pelosi Doctrine: Duck;'' Las Vegas Review Journal, ''Trade Talks;'' National Review, ''Free Choice;'' St. Louis Post-Dispatch, ''The Politics of Trade;'' Washington Post, ''Drop Dead, Colombia;'' and the Wall Street Journal, ''Pelosi's Bad Faith.''

Mr. Speaker, there is a crisis of leadership here in Washington, here in this House of Representatives. The American people are paying attention. The American people want positive change. The American people want us to work together. I call on the Speaker of this House to bring forward the free trade deal with Colombia, to work together on gas prices, to make certain that we pass a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act that allows our intelligence communities to act positively.

Mr. Speaker, I call on our leadership to be responsible.

ETHANOL HAS NOT SAVED US YET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been said by folks that Washington, DC., is the only place in America that is surrounded by reality because people here, especially in Congress, those people say, are in a Disney World atmosphere and don't know how the world really is.

Probably the best example is what has taken place throughout our country in the area of gasoline prices. They are going up every day. Every day we come back to Congress, gasoline prices continue to rise. And there's a constant problem here. Retail operators who run those mom-and-pop independent gasoline stations are saying they're not even making a profit off of gasoline. They hope maybe they can make one cent a gallon. The way they make profit is selling lottery tickets and donuts, and the country continues to see higher and higher gasoline prices.

It's a tremendous problem that we have to deal with. We have to come out of this Disney World atmosphere and solve the problem. Some say what is going to save us all is ethanol. Let's take all of the farmland in America, let's till it up, let's grow some corn, and let's make some of that unproven, unpredictable ethanol to burn in our vehicles.

Of course, what we have done as a Nation by encouraging and subsidizing the special interest group of ethanol, we've raised the corn prices worldwide. In fact, they have tripled in the last 2 years. And because corn prices are going up, wheat prices are going up. And in the last 17 years, food prices in

the world are higher than they ever have been, all because the United States has seen this vision that ethanol is going to save us all.

Several years ago, those who talked about ethanol that weren't for the concept of ethanol said ethanol is not going to be profitable unless gasoline gets to $4 a gallon. Four years ago, people in this House said, oh, that's never going to happen. The problem with ethanol is it takes a gallon and a third of fuel, diesel, to produce a gallon of ethanol. And only when gasoline gets to be $4 a gallon will ethanol be profitable for this country.

In fact, it's driving up pollution. Science Magazine has stated, ''After taking into account worldwide land-use changes, corn-based ethanol will increase greenhouse gases 93 percent compared to gasoline over a 30-year period.''

In other words, the House was trying to be environmentally correct. We want to make sure we don't have pollution. Nobody wants pollution. Nobody wants greenhouse gases; but unproven, subsidized ethanol is going to raise worldwide greenhouse gases all because we're tilling up our farmland.

I have here a map of the United States. Now we're also finding out where the Mississippi River dumps into the Gulf of Mexico, there is a dead zone, and there is a dead zone there for various reasons. But because we're plowing up all in the Midwest this farmland and making corn, which takes a lot of fertilizer, that fertilizer is going down the Mississippi River, and the dead zone at the mouth of the Mississippi River is getting bigger. ''Dead zone'' means exactly what it says: Nothing grows there and fish don't live there, all because of this concept of ethanol.

So what are we doing about it? Well, first thing Congress did, we're going to punish those oil companies, those American oil companies, and we are going to tax them, raise the taxes on these oil companies, and that's what Congress did. Now it's a simple economic fact. You tax something, you get less of it. What does that mean? That means if you tax something, you're going to get less production. You're going to get less production of crude oil.

Now, we don't drill off our own shores. We're the only Nation in the world that doesn't take care of ourselves with the natural resources that we have been given. The only place we drill offshore, Mr. Speaker, is right here in this blue zone off the State of Texas where I'm from, off the State of Louisiana and parts of Mississippi and Alabama. But you see in all of these areas that are red on this map, there is crude oil out there in the ocean, but we don't drill out there even though crude oil is there.

In fact, we're going to see some new platforms out in the Gulf of Mexico, but they're not from America. Right here off the coast of Florida, right there at the tip, there is an oil site, but we're not drilling there because we don't drill offshore. So the next oil rig you will see out in the Gulf of Mexico will be built by the Cubans and the Chinese. They're drilling in areas that we ought to be drilling in because it has been said in this House we can't drill offshore safely. That is wrong.

I live in the area that was hit by Katrina and Hurricane Rita, and when those two hurricanes came through that area, 700 offshore rigs were damaged or destroyed. But yet, we didn't hear one word about crude oil seepage from the Gulf of Mexico because it did not happen.

We have the greatest technology in the world for drilling, and we can drill safely, we've proven that. We've drilled safely, and we will continue to drill safely.

And that's just the way it is.

ENVIROMENTAL GROUPS ARE DRIVING UP THE PRICE OF GASOLINE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, oil prices have reached $112, $113 a barrel, an all-time high. Gas prices have reached an average of $3.50 a gallon and in some places even higher, and the only people who seem to be happy about this are Sierra Club and some of these other environmental groups. I have noticed that almost all of these environmental radicals or environmental extremists seem to come from very wealthy or very upper-income families. They are elitist types, and perhaps they're not concerned when their policies destroy jobs and drive up prices because who they're really hurting are the poor and the lower income and the working people in this country.

As the previous speaker, Mr. POE, pointed out, now some of these environmental groups, their policies are causing food prices to go up worldwide and, in many countries, leading to starvation. But once again, the environmentalists are hurting the poor and the lower-income and the working people. So perhaps they don't care.

About a year and a half ago in one of my newsletters I wrote this: I said, many experts are still predicting that the price of oil, and thus the price of gas, is going to go way back up. Environmental groups think this is good because it will force people to drive less. However, many people already have difficulty paying their gas bills, especially people from small towns in rural areas where many people have to drive long distances to go to work.

And I might add, Mr. Speaker, that when you drive these gas prices up, as some of these environmental groups want, to $4, or $5, or $6 a gallon so people will drive less, you'll put the final nails in the coffins of some of the small towns in rural areas. The environmental groups loudly complain about urban sprawl, but yet their policies are leading to more urban sprawl as they continue to drive up these gas prices.

Syndicated columnist Walter Williams wrote recently, ''If I were an OPEC big cheese, I would easily conclude I could restrict output and charge higher prices were U.S. oil drilling restricted. I would see environmental groups as allies and make 'charitable' contributions to help them reduce U.S. output,'' and that's something I thought for quite some time that these OPEC and countries and foreign energy producers I'm sure are contributing big money to these environmental groups, and they're receiving huge multi-million dollar contributions that they were refusing to disclose the source of.

Leonardo Mangeri, of the Italian energy company ENI, said, there are proven oil reserves now, economically and technologically recoverable, of 1.1 trillion barrels, or 38 years of world usage. In addition, he says there are another 2 trillion barrels of recoverable reserves that will be obtainable as technology improves over the next few years.

Also, the International Energy Administration, Mr. Speaker, estimates that at current prices, it will be economic to recover at least another 2 trillion barrels of petroleum from tar sands and oil shale.

Just a couple of months ago, I wrote in another newsletter this: Gas prices are far too high and probably will go even higher. They could be much lower, but very powerful environmental groups want them to go higher so people will drive less. Thus, we have put 85 percent or 611 million acres of the outer continental shelf off limits to oil production. We will not allow drilling in 99.9 percent of Alaska where oil could be found, and have prohibited or restricted production in other parts of the U.S.

We've also placed so many rules, regulations and red tape on all types of domestic energy production that small- and medium-sized businesses cannot compete or even enter these industries in the first place. All of these productions can be done in environmentally safe ways. Some of these environmental groups help the big business giants and foreign energy producers tremendously, but they are really hurting lower- and middle-income people.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 7 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. BALDWIN) at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

God of the founders of this Nation, who has shown us mercy throughout our history, be attentive to Your people and our needs today. In Your wisdom, You have established us as stewards of creation. Guide the Members of Congress and all citizens of this great land in their work today.

May the dignity of their enterprise bear results, which will unite Your people and bring about a prosperity that will embrace the least in our midst and reveal the generosity of those richly endowed so to give You ever greater glory, both now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HARE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. HARE led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ECONOMY AND EFFORTS TO PASS SECOND ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE

(Mr. WILSON of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WILSON of Ohio. Madam Speaker, with thousands of Americans losing their homes and jobs, skyrocketing costs for basic items such as gas prices at an all-time high, Americans everywhere are feeling the negative impact of these failed economic policies that we are living under.

Congress has already enacted an economic stimulus package that will provide relief to families in need. Last week, House Democrats called on President Bush to again work in a bipartisan manner on a second stimulus package, one that would help our economy get back on track.

House Democrats are also working on legislation to help 1.5 million American families to avoid foreclosure. This legislation goes further than the President's plan to help only 100,000 homeowners. This one goes to 1.5 million.

Congressional Democrats are proposing strong initiatives that will help stabilize the housing market and help jump-start an economy that is simply leaving just too many people behind.

THE PELOSI RECESSION

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

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, taxes are a function of spending. If you spend more, you must tax more.

The spending budget we passed previously is predicated on the largest tax increase in American history. Tax increases are coming to all Americans. Tax increases are on autopilot.

Without even a vote, tax levels are going to snap back up to the old levels, the levels that existed before the 2001 and 2003 tax reductions. In other words, doing nothing is doing something.

One of the reasons for the uncertainty in the market is because people know these tax increases are coming. All marginal income tax rates will increase, capital gains rates will increase, the marriage tax penalty will come back, the child tax credit will decrease, the death tax will jump back up to 55 percent. This will hurt the economy.

The Democratic leaders have blocked free trade with Colombia, they have blocked efforts to produce more oil and natural gas resources, they have blocked lower taxes. All this will hurt the economy.

People are beginning to call this the Pelosi recession. Maybe they are right.

HONORING EVA GEIRINGER SCHLOSS

(Mr. HARE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HARE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and commend Eva Geiringer Schloss for her efforts to educate our Nation about the evils of racism and hate.

Eva was born in Austria in 1929. When the Nazis invaded, she and her family went into hiding in Amsterdam until they were arrested on Eva's 15th birthday.

Eva was sent to Auschwitz, where she endured the daily degradation of the concentration camp that robbed so many of their lives. Eva's father and brother were killed in the Holocaust. She and her mother were liberated by the Russian army.

Eva Geiringer Schloss has traveled throughout the United States educating thousands of people about the dangers of unchecked prejudice and hate. A play based on Eva's life entitled ''And Then They Came for Me'' has been presented all over the country and will be performed in my district to mark the Holocaust Remembrance.

It is my honor to recognize Eva, a courageous woman who endured unimaginable brutality and has dedicated her life to fighting injustice.

HONORING RIC FLAIR

(Mrs. MYRICK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. MYRICK. Madam Speaker, I would like to honor the career of a man whom I am proud to call both a constituent and a friend.

Ric Flair's professional wrestling career of 36 years, in which he entertained millions of people around the world, recently came to a close. He will be forever known as an innovator, a pioneer, and, perhaps, the greatest that his industry has ever seen. By any standard, Ric Flair is a living legend.

He is recognized all over the world, but he calls Charlotte, North Carolina, home. On his way to being named a record 16-time world champion, he became famous for his bleached blond hair, his designer suits, and his charismatic on-stage persona, while dishing out his trademark chops, and, of course, the dreaded Figure Four Leglock.

On March 29, 2008, Ric Flair became the first active wrestler to be ever inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame. Often imitated, but never duplicated, his legacy will forever be synonymous with the world of professional wrestling. He is a fixture at Carolina Hurricanes games and Panthers games in our State. The joy and emotion that Ric Flair's very presence evokes will continue on for a very, very long time.

Today I honor the career of Nature Boy and congratulate Charlotte's favorite son, Ric Flair.

Woooo!

TAX BENEFITS AND RELIEFS

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

Mr. COHEN. Madam Speaker, today is the dreaded April 15, and I, like millions and millions of Americans, have filed my returns and those for my mother and others.

This Congress has tried to provide and has provided relief for middle-class taxpayers and middle-income taxpayers and extended those tax benefits. We have also passed relief for the people who pay the alternative minimum tax.

But with the stimulus package, we provide moneys for people to get a refund. But to get that refund, people have to file their taxes. Be sure and file your taxes, and if your income is $75,000 or less or $150,000 for a couple, you can get your stimulus relief package passed by this Congress.

We wish our moneys weren't going to rebuild Baghdad and for war efforts, but with the work of this Congress, one day we will have peace, we won't be spending the money in Baghdad, and we will be spending the money in America to rebuild our infrastructure.

THE WASHINGTON ELITES

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, the Washington elites are trying to rule the land like a monarchy, claiming they know

best for what they consider the peasants in the vast rural areas.

Those elitists grew up in privilege and look down on the rest of the country. The elitists in the imperial kingdom of Washington, DC feel it's their privileged right and obligation to make the peasants happier because those rural Americans don't know how to take care of themselves.

Well, let me tell you the truth about those peasants. These great Americans don't look to Washington or the elites or the monarchy for their happiness. They find their happiness in their individuality. The folks that I represent in southeast Texas are patriotic citizens, many from small-town rural America.

They love their families and are proud of America. They are honest, hard-working independent citizens who, when duty calls, go off to war to defend this Nation. They attend church on Sunday, and if they don't attend, they still feel strongly about their religion.

They believe they have the personal right to bear arms. They are not bitter about life, but they are generally happy. They are not in need of big government coming in in the name of hope and change to control more of their lives.

Those in Washington would do well to remember that the salt of the Earth lives in small-town America. Government should keep out of their way, instead of interfering with their lives, their faith, and their right to bear arms.

And that's just the way it is.

BIG OIL

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. Madam Speaker, the presumptive Republican nominee for president, JOHN MCCAIN, has a solution to skyrocketing gas prices.

Is he going to take on Big Oil, their price gouging, and their obscene profits? No. Is he going to take on OPEC and their collusion to restrict supply and drive up the price in violation of international trade law? No.

Is he going to take on the hedge fund speculators on Wall Street that are driving up the price unnecessarily 50 cents a gallon so then they can make money? No.

He is going to be the GOP nominee, the Grand Oil Party nominee. He can't take that money. He has a solution. Suspend the Federal gas tax.

In 1993, the Federal gas tax was 18.3 cents and a gallon of gas was a buck. In 2008, a gallon of gas is $3.50. The Federal gas tax is the same 18.3 cents. It's dropped to 5 percent of the cost.

If we follow his plan, we will cancel hundreds of needed bridge projects and highway projects across the country, throwing construction workers out of jobs, an already hard-hit sector, or maybe he is just going to borrow the money after he cancels the gas tax, because the only thing going up faster on the Republican administration than the price of gas is the national debt.

NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK

(Mr. CARTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CARTER. Madam Speaker, this week is National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

This Congress should be working to make our cities, our streets, our States, our Nation safer for crime victims instead of talking about things like beaches and protecting union bosses.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children was created 10 years ago, and this is about to expire in a few months.

Let me tell you, having spent 21 years on the bench, I probably tried 250 to 300 aggravated sexual assault cases. One was an adult, the balance were children.

This is epidemic in this country. It's time for this Congress to get on board and work on the Internet Sex Offender Prohibition Act, which would punish people for using the Internet to find victims for their sexual offenses as child predators and would increase and enhance the punishment for those crimes.

This is important work. This is work this Congress needs to do to protect our children and make our streets safe.

DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS IS FIGHTING TO MAKE THE TAX CODE FAIR AND PRO-FAMILY

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Madam Speaker, as millions of middle-class Americans rush to the post office tonight to drop their tax forms in the mail, this Democratic Congress is fighting to make the Tax Code fair and pro-family.

Already this year we passed a budget that makes middle-class tax relief a priority. Our budget calls for extending middle-income tax cuts, including child tax credit, marriage penalty relief and 10 percent tax bracket.

Rather than supporting our budget, President Bush and congressional Republicans continue to push permanent tax cuts for multimillionaires. For 7 years now, President Bush's tax policy has disproportionately benefited the wealthiest few in our Nation.

Consider that the average millionaire is being given $120,000 in tax breaks on their 2007 taxes, while middle-income taxpayers are, on average, receiving only about $740.

As the income gap between the wealthy and the middle class continues to grow, we should prioritize middle-class tax cuts. If Congressional Republicans are serious about providing continued relief to the middle class, they should support our final budget proposal.

□ 1215

MIDDLE CLASS TAX CUTS

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

Mr. ALTMIRE. Madam Speaker, congressional Democrats are prioritizing tax cuts for the middle class. Our budget made clear that we intend to extend and pay for the Bush tax cuts that directly impact middle class families.

In fact, the Democratic budget identifies the specific tax cuts that we would like to see extended, such as: marriage penalty relief; the 10 percent lower income bracket; the child tax credit; small business expensing; and the R&D tax credit.

But like our fiscally irresponsible colleagues who advocate a continuation of this administration's failed economic policies, the Democratic budget achieves balance in 4 years and ensures that any increased spending or decreased revenue must be offset by comparable budget cuts.

Rather than just charging the cost to the national credit card and increasing our indebtedness to foreign nations like China and Japan, Democrats want to go in a new direction by ensuring that our budgets are balanced and our Tax Code is fair for all Americans.

AMERICANS ASK: WHY IS BUSH SPENDING BILLIONS IN IRAQ

(Mr. SIRES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SIRES. Madam Speaker, on Tax Day, Americans have a right to ask why the Bush administration continues to spend taxpayer dollars on an Iraq war that has no end in sight and no plans for success.

Today, President Bush will spend more than $338 million in Iraq. What exactly does that mean for the taxpayer sending in his or her form today? The typical taxpayer covers the cost of the war in Iraq for only one-half a second.

And while we continue to ship billions of dollars to Iraq while our economy is going south and our budget deficit continues to hit record highs every year, the Iraqi government currently has a surplus and is expecting to receive $40 billion this year in oil revenues. Can someone please make sense of this policy?

Madam Speaker, the American taxpayer has every right to demand more accountability from Washington. Congressional Democrats continue to propose a change in policy, one that shifts more responsibility to the Iraqis themselves. They can certainly afford it. Unfortunately, President Bush and his supporters in Congress ignore the

American people and congressional Democrats who do not want to see taxpayer dollars wasted in Iraq any longer.

SUPPORT TAXPAYER ASSISTANCE AND SIMPLIFICATION ACT

(Mr. MCNERNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCNERNEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today on Tax Day 2008 in strong support of H.R. 5719, the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act. I commend Chairman RANGEL and Ranking Member MCCRERY for bringing this bill to the floor and working hard to simplify our tax policies.

Today's Tax Code has become so complex that it takes more than 25 hours to complete an itemized tax return. That is an hour longer than 2003, and 10 hours longer other than 1989.

Families will benefit significantly from this legislation which strengthens identity theft and tax fraud protections, stops taxpayer harassment by ending the private collection of Federal taxes, and expands tax refund assistance for low-income Americans.

I am also pleased that the provisions in the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act increase online fraud security and allows individuals to have better recourse in the event of a crime.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5719.

AMERICANS ASK: WHY IS BUSH SPENDING BILLIONS IN IRAQ

(Ms. WATSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WATSON. Madam Speaker, today, Tax Day, millions of Americans know that their tax dollars will support rebuilding Iraq instead of rebuilding America. Americans have already spent $44 billion in rebuilding Iraq at a time when the Iraqis have a huge oil revenue reserve.

Today, taxpayers may be wondering how this money could be spent in Iraq, our money, instead of rebuilding the U.S.A. With the $339 million that we are spending daily in Iraq, we could instead provide an additional 18,000 American students with Pell Grants so they can attend college. We could also hire and keep 4,400 ''COPS on the beat.'' Our moneys could be used, if we spent them here, to have 2,000 more border guard agents to protect our borders.

Madam Speaker, as Americans pay their taxes today, they have a right to know why billions are being spent each month in Iraq instead of here in the U.S.A.

DEMOCRATS' FISCALLY IRRESPONSIBLE BUDGET

(Mr. CHABOT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Speaker, House Democrats' fiscally irresponsible budget will impose on American workers and businesses a $683 billion tax hike, the largest in U.S. history.

With our economy slowing and many families losing their homes, the last thing Congress needs to do is to take more money from these hardworking Americans. Tax relief, not a tax increase, is the best stimulant to our economy. Socking 116 million Americans with an average tax hike of over $1,800 is an irresponsible fiscal strategy.

Working families would be hit especially hard by the Democrats' irresponsibility. A family of four with two children that currently earns $50,000 annually would have to pay an additional $2,155 in taxes under the Democrats' plan. That would amount to a 191 percent increase in their tax bill.

The last thing our economy needs right now is the largest tax increase in history. House Republicans are dedicated to protecting working families, investors, and small businesses from the irresponsible tax hike that is being foisted upon us.

TAXPAYER ASSISTANCE AND SIMPLIFICATION ACT

(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. Madam Speaker, my friend, the colleague who spoke just before me, was mentioning a fictitious tax increase. I want people to know that such a thing does not in fact exist, and I would be curious to see which law it is.

In the meanwhile, there is no better day than today, April 15, to talk about the commitment this Congress has made to the American people to ensure that the Tax Code becomes fairer and simpler for middle class families.

We must be consistent and make the Tax Code more helpful to families by prioritizing middle class tax relief, including the child tax credit, relief from the marriage penalty, and preserving our lowest tax brackets.

We must also commit to making sure our tax dollars are spent wisely. The average family pays over $13,000 in Federal taxes; they deserve to get their money's worth.

For that to happen, we must preserve fiscal discipline, as this Congress has done by reinstating the pay-as-you-go rules, PAYGO, meaning we only spend as much money as we have and we do not increase the deficit for our children and grandchildren. And we must prioritize important spending such as health care, education, and our national infrastructure.

WHY IS BUSH SPENDING BILLIONS IN IRAQ

(Mr. YARMUTH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. YARMUTH. Madam Speaker, as our constituents put the finishing touches on their tax returns, many of them are probably wondering just how much we will be sending to Iraq.

Taxpayers are rightfully outraged, as are many Members of this body, by the massive levels of waste, fraud and corruption documented in large government contracts to well-connected firms. Under the Bush administration, the use of no-bid contracts has doubled and the Defense Contract Audit Agency believes that $10 billion of the taxpayers' money has been spent on questionable or unsupported costs in Iraq contracts.

Madam Speaker, House Democrats are bringing much-needed accountability to the government contracting business by cracking down on no-bid contracts, protecting Federal whistleblowers, and withholding Federal contracts from tax-delinquent companies.

While Democrats would like to see a change of policy in Iraq, we, like the average taxpayer, want to prevent our money from being wasted. We are taking the steps necessary to ensure that no longer happens.

ON TAX DAY, WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

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

Mr. KAGEN. Madam Speaker, today is Tax Day and everyone in America is asking the question: Whose side are you on?

Well, I am on the side of Wisconsin taxpayers, and my record proves it. I have kept my word.

In September of 2006, I stated we should do two things: First, balance our Federal budget here in Washington like people do back home; and, second, to reduce taxes for middle class families.

We have kept our word. And like other Democrats, I voted to cut taxes and balance our Federal budget. We saved 62,000 households in the Eighth District of Wisconsin from paying the AMT tax; for tax deductions for health care expenses and property taxes; we voted to cut taxes for small businesses and S corporations; and we are trying to make mortgage payments deductible for everyone, whether you itemize or do not.

We also voted to close tax loopholes that encourage our jobs to be shipped overseas. We are on the side of the taxpayers. My record proves it. Today is Tax Day. Whose side is your representative on?

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas

and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS CONGRESSIONAL BADGE OF BRAVERY ACT OF 2008

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4056) to establish an awards mechanism to honor Federal law enforcement officers injured in the line of duty, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4056

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Federal Law Enforcement Officers Congressional Badge of Bravery Act of 2008''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds as follows:

(1) According to the Department of Justice, in the past 7 years, an average of 150 Federal law enforcement officers per year sustained physical injuries while dealing with an assaultive subject.

(2) More than 70 Federal agencies employ Federal law enforcement officers but only 2 such agencies have an awards mechanism to recognize Federal law enforcement officers who are injured in the line of duty.

(3) In contrast to the lack of an awards mechanism for Federal law enforcement officers, the President awards the Purple Heart for military personnel wounded or killed during armed service, and most State and local police departments have commendations and medals for officers who are injured in the line of duty.

(4) Formal congressional recognition does not exist to honor Federal law enforcement officers who are injured in the line of duty.

(5) It is appropriate for Congress to recognize and honor the brave men and women in Federal law enforcement who are injured while putting themselves at personal risk in the line of duty.

SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF A BADGE.

The Attorney General may award, and a Member of Congress or the Attorney General may present, in the name of Congress a Congressional Badge of Bravery (in this Act referred to as the ''Badge'') to a Federal law enforcement officer who is cited by the Attorney General, upon the recommendation of the Congressional Badge of Bravery Board, for sustaining a physical injury on or after January 1, 2007, while in the line of duty.

SEC. 4. NOMINATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—An agency head may nominate for a Badge an individual who meets the following criteria:

(1) The individual is a Federal law enforcement officer working within the agency of the agency head making the nomination.

(2) The individual sustained a physical injury while in the line of duty.

(3) The individual faced personal risk when the injury described in paragraph (2) occurred.

(4) The injury described in paragraph (2) occurred during some form of conduct characterized as bravery by the agency head making the nomination.

(b) CONTENTS.—A nomination under subsection (a) shall include—

(1) a written narrative, of not more than 2 pages, describing the circumstances under which the nominee sustained a physical injury described in subsection (a) and how the circumstances meet the criteria described in such subsection;

(2) the full name of the nominee;

(3) the home mailing address of the nominee;

(4) the agency in which the nominee served on the date when such nominee sustained a physical injury described in subsection (a);

(5) the occupational title and grade or rank of the nominee;

(6) the field office address of the nominee on the date when such nominee sustained a physical injury described in subsection (a); and

(7) the number of years of service in the Federal government by the nominee as of the date when such nominee sustained a physical injury described in subsection (a).

(c) SUBMISSION DEADLINE.—

(1) INJURIES SUSTAINED BEFORE AUGUST 15.—In the case of an individual who sustained a physical injury described in subsection (a) on or after January 1 of a year and before August 15 of such year, to nominate such individual under such subsection for a Badge, an agency head shall submit such nomination to the Congressional Badge of Bravery Board by February 15 of the following year.

(2) INJURIES SUSTAINED ON OR AFTER AUGUST 15.—In the case of an individual who sustained a physical injury described in subsection (a) on or after August 15 of a year, to nominate such individual under such subsection for a Badge, an agency head shall submit such nomination to the Congressional Badge of Bravery Board by February 15 of the second year following the date on which the individual sustained such physical injury.

SEC. 5. CONGRESSIONAL BADGE OF BRAVERY BOARD.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established within the Department of Justice a Congressional Badge of Bravery Board (in this Act referred to as the ''Board'').

(b) DUTIES.—The duties of the Board are the following:

(1) Design the Badge with appropriate ribbons and appurtenances.

(2) Select an engraver to produce each Badge.

(3) Not later than July 15 of each year, from among the nominations timely submitted to the Congressional Badge of Bravery Board by February 15th of such year, endorse as recipients of the Badge such nominations who meet the criteria described in section 4(a) and submit to the Attorney General a list of such nominations so endorsed.

(4) After submission to the Attorney General of the list described in paragraph (3)—

(A) procure the Badges from the engraver selected under paragraph (2);

(B) send a letter announcing the award of each Badge to the agency head who nominated the endorsed recipient of such Badge;

(C) send a letter to each Member of Congress representing the congressional district where the endorsed recipient of each Badge resides to offer such Member an opportunity to present such Badge;

(D) provide for the presentation of each Badge in accordance with section 7; and

(E) provide for the posting of the name of each endorsed recipient of the Badge on the public Internet site of the Department of Justice in a manner that acknowledges the Federal service and bravery of each such recipient.

(5) Set an annual timetable for fulfilling the duties described in this subsection.

(c) MEMBERSHIP.—

(1) NUMBER AND APPOINTMENT.—The Board shall be composed of 7 members (in this Act referred to as the ''Board members'') appointed as follows:

(A) One member jointly appointed by the majority leader and minority leader of the Senate.

(B) One member jointly appointed by the Speaker and minority leader of the House of Representatives.

(C) One member from the Department of Justice appointed by the Attorney General.

(D) Four members of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association appointed by the Executive Board of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association.

(2) LIMITATIONS.—

(A) APPLICABLE TO MEMBERS OF THE FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS ASSOCIATION.—No more than 5 Board members may be members of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association.

(B) APPLICABLE TO NOMINATING OFFICIALS.—In the case of a Board member who is an agency head, if such member nominates an individual under section 4(a), such member may not participate in any evaluation or recommendation process of the Board with respect to such individual.

(3) QUALIFICATIONS.—Board members shall be individuals with knowledge or expertise, whether by experience or training, in the field of Federal law enforcement.

(4) TERMS AND VACANCIES.—Each Board member shall be appointed for 2 years and may be reappointed. A vacancy in the Board shall not affect the powers of the Board and shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

(d) OPERATIONS.—

(1) CHAIRPERSON.—The Chairperson of the Board shall be a Board member elected by a majority of the Board.

(2) MEETINGS.—The Board shall conduct its first meeting not later than 90 days after the appointment of a majority of Board members. Thereafter, the Board shall meet at the call of the Chairperson, or in the case of a vacancy of the position of Chairperson, at the call of the Attorney General.

(3) VOTING AND RULES.—A majority of Board members shall constitute a quorum to conduct business, but the Board may establish a lesser quorum for conducting hearings scheduled by the Board. The Board may establish by majority vote any other rules for the conduct of the business of the Board, if such rules are not inconsistent with this Act or other applicable law.

(4) STAFF.—The Board may appoint and fix the pay of additional qualified personnel as the Board considers appropriate to assist it in carrying out its duties under subsection (b).

(e) POWERS.—

(1) HEARINGS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Board may hold hearings, sit and act at times and places, take testimony, and receive evidence as the Board considers appropriate to carry out the duties of the Board under this Act. The Board may administer oaths or affirmations to witnesses appearing before it.

(B) WITNESS EXPENSES.—Witnesses requested to appear before the Board may be paid the same fees as are paid to witnesses under section 1821 of title 28, United States Code. The per diem and mileage allowances for witnesses shall be paid from funds appropriated to the Board.

(2) INFORMATION FROM FEDERAL AGENCIES.—Subject to sections 552, 552a, and 552b of title 5, United States Code—

(A) the Board may secure directly from any Federal department or agency information necessary to enable it to carry out this Act; and

(B) upon request of the Board, the head of that department or agency shall furnish the information to the Board.

(3) INFORMATION TO BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.—The Board shall not disclose any information which may compromise an ongoing law enforcement investigation or is otherwise required by law to be kept confidential.

(f) COMPENSATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), Board members shall serve without pay.

(2) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—Each Board member shall receive travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, in accordance with applicable provisions under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code.

SEC. 6. PRESENTATION OF BADGES.

(a) PRESENTATION BY MEMBER OF CONGRESS.—A Member of Congress may present a Badge to any Badge recipient who resides in such Member's congressional district. If both a Senator and Representative choose to present a Badge, such Senator and Representative shall make a joint presentation.

(b) PRESENTATION BY ATTORNEY GENERAL.—If no Member of Congress chooses to present the Badge as described in subsection (a), the Attorney General, or a designee of the Attorney General, shall present such Badge.

(c) PRESENTATION ARRANGEMENTS.—The office of the Member of Congress presenting each Badge may make arrangements for the presentation of such Badge, and if a Senator and Representative choose to participate jointly as described in subsection (a), the Senator and Representative shall make joint arrangements. The Board shall facilitate any such presentation arrangements as requested by the congressional office presenting the Badge and shall make arrangements in cases not undertaken by Members of Congress.

(d) LIMITATION.—A Badge may not be awarded under this section during the 60-day period before the date of a Congressional election.

SEC. 7. DEFINITIONS.

For purposes of this Act:

(a) FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER.—The term ''Federal law enforcement officer'' means a Federal employee—

(1) who has statutory authority to make arrests;

(2) who is authorized by his or her agency to carry firearms; and

(3) whose duties are primarily—

(A) the investigation, apprehension, or detention of individuals suspected or convicted of a Federal criminal offense; or

(B) the protection of Federal officials against threats to personal safety.

(b) AGENCY HEAD.—The term ''agency head'' means the head of any executive, legislative, or judicial branch government entity that employs Federal law enforcement officers.

SEC. 8. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated to the Attorney General such sums as may be necessary to carry out this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ZOE LOFGREN) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

It is my pleasure to rise in strong support of H.R. 4056, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Congressional Badge of Bravery Act of 2008.

This measure establishes a formal process by which Congress will be able to recognize acts of bravery by men and women in Federal law enforcement who become injured in the course of their duties.

Each year, approximately 150 Federal law enforcement officers are injured in the line of duty. Although more than 70 Federal agencies employ law enforcement officers, only two of these agencies have an awards mechanism to recognize officers who are injured in the line of duty.

This bill addresses a long overdue need to establish a process for congressional recognition of the dangers these officers face for our safety. It would authorize a Member of Congress or the Attorney General to present in the name of Congress a Congressional Badge of Bravery to an officer who is cited by the Attorney General based on the recommendation of a board established by this measure.

Madam Speaker, the men and women in Federal law enforcement, like many hardworking public servants, must often work long and sometimes irregular hours. Unlike other public servants, however, Federal law enforcement officers undertake their responsibilities with full knowledge that they are at risk of severe injury, or worse.

This bill will now accord these brave men and women formal congressional recognition, an honor that is so very much deserved. I thank the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ELLSWORTH) for his leadership on this important legislation. I encourage my colleagues to support it.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in strong support of H.R. 4056, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Congressional Badge of Bravery Act of 2008. The men and women of American's Federal law enforcement agencies risk their lives every day protecting our communities, apprehending criminals and bringing them to justice. They are charged with the challenge of disrupting terrorist plots, combating violent gang activity, and stemming the flow of illegal drugs into this country. And they rise to this challenge every single day.

□ 1230

Over 100,000 law enforcement officers are employed by Federal agencies, including not only the FBI, DEA and ATF, but also the Secret Service, Forest Service, Park Police, Postal Inspectors and Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers.

Unbeknownst to many of us, approximately 150 of our Federal officers are injured in the line of duty each year in this country. However, of the more than 70 Federal agencies that employ law enforcement officers, only two, the Drug Enforcement Administration and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, actually recognize agents injured in the line of duty.

H.R. 4056 establishes the Congressional Badge of Bravery to honor Federal law enforcement officers injured in the line of duty, the first formal congressional award honoring injured law enforcement officers throughout the entire Federal Government.

The Congressional Badge of Bravery will be awarded to those Federal law enforcement officers who demonstrate bravery in performance of their duties, faced personal risk to their safety, and were injured in the line of duty.

H.R. 4056 establishes a seven-member Badge of Bravery Board within the Department of Justice. The Board is charged with designing the badge, selecting recipients and coordinating the presentation of the award.

Federal law enforcement officers perform an invaluable service in protecting our Nation from terrorist attacks, apprehending violent criminals, including sexual predators who prey on our children, and ensuring the safety of thousands of visitors to America's parks and forests each year. This badge of bravery is the least we can do to recognize the dedication and sacrifice of those injured in the line of duty.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Madam Speaker, it is an honor to yield to the author of this legislation, Mr. ELLSWORTH, who represents his district in Indiana with distinction, but also represented the district as their sheriff for many years, and it is therefore very appropriate that I yield to him 5 minutes.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank Ms. ZOE LOFGREN and Mr. CHABOT from Ohio for their support and recommended support for this. And I rise with great pride today to support the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Congressional Badge of Bravery Act.

As we all know, our Federal law enforcement agencies, including the Capitol Police that keep us safe every day, are responsible for providing much of the safety and security that all Americans expect and enjoy. In big cities and in small towns across the country, Federal law enforcement officers work to keep our Nation safe from terrorists, criminals and anybody who seeks to do us harm. This legislation gives Congress an opportunity to honor their service.

As a career law enforcement officer, I know about the sacrifices that all law enforcement officers make in service to their communities and the Nation. I've seen genuine acts of bravery and heroism, and have also been witness to

some of the injuries that can come with the job.

While my experiences are specific to local law enforcement, Department of Justice statistics show that over the last 7 years, an average of 150 Federal law enforcement officers each year sustained physical injuries while dealing with combative subjects as a direct result of their duties.

Unlike military personnel who are awarded a Purple Heart when wounded or killed during armed service, and in many States and local police who receive commendations and medals for sustaining physical injuries, most Federal law enforcement officers do not receive any official recognition for similar sacrifices. In fact, while more than 70 Federal agencies employ Federal law enforcement, only two such agencies, the DEA and the ATF, have an award mechanism to recognize those officers who were injured in the line of duty. This is an oversight that we can correct today.

The bill before us would make great progress in honoring the law enforcement officers who help keep us safe. It would establish a Congressional Badge of Bravery that would be awarded to officers injured in the line of duty while conducting an act of bravery. It would also provide Members of Congress the opportunity to present the Congressional Badge of Bravery to the injured officers who are truly hometown heroes in all of our districts.

It should also be noted that the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, which represents more than 26,000 members, supports this legislation.

Again, I'd like to thank Chairman CONYERS and his staff for their support and hard work and the assistance on this bill.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. I would just urge my colleagues to support this important legislation. It has bipartisan support.

Mr. SHULER. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4056, establishing a Federal Law Enforcement Officers Congressional Badge of Bravery. This resolution will ensure that due public honor and recognition is given to those Federal law enforcement officers who are wounded in the line of duty while protecting our Nation and communities.

Federal law enforcement officers are employed by a multitude of agencies, yet only two of those agencies have distinct awards mechanisms to recognize officers wounded in the line of duty. Adopting this resolution will allow the Attorney General and Members of Congress the opportunity to honor Federal law enforcement officers from their districts and commend their actions, which resulted in being wounded, with a Badge. This honor will bolster recognition for those Federal officers, as well as raising awareness and pride of their work in the communities they serve and protect.

Madam Speaker, I commend Congressman ELLSWORTH on his leadership in bringing this legislation to the floor. I urge my colleagues today to vote for this important resolution that will give due honor and respect to those Federal law enforcement officers wounded in the line of duty by recognizing them with a Congressional Badge of Bravery.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ZOE LOFGREN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4056, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SUPPORTING THE MISSION AND GOALS OF NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1053) supporting the mission and goals of National Crime Victims' Rights week in order to increase public awareness of the rights, needs, and concerns of victims and survivors of crime in the United States.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1053

Whereas 23,000,000 Americans are victims of crime each year, and of those, 5,200,000 are victims of violent crime;

Whereas a just society acknowledges crime's impact on individuals, families, and communities by ensuring that rights, resources, and services are available to help rebuild lives;

Whereas victims' rights are a critical component of the promise of ''justice for all,'' the foundation for our system of justice in America;

Whereas although our Nation has steadily expanded rights, protections, and services for victims of crime, too many victims are still not able to realize the hope and promise of these gains;

Whereas we must do better to ensure services are available for underserved segments of our population, including crime victims with disabilities, victims with mental illness, victims who are teenagers, victims who are elderly, victims in rural areas, and victims in communities of color;

Whereas observing victims' rights and treating victims with dignity and respect serves the public interest by engaging victims in the justice system, inspiring respect for public authorities, and promoting confidence in public safety;

Whereas America recognizes that we make our homes, neighborhoods, and communities safer and stronger by serving victims of crime and ensuring justice for all;

Whereas our Nation must strive to protect, expand, and observe crime victims' rights so that there truly is justice for victims and justice for all; and

Whereas National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 13, 2008 through April 19, 2008, provides an opportunity for us to strive to reach the goal of justice for all by ensuring that all victims are afforded their legal rights and provided with assistance as they face the financial, physical, and psychological impact of crime: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the United States House of Representatives—

(1) supports the mission and goals of the 2008 National Crime Victims' Rights Week in order to increase public awareness of the impact of crime on victims and survivors of crime, and of the rights and needs of such victims and survivors; and

(2) directs the Clerk of the House of Representatives to transmit an enrolled copy of this resolution to the Office for Victims of Crime in the Department of Justice.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ZOE LOFGREN) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, the National Center for Victims of Crime reports that approximately 23 million Americans are victimized by crime each year. Of these, more than 5 million are victims of violent crime.

Victims of crime can suffer from a broad range of adverse effects, ranging from the physical to the psychological. Some experience financial distress resulting from a disruption in employment.

Unfortunately, some of the most vulnerable of our society are also among those who are most commonly the victims of crime. People of color suffer disproportionately from violent crime. The poor and uneducated are often the target of financial schemes. And, sadly, children are victimized more than any other group.

A just society demands that we always bear in mind the suffering that crime victims endure and work to reduce the incidence of the crime that causes that suffering.

This bill will increase public awareness about the effects of crime on its victims and their families as well as our communities.

As part of today's debate, I would also like to point out that the Office for Victims of Crime offers a full array of assistance help for crime victims. By supporting this office and its programs on an ongoing basis we can help ensure that victims are afforded their legal rights and the necessary assistance to overcome the effects of being victimized by crime.

I encourage my colleagues to support H. Res. 1053.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this important resolution and the 28th annual observance of National Crime Victims' Rights Week. This year's theme, ''Justice for Victims, Justice for All'' is appropriate. Too often, victims of crime are made to be victims a second time, first as a result of the crime, but second as a result of our criminal justice system, the very system designed to protect them.

In 2004, 20 years after Congress enacted the Victims of Crime Act, Congress enacted the Justice for All Act. This was a significant victory for crime victims, as it extended a number of enforceable rights to crime victims, including the right to be reasonably heard at any public proceeding involving release, plea or sentencing, the right to file a motion to reopen a plea, or sentence in certain circumstances, and, most importantly, the right to be treated with dignity, fairness and respect.

Despite enactment, enforcement of these rights is just one of a number of important changes that needs to occur to ensure that our Nation's criminal justice system is just for both offenders and the victims of those crimes.

In a hearing held by the Crime Subcommittee 3 weeks ago, testimony was presented revealing that crime victims continue to bear the brunt of crimes. According to the Department of Justice, crime costs victims and their families more than $105 billion in lost earnings, public victim assistance and medical expenses.

For example, despite a victim's right to full and timely restitution, it remains one of the most underenforced victims' rights within our justice system. In fact, more than $50 billion in criminal debt, including restitution and fines, were uncollected in 2007. And the amount of outstanding criminal debt is only expected to increase, ballooning from $269 million to almost $13 billion. And in my own State of Ohio, more than $1.2 billion in criminal debt remained uncollected at the end of fiscal year 2007.

While I appreciate the majority's effort to recognize National Crime Victims' Rights Week, I believe that more than just lip service can be done to help victims. Many of us have introduced good legislation, such as H.R. 845, the Criminal Restitution Improvement Act of 2007, or H.R. 4110, restitution legislation introduced by Representative SHEA-PORTER that will do more to assist victims.

If we all agree that crime victims bear the brunt of crimes, then why not pass a bill such as H.R. 845, that makes restitution mandatory and strengthens collection efforts?

Enforcement of these rights is the type of legislation that crime victims and their families need and deserve to help rebuild their lives, not just the recognition that they exist on paper.

I appreciate the work that my colleagues, Mr. COSTA and Mr. POE, have done on the Victims' Rights Caucus and in introducing this resolution. National Crime Victims Week serves many purposes, including to remind us what victims have suffered and the need to include them in the criminal justice system, to thank those individuals and organizations who have selflessly dedicated themselves to assisting victims, and to urge us all to rededicate ourselves to advance the cause of the victims of crime.

I urge my colleagues to support the victims of crime and their families and those that help them rebuild their lives by supporting this resolution.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Madam Speaker, it is an honor to recognize my colleague from California, the author of this bill, Congressman JIM COSTA, for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTA. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from California for yielding me the time.

I rise today to introduce House Resolution 1053 with my colleague, Congressman TED POE. This supports the mission of the goals of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, and that designated that this week, April 13 to April 19, as National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

Congressman POE and I introduced this resolution on behalf of Victim Rights Caucus members who have joined this effort over the recent years.

In 1980 President Reagan first called for a national observance to recognize and honor millions of victims of crime in our country, their families and survivors. And with a bipartisan effort in Congress, that took place.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week also pays tribute to thousands of community-based systems for victims service providers, who, in fact, provide support to the criminal justice system and allied professionals, who, in fact, help those victims of crime every week throughout the country.

This year's theme for National Crime Victims' Rights Week is ''Justice for Victims, Justice for All.'' We, as a Nation, must do more to ensure that all victims of crime are afforded their legal rights and provided with assistance as they face financial, physical and oftentimes psychological impacts of crime.

When I first arrived in Washington almost 4 years ago, there was a lack of an advocacy group of behalf of victims' rights and issues. Congressman TED POE and I decided, as new Members, that we would put together a Victim Rights Caucus. We're very proud of the effects of this caucus in the first 4 years of its origin.

The goals of our caucus are simple: One, to represent crime victims in the United States in a bipartisan effort by supporting legislation that reflects their interests and their needs.

Two, to provide ongoing forum for proactive discussion between Congress and national victims assistance organizations to enhance mutual education, legislative advocacy and initiatives which promote justice for all, including, most importantly, the victims of crime.

Three, to seek opportunities for education to public education initiatives to help those in the United States to understand the impact on crime on victims and to encourage their involvement in crime prevention, victim assistance and community safety.

And, fourth, to protect the restitution fund that was initiated in the early 1980s. Those restitution funds go to the benefits of victims of crimes. Unfortunately, this administration has tried to redirect those restitution funds, which are not taxpayers dollars, but, in fact, criminal dollars, to the general fund. This Congress and the previous Congress prevented that from occurring.

Our caucus has been very successful. We have authored legislation, and I want to thank Congressman TED POE for cochairing the caucus with me, and for all of the Members of the House of Representatives who belong to this caucus.

Crime victims are our sons, our daughters, our brothers and our sisters, or neighbors and our friends. And they are struggling to survive in the aftermath of crime. They deserve our support.

□ 1245

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE), who before joining us here in Congress was a very distinguished judge who was recognized for his leadership in working to promote the interests of victims of crime.

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman from Ohio yielding.

Madam Speaker, victims of crime are real people. They are our friends, our relatives and our neighbors, and unfortunately, because of our culture, they have been for many years overlooked in the criminal justice system. Well, I think those days are over because they are as important as defendants, because the same Constitution that protects the rights of defendants in the courtroom, that same Constitution protects the rights of victims of crime.

Since 1981, this country celebrates National Crime Victims' Rights Week in April. Local communities hold rallies and candlelight vigils and a number of other activities to honor the millions of crime victims and survivors in the United States and also to recognize those many individuals that work with crime victims.

This week is National Crime Victims' Rights Week, and this year's theme is ''Justice for Victims, Justice for All.'' It is a very appropriate theme because we cannot achieve justice for all until there is some justice, total justice, for victims of crime.

The victims' right movement has come a long way. The days when a victim was just a mere witness in the courthouse are not far gone.

While we are always sure to safeguard the rights of defendants, our justice system must also safeguard the rights of victims of crime.

The victims' rights movement dates all the way back to 1965 when the first crime victim compensation program was started in the State of California. Five States enacted similar legislation by 1970, and then we saw that organization, what we call the MADD mothers, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, come into being to advocate on behalf of victims of crime who had been hurt by those people who drink and drive.

In 1975, activists across the country united and formed the National Organization for Victim Assistance to expand victim services and promote the rights of victims.

In 1978, three more important organizations started: the National Coalition Against Sexual Assault, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and a group of somber individuals called Parents of Murdered Children, all of them advocating on behalf of crime victims.

President Reagan in 1981 proclaimed the first National Victims' Rights Week in April, and that was also the year that 6-year-old Adam Walsh was abducted from a department store and later murdered, prompting a national campaign to educate the public on missing children and to pass better legislation—Federal legislation, to protect our greatest natural resource, the young that live among us.

In 1982, the Federal Government created the Office for Victims of Crime, or OVC, within the Department of Justice, a tremendous organization that sees after the victims of crime in our country.

Then, in 1984, the Congress passed the Victims of Crime Act, what we call VOCA, one of the most novel concepts that Congress has ever adopted. What it does is require that people convicted in Federal courts, those defendants, once they are convicted, they pay moneys into a fund, and that fund is used to help crime victims throughout the United States. It is a tremendous idea, making defendants pay for the system they have created, pay the rent on a courthouse as I like to call it. And today, Madam Speaker, that fund is over $1.7 billion, contributed not by taxpayers but by offenders, that goes for the specific purpose of helping victims, helping victims' organizations like rape centers, domestic violence shelters, and victim advocates that help victims throughout the turmoil of being a crime victim.

In 2005, my first year in Congress, I was honored to form the Victims' Rights Caucus with the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA), who was a long-time victims' advocate in the State of California before he ever came to Congress. And this bipartisan, but yet nonpartisan, caucus now has 44 members, and we do everything we can to raise the awareness of crime victims here in the Federal Government.

In 2006, 25 years after Adam Walsh's murder that I just mentioned earlier, President Bush signed the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act, which requires sex offenders and child molesters, once they leave the Federal penitentiary or State penitentiaries, to register on the national database so that we keep up with those people who wish to prey on our communities.

Madam Speaker, crime victims don't have a lobbyist up here in Washington. They don't have some high-dollar lobbyist to work for them and advocate on their behalf. But we are their lobbyists. We advocate on behalf of all crime victims because that's what we do here in Congress, to take and protect the best that we have among us, and that's crime victims.

I urge community leaders and organizations to celebrate how far the victims' rights movement has come but also to continue to recognize the importance of crime victims that live among us because, Madam Speaker, justice is the one thing we should always find, and hopefully crime victims can find justice at the courthouse in our day and time.

And that's just the way it is.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Madam Speaker, I wonder if the gentleman from Ohio has additional speakers.

Mr. CHABOT. We have no additional speakers, and we would be happy to yield back our time.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Madam Speaker, I would urge my colleagues to support this resolution. It's bipartisan. It's important.

I just recalled, as I was listening to both Mr. POE and Mr. COSTA taking the lead and I thank them both for that, my more than 10 years on the Victim Witness Assistance Board, when I was in local government, and the tremendous need there is for people who have been victims and then who are also witnesses to receive the assistance from society that they need so much.

So I appreciate the efforts of both gentlemen and our colleagues who are in this caucus and urge support.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ZOE LOFGREN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1053.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

COMMEMORATING THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE FAIR HOUSING ACT

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1095) recognizing and honoring the 40th anniversary of congressional passage of title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (the Fair Housing Act) and the 20th anniversary of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1095

Whereas April 11, 2008, marks the 40th anniversary of congressional passage of the Fair Housing Act;

Whereas September 13, 2008, marks the 20th anniversary of congressional passage of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988;

Whereas the Chicago Freedom Movement, led by the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr., expanded the fight for civil rights from the South to the North, raised the national consciousness about housing discrimination, and shaped the debate that led to the landmark fair housing legislation, the Fair Housing Act;

Whereas the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson and commonly known as the Kerner Commission, found in 1968 that ''[o]ur nation is moving toward two societies, one black and one white—separate and unequal'';

Whereas Congress passed the Fair Housing Act as part of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, and President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Act into law on April 11, 1968, one week after the assassination of the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr.;

Whereas the Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing and housing-related transactions on the basis of race, color, national origin, and religion;

Whereas in section 808 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, Congress amended the Fair Housing Act to include protection on the basis of sex;

Whereas the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, passed by overwhelming margins in Congress, included protection on the basis of familial status and disability, created an important enforcement mechanism, and expanded the definition of ''discriminatory housing practices'' to include interference and intimidation, requiring the Department of Housing and Urban Development to issue regulations to implement and interpret the Fair Housing Act and report annually to Congress on the nature and extent of housing discrimination;

Whereas the intent of Congress in passing the Fair Housing Act was broad and inclusive, to advance equal opportunity in housing and achieve racial integration for the benefit of all people in the United States;

Whereas housing integration affects educational attainment, employment opportunities, access to health care, and home equity;

Whereas the majority of Americans support neighborhood integration, and numerous studies have shown the universal benefits of residential integration;

Whereas more than 4,000,000 violations of fair housing laws still occur each year against people of all protected classes, and testing of the enforcement of fair housing laws continues to uncover a high rate of discrimination in the rental, sales, mortgage lending, and insurance markets;

Whereas less than 1 percent of violations of fair housing laws are reported each year;

Whereas fair housing centers funded by Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) are the frontline in the effort to resolve housing discrimination;

Whereas in 2006, approximately 27,000 housing discrimination complaints were filed, of which 18,000 complaints were resolved by fair housing centers;

Whereas the Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) funds fair housing grants annually on a non-competitive basis to State and local fair housing enforcement agencies which are used for complaint processing, administrative costs, special enforcement efforts, training and other projects designed to enhance the agency's administration and enforcement of its fair housing law;

Whereas fair housing education and enforcement play a pivotal role in increasing housing choice and minority homeownership and combating predatory lending; and

Whereas the Fair Housing Act is an essential component of our Nation's civil rights legislation: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes and honors the 40th anniversary of the enactment of the Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 3601 et seq.) and the 20th anniversary of the enactment of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 (Public Law 100–430; 102 Stat. 1619);

(2) supports activities to recognize and celebrate the important historical milestones represented by the anniversaries of the enactment of the Fair Housing Act and the enactment of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988; and

(3) encourages all people and levels of government to rededicate themselves to the enforcement and the ideals of fair housing laws.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

House Resolution 1095 recognizes the 40th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act, enacted as Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968.

On April 11, 1968, days after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Fair Housing Act, which prohibits discrimination in housing based on race, color, religion or national origin. Twenty years later today, the law was expanded by the Fair Housing Amendments Act to include protections against discrimination based also on sexual orientation, familial status, and disability.

Many may not recall Dr. King's advocacy for fair housing, but he recognized the tremendous costs our society pays if patterns of segregated living continues, as it has.

While there is no question that the Fair Housing Act has become a powerful tool for advancing civil rights, there is much more to be done. For instance, most Americans still live in communities largely divided by race, according to the National Fair Housing Alliance.

An estimated 3.7 million people are discriminated against in housing transactions every single year. This number doesn't even include instances of discrimination against persons with disabilities, nor does it reflect discriminatory lending in insurance practices, planning and zoning, or other forms of profiling. We have so much more to do.

Enforcement is a key area where we need further improvement. For example, while 27,000 complaints of housing discrimination were filed with the Federal Government last year, Housing and Urban Development issued 31 charges, and the Justice Department filed 35 cases.

Landlords, real estate agents, lenders, insurance agents, and others know they face limited risk of prosecution for discrimination. Even those who are prosecuted often pay such a minor penalty that discrimination today becomes just another cost of doing business. It's no surprise that housing providers continue to discriminate and communities across our Nation sadly remain highly segregated.

The most recent manifestation of discrimination in housing is the current sub-prime foreclosure crisis, which presents some of the greatest fair housing and civil rights issues facing our Nation today. Fueled by reverse red-lining practices, the sub-prime foreclosure crisis is now causing extreme havoc for minority owners who were targeted for predatory home loans that stripped away their home equity and put their houses at risk of foreclosure. It's also affected financing markets all over the world.

If left unchecked, the foreclosure crisis threatens to wipe out many of the advances the country has made in the 40 years since the passage of the Fair Housing Act.

To be an effective tool in our fight against discrimination, the Fair Housing Act must be enforced, and we need to augment it with tough anti-predatory lending legislation, which is what I intend to do.

We should also enact legislation permitting bankruptcy judges to restructure home mortgages so deserving families can save their homes from foreclosure and, thereby, stem falling housing prices in communities all across our Nation.

After centuries of discrimination and denied opportunities, enactment of the Fair Housing Act 40 years ago marked a milestone in our Nation's efforts to achieve equal housing opportunities.

And so today, we celebrate the Fair Housing Act's 40th anniversary with, I hope, a renewed commitment to achieving and furthering its goals by supporting this resolution.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 1095, a resolution commemorating the 40th anniversary of the passage of the Fair Housing Act.

On April 4, 2008, just 11 days ago, this Nation joined together to pay tribute to the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and recognize his contributions to this Nation.

□ 1300

Thus, it's only fitting that we recognize one aspect of Dr. King's legacy, passage of the Fair Housing Act, which was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson on April 11, 1968, just one week after Dr. King's tragic assassination.

The act, which prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental and financing of housing based on race, religion, national origin, sex, and later handicap and family status, was another tool to give meaning to the rights and protections afforded to all citizens by the Constitution.

Passage of the Fair Housing Act was a fitting memorial to Dr. King, as his name was closely associated with fair housing legislation since the 1966 ''open housing'' marches in Chicago.

At the same time, Senator Edward Brooke, the first African American ever to be elected to the Senate by popular vote, helped facilitate this Act's passage by describing his difficulties finding housing for his new family following his service in World War II.

The first official appointed to administer the act was former Governor George Romney. Secretary Romney assumed his position of Secretary of Housing and Urban Development after serving as Governor of Michigan, where he successfully campaigned for the ratification of a State constitutional amendment that prohibited discrimination in housing.

Since its enactment, the Fair Housing Act has prevented both countless instances of specific discrimination as well as broader patterns or practices of discrimination in housing programs. In addition, the act serves to punish those who attempt to disguise their discriminatory motives by giving false information to potential homebuyers, or by manipulating zoning codes. It prohibits sexual harassment in housing, and enables the disabled to more easily assimilate into our communities.

Madam Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't also commend and recognize the chairman of the Judiciary, Mr. CONYERS, both for his remarks, and also working with myself in a bipartisan manner on the issue that he raised about those that find themselves at risk of having their homes foreclosed upon. And I agree with him that we ought to give the bankruptcy judges additional powers to modify those particular agreements so that they can have a better chance of retaining their homes. That certainly would move forward those that find themselves at risk

of losing their own homes. Again, I want to thank the chairman of the committee for working with us in a bipartisan manner on that issue.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this resolution today, and in celebrating the 40th anniversary of passage of the Fair Housing Act.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT), the ranking member, for his great work on the matter.

And now I recognize the Reverend AL GREEN of Texas, the author of this idea, for 4 minutes.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. However, the promotion I cannot claim. I'm still a lowly Member of the House of Representatives, not yet made it to that lofty level of being a reverend, but you are very kind. And I thank you for the many years of work that you have dedicated to this very issue that we have on the floor today. In fact, it can be said that your great work has caused us to have this opportunity to be here today.

I also would like to thank the ranking member, LAMAR SMITH, for his work in helping us to bring this to the floor, and the manager of the time, Member STEVE CHABOT, for your services that you've rendered as well. And I appreciate especially the comments that you've made today.

In celebrating or commemorating or recognizing the 40th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, we are, in truth, recognizing the efforts of Dr. Martin Luther King because it was Dr. Martin Luther King who went to Memphis some 40 years ago to help what we call sanitation workers today, but back then we called them garbage men.

Dr. King had a basic premise of trying to help somebody. And to him, these persons, although known as garbage men, they were somebody. And he went there to help them in their efforts to obtain equal justice. And while there, the unfortunate circumstance occurred, and we lost Dr. King prematurely. But I do believe that he did not live in vain.

There is a spiritual song styled, ''If I can help somebody as I travel along, if I can help someone with a word or a song, if I can help someone from doing wrong, then my living shall not be in vain.'' Dr. King lived not in vain because this act, the Fair Housing Act, was passed after his demise. There are some historians who contend that it was his demise, in fact, that created the opportunity for it to pass as timely as it did.

And I am honored that Dr. King took up the cause of the lowly garbage men. However, 40 years later, there is still great work to be done, as has been indicated by the chairman, because 40 years later there are approximately four million acts of housing discrimination each year in this country. Forty years later, approximately 27,000 acts of housing discrimination and complaints are filed annually. Forty years later, 13 fair housing groups have closed their doors due to a lack of funding. Forty years later, 26 fair housing centers, or one-quarter of all fair housing centers, have either closed their doors or are at risk of closing their doors due to a lack of funding.

Forty years later, 87 percent of African Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans meet with real estate agents and experience some form of steering. Steering occurs when the agent will send a person of one ethnicity to an area where persons of this ethnicity may be residing, whites to white neighborhoods, blacks to black neighborhoods, or neighborhoods that are going into some form of transition. Forty years later, 20 percent of the African Americans and Latinos trying to buy or rent homes have their cause ignored.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. CONYERS. I yield the gentleman 1 additional minute.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Less than 1 percent of housing discrimination acts are reported 40 years later.

So we need to do something to change this. We need to fully fund the fair housing programs. FHIP, the Fair Housing Initiative Program, should be fully funded to about $52 million.

This program allows us to do what is known as testing, the means by which we acquired the empirical evidence that housing discrimination has actually occurred. There is no substitute for FHIP and the testing that takes place.

But also there is a piece of legislation, the Fair Housing Act of 2007, or H.R. 2926, which will give HUD some additional authority, will establish competitive grants, will help us to examine the causes of housing discrimination and talk about what we can do and, in fact, conclude what we can do to make remedies.

If we want to live not in vain as Dr. King did, let's help somebody. Let's do something about discrimination in housing and make real the great American ideal of owning a home.

Mr. CONYERS. I am pleased now to recognize a senior member of the House Judiciary Committee, MEL WATT, for as much time as he may consume. And I note that, although the gentleman from Texas is not a minister, we may all agree that he is a good preacher.

Mr. WATT. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 1095, the resolution recognizing the 40th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act.

The Fair Housing Act, title VIII of the Civil Rights Act, was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson in April of 1968, only 1 week after the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King.

This landmark act, the primary purpose of which is to prohibit discrimination in housing, introduced meaningful Federal enforcement mechanisms for buyers and renters. The Federal Housing Act initially prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion and national origin. Sex was subsequently added to the list of protected classes in 1974, and disability and family status were added in 1988.

Forty years later, in 2008, effective and meaningful enforcement of these fair housing laws continues to be critically important. It is essential that we continue to combat housing discrimination, which still exists today, not just by enacting laws, but by enforcing those that we have on the books already.

This is a meaningful piece of legislation, and I'm honored to pay tribute to the importance of it, but more importantly, to pay tribute and to recognize that enforcement continues to be a problem, and that discrimination in housing continues to exist.

With that, I thank the gentleman for the time.

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, I am pleased now to recognize the Honorable MAXINE WATERS of California for as much time as she may consume.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak in strong support of this resolution offered by my colleague, Mr. GREEN, from Houston commemorating the 40th anniversary of title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 and the 20th anniversary of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988.

The history of the Fair Housing Act embodies both our Nation's most noble instincts and recent behavior by our Federal Government, which should make none of us proud.

On April 11, 1968, one week to the day after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Congress passed and the President signed into law the Federal Fair Housing Act which now prohibits discrimination in housing based on race, national origin, religion, color, sex, familial status and disability.

Acting on this legislation, which has been stalled in this body for over 2 years, was a fitting tribute to Dr. King and reflected a belief that something constructive could be achieved in the aftermath of days of unrest in cities across the country.

In 1988, the law was amended by the Fair Housing Amendments Act, which significantly strengthened the enforcement powers of the act, giving the Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Justice the authority to mandate and to enforce the expanded and comprehensive requirements of the act. Unfortunately, while we can be proud of passing these landmark statutes, the sad fact is that the Fair Housing Act remains the least enforced of our Nation's civil rights laws.

Through the work of local housing groups like the Housing Rights Center in my district in Los Angeles, we know that more than 3.7 million people are discriminated against in housing transactions every year, and we are on the brink of an economic crisis fueled by a failed subprime lending market built

primarily on borrowers and neighborhoods of color.

The current foreclosure crisis is the outgrowth of persistent discrimination in housing, lending and insurance markets that took place under the negligent eyes of the very Federal agencies charged with enforcing our Nation's antidiscrimination laws. In 2007, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development issued only 31 charges of discrimination, and the Department of Justice filed just 35 cases.

Sadly, the risk posed by lax enforcement of the Fair Housing Act is no less than the resegregation of America. While we have made some progress in reducing levels of residential segregation, most Americans live in communities largely divided by race and ethnicity. Perhaps more distressingly, our children are attending increasingly segregated schools. Recent research demonstrates that by 2000, minority students were in schools with substantially fewer white students than was the case a decade earlier. We must reduce those troubling trends.

To that end, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution offered by Mr. GREEN, whose dedication to the housing needs of America and America's most vulnerable households is second to that of no other member of the Housing and Community Opportunity Subcommittee, which I chair.

Additionally, in my role as Chair, I'm joining Mr. GREEN in rededicating myself to the enforcement of the Fair Housing Act, starting with making plans for a joint hearing with the Constitution Subcommittee, chaired by Mr. NADLER of New York, to hold the inadequate efforts of both HUD and the Department of Justice up to congressional scrutiny.

□ 1315

The best way to celebrate the anniversary of the Fair Housing Act is to take concrete actions to enforce both its letter and spirit.

Mr. Chairman of our Judiciary Committee, whose lifelong work has been to end discrimination and to enforce fair housing and to enforce civil rights, I just thank you for having the opportunity to work with you.

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, I recognize now the gentlewoman from Oakland, California, a valuable member of the House (Ms. LEE), for such time as she may consume.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Michigan will note that there are only 3 minutes remaining.

Ms. LEE. Let me first say to the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, I want to thank you also for staying the course for freedom, justice, and equality for so many years. Thank you, Mr. CONYERS, and thank you for yielding.

Madam Speaker, let me say that I rise in strong support of H. Res. 1095, and I also must thank Congressman AL GREEN for introducing this very important resolution but also for his consistent voice for liberty and justice for all. Thank you, Congressman GREEN.

The Fair Housing Act was critical in ending the rampant discrimination in the housing industry 40 years. Today the Fair Housing Act continues to play a vital and significant role in ensuring fair and equal access to housing for all Americans.

It is in part due to the failure, however, of this administration to enforce these civil rights laws that led to the predatory lending practices that fueled the housing crisis our Nation now faces.

Just like many other innovative and progressive ideas about equality and fairness, I must remind us of the fact that the Fair Housing Act had a California precursor: the Rumford Fair Housing Act, one of the first fair housing laws in the Nation. Former Assemblyman William Byron Rumford, the first African American from Northern California elected to the California legislature, and whose seat I was later honored to hold, passed this landmark bill in 1963, and today I also honor his memory and his legacy.

But like many today who argue that the housing and financial services industries do not need further oversight or regulation, I must remind us also that during this period, a candidate for governor over 40 years ago, Ronald Reagan, fought very hard against fair housing laws. But, thankfully, Ronald Reagan lost his fight to make housing discrimination the law in California, and 40 years ago the Congress passed the Fair Housing Act to outlaw discrimination in housing in every State of the union. Like my colleagues, I also honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. today as we pass this resolution.

Unfortunately, today the promise of fair housing remains unfulfilled. De facto segregation has kicked in. Subprime mortgages have unfairly hit African Americans and the Latino community and other communities of color. So we must work to educate Americans about their right to fair housing and work together to enforce the law. And we must fully fund fair housing programs to at least the tune of $84 million in fiscal 2009.

So, Madam Speaker, we must recommit ourselves today to make these critical investments a guarantee for fair housing for all Americans. Housing should be a basic human right in our great country.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 1095, "Commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the Fair Housing Act", introduced by a fellow Texan, Representative AL GREEN.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is the nation's housing agency committed to increasing homeownership, particularly among minorities; creating affordable housing opportunities for low-income Americans; and supporting the homeless, elderly, people with disabilities and people living with AIDS. The Department also promotes economic and community development and enforces the nation's fair housing laws.

However, according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), more than 10,000 people filed housing discrimination complaints last year, mostly from persons with disabilities. HUD also found that race-based housing discrimination was the second most frequent reason individuals filed complaints.

Of the more than 10,000 complaints filed last year, 43 percent alleged discrimination against persons with disabilities while 37 percent alleged racial discrimination. Most complainants claimed to be victims of discrimination in the terms and conditions of the sale or rental of housing, or outright refusal to rent.

The Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at HUD stated that "Forty years after the passage of the Fair Housing Act, an alarming number of families are still being denied housing and still need the protections this landmark law offers." Assistant Secretary Kim Kendrick's remarks only underscore the importance of HUD's continued enforcement, instruction, and outreach activities to ensure that all Americans have equal access to housing opportunities.

Currently HUD has placed fair housing advertisements on more than 900 movie screens throughout the country. These advertisements inform viewers that it is unlawful to discriminate in the sale, rental, or financing of housing and provided HUD's toll-free telephone number, for those that may have experienced or witnessed unlawful discrimination.

Another part of HUD's outreach in this area is its training program, Fair Housing Accessibility FIRST, which has trained 1,351 individuals in 22 training sessions in 17 states on the Fair Housing Act's design and construction requirements for multifamily housing.

TEXAS

On March 27th, HUD announced that the Texas State Program and the cities of Houston and New Braunfels will receive a total of $234,868,077 to support community development and produce more affordable housing. HUD's annual funding will also provide down payment assistance to first-time homebuyers; assist individuals and families who might otherwise be living on the streets; and offer real housing solutions for individuals with HIV/AIDS.

This funding will help Texas to reconstruct its neighborhoods and affordable housing stock by helping communities to improve their infrastructure or assisting families to purchase their first home, HUD is helping improve neighborhoods from the ground up.

The funding announced includes: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds; HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) funding; American Dream Down payment assistance; Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG); and, Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA).

Since 1974, HUD's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program has provided more than $120 billion to state and local governments to target their own community development priorities. The rehabilitation of affordable housing and the improvement of public facilities have traditionally been the largest uses of CDBG although the program is also an important catalyst for job growth and business opportunities. Annual CDBG funds are distributed to communities according to a statutory formula based on a community's population, poverty, and age of its housing stock, and extent of overcrowded housing.

HOME (HOME Investment Partnerships Program) is the largest federal block grant to state and local governments designed exclusively to produce affordable housing for low-income families. Since 1992, more than 600 communities have completed more than 834,000 affordable housing units, including 352,000 for new homebuyers. In addition, 186,000 tenants have received direct rental assistance.

The American Dream Down payment Initiative (ADDI) helps first-time homebuyers with the biggest hurdles to homeownership—down payment and closing costs. The program was created to assist low-income first-time homebuyers in purchasing single-family homes by providing funds for down payment, closing costs, and rehabilitation carried out in conjunction with the assisted home purchase. Since the program's inception, ADDI has assisted nearly 29,000 families to purchase their first home.

Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG) helps local communities to meet the basic shelter needs of homeless individuals and families. These grants also provide transitional housing and a variety of support services designed to move the homeless away from a life on the street toward permanent housing. This block grant program, along with more than $14 million HUD awarded New Orleans and Jefferson Parish by competition, helps thousands of local homeless assistance programs to help those who would otherwise be living on the streets.

HUD's Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) grants are distributed to states and cities based on the number of AIDS cases reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The grants provide resources for operating community residences and providing rental assistance and support services to individuals with HIV/AIDS and their families. In addition, the HOPWA program also helps many communities develop strategic AIDS housing plans and fill in gaps in local systems of care. A stable home environment is a critical component for low-income persons managing complex drug therapies and potential side effects from their treatments.

SUBPRIME MORTGAGE CRISIS AND HOUSING

Over the past year, we have seen a crisis in subprime mortgage lending, which has threatened the stability of the housing market and the livelihoods of large numbers of Americans. This Democratic Congress is committed to strengthening the housing market and stabilizing the economy, and we have passed important legislation to address this crisis.

Due to the lack of regulation by the federal government, many loans were accompanied by fraud, predatory lending, inadequate information and other failures of responsible marketing. With exceptionally high (and rising) foreclosure rates across the country, homeowners all over America are losing their homes.

The sub-prime mortgage crisis has impacted families and communities across the country. Home foreclosure filings rose to 1.2 million in 2006—a 42 percent jump—due to rising mortgage bills and a slowing housing market. Nationally, as many as 2.4 million sub-prime borrowers have either lost their homes or could lose them in the next few years.

It is critical that we address this crisis. The Bush administration and the mortgage industry must reach agreement that matches the scale of the problem. If you produce an inadequate agreement, or fail outright, the cost to our economy will be incalculable. The freeze on foreclosures would give the housing market time to stabilize and homeowner's time to build equity.

The 110th Congress has demonstrated its commitment to moving America in a New Direction by raising the minimum wage, implementing the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, opposing the war in Iraq, improving children's health care coverage, increasing aid to the Gulf Coast, passing energy reform, instituting fiscal discipline through pay go budgeting, raising ethical standards for lobbying, and increasing oversight over the Bush Administration on a range of issues including Iraq, FISA, the CIA interrogation tapes, and the Jena 6 cases.

We have also made efforts to strengthen the housing market, including continued efforts to end discriminatory practices and stabilize the economy. Expanding affordable housing and mortgage opportunities for all American families is of paramount importance.

CONCLUSION

The 40th Anniversary of the Fair Housing Act comes only a few weeks after the Anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and—oh how fitting. The things he fought for then, the principles he gave his life for are still ideals we fight for today. We must continue the fight to end discrimination not just in the area of housing but in education, in healthcare, in politics. Madam Speaker, I remind colleagues of the importance of the Fair Housing Act, what it has meant to all Americans.

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise to commend my colleague Congressman GREEN for sponsoring this resolution to recognize and honor the 40th anniversary of congressional passage of title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, the Fair Housing Act, and the 20th anniversary of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988. It is important that we honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King and reflect on how far we have come. It is equally important, as we witness tens of thousands of Americans who risk losing their homes to foreclosure this year, that we rededicate ourselves to standing firm for those victimized by this economy or victimized by residual discrimination. We must continue to encourage all people and all three levels of government to rededicate themselves to the enforcement and the ideals of fair housing laws.

The fair povision of housing and economic opportunity—and especially the drive to ensure safe shelter for those in need—has been a compelling foundation of my career in public service. As a council member and subsequently as mayor of Alexandria, I served as vice chairman of the Alexandria Economic Opportunity Commission when the commission began its efforts to ensure local, State, and Federal action to bring down the barriers in rental housing that so discriminated against single women with children.

The enactment of the Fair Housing Act of 1988 was a testament to many of our former colleagues in this region, including former Congresswoman Gladys Spellman, former Senator Charles MacMathias, and former Delegate, Reverend Walter Fauntroy. That enactment was an honor to them and to thousands of Americans who joined in a national effort to seek justice and enduring rights for women in that most fundamental of human needs: shelter.

In Alexandria, our commission—and our city—focus on special populations, such as at-risk preschool children and teens, the homeless, ex-offenders, single parents, as well as the low-income community in general. These populations, our most vulnerable, face enough of an uphill struggle everyday as it is without governmentally permitted discrimination. I am proud at what we were able to accomplish so many years ago, but I remain committed the vision that Dr. King and others set before us, which we honor and remember today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman from Michigan has expired.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1095.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RELIGIOUS WORKER VISA EXTENSION ACT OF 2008

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5570) to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to eliminate the sunset in the special immigrant nonminister religious worker visa program, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5570

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Religious Worker Visa Extension Act of 2008''.

SEC. 2. SPECIAL IMMIGRANT NONMINISTER RELIGIOUS WORKER PROGRAM.

(a) REGULATIONS.—Not later than December 31, 2008, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall issue final regulations to eliminate or reduce fraud in the special immigrant categories described in subclauses (II) and (III) of section 101(a)(27)(C)(ii) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(27)(C)(ii)).

(b) EXTENSIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 101(a)(27)(C)(ii) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(27)(C)(ii)) is amended by striking ''October 1, 2008,'' each place such term appears and inserting ''January 1, 2010,''.

(2) CONDITIONAL FURTHER EXTENSION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Section 101(a)(27)(C)(ii) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(27)(C)(ii)), as amended by paragraph (1), is further amended by striking ''January 1, 2010,'' each place such term appears and inserting ''January 1, 2016,''.

(B) CONDITIONAL EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subparagraph (A) shall take effect on March 1, 2009, but only if the Secretary of Homeland Security has complied with subsection (a).

(c) REPORT.—Not later than September 30, 2010, the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security shall submit to

the Congress a report containing the results of a study of the effectiveness of the regulations described in subsection (a). The report shall also include an analysis of a random sample of non-minister special immigrant religious workers, before their second anniversary of being admitted, to determine whether they are still employed by the religious organization that petitioned for them, and if not, the reasons for their departure from such employment.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) and the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Members of the House, this week we are honored by a visit from His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI and are reminded of the good work that people of faith do all around the world. I am pleased to bring before the House at this time the Religious Worker Visa Extension Act of 2008.

This measure would reauthorize the Special Immigrant Non-Minister Religious Worker Program, which also allows non-minister religious workers to obtain special immigrant status in the United States so that they may do the work required of their faith. If we don't act, the program will sunset at the end of September of this year.

Non-minister religious workers are people of faith who are called to a vocation or who are in traditional religious occupations with a bona fide nonprofit religious organization in the United States. Examples of those called to a vocation include nuns, monks, and sisters. Examples of those in religious occupations include missionaries, counselors, translators, religious instructors, cantors, and other pastoral care providers.

The program provides up to 5,000 special immigrant visas per year that religious denominations or organizations in the United States may use to sponsor foreign nationals to perform religious service here. Once granted, this type of visa allows religious workers to immigrate permanently to the United States.

Since it was first enacted in 1990, the program has been extended four times, most recently in 2003. Working with the ranking member of our committee, LAMAR SMITH, we're making changes in the program for the first time to address potential fraudulent uses of the program. None other than our Immigration Subcommittee Chair, ZOE LOFGREN of California, has led the way in fashioning these proposals.

First, the bill requires that the Department of Homeland Security issue regulations by December 31 of this year to eliminate or reduce any fraud in the program. Then it extends authorization for only 15 months if the Department of Homeland Security fails to issue those regulations. This would enable Congress to better consider other possible avenues to address possible or potential fraud in the program if that proves necessary. If the department does issue the regulations, the authorization is extended for 6 more years, for a total of a little over 7 years. Finally, the bill requires the Inspector General to report on the effectiveness of the regulations by September 30, 2010.

With these significant anti-fraud provisions we have worked together with our Republican colleagues to add, I am confident Congress will be equipped with the information it needs to determine whether further action to prevent fraud in the program is warranted. And if it is, we do not hesitate to take such appropriate action.

So I hope that we will receive unanimous support on this bipartisan legislation.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise to address the legislation as so eloquently laid out by the chairman of the full Judiciary Committee. And, first, I would like to remark that I appreciate the cooperation in the negotiations that have taken place between Ranking Member SMITH and the chairman of the Immigration Subcommittee, Ms. ZOE LOFGREN, as well as Chairman CONYERS. And this is the right spirit to deal with a religious visas extension type of a bill, and the timing of this is perfect as well for it to be the very week that Pope Benedict XVI is arriving tomorrow morning here in Washington, DC, and I think a lot of our activity will be suspended while we commemorate the glorious day.

I have looked at a number of the statistics throughout this, and I have some reservations about what has transpired with the religious worker visas over the last several years, and I expect to take up some of those issues a little bit later in the debate.

But as the gentleman who is more eloquent in laying out this entire case is to my right, I would be very happy to yield 3 minutes to the ranking member of the full Judiciary Committee, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of Texas. First of all, I want to thank the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING), who is the ranking member of the Immigration Subcommittee, for yielding.

I am happy to have played a part in the creation of the Religious Worker Immigrant Visa Program back in 1990. These visas enable American religious denominations, large and small, to benefit from committed religious workers from other countries.

However, I have also long been concerned about the high level of fraud that has been evident in this visa program. Like Mr. KING, I feel regulations can only go so far in preventing fraud and we do need additional statutory changes in the program.

The Office of Fraud Detection and National Security at the Department of Homeland Security has conducted a Fraud Benefit Assessment. It found that of 220 religious worker visa cases selected at random, 33 percent had ''a finding of fraud,'' the highest of any visa program.

Fraud involves everything from bogus churches and bogus jobs to ''religious workers'' who are found driving taxis soon after they arrive here.

So I especially appreciate the steps that the chairman of the Immigration Subcommittee, Congresswoman ZOE LOFGREN, has taken to address these concerns. She agreed that we would extend the expiring religious worker green cards for 7 years as long as the Department of Homeland Security issues long-needed regulations to address some types of fraud. In addition, she agreed to have the Inspector General complete a report on the effectiveness of the anti-fraud regulations. The Inspector General also will conduct an audit to determine to what extent religious workers continue to work for the religious institutions that sponsor them.

Madam Speaker, although the bill does not contain all of the provisions I would have liked, I want to express my thanks to Ms. ZOE LOFGREN for her comity in drafting this legislation, which I support.

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, I recognize now the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ZOE LOFGREN), Chair of Immigration, without whose inordinate leadership we would not have been able to arrive at the accommodations and agreements that is in the bill that is now before us, and I yield to her such time as she may consume.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. I thank Mr. CONYERS, Mr. SMITH, and Mr. KING.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to be the author of H.R. 5570, the Religious Worker Visa Extension Act of 2008.

Immigrant religious workers add vitality and depth to communities of faith throughout America. They provide much-needed help to people of all faiths. America is a great and diverse land. Our religious institutions, our churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, cathedrals, face daunting challenges today. They must reach out to more people from more countries and cultures than ever before. Religious workers serve these communities well and ably to the benefit of their communities and their many faiths. I have no doubt that religious communities in America will continue to have the need to find devoted people of faith to help them meet the needs of their members.

□ 1330

In Jewish community schools across the country, highly skilled religious instructors from Israel plant the fertile seeds of faith in our children. Mormon missionaries from around the world come to the U.S. to serve their community and deepen their faith. In Catholic dioceses around America, nuns from around the world provide needed community services and teach our children well. Muslim imams call their communities together to promote their faiths and a greater understanding of their beliefs. Protestant churches of every denomination benefit from the touches of religious workers in their diverse communities.

The call to faithful service in the United States will continue to grow as this Nation becomes more diverse. Because of this growing need, I introduced this bill. It follows my efforts in years past from the 105th and 106th Congress to permanently reauthorize the special immigrant nonminister religious worker visa program. I called those bills the Mother Theresa Worker Act in honor of her great service which inspired us and benefited the world.

I believed then as I believe now, that the special immigrant nonminister religious worker visa program represents an important and even critical piece of our immigration laws and that it should, like other religious worker programs, not sunset.

After four successive reauthorizations of this program in 1994, 1997, 2000 and most recently in 2003, each without a single substantive change in the program, I again introduced a bill to permanently reauthorize the program. However, as part of the process of putting the bill through the regular order and subjecting it to the robust discussion inherent in the legislative process, I offered an amendment worked out with the minority in the subcommittee to significantly reduce the potential for fraud in the program.

As mentioned by the chairman of the full committee, it requires DHS to issue its regulations. It limits the reauthorization to 15 months. If the department fails to issue regulations, it requires the Inspector General to issue a report on the effectiveness of the regulations. And rather than the permanent extension, as I had sought, Mr. SMITH and I worked out a compromise of 7 years of the regulations that are authored.

Finally, after additional discussion with the minority over the last several days, we have agreed that the Inspector General's report should also contain an analysis of a random sample of nonminister special immigrant cases to determine whether they are still employed by the religious organization that petitioned for them, and if not, the reasons for their departure from such employment. I am confident that these steps will make the issue and concern of fraud unnecessary because we will eliminate that problem.

I had an exit interview, if you will, with the director of the USCIS last week. Dr. Emilio Gonzalez is going back to his family in Florida. And he told me that with the initiation of site visits, which is something that should have happened long ago, the actual number of applications for this visa has dropped significantly, which is an interesting phenomenon.

So I think that we are well underway in eliminating any problems with the program so that our country can enjoy the richness that religious workers bring to our communities.

I thank the chairman for yielding to me.

Mr. CONYERS. I would like now to recognize the distinguished gentlelady from Texas, SHEILA JACKSON-LEE, who has worked on immigration as long as anyone on our committee, and her industry and cooperation have been very effective in bringing us together this afternoon. And I yield her as much time as she may consume or as much time as I have left, whichever is the longest.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. To the distinguished chairman, let me thank you for the litany and list of achievements of human rights that you have achieved on this floor. And I appreciate the leadership of my subcommittee Chair, Ms. ZOE LOFGREN, on many hard issues that have come to her attention over the time of her tenure as chairperson. And as a member of the subcommittee, I am grateful for her leadership. And working with the minority, I thank them on this instance for the cooperation on H.R. 5570. It is an especially unique and important legislative initiative as we make note not only of the many religious leaders in this Nation, but as we make note of the visit of the Aga Khan that, who has spent time in the State of Texas and his followers who have had the privilege of seeing him for the first time in 10 years in the United States, someone who has funded major humanitarian efforts around the world, and of course, the people of New York and Washington, D.C. have the privilege of hosting the Pope in these coming weeks and certainly in Washington.

Religion is special, and is special to this Nation. This legislation is a special immigrant visa which allows qualified religious workers to immigrate to the U.S. and later become citizens if they so chose and meet the qualifications. The other is a nonimmigrant visa which allows qualified religious workers to entry temporarily and perform services in the U.S. for a prescribed period. It has already been noted that the actions of these religious workers may find themselves in parishes, mosques or synagogues, or really simply in the community, as Mother Theresa was in India. Both of these visas may be granted to both ministers and nonminister religious workers.

Yes, there is humanitarian work to be done in the United States. They work in some of our most impoverished communities. And they are sincere in their social and religious humanitarian work. The bill has come under closer scrutiny because of the allegations of abuse and fraud among the foreign petitioners. But I am glad that this bill will provide for a 7-year extension of the program, and it will require DHS to promulgate regulations to eliminate fraud.

We must work together with the Department of Homeland Security, and I do appreciate the work of Dr. Gonzalez to impress upon them that their task is, in fact, to secure America and that they must move quickly on these regulations. If the regulations are not in place by December 31, 2008, to reduce fraud, the program will only be extended for 15 months through January 1, 2010. But if DHS can get the regulations in place, it is automatically extended to January 1, 2016.

I think this is a great start. But I ask my colleagues to consider the expansion of this bill, one to authorize it permanently, but also to look at a small area of which I hope to write legislation on, and that is the insistence that the religious person coming must be of the same religion of that which the person is petitioning for.

I had this circumstance in my district. Grace Community Church is a church with thriving multiple ministries that wanted to bring a young man and his family, a bilingual pastor, to speak to their Spanish congregation and to minister to our Hispanic community in Texas. It was a very, very tough task to address the question of the denials that he received because he was not the same religion of Grace Community Church. He had the same faith. He believed in a higher power. He wanted to do missionary work. The church was legitimate. It had long years in the community. The father of the young man had worked with the pastor of Grace Community Church. But yet we could not get a visa except for the gracious reconsideration of the Department of Homeland Security.

We must reduce fraud. But we can't reduce faith. And when individuals come and want to be missionaries even in this land, we should recognize and grant the opportunity. We can reduce fraud by making sure the institutions exist, the time frame is a time frame that is credible, the individuals are credible, the time that the visa is issued is reviewed, if you will, or overseen by the Department of Homeland Security. But actually, we should encourage those who wish to come to this Nation for good reasons and those who come under this visa are doing so.

So in conclusion, I do want to note that we are celebrating the authorization of this bill this week for very special reasons. But we are also celebrating it because we believe that those who want to do good should be granted the opportunity. As we go forward on this legislation, I am hoping that we will look at some of the small fractures that keep good people from

coming to the United States, worshiping, practicing, serving and working with a great church like Grace Community and others who may wish to bring individuals who may not have the same religious affiliation but have the same belief in the greater goodness and the greater power.

Let me yield back by asking my colleagues to support H.R. 5570. And I thank my colleagues for the great work that they have done.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5570, the "Religious Worker Visa Program Extension Act of 2008", introduced by the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Immigration, Representative ZOE LOFGREN.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill. The religious worker visa program allows U.S. religious denominations to fill critical religious worker positions for which there are no qualified candidates in the U.S. with qualified religious workers abroad. The program provides for two types of visas.

The one is a special immigrant visa, which allows qualified religious workers to immigrate to the U.S. and later become citizens if they so choose and meet the qualification. The other is the non-immigrant visa, which allows qualified religious workers to enter temporarily and perform services in the U.S. for a proscribed period. Both of these visas may be granted to both ministers and non-minister religious workers.

This bill has come under closer scrutiny recently because of allegations of abuse and fraud among the foreign petitioners. H.R. 5570 would provide for a seven-year extension of the program and it would require DHS to promulgate regulations to eliminate fraud. If the Department of Homeland Security does not issue regulations to eliminate or reduce fraud in the religious worker program by December 31, 2008, the program is only extended for 15 months through January 1, 2010. If the Secretary of Homeland Security issues the regulation then the program is automatically extended until January 1, 2016.

While I support this bill, I would have liked to have this bill be expanded so that a religious worker does not have to work for a religious institution of the same denomination. Presently, a religious worker must be of the same religion as the institution by which the worker is employed. Recently this has created problems.

Pastor Riggle from Grace Community Church in my district in Houston, Texas contacted my office concerning Dr. David Scarpeta who needed a religious worker visa to work in his church. USCIS initially denied Dr. Scarpeta's religious worker petition because Dr. Scarpeta was not a member of Pastor Riggle's church.

In my view, Dr. Scarpeta should not have been excluded from the religious worker program merely because he was not a member of the church that was sponsoring him. This is inconsistent with religious work as I know it in this country. Often religious workers from different denominations and religious workers from different denominations work together in the religious vineyard.

Because I thought the law as interpreted was draconian and far too limited in its application, I worked tirelessly with USCIS to ensure that Dr. Scarpeta would be able to work for Grace Community Church. Through my efforts, I was able to get resolution of that case and now Dr. Scarpeta is an active member of the Grace Community Church.

Madam Speaker I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to examine this bill and recognize that it benefits the religious worker and Americans. I fully support what Representative LOFGREN and the Subcommittee on Immigration, of which I am a member, have done in the area of immigration.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I want to make sure that I am on record here as supporting religious worker visas. And one of the things that was well publicized during the Reagan administration was our ability to exchange students and business relationships and all parts of our culture with the rest of our world and bring people into the United States to get a feel and for us to learn from them and for them to learn from us. And I very much support that approach, and it has been important from the standpoint of promoting peace throughout the world.

I find that whenever you get to know people, you find out that people are human everywhere with the same values, the same interests and the same ideals at our core. We have different religions sometimes, we have different economics, different clothing, different food, different building structures and different climates. That all comes together as components of who we are as nations and nationalities. But inside of us, we are all one people. And that is my belief, and it is my profound commitment to continue to support the religious workers' visa.

Now I get to the "or what?" And that is that I have seen a significant amount of fraud in these applications. And I want to point out that where we will be welcoming Pope Benedict XVI here in Washington, D.C., and as I look through the statistics on the Catholic religious workers' visas, the fraud rate is very, very low as a proportion to the overall applications. So there is no implication in my remarks with regard to Catholics in particular, and many other denominations from that standpoint.

But the special immigrant religious worker visa program was created in 1990 and has been a magnet for people not only to come and share their faith with us, but also a magnet for people to be able to utilize the program in the system that it wasn't intended for.

The State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs in September 2005 in their Fraud Digest reported that "religious worker visas are known as some of the most difficult to adjudicate." The Fraud Digest then goes on to discuss various cases in which people were prosecuted for fraudulent use of the program. So, for instance, in 2004 a Venezuelan national was convicted in Virginia of visa fraud. He had filed 179 fraudulent petitions for religious ministers. In addition to creating fraudulent certificates of ordination, diplomas and other supporting documentation, he also obtained a valid 501(c)(3) tax exemption from recognized religious organizations without their knowledge.

The Immigration Subcommittee has long been aware of fraud in their religious worker visa program. In 1997, a GAO investigation was requested by our subcommittee. The State Department conducted a field inquiry. They did that to get the views of consular offices as to the level and type of fraud. And in 41 percent of the 83 responding posts, some type of fraud or abuse was acknowledged. And the State Department also noted that under the program's regulations, almost anyone involved with a church, aside from the explicitly excluded occupations of cleaning, maintenance and support staff, arguably could be qualified as a religious worker. So this was an open door. And I recognize the chairlady of the subcommittee acknowledged that we need to tighten that up a bit. And that, I think, is the biggest reason why, in that particular quote from that report.

In 1999, the GAO released a final report. The agency noted that the types of fraud often encountered in the processing of religious worker visas "involved petitioners making false statements about the length of time that the applicant was a member of the religious organization and the nature of the qualifying work experience."

The report went on to say that evidence uncovered at that time by INS agents suggested that "some of these organizations exist solely as a means to carry out immigration fraud." That is what we should be guarding against. That is what we hope to be able to do with their new regulations that will be written as a result of the bill.

At his motion, I would be happy to yield to the chairman of the full committee, Mr. CONYERS.

Mr. CONYERS. Thank you very much, STEVE KING, ranking member.

Am I getting from your remarks that you are implying that Protestants commit more abuse than Catholics in this particular program?

Mr. KING. Mr. Chairman, reclaiming my time, no good deed goes unpunished.

I'm simply complimenting the Catholics without reference to Protestants. However, I do have some data I could bring out perhaps a little later in the debate.

Mr. CONYERS. Did you say yes or no?

Mr. KING of Iowa. I said, "No good deed goes unpunished." I complimented the Catholics and didn't remark with regard to the Protestants.

Mr. CONYERS. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. KING of Iowa. I thank the chairman for his levity in this debate and I reclaim my time.

□ 1345

Madam Speaker, most recently, in July of 2006, the U.S. Citizenship and

Immigration Services Office of Fraud Detection and National Security conducted a fraud benefit assessment on the Religious Worker Visa program. They selected 220 cases at random and found an astounding 33 percent fraud rate. That means one out of three was fraudulent. That is their finding.

In 32 of the fraudulent cases, the religious institution either did not exist or only existed on paper, and 39 of their fraudulent petitions included fraudulent supporting documentation or material misrepresentations within a document. Other instances of fraud included cases where the petitioner could not be located or connected to any religious entity and where the petitioning religious entity was unaware that the petition had even been filed and was unaware of the beneficiary.

Now that this Nation is involved in a global war on terror, we must be extremely vigilant, Madam Speaker. We must protect the safety and welfare of American citizens. We can't do that with an immigration policy that includes programs ripe with fraud.

Another example would be in 2003 Mohammed Khalil and three of his sons were arrested in connection with submitting false applications to bring over 200 individuals to the United States using the Religious Worker Visa program. Prosecutors revealed that Khalil made statements to an undercover witness professing allegiance to Osama bin Laden. He also allegedly stated, ''Hopefully another attack in the United States will come shortly.'' These are the kind of people that we don't need in this program. We must be ever vigilant.

This program needed some improvements before it was ready for reauthorization. Historically it has been reauthorized as a 5-year reauthorization. The initial proposal was to reauthorize it to make the program permanent. I appreciate the negotiations that have taken it down to a 7-year reauthorization. I would have preferred it be substantially less.

However, information that has been made available to me after such time as we took action on the bill in the Judiciary Committee gives me some hope that USCIS, the U.S. Citizenship Immigration Services, has already taken some steps that likely would have reduced the percentage and certainly reduced the number of fraud cases.

As I look at the verbal report from Director Emilio Gonzalez, the 2005 Religious Worker Visa applications were something slightly above 4,000 out of the 5,000 cap that is in the authorization. That was 2005. So that would be the year by which we have seen the highest percentage of fraud in the reports that I have seen, Madam Speaker.

In 2006, the applications, by the report language that I received, is 3,048. So we have seen these numbers going down, presumably because of the increased scrutiny on the Religious Worker Visa applications. Then by 2007 we only saw, and this is by a verbal report from the director, 454 Religious Worker Visa applications. That is a dramatic 80-some percent reduction in the number of visa applications. I think it is safe to conclude that a significant amount of this, Madam Speaker, is the result of increased scrutiny on the part of USCIS.

We need to be taking a particular look still, and I intend to sit down with Director Gonzalez and talk this through so I can get a full understanding of the decisions they made, the timing of their decisions and how that might have affected the Religious Worker Visa applications.

But as I look through their report, I see a couple or three places that we should be looking. One is the special registrant countries. These are the countries that required extra scrutiny post-September 11th, and we know which countries those are. They are listed in the report. That happens to be the source of, depending how you want to evaluate the information, those countries that made those self-attested reports show that either 70 percent, 73 percent or 80 percent were fraudulent in the special registrant countries category.

Then the non-affiliated groups, the groups that are not affiliated with a religious denomination, showed 63 percent fraud. That is worthy also of significant scrutiny, and I am hopeful that this has been addressed. And those numbers I believe also are shrinking. Then I looked at, for example, the countries of origin. There was one county that had 100 percent fraud of the report that was issued. That was Jamaica.

So these are things that I think are red flags. I intend to sit down and have this conversation with Director Gonzalez and get a better feel for it. But that is the statistics we are dealing with today as this bill to reauthorize and extend for 7 years Religious Worker Visas is before this Congress.

Then I would submit also that there is something that is actually missing in our policy. A nation that should be a nation that believes in free trade and smart trade also should believe in free and smart trade of our religious workers. I believe that we should have reciprocity. For us to welcome religious workers from countries that will disallow American religious workers from going to their countries and particular religions that come from America to go to those countries, I think is a great big gap in our oversight.

Recognizing the time of this legislation and the inability to offer an amendment in a closed rule, I have drafted a bill, and I have that bill with me today and I won't be able to introduce it unless there is a request for unanimous consent, and I don't intend to do that, but this bill is the Religious Worker Reciprocity Act of 2006.

What it does, it just extends reciprocal immigration treatment to nationals of the United States who are seeking resident status in order to work in religious vocation of other countries. In other words, it would simply say you send your religious workers here, we want to be able to send our religious workers there. I think that is the intent. And I would ask for support of that across the bipartisan effort, and particularly those that have taken particular interest in this issue. But I will be introducing that legislation in a subsequent day.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ZOE LOFGREN), the chairwoman of the Immigration Subcommittee.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Madam Speaker, may I inquire how much time remains.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Michigan controls 6 minutes and the gentleman from Iowa controls 4½ minutes.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Madam Speaker, I just want to make a couple of comments. I think it is important to note that the various analyses of this program back in the nineties and early in this century actually preceded reauthorization when Republicans were in the majority. We had a reauthorization with no changes at all in 1994, 1997, 2000 and 2003. So this is the first time we have actually had changes in the bill to address the issue of fraud, and I think is it is appropriate we do so. We want to welcome religious workers to our country, but we don't want to be scammed. So I think we have done the balance on this.

I would note that I believe, as does the ranking member, that the Catholics probably do have a low rate of fraud, but there is no way to know that, because the sample of 220 was so small that there was no way to pull out any one denomination as being more problematic than another.

I would ask unanimous consent that the e-mail from the USCIS making that point to me be included in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

From: Patrick N. Forrest.
Sent: Thursday, March 13, 2008.
To: Blake Chisam.
Subject: Re religious workers.

BLAKE, the Religious Worker BFA (non-immigrant) had a 32.73% fraud rate out of a sample of 220 cases. The public version of the BFA did not further break down the 220 cases into religious categories. The fraud rate for Muslim organization has been spoken of many times on the Hill for some time. The reality is that because the population sample for Muslim groups in the BFA is so small the rate of fraud is statistically insignificant. I'm still waiting on the site check data.

PATRICK.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Madam Speaker, I would note also that, anecdotally, the non-affiliated may in fact be part of the issue, and

here is the problem that may have happened.

If there is no site visit to the petitioning church, you don't know whether it is a phony post office box or whether it is St. Joseph's Cathedral in downtown San Jose. So now that the Department of Homeland Security has done site inspections, anybody can see the beautiful St. Joseph's in downtown San Jose, and you can also find out there is something funny here because there is not a real church or it is just a post office box. And I think that is what has led to the dramatic decline in some of these more problematic applications.

I would note also, and I look forward to talking to the ranking member about his reciprocity bill, but let me just express a caution. Right now, Russia will not allow our evangelicals into their country to proselytize. I think that is the wrong thing for the Russian government to do. I think it denies the Russian people the opportunity to be exposed to those who believe that Christ is their personal saviour. But I don't think we ought to deny the Russian Orthodox believers in California the opportunity to receive assistance from Russian Orthodox religious workers simply because the Russian government has hostility towards religion and our government does not have hostility towards religion.

So I look forward to discussing this further with the ranking member, but I would want to add that cautionary.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

In fact, I don't recall the unanimous consent request. Was that responded to by the Speaker?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Yes, it was.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Okay, I didn't hear that. And I certainly don't reserve nor do I object to that e-mail from USCIS being introduced into the RECORD. In fact, I would like to read it into the RECORD.

It says, ''The religious worker BFA non-immigrant had a 32.73 percent fraud rate out of a sample of 220 cases. The public version of the BFA did not further break down the 220 cases into religious categories. The fraud rate for Muslim organization has been spoken of many times on the Hill for some time. The reality is that because the population sample for Muslim groups in the BFA is so small, the rate of fraud is statistically insignificant. I am still waiting on the site check data.''

I believe that is the e-mail referenced by the gentlewoman from California, and I reference it here to speak to the data that is in the report rather than a comment about the data that is in the report.

These 220 cases were drawn to give indicators for further scrutiny. When you see a 70, 73 or 80 percent fraud rate, there is an obligation to look into that and verify the sources of that fraud and also the indicators that it might be greater, not less. I don't imply it is, but we can draw just as much inference that it is greater than it is less from these statistics.

I pointed out that Jamaica has a 100 percent fraud rate out of the sample in this study. That doesn't mean there aren't other denominations we shouldn't be looking at. But I am looking at each one of these cases, and I referenced the special registrant countries that are part of that list. The special registrant counties would be, for the record, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Libya, Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Eritrea, Lebanon, Morocco, North Korea, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Egypt and Pakistan.

For the record, when I referenced then the special registrant countries, those are the countries. This is the record. It is the data we are dealing with. I think that it is something that we need to pay special scrutiny to. But we should encourage the reciprocity and the exchange of religious workers.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, I am very happy to yield back my time if the other side has no further speakers.

Mr. KING of Iowa. If the gentleman would yield, I would like perhaps 30 seconds just to wrap it up.

Mr. CONYERS. Absolutely.

Madam Speaker, I return any unused time.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Madam Speaker, I think this has been a very healthy debate. It has brought issues out into the Record that are going to be useful for us to reference. I pointed out that I do have data here that hasn't become part of the Record and I have withheld it for some reasons of discretion.

I look forward to reaching across the aisle and working with the Members across the aisle to look into those concentrated areas of fraud and work together to see if we can find a way to establish a policy of reciprocity for religious workers, and, at the same time, celebrate the great religions of the world and the exchange of those religions.

Mr. TANCREDO. Madam Speaker, I rise to oppose H.R. 5570, a bill which will again reauthorize the Religious Worker Visa. The new majority apparently thinks we need to add "ministry" to the list of jobs that "Americans won't do." Then again, with the level of hostility the Democrats have towards religion in America, there may come a time when we do have to import religious workers. Fortunately, we aren't to that point quite yet.

Regrettably, this program is far from comical. Just last year, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service attested to the fact that this visa had been "compromised." The fraud rate is "excessively high" according to Emilio Gonzalez, head of USCIS. In fact, a DHS fraud-prevention task force found that a whopping 33 percent of the visas in this program were granted based on fraudulent information.

Even worse, rampant fraud and abuse has characterized this program, practically since its inception in 1990. A GAO report about the program back in 1999 found that, "As a result of . . . fraud investigations, both [the State Department and the INS] have expressed concern that some individuals and organizations that sponsor religious workers may be exploiting this category to enable unqualified aliens to enter or stay in the United States illegally."

Madam Speaker, some might point out that this program is not very large in the scope of the total number of visas. But I would remind them that we know the amount of damage a handful of determined enemies can inflict when they are allowed to abuse our visa system.

The last thing we want to do is perpetuate a program we know is fatally flawed, and continue a policy that just might be rolling out a welcome mat for some of the most radical imams in the Middle East. I urge a "no" vote on this bill. Let's close this giant loophole in our national security.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5570, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title was amended so as to read: ''A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act with respect to the special immigrant nonminister religious worker program, and for other purposes.''.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1400

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR SECURE ELECTIONS ACT OF 2008

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5036) to direct the Administrator of General Services to reimburse certain jurisdictions for the costs of obtaining paper ballot voting systems for the general elections for Federal office to be held in November 2008, to reimburse jurisdictions for the costs incurred in conducting audits or hand counting of the results of the general elections for Federal office to be held in November 2008, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5036

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Emergency Assistance for Secure Elections Act of 2008''.

SEC. 2. PAYMENTS TO CERTAIN JURISDICTIONS CONDUCTING 2008 GENERAL ELECTIONS.

(a) REIMBURSEMENT FOR CONVERSION TO PAPER BALLOT VOTING SYSTEM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Election Assistance Commission shall pay to each eligible jurisdiction an amount equal to the sum of the following:

(A) The documented reasonable costs paid or incurred by such jurisdiction to replace any voting systems used to conduct the general elections for Federal office held in November 2006 that did not use or produce a paper ballot verified by the voter or a paper ballot printout verifiable by the voter at the time the vote is cast with paper ballot voting systems.

(B) The documented reasonable costs paid or incurred by such jurisdiction to obtain non-tabulating ballot marking devices that are accessible for individuals with disabilities in accordance with the requirements of section 301(a)(3) of the Help America Vote Act of 2002.

(C) The documented reasonable costs paid or incurred by such jurisdiction to obtain ballot marking stations or voting booths for the protection of voter privacy.

(D) The documented reasonable costs paid or incurred by such jurisdiction to obtain paper ballots.

(E) The documented reasonable costs paid or incurred by such jurisdiction to obtain precinct-based equipment that tabulates paper ballots or scans paper ballots.

(F) The documented reasonable administrative costs paid or incurred by such jurisdiction that are associated with meeting the requirements for an eligible jurisdiction.

(2) ELIGIBLE JURISDICTION DEFINED.—In this subsection, an ''eligible jurisdiction'' means a jurisdiction that submits to the Commission (and, in the case of a county or equivalent jurisdiction, provides a copy to the State), at such time and in such form as the Commission may require, an application containing—

(A) assurances that the jurisdiction conducted regularly scheduled general elections for Federal office in November 2006 using (in whole or in part) a voting system that did not use or produce a paper ballot verified by the voter or a paper ballot printout verifiable by the voter at the time the vote is cast;

(B) assurances that the jurisdiction will conduct the regularly scheduled general elections for Federal office to be held in November 2008 using only paper ballot voting systems;

(C) assurances that the jurisdiction has obtained or will obtain a sufficient number of non-tabulating ballot marking devices that are accessible for individuals with disabilities in accordance with the requirements of section 301(a)(3) of the Help America Vote Act of 2002;

(D) assurances that the jurisdiction has obtained or will obtain a sufficient number of ballot marking stations or voting booths for the protection of voter privacy;

(E) assurances that the jurisdiction has obtained or will obtain a sufficient number of paper ballots;

(F) such information and assurances as the Commission may require to make the determinations under paragraph (1); and

(G) such other information and assurances as the Commission may require.

(3) DETERMINATIONS OF REASONABLENESS OF COSTS.—The determinations under paragraph (1) of whether costs paid or incurred by a jurisdiction are reasonable shall be made by the Commission.

(4) PAPER BALLOT VOTING SYSTEM DEFINED.—In this subsection, a ''paper ballot voting system'' means a voting system that uses a paper ballot marked by the voter by hand or a paper ballot marked by the voter with the assistance of a non-tabulating ballot marking device described in paragraph (1)(B).

(b) REIMBURSEMENT FOR RETROFITTING OF DIRECT RECORDING ELECTRONIC VOTING SYSTEMS TO PRODUCE VOTER VERIFIABLE PAPER RECORDS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall pay to each eligible jurisdiction an amount equal to the documented reasonable costs paid or incurred by such jurisdiction to retrofit direct recording electronic voting systems so that the systems will produce a voter verifiable paper record of the marked ballot for verification by the voter at the time the vote is cast, including the costs of obtaining printers to produce the records.

(2) ELIGIBLE JURISDICTION DEFINED.—In this subsection, an ''eligible jurisdiction'' means a jurisdiction that submits to the Commission (and, in the case of a county or equivalent jurisdiction, provides a copy to the State), at such time and in such form as the Commission may require, an application containing—

(A) assurances that the jurisdiction has obtained or will obtain a printer for and retrofit each direct recording electronic voting system used to conduct the general elections for Federal office held in November 2008 so that the system will produce a voter verifiable paper record of the marked ballot for verification by the voter;

(B) such information and assurances as the Commission may require to make the determinations under paragraph (1); and

(C) such other information and assurances as the Commission may require.

(3) DETERMINATION OF REASONABLENESS OF COSTS.—The determinations under paragraph (1) of whether costs paid or incurred by a jurisdiction are reasonable shall be made by the Commission.

(c) REIMBURSEMENT FOR PROVISION OF BACKUP PAPER BALLOTS BY JURISDICTIONS USING DIRECT RECORDING ELECTRONIC VOTING SYSTEMS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall pay to each eligible jurisdiction an amount equal to the documented reasonable costs paid or incurred by such jurisdiction to obtain, deploy, and tabulate backup paper ballots (and related supplies and equipment) that may be used in the event of the failure of a direct recording electronic voting system in the regularly scheduled general elections for Federal office to be held in November 2008.

(2) ELIGIBLE JURISDICTION DEFINED.—In this subsection, an ''eligible jurisdiction'' means a jurisdiction that submits to the Commission (and, in the case of a county or equivalent jurisdiction, provides a copy to the State), at such time and in such form as the Commission may require, an application containing—

(A) assurances that the jurisdiction will post, in a conspicuous manner at all polling places at which a direct recording electronic voting system will be used in such elections, a notice stating that backup paper ballots are available at the polling place and that a voter is entitled to use such a ballot upon the failure of a voting system;

(B) assurances that the jurisdiction counts each such backup paper ballot cast by a voter as a regular ballot cast in the election, and does not treat it (for eligibility purposes) as a provisional ballot under section 302(a) of the Help America Vote Act of 2002, unless the individual casting the ballot would have otherwise been required to cast a provisional ballot;

(C) such information and assurances as the Commission may require to make the determinations under paragraph (1); and

(D) such other information and assurances as the Commission may require.

(3) DETERMINATION OF REASONABLENESS OF COSTS.—The determinations under paragraph (1) of whether costs paid or incurred by a jurisdiction are reasonable shall be made by the Commission.

(d) AMOUNTS.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Commission such sums as may be necessary for payments under this section. Any amounts appropriated pursuant to the authorization under this subsection shall remain available until expended.

SEC. 3. PAYMENTS FOR CONDUCTING MANUAL AUDITS OF RESULTS OF 2008 GENERAL ELECTIONS.

(a) PAYMENTS.—

(1) ELIGIBILITY FOR PAYMENTS.—If a State conducts manual audits of the results of any of the regularly scheduled general elections for Federal office in November 2008 (and, at the option of the State, conducts audits of elections for State and local office held at the same time as such election) in accordance with the requirements of this section, the Commission shall make a payment to the State in an amount equal to the documented reasonable costs incurred by the State in conducting the audits.

(2) CERTIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE AND COSTS.—

(A) CERTIFICATION REQUIRED.—In order to receive a payment under this section, a State shall submit to the Commission, in such form as the Commission may require, a statement containing—

(i) a certification that the State conducted the audits in accordance with all of the requirements of this section;

(ii) a statement of the reasonable costs incurred in conducting the audits; and

(iii) such other information and assurances as the Commission may require.

(B) AMOUNT OF PAYMENT.—The amount of a payment made to a State under this section shall be equal to the reasonable costs incurred in conducting the audits.

(C) DETERMINATION OF REASONABLENESS OF COSTS.—The determinations under this paragraph of whether costs incurred by a State are reasonable shall be made by the Commission.

(3) TIMING OF PAYMENTS.—The Commission shall make the payment required under this section to a State not later than 30 days after receiving the statement submitted by the State under paragraph (2).

(4) MANDATORY IMMEDIATE REIMBURSEMENT OF COUNTIES AND OTHER JURISDICTIONS.—If a county or other jurisdiction responsible for the administration of an election in a State incurs costs as the result of the State conducting an audit of the election in accordance with this section, the State shall reimburse the county or jurisdiction for such costs immediately upon receiving the payment from the Commission under paragraph (3).

(5) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Commission such sums as may be necessary for payments under this section. Any amounts appropriated pursuant to the authorization under this subsection shall remain available until expended.

(b) AUDIT REQUIREMENTS.—In order to receive a payment under this section for conducting an audit, the State shall meet the following minimum requirements:

(1) Not later than 30 days before the date of the regularly scheduled general election for Federal office in November 2008, the State shall establish and publish guidelines, standards, and procedures to be used in conducting audits in accordance with this section.

(2) The State shall select an appropriate entity to oversee the administration of the audit, in accordance with such criteria as the State considers appropriate consistent with the requirements of this section, except that the entity must meet a general standard of independence as defined by the State.

(3) The State shall determine whether the units in which the audit will be conducted will be precincts or some alternative auditing unit, and shall apply that determination

in a uniform manner for all audits conducted in accordance with this section.

(4) The State shall select the precincts or alternative auditing units in which audits are conducted in accordance with this section in a random manner following the election after the final unofficial vote count (as defined by the State) has been announced, such that each precinct or alternative auditing unit in which the election was held has an equal chance of being selected, subject to paragraph (9), except that the State shall ensure that at least one precinct or alternative auditing unit is selected in each county in which the election is held.

(5) The audit shall be conducted in not less than 2 percent of the precincts or alternative auditing units in the State (in the case of a general election for the office of Senator) or the Congressional district involved (in the case of an election for the office of Representative in, or Delegate or Resident Commissioner to, the Congress).

(6) The State shall determine the stage of the tabulation process at which the audit will be conducted, and shall apply that determination in a uniform manner for all audits conducted in accordance with this section, except that the audit shall commence within 48 hours after the State or jurisdiction involved announces the final unofficial vote count (as defined by the State) in each precinct in which votes are cast in the election which is the subject of the audit.

(7) With respect to each precinct or alternative audit unit audited, the State shall ensure that a voter verified paper ballot or paper ballot printout verifiable by the voter at the time the vote is cast is available for every vote cast in the precinct or alternative audit unit, and that the tally produced by counting all of those paper ballots or paper ballot printouts by hand is compared with the corresponding final unofficial vote count (as defined by the State) announced with respect to that precinct or audit unit in the election.

(8) Within each precinct or alternative audit unit, the audit shall include all ballots cast by all individuals who voted in or who are under the jurisdiction of the precinct or alternative audit unit with respect to the election, including absentee ballots (subject to paragraph (9)), early ballots, emergency ballots, and provisional ballots, without regard to the time, place, or manner in which the ballots were cast.

(9) If a State establishes a separate precinct for purposes of counting the absentee ballots cast in the election and treats all absentee ballots as having been cast in that precinct, and if the state does not make absentee ballots sortable by precinct and include those ballots in the hand count described in paragraph (7) which is administered with respect to that precinct, the State may divide absentee ballots into audit units approximately equal in size to the average precinct in the State in terms of the number of ballots cast, and shall randomly select and include at least 2 percent of those audit units in the audit. Any audit carried out with respect to such an audit unit shall meet the same standards applicable under paragraph (7) to audits carried out with respect to other precincts and alternative audit units, including the requirement that all paper ballots be counted by hand.

(10) The audit shall be conducted in a public and transparent manner, such that members of the public are able to observe the entire process.

(c) COLLECTION AND SUBMISSION OF AUDIT RESULTS; PUBLICATION.—

(1) STATE SUBMISSION OF REPORT.—In order to receive a payment under this section, a State shall submit to the Commission a report, in such form as the Commission may require, on the results of each audit conducted under this section.

(2) COMMISSION ACTION.—The Commission may request additional information from a State based on the report submitted under paragraph (1).

(3) PUBLICATION.—The Commission shall publish each report submitted under paragraph (1) upon receipt.

(d) DELAY IN CERTIFICATION OF RESULTS BY STATE.—No State may certify the results of any election which is subject to an audit under this section prior to completing the audit, resolving discrepancies discovered in the audit, and submitting the report required under subsection (c).

SEC. 4. PAYMENTS FOR CONDUCTING HAND COUNTS OF RESULTS OF 2008 GENERAL ELECTIONS.

(a) PAYMENTS.—

(1) ELIGIBILITY FOR PAYMENTS.—If a State, county, or equivalent location tallies the results of any regularly scheduled general election for Federal office in November 2008 by conducting a hand count of the votes cast on the paper ballots used in the election (including paper ballot printouts verifiable by the voter at the time the vote is cast) in accordance with the requirements of this section, the Commission shall make a payment to the State, county, or equivalent location in an amount equal to the documented reasonable costs incurred by the State, county, or equivalent location in conducting the hand counts.

(2) CERTIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE AND COSTS.—

(A) CERTIFICATION REQUIRED.—In order to receive a payment under this section, a State, county, or equivalent location shall submit to the Commission (and, in the case of a county or equivalent jurisdiction, shall provide a copy to the State), in such form as the Commission may require, a statement containing—

(i) a certification that the State, county, or equivalent location conducted the hand counts in accordance with all of the requirements of this section;

(ii) a statement of the reasonable costs incurred by the State, county, or equivalent location in conducting the hand counts; and

(iii) such other information and assurances as the Commission may require.

(B) AMOUNT OF PAYMENT.—The amount of a payment made to a State, county, or equivalent location under this section shall be equal to the reasonable costs incurred by the State, county, or equivalent location in conducting the hand counts.

(C) DETERMINATION OF REASONABLENESS OF COSTS.—The determinations under this paragraph of whether costs incurred by a State, county, or equivalent location are reasonable shall be made by the Commission.

(3) TIMING OF PAYMENTS.—The Commission shall make the payment required under this section to a State, county, or equivalent location not later than 30 days after receiving the statement submitted by the State, county, or equivalent location under paragraph (2).

(4) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Commission such sums as may be necessary for payments under this section. Any amounts appropriated pursuant to the authorization under this subsection shall remain available until expended.

(b) HAND COUNTS DESCRIBED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—A hand count conducted in accordance with this section is a count of all of the paper ballots on which votes were cast in the election (including paper ballot printouts verifiable by the voter at the time the vote is cast), including votes cast on an early, absentee, emergency, and provisional basis, which is conducted by hand to determine the winner of the election and is conducted without using electronic equipment or software.

(2) COMPLETENESS.—With respect to each jurisdiction in which a hand count is conducted, the State, county, or equivalent location shall ensure that a voter verified paper ballot or paper ballot printout verifiable by the voter at the time the vote is cast is available for every vote cast in the jurisdiction.

(c) PROCESS FOR CONDUCTING HAND COUNTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In order to meet the requirements of this section, a hand count of the ballots cast in an election shall be conducted in accordance with the following procedures:

(A) After the closing of the polls on the date of the election, the appropriate election official shall secure the ballots at the polling place (or, in the case of ballots cast at any other location, at the office of the chief election official of the jurisdiction conducting the hand count).

(B) Beginning at any time after the expiration of the 8-hour period that begins at the time the polls close on the date of the election, the jurisdiction shall conduct an initial hand count of the ballots cast in the election, using the ballots which are eligible to be counted in the election as of the time the polls are closed.

(C) Any ballot which is eligible to be counted in the election but which is not included in the initial count conducted under subparagraph (B), including a provisional ballot cast by an individual who is determined to be eligible to vote in the election or an absentee ballot received after the date of the election but prior to the applicable deadline under State law for the receipt of absentee ballots, shall be subject to a hand count in accordance with this section and added to the tally conducted under subparagraph (B) not later than 48 hours after the ballot is determined to be eligible to be counted.

(D) The hand count shall be conducted by a team of not fewer than 2 individuals who shall be witnessed by at least one observer sitting at the same table with such individuals. Except as provided in paragraph (2), all such individuals shall be election officials of the jurisdiction in which the hand count is conducted. The number of such individuals who are members of the political party whose candidates received the greatest number of the aggregate votes cast in the regularly scheduled general elections for Federal office held in the State in November 2006 shall be equal to the number of such individuals who are members of the political party whose candidates received the second greatest number of the aggregate votes cast in the regularly scheduled general elections for Federal office held in the State in November 2006.

(E) After the completion of the hand count, the ballots may be run through a tabulating machine or scanner for comparison with the tally, if such a machine or scanner is available.

(2) USE OF OTHER PERSONNEL.—An individual who is not an election official of the jurisdiction in which a hand count is conducted under this section may serve on a team conducting the hand count or may serve as an observer of a team conducting the hand count if the jurisdiction certifies that the individual has completed such training as the jurisdiction deems appropriate to conduct or observe the hand count (as the case may be).

(3) LOCATION.—The hand counts conducted under this section of the ballots cast in an election shall be conducted—

(A) in the case of ballots cast at a polling place on the date of the election, at the polling place at which the ballots were cast; or

(B) in the case of any other ballots, at the office of the chief election official of the jurisdiction conducting the hand count.

(4) INFORMATION INCLUDED IN RESULTS.—Each hand count conducted under this section shall produce the following information with respect to the election:

(A) The vote tally for each candidate.

(B) The number of overvotes, undervotes, spoiled ballots, and blank ballots cast (or their equivalents, as defined by the State, county or equivalent location).

(C) The number of write-in ballots and the names written in on such ballots pursuant to State law.

(D) The total number of ballots cast.

(E) A record of judgement calls made regarding voter intent.

(5) PUBLIC OBSERVATION OF HAND COUNTS.—Each hand count conducted under this section shall be conducted in a manner that allows public observation of the entire process (including the opening of the ballot boxes or removal of machine-printed ballots from their containers, the sorting, counting, and notation of results, and the announcement of final determinations) sufficient to confirm but not interfere with the proceedings.

(6) ESTABLISHMENT AND PUBLICATION OF PROCEDURES.—Prior to the date of the regularly scheduled general election for Federal office held in November 2008, a State, county, or equivalent location shall establish and publish procedures for carrying out hand counts under this subsection.

(d) APPLICATION TO JURISDICTIONS CONDUCTING ELECTIONS WITH DIRECT RECORDING ELECTRONIC VOTING SYSTEMS.—

(1) REQUIRING SYSTEMS TO PRODUCE VOTER VERIFIABLE PAPER RECORD.—If a State, county, or equivalent location uses a direct recording electronic voting system to conduct an election, the State, county, or equivalent location may not receive a payment under this section for conducting a hand count of the votes cast in the election unless (in addition to meeting the other requirements applicable under this section) the State, county, or equivalent location certifies to the Commission that each such system produces a paper record printout of the marked ballot which is verifiable by the voter at the time the vote is cast.

(2) TREATMENT OF PAPER RECORD PRINTOUTS.—In applying this section to a hand count conducted by a State, county, or equivalent location which provides a certification to the Commission under paragraph (1), the paper record printout referred to in such paragraph shall be treated as the paper ballot used in the election.

(e) ANNOUNCEMENT AND POSTING OF RESULTS.—Upon the completion of a hand count conducted under this section, the State, county, or equivalent location shall announce the results to the public and post them on a public Internet site.

(f) USE OF HAND COUNT IN CERTIFICATION OF RESULTS.—The State shall use the results of the hand count conducted under this section for purposes of certifying the results of the election involved. Nothing in this section may be construed to affect the application or operation of any State law governing the recount of the results of an election.

SEC. 5. STUDY, DEVELOPMENT OF TESTING METHODS, AND ACCELERATION OF DEVELOPMENT OF PRODUCTS AND STANDARDS TO ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY OF PAPER BALLOT VERIFICATION AND CASTING FOR CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS.

(a) STUDY, TESTING, AND DEVELOPMENT.—In accordance with OMB Circular A-119, the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (hereafter in this section referred to as the ''Director'') shall study, develop testing methods, and accelerate the development of products and standards that ensure the accessibility of paper ballot verification and casting for individuals with disabilities, for voters whose primary language is not English, and for voters with difficulties in literacy, including the mechanisms themselves and the processes through which the mechanisms are used. In carrying out this subsection, the Director shall investigate existing and potential methods or systems, including non-electronic systems, that will assist such individuals and voters in creating voter verified paper ballots, presenting or transmitting the information printed or marked on such ballots back to such individuals and voters in an accessible form, and enabling the voters to cast the ballots.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than June 30, 2009, the Director shall submit a report to Congress on the results of the studying, development of testing methods, and acceleration of the development of products and standards under subsection (a).

(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Director such sums as may be necessary to carry out this section, to remain available until expended.

SEC. 6. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act—

(1) the term ''Commission'' means the Election Assistance Commission; and

(2) the term ''State'' includes the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, and the United States Virgin Islands.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SERRANO). Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ZOE LOFGREN) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 5036 and to include extraneous matter.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 5036, the Emergency Assistance for Secure Elections Act 2008, is a bill that provides State and local governments the opportunity to have safe, secure and auditable elections in this, the election, year.

I commend Congressman HOLT and his bipartisan cosponsors for their continued dedication to the issue of election reform.

This bill recognizes that 2008 is quickly approaching and options must be provided to ensure the integrity of the vote. Our election process must be open and transparent to ensure public confidence. We are now 8 months from the general election and cannot place State and local governments in a position to require change. Therefore, the bill is 100 percent optional.

State and local governments can choose which provisions they can successfully implement. Opting in entitles the State or jurisdiction to reimbursement. In committee, several changes were made to this bill through bipartisan cooperation, and I want to thank Mr. EHLERS for his support during the committee markup. Changes were also made to meet the concerns of disability groups, as well as State and local government.

H.R. 5036, as amended, reimburses jurisdictions for retrofitting paperless touch-screen voting machines, or DREs, with systems that produce a voter verifiable paper record, allows for reimbursements for jurisdictions to obtain backup paper ballots in the event of failure of electronic voting systems and authorizes reimbursement for jurisdictions which conduct a manual audit of a Federal and any State and local election in November, 2008, in no less than 2 percent of the precincts.

During the markup, all the amendments offered by the Republicans were accepted by voice vote, and those four amendments were to allow for audits to commence within 48 hours after States or relevant jurisdictions involved announced the unofficial vote count. It requires no hand count to commence until at least 8 hours after the polls close and requires the ballots to be in a secured location until the hand count commences, and ensures that the hand-counting teams, when conducting a hand count of the election results, have equal representation from both political parties of the candidates who received the two greatest numbers of aggregate votes cast, and requires that after the hand count is complete the ballots be run through a tabulating machine or scanner for verification of the tally, if such a machine or scanner is available.

Having a voter verified paper trail with an automatic routine audit will go a long way to increase voter confidence and deter fraud.

Post-election audits are an essential tool to increase voter confidence in the election process. While the bill authorizes such sums as necessary, the CBO has come back to us with a score of $685 million, about what we expected, and a sum that was in the original Holt bill.

The CBO score, however, anticipates the participation of everyone in this bill. I think it is highly unlikely that every jurisdiction will participate in every aspect of the bill, since they have the opportunity to do nothing or to pick and choose portions of the bill. It is clear that the actual score or total would be less.

I would note that we are spending over $10 billion a month in Iraq and that we have spent a total of $1.32 billion on democracy-building programs in Afghanistan and Iraq. The CBO figure is certainly less than that. It seems to me, if we can't protect our elections at home, really, how are we supposed to be a model of democracy without safe and secure and auditable elections.

The country could end up revisiting the contentious and mistrusted count

of 2000 and, even more recently, in the contested election of District 13 where people could not verify votes through an actual written ballot.

The bill reported out of committee makes the changes requested by the minority to the legislation but keeps the core purpose of the bill, providing a voter verifiable paper and auditable paper trail.

If this bill is enacted promptly, jurisdiction should have adequate time to purchase and implement the voting system upgrades and the other provisions of this bill and provide voter confidence in the integrity of the 2008 election.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this option bill, this bipartisan effort.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss this bill and, first of all, to commend Mr. HOLT for his efforts and his concerns.

He is sincerely and extremely concerned about accuracy in voting, and what can be done to make certain that the results are accurate. He expressed that in his first bill, H.R. 811, which did not receive committee consideration.

I spent considerable time with him trying to work out the details of that bill, but we simply could not reach agreement or even come close to agreement.

I commend Mr. HOLT again for his concern and his persistence, as he authored H.R. 5036. When I reviewed it with him I thought this might be a much better basis for agreement and, that by working together, we might be able to achieve that.

Unfortunately, we have not achieved full agreement on it, although we did get it out of committee. I supported it out of committee because I thought it should reach the floor for floor debate. I anticipated that it would be taken up under a rule where we might have the possibility for an additional compromise, but that has not happened.

There are a number of issues that still remain. I agree with Mr. HOLT that we should have some type of redundancy in our recording systems. I disagree that it has to be paper. I think there are other methods of achieving redundancy.

Recently we had an exposition in the House Administration Committee room where we had demonstrations of equipment which shows redundancy in an electronic fashion, and I think would be fully as reliable as redundancy in paper.

Another area where we disagree is in the hand counting of ballots. I have enough experience with elections in local politics to recognize that hand counting is not as accurate as almost any machine counting that I have seen.

There are ways of achieving what Mr. HOLT wishes. I think the optical-scan method is certainly a valid one, and that is what the State of Michigan uses. Other States are beginning to go use that.

But the final blow to our efforts was the judgment of the CBO that it was $685 million for 1 year. I realize that Mr. HOLT had estimated that would be the cost in his original bill. In fact he had included it as an authorization in his original bill.

But having the CBO report that large sum that casts a pall over this particular bill in respect to the opinions of the Members of this body, and I am afraid that is likely to be the death knell.

In summary, I certainly commend Mr. HOLT for his concerns. I commend him for his efforts. I just don't think we have achieved enough agreement to effectively make this a bipartisan bill. Therefore, I suspect it will not pass, and I will have great difficulty supporting it at this point.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the author of the bill, Congressman Rush Holt from New Jersey, who has been tremendously diligent in pursuing these reform measures. Really, without his persistence, we would not be here today.

I would recognize him for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOLT. I thank the gentlelady.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to urge my colleagues to support the Emergency Assistance for Secure Elections Act of 2008.

This is a bill that is optional for counties. It's to encourage counties and States to do the right thing. We should all want national standards of accessibility, reliability and auditability for our elections. This is an emergency stop-gap measure to see that we achieve as much of that as possible before the November elections.

The principle is simple. Anything of value should be auditable. Votes are valuable. They should be audited so that voters can have the confidence that each vote is recorded the way the voter intended. In too many places around the United States, votes are not audited.

In too many places around the United States, they are not even auditable. Voters leave the polling places wondering if their vote will be counted as they intended and election losers and their supporters are left wondering if they can believe the results.

Already in this primary season, there have been numerous, numerous problems, questions, and unresolved disputes.

In county after county, in State after State, electronic voting systems have failed in many ways, failure to start-up in the morning, a mismatch between the electronic count and the end-of-day printout, failed memory cards, and on and on and on. In too many places, the irregularities can not be resolved. There is no way to resolve them. There is no way to know because there is no record of the voter's intentions.

This legislation would reimburse counties and States for allowing voters to inspect paper-based records of their vote, in other words, paper ballots. That would not only make it possible for audits, but this legislation would go further and reward States for putting in place procedures to conduct those audits. This would go a long way toward restoring confidence in the process.

There is still time before November to secure our election system. If our Emergency Assistance for Secure Elections Act is enacted, localities could choose to convert to paper ballot voting systems, offer emergency paper ballots if machines fail, and to conduct audits to confirm the accuracy of the electronic tallies.

I want to stress that this is optional. We took great pains to accept the suggestions of the minority party, to take suggestions of election officials, to take suggestions of people all over the country, lawyers and others who have looked at elections in detail. We simplified this so that counties could not object that we were making them do something that we weren't going to support them on. This is optional. We have simplified it as much as possible so that it could be implemented in time for this year's election, and it could be.

□ 1415

This modest bill simply entitles jurisdictions to reimbursement for the costs to conduct fully auditable, fully audited elections. It will encourage States and counties that want to do the right thing on behalf of their voters. But time is of the essence.

If we don't take action immediately, we will not leave enough time for States that wish to opt to do so before the November election. Voters will lose further confidence in the system, and candidates will leave on election night wondering if they can trust the results.

Common Cause wrote: ''The security and reliability problems with electronic machines have been well documented. Both the State of California with the Top to Bottom Review and the State of Ohio with their study have documented numerous security vulnerabilities and have systems and have taken action to protect voters. Additionally, a number of academic and public policy experts have recommended that the shortcomings of these systems be addressed. Finally, there have been a number of incidents in which voters have been disenfranchised and election outcomes thrown into doubt because the machines have simply failed to work properly.''

The Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law writes: ''Reports of machine problems during States' recent Presidential primary elections provide a preview of potentially widespread machine failure and disenfranchisement in November.''

They and others go on to argue that this simple, straightforward legislation

will allow many counties and States around the country to address these problems in time for their November election so that we can have a truly reliable, accessible and auditable election that voters can believe in.

I yield back the balance of my time with thanks to the gentlelady from California for her diligent work in putting together such a good piece of legislation.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. I thank the gentleman, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. EHLERS. I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. REGULA).

(Mr. REGULA asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. REGULA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 5036.

CBO estimates that this bill will cost the taxpayers $685 million to reimburse jurisdictions for the cost of converting to voting systems that produce paper ballots, manual audits and hand recounts. We have already provided the States with $3.2 billion in grants to implement the Help America Vote Act, including $115 million appropriated in fiscal year 2008.

The administration of elections is a State and local responsibility. Many jurisdictions have already decided to change their election systems to require paper ballots using their own resources. This bill would encourage other jurisdictions to rush the implementation of new paper ballot systems for the November election.

In written testimony before the Appropriations Subcommittee, the bipartisan Election Assistance Commission stated: ''Experience has taught election officials that a minimum of 6 to 8 months, and preferably longer, is needed to effectively implement a new voting system and to educate the voting public about how to use the system. Consistency in procedures and process is key in creating a secure, accurate and effective election. As we have seen in Ohio and in several other jurisdictions, the hasty attaching of a printer to some machines has led to paper jams, long lines, and confusion. While jurisdictions may find a voter verified paper audit trail to be suitable for their needs, hastily requiring such a thing for this year's election has the potential to lead to more problems than it can possibly solve. At this point in the election cycle, election officials are better served by sharpening their already existing policies than trying to apply patchwork fixes that could lead to greater problems.''

That was from the Election Assistance Commission which is a bipartisan group.

I would add, this bill will not only put the country further in debt, but would encourage jurisdictions to implement new voting systems between the primaries and general election, leading to additional election problems.

I urge my colleagues to vote ''no'' on this legislative proposal.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, Mr. DAVIS of Virginia is a principal cosponsor and I don't see him here, so I will yield to Mr. HOLT for 1 minute.

Mr. HOLT. I thank the gentlelady. I just wanted to address a couple of the points that the gentleman from Ohio made.

The first is we don't in this legislation tell the counties how to run their elections. We leave this up to them, and it is entirely optional. There are States around the country who have instituted complete auditable election systems in a matter of months.

If a county or a State feels they cannot do it, then I would advise them not to opt in to this program. But we believe they can. Let's leave that to them rather than as the gentleman from Ohio would, try to decide for them whether this is something that they would want.

We believe from a number of indications that this will be useful in many counties and States around the country.

Mr. EHLERS. I yield 4 minutes to the Republican whip, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT).

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman for yielding and I come to the floor to talk about this bill with real appreciation for the hard work that the gentleman from New Jersey has put into this effort. I know it is a heartfelt effort on his part.

In fact, I first met his mother when we were both serving as the Secretaries of State of respective States, West Virginia and Missouri, at the time. I just come here to say that the States have handled the responsibility of the mechanics of election administration well for a very long time.

The process of voting, how you vote, the mechanics of what the ballot looks like, whether you have a straight ballot voting system, all that has been left to the States, and I think wisely so.

In the Help America Vote Act, the Congress provided States with over $3 billion to modernize their voting systems, including allowing the States to decide whether they wanted to have a paper backup. In my State, the State of Missouri, the Secretary of State determined if that money was used, there would be no system authorized in our State unless the paper backup was part of that system. As it turned out, that was a very good decision.

But in the aftermath of the 2000 elections, many States took that incentive, that $3 billion that was out there, and in my view made decisions more quickly than they otherwise would have.

This bill now offers a second round of money that would be available to encourage changing their systems, many of them that we know about today changing their system from a system they just used Federal money to change to. I think this is neither wise nor the responsible thing for us to do.

I also very much think that there is no reason to rush this bill at this time. There is not enough time left between now and the November election to change voting systems. Over 30 States have already conducted primary elections with the system they will use in November. The very worst time to change a voting system is an election that has overwhelming participation, as we believe this one will.

Election administration and the mechanics of election grew up in this country over decades and generations of voting and voting habits. To try to change those voting habits from a primary election some time earlier in the year to a new system, to be frankly tested the first time in probably the biggest election turnout that we have had or will have in a long time, is just a mistake.

To think that we should pass this bill today for the November election, I think, is as far off base as we could be. I am not absolutely opposed to the Federal Government encouraging States to do better with their election process; I am opposed to this feeling that we get into that creates an environment where the States have to make these decisions more quickly than they should, and particularly to make a decision like this just in advance of a high-participation election.

I don't think the $3.2 billion so-called solution produced the right results. In fact, several States are now complaining that it produced problems. But they are the ones that decided that they would deal with those problems. Those problems, frankly, become less significant every time voters use a system. Maybe you made an investment that you wished you didn't make, but you made that investment. It is not impossible to either reverse it on your own or decide you are going to make it work.

I think this is the wrong approach at the wrong time. I encourage my colleagues to vote ''no'' on this bill today, not to give up in working with our friend from New Jersey to find a bill that would be helpful to the States, but not to pass a bill today that would only create with certainty more problems in November than we will have without it.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I just want to make it clear that the Holt bill is optional for jurisdictions. No one is required to opt in, so no one would be rushed unless they wanted and felt they could take advantage of this legislation. I would note also that several States have undergone very rapid conversion. I would note that Governor Crist from Florida was a witness before the Election Subcommittee in House Administration, and he had the entire State of Florida switch from the electronic machines to optical scan in really a matter of months. This is a matter of intention if you want to do it.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. EHLERS. I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING).

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Michigan for yielding, and I appreciate the privilege to address you here on the floor of the House with regard to integrity in the ballot system.

I will say as a compliment to Mr. HOLT, he and I have had a number of conversations about integrity in the electoral process. We share concern that the electoral process here in America have the highest level of integrity. I, for one, actually sat in my chair for all but a couple of 37 days following the election of the year 2000 watching television, scooting around and surfing the Internet, chasing down the rabbit trails. I was on the telephone. At the time I was the chairman of the Senate State Government Committee in Iowa, and I didn't want Iowa to become a Florida.

As I educated myself, it was a crash course in the electoral process. I found fraud in elections in a number of States, at least solid newspaper and journalistic reports of fraud, and I became convinced that it was scattered throughout this country. And the pattern is hard to follow, but the conclusion I drew was if this country ever loses its faith in our electoral system, this constitutional republic will collapse due to a lack of faith of the people.

So integrity in the electoral process is important. I would rather lose an election than lose the integrity of the electoral process.

I come to this floor today to oppose this bill, however, because this is Tax Day, 2008, election year 2008, and we are watching the Presidential debates unfold and soon we will hear the congressional debates light up. To try to jump on this horse in the middle of this fast current of stream that we have racing toward an election, I think is a bridge too far for us to be able to get there without further damaging the integrity, rather than improving it.

□ 1430

I would urge this House to step back, take a look, take a deep breath, and come together with some legislation that would provide, of course, for a paper audit trail, which I support, but one that does so in a reasoned fashion, not in the middle of an election year, not something that's designed to patch some of the flaws that came with the Help America Vote Act, but something that's well thought out, something that's bipartisan, something that's reasoned, something that's cautious, and something that will preserve the integrity of the electoral system that we have. And that's why I come to the floor, Mr. Speaker, for that purpose.

And I support the position taken by the ranking member from Michigan and my colleagues, although I intend to continue to work with Mr. HOLT. Another point that I would make is that we do have a disagreement in our viewpoint, and that is that I think we should, at the very last resort, impose obligations on the States. The States have run this electoral process. The Federal Government has a minimal involvement.

And so my view is, if the States have integrity, we have to be very careful because the voters within the States will be determining the next leader in the free world. I think the number was just 527 votes in Florida made the difference on who the leader of the free world was in the year 2000. That integrity is important. We must hold it together.

But I urge a ''no'' vote on this bill at this time.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to note that this has not been a hurried effort. In fact, we reported out of the House Administration Committee the original Holt bill before last Easter, Easter of 2007, and have been working with interested parties and across the aisle since that time.

It's worth noting that these changes can happen responsibly and also quickly. For example, in Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania, they're going to switch from DREs to optical scan in 7 weeks, before this primary.

And I would note that the legislature in Iowa has voted, I understand the vote was nearly unanimous, to transition from DREs to optical scan, and that's going to be done before this November election. So I think that this measure would help cities and counties who want to take those responsible steps.

I would yield to the author of the legislation, Mr. HOLT, an additional minute.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will note that the gentleman from Michigan has 6½ minutes remaining. The gentlewoman from California has 6 minutes remaining.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, under this legislation, the States and counties still have the responsibility for the mechanics of the elections. All we're saying is, if they put in place procedures to make them auditable, and procedures to audit the votes, we will assist them in the cost.

There are many things the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) said we could be dealing with, and, indeed, we are not dealing with questions of registration and purging of names on registration lists and absentee voting and the openness of the tabulation phase of results. We are just talking about what happens in the voting booth, so that each voter will be able to verify, on paper, that her vote or his vote is recorded the way they intended, and then, those voter verified records be used to audit the results. It's that simple.

I can promise you that if jurisdictions don't take these steps, there will be many questions around the country that cannot be resolved. This is a simple, straightforward way to take care of it.

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Florida, who has considerable voting experience, Mr. MICA.

Mr. MICA. I want to thank Ranking Member EHLERS and others for working on this bill.

I join in opposition to the legislation. First of all, let me say, my colleagues, there's nothing more important than the integrity of the election process in the United States and confidence that all Americans would have in making certain our system of election is secure.

But let me tell you, folks, this is compounding error and mistake Congress made, and here it is on Tax Day, 2008, that we're going to commit another two-thirds of a billion dollar mistake.

I sat on House Administration that oversees elections. I was there in 2000 when we had the problems in Florida with the hanging chads. We've all heard of the hanging chads. And everybody rushed here, and every vote's got to count; we've got to spend taxpayer dollars and make sure that every vote is counted; and we're going to put in a system, and we have to make it look like we're doing something to make certain that system's secure.

Now, we listened to the witnesses and they came before House Administration and they told folks that an electronic voting system, which would cost billions of dollars to implement, would have the possibility of error and just about the same percentage of error if you choose a lever, if you use a hanging chad ballot, if you use optical scan, if you use a paper ballot. And you can mess up any of those elections.

They told us. And then everybody rushed down. They voted it out of committee. We passed it. We spent $2 billion or $3 billion to put in place a system that they told us, well, somebody can pull the plug, the electronic thing doesn't work. Duh. Somebody can come up with some sort of electronic device. Even one of these might set it off and you might get some results.

They told us there might be errors, and they told us they didn't have a paper trail. Duh.

So here we are putting in place the system. On Tax Day, spend another two-thirds of a billion dollars. Keep working out there, Americans. Send it here because they'll spend it in some dumb fashion, and this follows that.

Now, we do want the system to work, but there are errors in everything. You heard them talking about the scan.

I went down and sat all night and watched the scan voting. It's simple. You just take a pen and you fill in the space. My God, I couldn't believe, hundreds of people, they put X's all the way around, they circled optical scan. They could screw up any kind of a ballot. A paper ballot. Actually I'm told that the old levers are probably the

best, that we took out for $2 billion or $3 billion worth of hard-earned taxpayer dollars and replaced with these electronic machines which now we're coming to correct. But they still have the same rate of error.

I guess it never stops around here. But here we are again spending that money on another whim. But we'll do it.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a couple of comments. In the last several years, the United States has spent at least $240 million to make sure that democratic elections in other countries met the same standards that we're hoping elections will be held to here. And so, obviously, every dollar that we have is precious tax money, but I would hope that we would be at least as interested in protecting the integrity of the elections in America as we are in protecting the integrity of the elections in Pakistan, Afghanistan and the like.

Secondly, I was not a member of the House Administration Committee when Mr. MICA, the gentleman from Florida, was. But I was on the Florida 13 Task Force, and we reached a conclusion. It was unanimous and it was bipartisan, and I don't second-guess them. We had GAO go in and they gave us a report, and we accepted that report. But had there been a paper trail we wouldn't have had to have the GAO go in and examine these machines.

And I would finally note that the gentleman is right. If you can mess it up, it will be messed up. But at least, with a paper ballot, you can discern intent. And if somebody circles the name instead of fills it in, and there is a recount, you can see what a voter meant to do. You cannot see that with an electronic machine.

So with that, and I understand the points being made, but I would hope that we can come together and support this bipartisan bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. EHLERS. I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA).

Mr. MICA. I didn't get a chance to say this, but there is a quote that I think should be part of the record. And the quote is: ''An informed electorate is the cornerstone of democracy and an educated electorate.'' And that's what we need to do.

And they make errors. Folks make errors. They just don't circle one and it's very clear. I'd love to bring the ballots here. Sometime I'll have to do that to show you how people can mess it up. But an informed electorate is the cornerstone of democracy. And, yes, we need to do all we can to make certain that they're provided with all the assistance from the Federal level to make certain that we have a fair, open, honest election.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. We don't have additional speakers. I wonder if the gentleman has additional speakers.

Mr. EHLERS. We have no further speakers. If you have none then I will make some concluding remarks.

I yield myself such time as I may consume.

We've heard a good deal of discussion on this bill. Some of you may recall Parkinson's laws from some years ago in which he commented that when there's a debate on a subject, the more the people know, the longer the debate. And I suspect we could go on considerably longer if we had more of the Members of Congress here simply because all of us have experience with elections.

I would like to point out a few items. First of all, the comments about the integrity of the system. I agree totally. The objective should be the complete integrity of the system to insure that every vote is counted accurately, and that every voter can be assured that their vote is not cancelled out by someone who has illegally voted the wrong way; in other words, through fraud or through mistakes by the machine.

I believe that the audits that Mr. HOLT has proposed are very important and should be developed. It should be developed with the help of the Secretaries of State and local election officials to develop a system that works, so that we can ensure that the count is as accurate as possible.

I also want to comment that the White House also has taken a dim view of this. They've issued a SAP this afternoon, somewhat to my surprise, that indicates that they oppose this bill and urge Members of the Congress to vote against it.

But I do want to look at this from the historical perspective, and as an older person, I've been around a while, and I've seen a lot of different elections. Recalling the early history of our country, all balloting was with paper. But because there was too much miscounting on opportunity for fraud, machines were developed: the iron monsters, as they called them, meaning the lever machines. And those were used for years, even though their error rate also was note zero. And then we've gone to many other voting methods over the years.

Now we're using high tech approaches with computers, and we have encountered some of the same difficulties.

I am not saying that you can't make a perfect machine. I am saying that as long as people are involved in operating them, there are likely to be mistakes.

And one of my classics that I remember is from the presidential election in 2004, when in Los Angeles County there were something like nine candidates for President listed on the ballot. This was an optical scan ballot. Over 3,600 voters crossed through the oval for candidates other than President Bush and left his blank.

Now, how is one to interpret that? Did these voters think they should leave the Bush oval blank because that was who they wanted to vote for? Or were they saying ''Anyone but the President? Who knows. As long as those types of mistakes are possible, they will be made. And we have to do our best here to work diligently, with, and I emphasize ''working with'' very strongly, working with the local elected officials, the State-elected officials, and continue to do as best we can to perfect the best possible voting system.

And with that, I will yield back.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I urge that we pass this important legislation today.

I will confess that I am disappointed that the ranking member is not today in support of this measure. We, on the majority side, accepted every amendment offered by Republicans in the committee mark-up on this bill, and I had hoped and expected that we would be able to continue to work together and support this measure on the floor.

We reported the original Holt bill out of the committee over 1 year ago, and in that time, between now and then, we have worked with Secretaries of State, the National Association of Counties, disability rights groups, voting rights groups, civil rights groups, to try and get a measure that could garner broad support across the country. And I believe that we have that measure before us today.

I will say that the White House issuing an SAP today, after a year's work, I think, is really bad faith. We have worked very hard, and to come out at the last minute is really very unprofessional.

I'd finally like to say that the dollar amount estimated by the Congressional Budget Office is a worst-case scenario. There's no way that that would be the full amount.

But even if it were, I would ask Members to think of this: Isn't the American democracy worth as much as the Iraqi or the Pakistani democracy?

□ 1445

Aren't we willing to spend as much to make sure that our precious American votes are counted as we are the votes of foreigners in other countries? I would hope that as we consider our responsibility as Members of Congress to our wonderful America and our wonderful country, that the answer to that would be yes and therefore, a ''yes'' on the whole bill.

There have been various quotes made today, but I think back of the second Californian to ever be President of the United States, his phrase was not used about voting, but it was this: Trust but verify. That's what the Holt bill would do. It would trust but verify, and I hope that Members today can come together and support the Holt bill.

I would like to commend once again Congressman HOLT for his enormous efforts that brought us here today.

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, as a cosponsor of the Emergency Assistance for Secure Elections Act, I rise in strong support of the bill.

Voting is the most fundamental element of democracy. It is the mechanism by which citizens hold their government accountable for its actions. This most critical of democratic actions depends, however, on voters' confidence

that their votes are counted fairly and accurately.

Voters have lost this confidence.

Election after election, year after year, millions of voters cast votes not knowing if their votes will count because the machines produce no paper records.

The Help America Vote Act of 2002 was supposed to resolve these problems. However, it failed to address several major issues that continue to plague the system and undermine the legitimacy of our elections.

This so-called response to the 2000 election debacle in Florida failed to implement accountability measures to ensure that every vote is cast and counted accurately.

The Emergency Assistance for Secure Elections Act would address this problem by providing funding for states and counties to implement safe, secure and auditable voting systems in time for the 2008 general election.

It would reimburse jurisdictions that choose to convert to paper-based voting systems. The reimbursements also cover emergency paper ballots used in the event of machine failure, and the cost of conducting hand-counted audits or hand counting the results of elections.

We must act to restore confidence in our election system. The Emergency Assistance for Secure Elections Act will help restore this confidence and help ensure that all votes are counted and recorded properly. I urge my colleagues to fulfill their responsibility to American voters by voting yes on this critical bill.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5036, the Emergency Assistance for Secure Elections Act of 2008.

I think everyone in the chamber today remembers the frustration and disbelief we all felt in November 2000 as hundreds of volunteers poured into Dade County Florida to oversee the recount of the Presidential election. As the future of our nation swayed in the balance, we all thought to ourselves, Can this actually be happening in America?

The answer, unfortunately, was yes. As devastating as that event was, I think we learned two very important lessons. The first is that every vote really does count. Every person who is eligible must get to the polls. The second lesson learned is that our system of elections is broken. Changes must be mandated, improvements must be made.

That is why I am proud to rise in support of H.R. 5036. This bill takes real steps to improve the transparency and accuracy of electoral process by minimizing the financial burden placed on local governments to ensure the accuracy of election results.

H.R. 5036 fully reimburses jurisdictions that choose to offer paper ballots on Election Day. In the 2006 election cycle, we learned that electronic voting machines are not always reliable, often malfunctioning and creating substantial complications on Election Day. H.R. 5036 also subsidizes manual recounts of elections results if basic minimum requirements are met. We must provide resources to the states to ensure that the elections they conduct are fair and accurate.

Both provisions provide absolutely necessary funding to alleviate the significant burden placed on local and county governments when holding elections. This relief is critical to ensure that local government entities can protect the legitimacy of election results without enduring financial hardship.

While, I recognize the fact that more must be done, I also believe that this bill is a very good start and I want to commend my good friend and colleague, RUSH HOLT, for his leadership on this issue. Even a month ago, it appeared that passing this bill was impossible. However, thanks to Representative HOLT's tireless efforts to work with members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, that impossibility becomes reality today. America will be a better for place for his efforts on this Issue.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, elections are the bedrock of our republic. Our capacity to function as a tripartite government of co-equal branches rests in the public's assurance that those of us entrusted to administer and legislate assumed our offices through free, fair and open elections.

I laud Congressman RUSH HOLT and his efforts to ensure the integrity and accuracy of our voting system. However, today I must rise in opposition to H.R. 5036, the Emergency Assistance for Secure Elections Act of 2008.

H.R. 5036 acknowledges that problems exist in our system of voting, and that without action now these problems will grow. For this reason the legislation has merit. While H.R. 5036 includes a provision to reimburse jurisdictions that convert their paperless voting system to one that includes a paper trail, it may also include optical scan technology. I have serious concerns with optical scan technology and its susceptibility to hacks and security breaches. Recent tests and research have demonstrated the ease with which a person can manipulate the configuration files to change votes. What's more, most of the equipment necessary to accomplish this can be purchased off-the-shelf at most technology stores.

Indeed, our voting system needs improvement, but replacing one flawed technology with another will do little to garner public faith in the electoral process. Let us make comprehensive electoral system reform a priority, and let us enact a policy that ensures system integrity, system security, and that each and every vote is counted.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ZOE LOFGREN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5036, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

HOUSE SALARIES

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5493) to provide that the usual day for paying salaries in or under the House of Representatives may be established by regulations of the Committee on House Administration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5493

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. AUTHORITY OF COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION TO ESTABLISH DAY FOR PAYING SALARIES IN OR UNDER THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

Section 116(a) of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2002 (2 U.S.C. 60d–1) is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: ''Notwithstanding the previous sentence, the Committee on House Administration may by regulation provide for the payment of salaries with respect to a month on a date other than the date provided under the previous sentence as may be necessary to conform to generally accepted accounting practices.''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BRADY) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on this bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 5493 is a bill to address the frequency of staff pay periods in the House. It provides that the day for paying staff may be regulated by the Committee on House Administration. The House of Representatives currently pays the staff once a month. The executive branch, the Senate, and most private companies pay their employees twice a month or every two weeks.

We are considering a change because once-a-month pay can be difficult for staffers budgeting on a tight paycheck. In addition, the committee's oversight experience with payroll software suggested adopting a more common approach will save money, reduce errors and increase efficiency. Unfortunately, the committee can't change the pay schedule for House staff until we change the law.

This bill will give the committee the authority to change the date that staffers are paid. It won't change the pay schedule right away. Once this bill is enacted, the committee will adopt regulations that change the pay cycle.

I would like to thank my friend and colleague, Mr. EHLERS, for cosponsoring this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5493, which would establish that the pay date in the House be determined by Committee on House Administration

regulations. However, I want to make clear that, while I support the committee establishing its authority to determine the House's pay date, I do not necessarily support alteration of the current House pay schedule at this time.

Along with the obvious administrative challenges that would impact the CAO, there are a number of cultural implications within the House population that must be addressed prior to making such a change.

Many employees pay their mortgages, utility bills, and other financial obligations in concert with a monthly pay schedule. To change a system that has been in place for such an extended period of time will have a pervasive impact and must be considered and communicated thoroughly before it is instituted.

This bill is the first step on a very long road, and it should be followed by hearings and surveys to allow House employees to express their opinions.

However, I fully support the efforts of Chairman BRADY to ensure that the committee take a decisive role in determining whether or not changes to the House pay schedule are made.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BRADY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5493.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HOUSE EXERCISE FACILITY

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1068) permitting active duty members of the Armed Forces who are assigned to a Congressional liaison office of the Department of Defense at the House of Representatives to obtain membership in the exercise facility established for employees of the House of Representatives, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1068

Resolved, That any active duty member of the Armed Forces who is assigned to a Congressional liaison office of the Armed Forces at the House of Representatives may obtain membership in the exercise facility established for employees of the House of Representatives (as described in section 103(a) of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2005) in the same manner as an employee of the House of Representatives, in accordance with such regulations as the Committee on House Administration may promulgate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BRADY) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on this resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 1068 responds to a specific request from the liaisons who serve in each branch of the military and assist us daily in the House of Representatives. They have just a simple favor to ask that they be allowed to use the House staff gym since they work here far away from the ordinary military fitness facilities.

In order to ensure that the military liaisons can maintain the physical fitness and readiness while they serve in the House, this resolution will allow them to use the House staff gym. The committee will adopt regulations for the use of this facility.

We anticipate that the Armed Forces personnel who use the facility would do so consistently with military policy and, to the extent possible, during off-peak hours.

Again, I would like to thank my friend and colleague, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS), for cosponsoring this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1068, which would permit military liaisons who are assigned to official duty within the House of Representatives to join the House Staff Fitness Center. The center has been a welcome benefit to many House employees since it opened in December of 2005. Located in the southwest corner of the Rayburn building, the fitness center covers 11,000 square feet in which gym members can take advantage of health screenings and fitness assessments, take part in health wellness workshops and seminars, and receive individualized exercise programs, in addition to using the state-of-the-art exercise equipment.

While membership in the House Staff Fitness Center will prove a convenient and useful operation to those military personnel who work in the House campus, I think it's also important to recognize that these gentlemen and women are part of the military. They must remain in shape because they may be called into active duty at any time.

And so I believe this is a good bill, and I thank Chairman BRADY for his work on the bill.

I yield back my time.

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BRADY) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1068, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

The title was amended so as to read: ''A resolution permitting active duty members of the Armed Forces who are assigned to a Congressional liaison office of the Armed Forces at the House of Representatives to obtain membership in the exercise facility established for employees of the House of Representatives.''.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AUTHORIZING THE USE OF THE ROTUNDA OF THE CAPITOL FOR THE PRESENTATION OF THE CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL TO MICHAEL ELLIS DEBAKEY, M.D.

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to discharge the Committee on House Administration from further consideration of S. Con. Res. 71 and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate concurrent resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, I will not object, but I would like to make a few comments.

I am proud to support S. Con. Res. 71, which authorizes the use of the Rotunda of the Capitol for a ceremony to award the Congressional Gold Medal to Dr. Michael Ellis DeBakey.

A pioneer in the field of cardiovascular surgery, Dr. DeBakey became chairman of the Department of Surgery at Baylor University College of Medicine in 1948. Over the last half century, he has created a number of medical devices, techniques, and procedures that have saved countless lives. He is perhaps best known for his pioneering efforts in cardiovascular surgery, as he was one of the first physicians to ever perform coronary bypass surgery.

Additionally, Michael DeBakey is credited with developing the concept for the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital, or M.A.S.H., units which were used in the Vietnam and Korean War to treat injured soldiers, saving even more lives.

An adviser to nearly every President for the past 50 years, Dr. DeBakey has served the public through his vast knowledge on a variety of medical issues. He has published more than

1,300 medical articles and has performed over 60,000 cardiovascular procedures. He is a beloved educator, so much so that in 1976, his students across the globe worked together to establish the Michael E. DeBakey International Surgical Society in his honor.

Dr. DeBakey has received numerous awards for his work, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1969 and the National Medal of Science, which was awarded to him by the late President Ronald Reagan in 1987.

I am extremely pleased that this bill will enable us to bestow another honor upon Dr. DeBakey as he receives the Congressional Gold Medal in the Rotunda of the United States Capitol.

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, would the gentleman yield?

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, the concurrent resolution provides for the use of the Capitol Rotunda to award the Congressional Gold Medal, and I support the resolution.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Michael DeBakey is a pioneer in the field of heart surgery and research. Dr. DeBakey honed his skills as an Army doctor during World War II. While chairman of the Department of Surgery at the Baylor College of Medicine, Dr. DeBakey performed the first heart bypass surgery. He has saved countless lives.

Dr. DeBakey has received a Presidential Medal of Freedom and the National Medal of Science, as well as awards from the American Medical Association, the American Heart Association, and the Academy of Surgical Research.

We are honored to authorize the use of the Capitol Rotunda to present Dr. DeBakey with the Congressional Gold Medal, and again, I thank the gentleman from Michigan for his support.

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

The text of the Senate concurrent resolution is as follows:

S. CON. RES. 71

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring),

SECTION 1. USE OF THE ROTUNDA OF THE CAPITOL FOR THE PRESENTATION OF THE CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.

The rotunda of the United States Capitol is authorized to be used on April 23, 2008, for the presentation of the Congressional Gold Medal to Michael Ellis DeBakey, M.D. Physical preparations for the conduct of the ceremony shall be carried out in accordance with such conditions as may be prescribed by the Architect of the Capitol.

The Senate concurrent resolution was concurred in.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks in the RECORD on the concurrent resolution just considered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

□ 1500

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 5719, TAXPAYER ASSISTANCE AND SIMPLIFICATION ACT OF 2008

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 1102 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 1102

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 5719) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to conform return preparer penalty standards, delay implementation of withholding taxes on government contractors, enhance taxpayer protections, assist low-income taxpayers, and for other purposes. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. The amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Ways and Means now printed in the bill shall be considered as adopted. The bill, as amended, shall be considered as read. All points of order against provisions of the bill, as amended, are waived. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill, as amended, to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Ways and Means; and (2) one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. During consideration of H.R. 5719 pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to such time as may be designated by the Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Ohio is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. SUTTON. For the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS). All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous materials into the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Ms. SUTTON. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 1102 provides for consideration of H.R. 5719, the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act of 2008, under a closed rule. The rule provides for 1 hour of debate on the bill controlled by the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. Speaker, today, April 15, is Tax Day, which has long been a source of stress and anxiety for many working families. However, today we will bring good news. We will consider legislation that will alleviate many of the tax-related difficulties Americans face today and throughout the year. This legislation will streamline the tax filing process for individuals and businesses as well as improve IRS customer service and strengthen privacy protections.

The Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act is also fully paid for by ensuring funds from tax-advantaged health savings accounts will be used for qualified health care expenses, and by temporarily delaying a withholding requirement on government payments to contractors.

It also contains provisions to strengthen the integrity of the Tax Code, making it simpler and fairer for all Americans. It eliminates incentives for U.S. companies to outsource work by ensuring they cannot escape paying employment taxes on government workers.

In addition, this legislation will also prevent thousands of elderly and disabled individuals from owing employment taxes for in-home care workers provided through State and local government programs.

This legislation also improves IRS service and outreach to low-income taxpayers in several ways. First, it allows IRS employees to refer taxpayers requiring assistance with tax cases to qualified low-income taxpayer clinics. It also requires that the IRS notify taxpayers of their potential eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit, which has been the largest need-based, anti-poverty program in the United States, lifting millions of Americans out of poverty every single year.

GAO estimates that in 2004, Americans failed to claim $8 billion in earned income tax credits, hundreds of millions of dollars in my home State of Ohio alone. These credits have the potential to help strengthen families and their financial security while also benefiting our communities at large by stimulating local economic development and job growth. And in order to ensure that eligible families can continue to take advantage of the earned income tax credit, this legislation authorizes an annual $10 million grant to Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, or VITA, programs. VITA provides free assistance to qualified low-income taxpayers, thanks to these grants as well as the assistance of dedicated volunteers across the country.

The availability of these valuable services makes it unnecessary for working families to turn to high-cost tax preparers and unscrupulous organizations engaging in predatory practices like offering what is called ''Refund Anticipation Loans.''

The Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act also includes several

provisions to strengthen privacy protections and government accountability. Importantly, it prohibits the IRS from providing individual taxpayer information to private entities employing predatory loan tactics. And it requires the IRS to notify taxpayers of suspected identity theft and fraud. It also takes the important step of repealing the authority of the IRS to contract with private debt collection agencies.

Mr. Speaker, there is no duty more central to the functioning of the Federal Government than the collection of its revenue. But under the Bush Administration, this inherently governmental responsibility has been farmed out to private collectors who keep up to 25 percent of the tax revenues they collect. The program has caused confusion and aggravation for many taxpayers because these private debt collectors frequently demand sensitive personal information without revealing the nature of their phone calls, as was documented in a Ways and Means Committee hearing last year.

In addition, the operations of private contractors are not held to the same standard of transparency as required of the Federal Government. There is the danger that sensitive personal information could be compromised through careless handling of these cases without accountability. The Taxpayer Advocate Service has reported over 1,500 complaints related to this program. And not only are there serious privacy and service issues, but the promised cost savings of the private debt collection program has simply not materialized. One needs to look no further than a headline on the front page of today's Washington Post that proclaims, ''Collectors Cost IRS More Than They Raise.''

Private debt collectors are also less efficient than the IRS. As the IRS Taxpayer Advocate Service points out, the Department of the Treasury estimates that private collection agencies collect $4 for every dollar it invests in tax collection efforts, but every dollar invested in IRS collections yields five times that amount.

The downside of continuing to outsource the duties of the Internal Revenue Service clearly outweigh any benefits. It's just another disturbing example of a poor governmental function being outsourced to private contractors with subpar results and a lack of transparency and accountability. It is a waste of taxpayer resources, and it is about time that we eliminated the IRS's authority to outsource this government responsibility.

The Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act improves government accountability and makes the Tax Code simpler and fairer for all Americans. I urge my colleagues to support this rule and the underlying legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this 52nd closed rule of the 110th Congress, a new record for the United States Congress. And I oppose, also, the underlying legislation which would have been passed by this House in a bipartisan fashion without the inclusion of two partisan and controversial measures that have already drawn veto threats from President Bush's senior advisers.

Mr. Speaker, I will insert a Statement of Administrative Policy for H.R. 5719 in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD outlining the administration's oppositions to these two provisions.

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY, H.R. 5719—TAXPAYER ASSISTANCE AND SIMPLIFICATION ACT OF 2008

(Rep. Rangel (D) New York and 16 cosponsors.)

The Administration strongly opposes H.R. 5719, the so-called ''Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act of 2008.'' The bill includes provisions that would impose new administrative burdens on the trustees of Health Savings Accounts (HSAs). These new burdens on HSA administrators are unnecessary for efficient tax administration, inconsistent with the flexibility purposely afforded HSAs at their inception, and could undermine efforts by employers, individuals, and insurers to reduce health care costs and improve health outcomes by empowering consumers to take greater control of health care decision-making. If H.R. 5719 were presented to the President with these provisions, his senior advisors would recommend he would veto the bill.

Also, the Administration strongly opposes the provisions of the bill that would repeal the current statutory authorization for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) private debt collection program. As of February 2008, over 98,000 cases have been referred to contractors, representing over $910 million in delinquent accounts. Terminating this program would result in a loss of $578 million in revenue over the next ten years, according to Congress' Joint Committee on Taxation. These are tax dollars that are legally owed to the Government and are otherwise very unlikely to be collected by the IRS due to workload demands. As noted in previous Statements of Administration Policy, the Administration strongly opposes elimination of this program, which is not consistent with the Administration's commitment to a balanced approach toward improving taxpayer compliance and collecting outstanding tax liabilities. If H.R. 5719 were presented to the President with these provisions, his senior advisors would recommend that he veto the bill.

The first partisan provision unnecessarily included by our friends, the Democrats, in this otherwise noncontroversial measure would require all HSA account holders to verify independently the qualified nature of medical expenses for all withdrawals subject to those transactions not substantiated to income taxes.

In theory, it is extremely important to make sure that health savings accounts are being used for qualified medical expenses and not for everyday use. Unfortunately, this language takes the reporting process way too far and risks discouraging health savings accounts enrollment, limiting patient choice, and further burdening our banks and financial organizations with implementing the substantial requirements.

The current system requires that nonqualified withdrawals from a health savings account are subject to individual income taxes as well as a 10 percent penalty. If the Internal Revenue Service is not enforcing these penalties, it should be, and it would make sense that Congress would take the necessary steps to ensure the appropriate audits take place. Our constituents' health and our Nation's financial institutions should not suffer from the Federal Government's inefficiency.

The Joint Committee on Taxation has said that this provision would save money, though they are unable to determine how much savings would result from the newly captured penalties and taxes that make HSAs, health savings accounts, less attractive to consumers, in turn, giving them less health care choices.

I might add that HSAs are there to provide consumers that do not have the tax advantages that corporate employees have, it gives employees health care on a pretax basis and is very important to families across this country.

But consumers are not the only ones who would suffer. Introducing a new step of independent substantiation would increase costs for banks and account administrators. Should that happen, it is very possible that they will pass on these costs to employees, and ultimately, consumers.

Over the past several weeks, Democrats have loudly complained about the charges that banks and other commercial lending institutions pass on to their customers, yet provisions allow for the possibility of increasing those costs further when it now applies to an HSA. I think Members of this body should be opposed to that.

The other controversial and partisan provisions included in this legislation would revoke the Internal Revenue Service's authority to contract out collection authority for those small accounts that in the private sector would often be referred to as ''old and cold.'' In 2004, Congress gave the IRS the ability to utilize the best practices and advantages created by the private sector to address its growing backlog of unpaid debt. Today, it is estimated that $345 billion of these unpaid taxes exist, meaning that every year the average taxpayer who plays by the rules must pay an extra $2,700 to cover the taxes not paid for by these people who are not paying.

This new practice, which begins as a small pilot program that grows as it continues to succeed, is estimated to bring in approximately $2.2 billion in the first 10 years alone. And under this agreement, the IRS would get the first 25 cents of every dollar to hire new collections professionals, a provision that will have a positive, compound effect by helping to bring in even greater amounts of this uncollected revenue for the government in the future.

The program, even in its beginning stages and despite numerous attempts by the Democrat majority to kill it before it could succeed, has been hugely

successful, bringing in over $30 million worth of uncollected taxes. Mr. Speaker, that means that $30 million worth of taxes that the IRS chose not to collect has been brought in as a result of what these outside collectors have done. It has received a 98 percent rating from the IRS for regulatory and procedural accuracy as well as a 100 percent rating for professionalism. Additionally, less than 1 percent of the taxpayers contacted by these private agencies have filed complaints with the IRS, not one of which has been validated.

Despite this program's track record of success on behalf of taxpayers who play by the rules and pay their designated share, not to mention the increased revenues that it brings in to fund the Democrats' other new, big spending legislation, there are many opponents on the other side of the aisle that want to prevent it from continuing to work, supposedly to protect the dues of big government union bosses.

□ 1515

They have claimed, despite the fact that 40 out of the 50 States in America already contract out their services, that this is something that only the government can do. You don't have to take my word for it to be said that this is untrue. Even the nonpartisan Government Accounting Office found that ''the IRS may benefit from using private collectors . . . and it is reasonable to assume that the IRS could learn from their best practices as it works to resolve longstanding problems with its debt collection activities.''

As well, in July of 2007, over 51,667 ''cold cases'' that the IRS was incapable of collecting were given to private agencies, resulting in over 5,300 full repayments to the Treasury and almost 2,000 full agreements to repay these debts incrementally. This means that the government received over $24 million of gross revenue that it would not have otherwise received, which was about one-eighth of what it cost for these nonexisting services to be paid for.

In fact, the IRS has publicly stated that no government employee will lose his or her job as a result of this highly efficient private contracting. Instead, the IRS will benefit from the opportunity to focus their talent, expertise, and resources on higher priority, more complex cases.

Last night in the most-closed-Congress-in-history Rules Committee, I offered an amendment coauthored by my friend Congressman KEVIN BRADY of Texas to strike this unfortunate provision, which was unsurprisingly defeated by the Democrat majority along party lines.

I encourage all my colleagues to vote against this closed rule and the underlying legislation that includes these two provisions.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, before I yield, I'd just like to clarify for the record some of the things that have been presented.

The National Taxpayer Advocate, who is appointed by the Treasury Secretary, reported to Congress that ''the money spent on the IRS Private Debt Collection initiative is an inefficient use of government dollars.'' The Chief of the National Taxpayer Advocate Service testified that the IRS employees bring in $20 for every dollar IRS spends, whereas private debt collectors bring in only $4.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO).

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the rule and the underlying legislation. The Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act is an important step toward a more straightforward, just tax system. I commend Chairman RANGEL for his tireless leadership.

Among other things, this bill will allow IRS employees to refer taxpayers needing assistance to qualified low-income taxpayer clinics, boost outreach, supporting the earned income tax credit. For so many families facing such great income insecurity during these difficult times, the EITC is a powerful initiative whose benefits reach our entire economy.

In particular, I want to recognize Representative ELLSWORTH and highlight this bill's Fair Tax Provision, rooted in our belief that no one, no one, should receive special privileges under our tax system. After all, what does it say about our Nation and our priorities when American companies like Kellog, Brown & Root, by far the largest contractor in Iraq, are allowed to take their Department of Defense dollars and filter them through offshore shell companies in order to avoid paying significant Social Security and Medicare taxes? It is my understanding that there are no other contractors in Iraq who are doing this.

KBR, which received a no-bid contract to rebuild Iraq's oil infrastructure and provides logistical support to the military, employs roughly 14,000 Americans in Iraq, and nearly all of them, approximately 10,500, are listed as employees of two Cayman Islands' shell companies, contracted by KBR solely to avoid paying payroll taxes for those workers.

And that means big cost savings passed on to a Defense Department that is contracted to reimburse KBR for all its labor costs while guaranteeing a profit, a Defense Department that is more than ready to look the other way as long as the bottom line works out in its favor. Indeed, the department knew KBR was shirking its responsibilities since 2004; yet they took no action. This kind of setup may mean a smaller price tag on any particular contract, but the long-term costs to the government and the taxpayer are far greater, $846 million over 10 years, according to the Joint Committee on Taxation. And the only one who really wins in the end is the company who gets the contract thanks to its unfair competitive advantage.

Mr. Speaker, these practices must end. This bill amends current law to treat foreign subsidies of U.S. companies under contract with the U.S. Government as American employers. And it changes the degree of common ownership to 50 percent, ensuring that more companies owing taxes are subject to the new law and greater transparency.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman's time has expired.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional minute to the gentlewoman.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable for the Department of Defense to pay for this war by doing business with a company that siphons money from its own workers and its own government, undermining the Social Security and the Medicare trust funds in the process. When tax dodgers try to avoid their responsibility, the American taxpayer suffers. This company should not be allowed to shirk their responsibilities and then be able to reap the rewards of very large Federal contracts. It is wrong. It should end. And we can no longer afford to look the other way.

I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I'm starting to get it. The IRS has a lot of work to do, and then as accounts become older because they don't get to those and they become 2, 3, 4, 5 years old but they are still debts that are owed this country, the IRS now, or at least we are led to believe this, would go collect that money when they hadn't done it their first 5 years.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not true. They will not go collect these accounts. They are old. And the point is it's still a debt that is owed to the United States Government. And that's where these private collectors come in. Private collectors that collect for at least 40 out of 50 States. Private collectors that have a 100 percent rating.

Mr. Speaker, what we're trying to say is that the IRS probably does do a good job with what it does do. But when it has not handled an account, it is unwise and bad for the taxpayer not to receive that money that is due from its services and from the taxes that took place, and that's what these collectors are all about. To say that they're not as efficient an outside collector as an IRS collector is silly because these cases are ones the IRS didn't want to handle in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY).

Mr. GINGREY. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the rule and the underlying bill, H.R. 5719.

As we are all aware, today is April 15, and once again Americans from all

across this land and from all walks of life must fork over their hard-earned income to the IRS. So to ease the burden on the taxpayer, the House Democratic leadership, under a closed rule, no opportunity for amendment, brings up this so-called Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act.

However, Mr. Speaker, anyone who takes a good, hard look at the language in the bill, they might not think today is April 15 but rather April Fools Day. In fact, this legislation should really be entitled the ''Tax Evader Assistance and Simplification Act.''

For example, this legislation will provide assistance to those who just don't feel like paying their taxes by eliminating a successful debt collection program that my friend from Texas just mentioned. Instead of lowering taxes for hardworking Americans of over half a billion dollars, this majority would rather give a tax break to these tax evaders to the tune, Mr. Speaker, of about $600 million.

And, unfortunately, to pay for these tax-evader protections, this bill targets what? Health Savings Accounts and the millions of Americans who are trying to take control of their own health care decisions. This legislation will cost those Americans who use HSAs, as my children do, nearly $500 million. It effectively works to destroy market-based solutions in order to force government-run health care down the throats of the American people.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier that this bill makes today seem more like April Fools Day. Well, that moniker already belongs to April 1; so perhaps we can just call today ''Thank a Congressional Democrat Day.''

I would say to the American people if they are happy that this Congress today will basically give away $600 million to tax evaders, thank a congressional Democrat.

If they are happy with the fact that this Congress has done nothing to repeal the deplorable death tax, thank a congressional Democrat.

If they are happy with the fact that this Congress has refused time after time to extend the tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 when our economy needs it most, thank a congressional Democrat.

If they are happy with the fact this Congress has for 2 straight years passed budgets that included the largest tax increase in United States history, thank a congressional Democrat.

And if they look forward to the prospect of writing an even bigger check to the IRS next year than they did this year, well, you guessed it, they can thank a congressional Democrat.

Mr. Speaker, I again ask all my colleagues, Democrat and Republican, to oppose this rule so this bill can be amended to provide real assistance to the American taxpayer. But if this rule passes, I call upon them to oppose the underlying ''Tax Evader Protection and Simplification Act.''

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentlewoman from Arizona (Ms. GIFFORDS).

Ms. GIFFORDS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support moving forward with this legislation.

I was a former small business owner, and I understand the real costs of health care, health insurance, increasing year after year. It's my understanding that the health savings account provision is not going to increase the burden on employers. The bill does not intend for employers to be subject to any additional burdens or obligations. And what it simply does is it closes the tax gap by requiring HSA trustees to report amounts paid to individuals that are not identified with medical expenses. Furthermore, we are going to be asking the GAO to study the uses of distribution from the HSAs.

So I'm really pleased to know that we are ensuring that this provision does not negatively impact our business community.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman from Arizona's letting us know about her understanding of what's happening.

What I would like to tell her is that a number of companies, including the National Association for the Self-Employed, National Association of Health Underwriters, National Association of Manufacturers, National Restaurant Association, National Retail Federation, National Taxpayers Union, Principal Financial Group, Retail Industry Leaders Association, Financial Services Roundtable, the HSA Council, the UnitedHealth Group, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, WellPoint, these people that employ people that utilize the HSA, are all saying it will have a negative impact upon the use of HSAs making it easier for individuals to get and have health care on a pretax basis.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE).

□ 1530

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, let me just make the observation that today is Tax Day, and effectively what we are doing to the American taxpayers is making them jump through more hoops. Certainly if they have an HSA, and the costs of this program are projected to be about a half a billion dollars a year, what we are going to be doing, what we are doing in bringing this bill to the floor, is enacting burdensome bureaucratic regulations that are going to undermine those health savings accounts which have been proven successful at slowing the growth of health costs and cutting insurance premiums for millions of individuals and small businesses. And my colleague has just listed all the business groups that are opposed to this legislation.

The question I guess I have is in the last session, we had a largely bipartisan bill that the Republicans put forward, with Democratic support, 407–7 it passed. But now we have this provision dropped into this bill that cripples health savings accounts. Now I know we have a philosophical difference of opinion on whether we want to keep health care private and do it through the marketplace, or whether we want to have a government nationalization and takeover of health care. What I am sharing with you is if you cripple HSAs in this way, I guess you do build momentum for a government takeover of health care. But that is not going to make savings for the American consumers.

HSAs are effective in reducing costs for the consumer. And I have got to tell you, these new burdens are unnecessary. They are inefficient. They are inconsistent with the flexibility purposely afforded HSAs at their inception. These provisions undermine efforts by employers, individuals and insurers to reduce health care costs and improve health outcomes.

How is it possible that we are going to consider a program here where it will take longer to receive reimbursements and will require individuals to come up with money out of their own pocket, potentially hundreds of dollars, on occasion $1,000 or so, at one time under this new proposal?

I just think that this new step of independent substantiation frankly helps only one company, or a very limited number of companies who offer such bureaucratic systems and imposes costs on all of the rest. This is going to increase the costs for the banks, for the account administrators, and for the individual who uses them. And it is going to be passed on to the consumers.

So we do complain about the charges which banks and other commercial lending institutions pass on to their customers. But why have this provision that is going to increase those costs on the consumer? This does not make sense. Health savings accounts were created to reduce the growth of health care costs. And they have achieved some noteworthy successes. But this bill is going to lead to increased health care costs for individuals by crippling HSAs. Don't taxpayers have enough to worry about on Tax Day?

I urge my colleagues to vote against this rule so we can fix this bill and provide a little relief to hardworking Americans on April 15.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I yield 5 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. This is an important bill and a timely bill. This is a bill that is due as a gift to the American people on this day which is referred to as Tax Day, April 15.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this bill simplifies the Tax Code. It also deals with antiharassment. It also deals with making sure that companies who do business in foreign lands are not using offshore accounts as scams to avoid paying their fair share of taxes.

And most importantly, Mr. Speaker, it deals with the simplification of the code and applies that to those people

who need it the most, because so many people, Mr. Speaker, are not even getting the advantages and getting their due from paying the taxes because of the fact that our Tax Code is so complicated. It is so complex. And this bill streamlines that.

Now let me take just a few minute to go through some very salient points. The Government Accountability Office estimates that Americans overpaid their taxes by over $1 billion a year because they failed to claim deductions. This bill deals with that. About a quarter of Americans who are eligible for the earned income tax credit failed to claim that due to its complexity.

But what this bill does, Mr. Speaker, is it makes the Tax Code simpler and fairer. It strengthens the IRS's outreach program to make sure that people know that they are entitled to the tax refunds and to payments earned under the earned income tax credit. As I mentioned, there are 25 percent of households who are eligible for the earned income tax credit in 1999 that did not even claim it. And working Americans may have lost out on approximately $8 billion. This bill corrects that.

And one of the most important measures of this bill, Mr. Speaker, is that the American people are tired of the harassment. They are tired of the phone calls, the abuse by these private collectors in which jobs are outsourced by the IRS to go collect the Federal debt. We have talked with the IRS. We have talked with the commissioner of the IRS. And he agrees with us that that can best be done not by outsourcing these jobs out, but by having the IRS employees collect that debt. Personal financial information of our American people is too precious and it is too confidential to be in the hands of private contractors on the outside.

And just very quickly, Mr. Speaker, we have foreign companies like KBR that are working and having millions of dollars of contracts servicing in Iraq. But they are using offshore accounts to hide that money to make sure that they do not have to pay the important taxes that go to Medicaid and to Medicare, not only not paying their fair share, Mr. Speaker, and hundreds of millions of dollars, but not even allowing their employees to qualify for Medicare and for Social Security. This bill corrects that.

And another important area, Mr. Speaker, is the new taxpayer protections against identity theft and tax fraud. It cracks down on misleading web sites that seek to get personal information by using their web sites and imitating and pretending that they are the IRS. Now Mr. Speaker, the American people are certainly fed up with being abused by these private collectors, being abused by these Web siters who are posing themselves as IRS agents.

This is a very important measure. I support this rule going forward. This is a very important bill, giving the taxpayers a due recognition, making the Tax Code simpler, and making sure it is fair for all. It is a good bill. I support this bill rule, and let's pass this bill and move it forward.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will note that both sides have 13½ minutes remaining.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I would like to yield 4 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE).

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to this closed rule. I am opposed because the majority continues to punish States without an income tax, States like Florida. Under the Republican leadership, Congress allowed States to once again allow their residents to deduct the State sales tax from their Federal income tax, just as other States are able to deduct their State income tax. My colleagues and I have repeatedly asked the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee to extend the deduction. But we have repeatedly been ignored.

As we all know, providing tax relief is a very important and effective way to stimulate our economy. Yet, the majority is choosing to pass a tax increase on to Floridians and residents of other States that only have a State sales tax.

Florida has the second highest foreclosure rate in America. And this, ladies and gentlemen, would increase taxes on people already stressing to pay their mortgage payments, and today being April 15, obviously, to rush down to the post office to pay their Federal income tax.

The Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act will not assist the average taxpayer nor simplify their tax burden. Even though the bill is being considered today, I haven't had a single constituent contact me in support of this measure. I have, however, had some pretty upset constituents come in about the fact that this is going to be the last year that they can deduct the sales tax on their Federal income tax.

Instead of heading off their requests, the majority is passing this bill under a closed rule, disallowing Members to help our cash-strapped constituents. The majority should really be ashamed of what they are doing today.

I urge all Members to vote against this rule and also the underlying bill.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Indiana, (Mr. ELLSWORTH).

Mr. ELLSWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlelady for recognizing me and yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act that is before us today. As everyone knows, it is April 15, Tax Day. No one likes paying taxes. But what folks really hate is when they have to pay more because bad actors are gaming the system and not paying their fair share. In fact, recent reports in the Boston Globe has shown that some government contractors have been using offshore Cayman Islands places, tax havens, to avoid paying their payroll taxes that they owe. A few weeks ago, I introduced the Fair Share Act to put a stop to this abuse, and I am proud to have this legislation included as part of today's important bill.

My constituents back in the Eighth District of Indiana don't want to pay even more taxes to shore up programs like Social Security and Medicare because companies who receive billions of dollars from this very government are exploiting the tax system today.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill and send a strong message that Congress is not going to stand by and let contractors cheat their workers, cheat the government or the American taxpayers.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, we will reserve our time.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I would inquire of the gentleman from Texas if he has any remaining speakers.

Mr. SESSIONS. I appreciate the gentlewoman asking. At this time, I do not have any additional speakers other than my close.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I am the last speaker on this side, so I'll reserve my time until the gentleman has closed on his side and yielded back his time.

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank the gentlewoman.

Mr. Speaker, as every American taxpayer is acutely aware, today is Tax Day, or the final day for individuals and families to file taxes without incurring financial penalties.

This is not to be confused with Tax Freedom Day, which the Tax Freedom Foundation has defined as the day on which the average American has finally earned enough money to pay this year's tax obligations at the Federal, State and local level, which won't arrive this year until next week, April 23.

In recognition of these two important days on every taxpayer calendar, today I will be asking each of my colleagues to vote ''no'' on the previous question to this rule. If this previous question is defeated, I will amend the rule to make it in order for the House to consider H.R. 2734, a bill offered by my friend, the gentleman from Michigan, Congressman TIM WALBERG.

This legislation repeals the sunset date of the 2001 Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act and makes the tax reductions enacted by that act permanent. Let me say that again in regular English. That means that we will make the tax cuts permanent to make sure that all these hardworking taxpayers that we are talking about won't have to pay an increase of taxes because the new Democrat majority wants tax increases for every single taxpayer in this country.

Today is an opportunity where we can make those tax cuts permanent to

make sure that our Tax Code encourages not only employers, but employees, and to grow our economy. It also repeals the termination date for provisions of the 2003 Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2003, thereby reducing income tax rates on dividends and capital gains. It amends the Internal Revenue Code to make permanent the tax deduction for State and local sales taxes, the tax deduction for tuition and related expenses, the increased expensing allowance for small business assets and related provisions, and the tax credit for increasing research activities.

□ 1545

In summary, I would just say this, that what it will do is to maintain in a time of uncertainty the ability for America to continue to grow jobs, which means that America can compete globally. On the other hand, if you are for tax increases, if you want to tax taxpayers more, just simply vote with the Democrat majority.

Finally, it expresses the sense of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Ways and Means that they should report legislation on or before the end of the year to simplify the Federal income tax system.

Mr. Speaker, I can think of a no more fitting action for Congress during the week between Tax Day and Tax Freedom Day to provide this kind of certainty to the American taxpayer.

By voting ''no'' on the previous question, Members will not be voting to kill or delay this debt relief legislation. They will simply be voting to provide tax relief to Americans as they provide debt relief the same day to the world's poorest countries. I encourage all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote ''no'' on the previous question.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of taxpayers who want to continue economic growth in America, I say let's vote to make the tax cuts permanent.

AMENDMENT TO H. RES. 1102 OFFERED BY MR. SESSIONS OF TEXAS

At the end of the resolution, add the following:

SEC. 3. That immediately upon the adoption of this resolution the House shall, without intervention of any point of order, consider the bill (H.R. 2734) to make the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 and certain other tax benefits permanent law. All points of order against the bill are waived. The bill shall be considered as read. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and any amendment thereto to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate on the bill equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Ways and Means; and (2) an amendment in the nature of a substitute if offered by Representative Rangel of New York, which shall be considered as read and shall be separately debatable for 40 minutes equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent; and (3) one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

(The information contained herein was provided by Democratic Minority on multiple occasions throughout the 109th Congress.)

THE VOTE ON THE PREVIOUS QUESTION: WHAT IT REALLY MEANS

This vote, the vote on whether to order the previous question on a special rule, is not merely a procedural vote. A vote against ordering the previous question is a vote against the Democratic majority agenda and a vote to allow the opposition, at least for the moment, to offer an alternative plan. It is a vote about what the House should be debating.

Mr. Clarence Cannon's Precedents of the House of Representatives, (VI, 308–311) describes the vote on the previous question on the rule as ''a motion to direct or control the consideration of the subject before the House being made by the Member in charge.'' To defeat the previous question is to give the opposition a chance to decide the subject before the House. Cannon cites the Speaker's ruling of January 13, 1920, to the effect that ''the refusal of the House to sustain the demand for the previous question passes the control of the resolution to the opposition'' in order to offer an amendment. On March 15, 1909, a member of the majority party offered a rule resolution. The House defeated the previous question and a member of the opposition rose to a parliamentary inquiry, asking who was entitled to recognition. Speaker Joseph G. Cannon (R–Illinois) said: ''The previous question having been refused, the gentleman from New York, Mr. Fitzgerald, who had asked the gentleman to yield to him for an amendment, is entitled to the first recognition.''

Because the vote today may look bad for the Democratic majority they will say ''the vote on the previous question is simply a vote on whether to proceed to an immediate vote on adopting the resolution. . . . [and] has no substantive legislative or policy implications whatsoever.'' But that is not what they have always said. Listen to the definition of the previous question used in the Floor Procedures Manual published by the Rules Committee in the 109th Congress, (page 56). Here's how the Rules Committee described the rule using information from Congressional Quarterly's ''American Congressional Dictionary'': ''If the previous question is defeated, control of debate shifts to the leading opposition member (usually the minority Floor Manager) who then manages an hour of debate and may offer a germane amendment to the pending business.''

Deschler's Procedure in the U.S. House of Representatives, the subchapter titled ''Amending Special Rules'' states: ''a refusal to order the previous question on such a rule [a special rule reported from the Committee on Rules] opens the resolution to amendment and further debate.'' (Chapter 21, section 21.2) Section 21.3 continues: Upon rejection of the motion for the previous question on a resolution reported from the Committee on Rules, control shifts to the Member leading the opposition to the previous question, who may offer a proper amendment or motion and who controls the time for debate thereon.''

Clearly, the vote on the previous question on a rule does have substantive policy implications. It is one of the only available tools for those who oppose the Democratic majority's agenda and allows those with alternative views the opportunity to offer an alternative plan.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act of 2008 is a strong pro-taxpayer bill that adopts legislative recommendations and tackles many of the most serious problems detailed in the National Taxpayer Advocate's Report to Congress.

In this weakening economy, America's working families will face many challenges in the months ahead and we in Congress need to do what we can to help. This legislation will streamline the tax filing process and ease the burden of tax law compliance, it will ensure that we are good stewards of taxpayer funds by eliminating unnecessary and wasteful programs that compromise the integrity of our governmental functions, and it makes the Tax Code simpler and fairer by eliminating unduly burdensome compliance requirements and providing commonsense solutions.

I am proud, Mr. Speaker, to support this legislation, because it makes the needs of working Americans a priority.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I support ordering the previous question because I think the House should proceed to considering H.R. 5719, the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act, without unnecessary delay.

Some have urged that Members oppose ordering the previous question so that the House could consider legislation to make permanent all the tax cuts the Bush Administration pushed through Congress in 2001.

I supported some of those reductions, but opposed others, and am not convinced that they should all be made permanent. But in any event, they will remain in effect until 2010. There is no need for us to consider today which should be extended, either as they stand or in modified form. I think instead we should proceed to the debate on H.R. 5719, and so I am voting to order the previous question.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 1102, the Rule to Consider H.R. 5719, "Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act of 2008". This legislation, introduced by Chairman CHARLES B. RANGEL (D–NY) and Oversight Subcommittee Chairman JOHN LEWIS (D–GA), modernizes Internal Revenue Service functions to make filing taxes simpler while improving outreach to taxpayers.

This Rule allows considerations:

SUMMARY OF H.R. 5719

Key provisions included in H.R. 5719 as agreed to by the Committee would eliminate the special requirements for individuals to keep detailed records of calls made on employer-provided cell phones; delay for one year the imposition of a three-percent withholding requirement on government payments for goods and services made after December 31, 2010; stops federal contractors from using foreign subsidiaries to evade Social Security and other employment taxes; make the administrators of state and local government programs liable for paying the employment taxes on amounts paid by government programs to in-home care workers provided to elderly and disabled persons; repeal the IRS's authority to use private debt collection companies to collect Federal taxes; prohibit the misuse of Department of the Treasury names and symbols in misleading websites and "phishing" schemes; protect low-income taxpayers by prohibiting IRS debt indicators for predatory

refund anticipation loans, allowing IRS employees to refer taxpayers to qualified low-income taxpayer clinics, and authorizing funding for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, "VITA" programs, and require the IRS to notify taxpayers if it suspects theft of a taxpayer's identity.

PROGRAMS FOR THE BENEFIT OF LOW-INCOME TAXPAYERS

There are parts of this tax bill that help the working poor and our elderly, making this tax bill truly live up to its name of being one of Taxpayer Assistance—not just give a credit to the top 2% of Americans.

This bill would authorize an annual $10 million grant for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, "VITA" programs, increasing the annual aggregate limitation authorized on grants to qualified low-income taxpayer clinics to $10 million.

This bill would allow IRS employees to refer taxpayers needing assistance with tax cases to qualified low-income taxpayer clinics so they can get the help they need. Many people are struggling with how to manage complicated tax cases when they can barely afford to pay their mortgage. This portion of the bill will alleviate the fear that is sometimes associated with IRS tax cases particularly among people who cannot afford legal counsel.

ELDERLY AND DISABLED INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING IN-HOME CARE

This bill would make the administrators of state and local government programs liable for paying the employment taxes on amounts paid by government programs to in-home care workers provided to elderly and disabled persons. This is yet another provision of the bill that benefits our most vulnerable populations.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to allow for full consideration of this bill by supporting H. Res. 1102, the Rule providing for consideration of the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act of 2008. I fully support what Representative RANGEL and the Committee on Ways and Means has done to alleviate some of the burden on taxpayers.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MS. SUTTON

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I offer an amendment to the rule which I have placed at the desk.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment offered by Ms. SUTTON:

Add at the end the following new sections:

SEC. 3. Notwithstanding any other provision of this resolution, the amendment considered as adopted under the first section of this resolution shall be modified as specified in section 4.

SEC. 4. The modification referred to in section 3 is as follows:

Page 21, line 26, insert ''as related to account beneficiary substantiation requirements'' after ''flexible spending arrangements''.

Add at the end the following new section:

SEC. 20. GAO STUDY ON HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct a study of the use of distributions from health savings accounts.

(b) SUBMISSION OF REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General shall submit a report on the findings of the study conducted under subsection (a) and shall include therein recommendations (if any) relating to such findings. The report shall be submitted to the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Finance of the Senate.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I move the previous question on the amendment and on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 and clause 9 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on ordering the previous question will be followed by 5-minute votes on agreeing to the amendment to House Resolution 1102, if ordered; adopting House Resolution 1102, if ordered; and suspending the rules with respect to H.R. 5036.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 220, nays 196, not voting 15, as follows:

[Roll No. 186]

YEAS—220

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Foster
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McNerney
McNulty
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pastor
Payne
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Speier
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Tsongas
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NAYS—196

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bean
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Boehner
Bonner
Bono Mack
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Broun (GA)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Cubin
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gilchrest
Gingrey
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hill
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Lampson
Latham
LaTourette
Latta
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Manzullo
Marchant
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McIntyre
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Paul
Pearce
Pence
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Stearns
Sullivan
Tancredo
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield (KY)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman (VA)
Wolf
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—15

Blunt
Capuano
Culberson
Delahunt
Gohmert
Honda
LoBiondo
Mack
Meek (FL)
Pallone
Pascrell
Peterson (PA)
Richardson
Rush
Wilson (NM)

□ 1612

Messrs. LAMBORN, McHENRY and STEARNS changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Mr. HIGGINS changed his vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the previous question was ordered.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. SUTTON).

The amendment was agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution, as amended.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

RECORDED VOTE

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 222, noes 195, not voting 14, as follows:

[Roll No. 187]

AYES—222

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Foster
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pastor
Payne
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Speier
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Tsongas
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NOES—195

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono Mack
Boozman
Boustany
Boyda (KS)
Brady (TX)
Broun (GA)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Cubin
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gilchrest
Gingrey
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hill
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Lampson
Latham
LaTourette
Latta
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Manzullo
Marchant
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Paul
Pearce
Pence
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Stearns
Sullivan
Tancredo
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield (KY)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman (VA)
Wolf
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—14

Capuano
Culberson
Delahunt
Gohmert
Gutierrez
Honda
LoBiondo
Mack
Pallone
Pascrell
Peterson (PA)
Richardson
Rush
Wilson (NM)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised 2 minutes are left.

□ 1620

So the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR SECURE ELECTIONS ACT OF 2008

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and agree to the bill, H.R. 5036, as amended, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ZOE LOFGREN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5036, as amended.

This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 239, nays 178, not voting 14, as follows:

[Roll No. 188]

YEAS—239

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Buchanan
Butterfield
Capps
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castor
Chabot
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Cole (OK)
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
DeFazio
DeGette
DeLauro
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Foster
Frank (MA)
Gerlach
Giffords
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Heller
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Lampson
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murphy, Tim
Murtha
Musgrave
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pastor
Payne
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (NC)
Ramstad
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ros-Lehtinen
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shays
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (NJ)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Speier
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher

Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Tsongas
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NAYS—178

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono Mack
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Broun (GA)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Castle
Coble
Conaway
Crenshaw
Cubin
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Deal (GA)
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gilchrest
Gingrey
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
LaTourette
Latta
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Manzullo
Marchant
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Paul
Pearce
Pence
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Rahall
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Stearns
Sullivan
Tancredo
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield (KY)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman (VA)
Wolf
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—14

Capuano
Culberson
Delahunt
Gohmert
Honda
LoBiondo
Mack
Pallone
Pascrell
Peterson (PA)
Rangel
Richardson
Rush
Wilson (NM)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised 2 minutes are left.

□ 1628

So (two-thirds not being in the affirmative) the motion was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

□ 1630

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on the bill, H.R. 5719.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

TAXPAYER ASSISTANCE AND SIMPLIFICATION ACT OF 2008

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 1102, I call up the bill (H.R. 5719) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to conform return preparer penalty standards, delay implementation of withholding taxes on government contractors, enhance taxpayer protections, assist low-income taxpayers, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas). Pursuant to House Resolution 1102, the amendment in the nature of a substitute printed in the bill is adopted and the bill, as amended, is considered read.

The text of the bill, as amended, is as follows:

H.R. 5719

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE, ETC.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the ''Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act of 2008''.

(b) AMENDMENT OF 1986 CODE.—Except as otherwise expressly provided, whenever in this Act an amendment or repeal is expressed in terms of an amendment to, or repeal of, a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

(c) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents of this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title, etc.
Sec. 2. Modification of penalty on understatement of taxpayer's liability by tax return preparer.
Sec. 3. Removal of cellular telephones (or similar telecommunications equipment) from listed property.
Sec. 4. Delay of application of withholding requirement on certain governmental payments for goods and services.
Sec. 5. Elderly and disabled individuals receiving in-home care under certain government programs not subject to employment tax provisions.
Sec. 6. Referrals to low income taxpayer clinics permitted.
Sec. 7. Programs for the benefit of low-income taxpayers.
Sec. 8. EITC outreach.
Sec. 9. Prohibition on IRS debt indicators for predatory refund anticipation loans.
Sec. 10. Study on delivery of tax refunds.
Sec. 11. Extension of time for return of property for wrongful levy.
Sec. 12. Individuals held harmless on wrongful levy, etc., on individual retirement plan.
Sec. 13. Taxpayer notification of suspected identity theft.
Sec. 14. Repeal of authority to enter into private debt collection contracts.
Sec. 15. Clarification of IRS unclaimed refund authority.
Sec. 16. Prohibition on misuse of Department of the Treasury names and symbols.
Sec. 17. Substantiation of amounts paid or distributed out of health savings account.
Sec. 18. Certain domestically controlled foreign persons performing services under contract with United States Government treated as American employers.
Sec. 19. Time for payment of corporate estimated tax.

SEC. 2. MODIFICATION OF PENALTY ON UNDERSTATEMENT OF TAXPAYER'S LIABILITY BY TAX RETURN PREPARER.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (a) of section 6694 (relating to understatement due to unreasonable positions) is amended to read as follows:

''(a) UNDERSTATEMENT DUE TO UNREASONABLE POSITIONS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—If a tax return preparer—

''(A) prepares any return or claim of refund with respect to which any part of an understatement of liability is due to a position described in paragraph (2), and

''(B) knew (or reasonably should have known) of the position,

such tax return preparer shall pay a penalty with respect to each such return or claim in an amount equal to the greater of $1,000 or 50 percent of the income derived (or to be derived) by the tax return preparer with respect to the return or claim.

''(2) UNREASONABLE POSITION.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as otherwise provided in this paragraph, a position is described in this paragraph unless there is or was substantial authority for the position.

''(B) DISCLOSED POSITIONS.—If the position was disclosed as provided in section 6662(d)(2)(B)(ii)(I) and is not a position to which subparagraph (C) applies, the position is described in this paragraph unless there is a reasonable basis for the position.

''(C) TAX SHELTERS AND REPORTABLE TRANSACTIONS.—If the position is with respect to a tax shelter (as defined in section 6662(d)(2)(C)(ii)) or a reportable transaction to which section 6662A applies, the position is described in this paragraph unless it is reasonable to believe that the position would more likely than not be sustained on its merits.

''(3) REASONABLE CAUSE EXCEPTION.—No penalty shall be imposed under this subsection if it is shown that there is reasonable cause for the understatement and the tax return preparer acted in good faith.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by this section shall apply—

(1) in the case of a position described in subparagraph (A) or (B) of section 6694(a)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (as amended by this section), to returns prepared after May 25, 2007, and

(2) in the case of a position described in subparagraph (C) of such section (as amended by this section), to returns prepared for taxable years ending after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 3. REMOVAL OF CELLULAR TELEPHONES (OR SIMILAR TELECOMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT) FROM LISTED PROPERTY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subparagraph (A) of section 280F(d)(4) (defining listed property) is amended by inserting ''and'' at the end of clause (iv), by striking clause (v), and by redesignating clause (vi) as clause (v).

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply to taxable years beginning after December 31, 2008.

SEC. 4. DELAY OF APPLICATION OF WITHHOLDING REQUIREMENT ON CERTAIN GOVERNMENTAL PAYMENTS FOR GOODS AND SERVICES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (b) of section 511 of the Tax Increase Prevention and Reconciliation Act of 2005 is amended by striking ''December 31, 2010'' and inserting ''December 31, 2011''.

(b) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Treasury shall submit to the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Finance of the Senate a report with respect to the withholding requirements of section 3402(t) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, including a detailed analysis of—

(1) the problems, if any, which are anticipated in administering and complying with such requirements,

(2) the burdens, if any, that such requirements will place on governments and businesses (taking into account such mechanisms as may be necessary to administer such requirements), and

(3) the application of such requirements to small expenditures for services and goods by governments.

SEC. 5. ELDERLY AND DISABLED INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING IN-HOME CARE UNDER CERTAIN GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS NOT SUBJECT TO EMPLOYMENT TAX PROVISIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 25 (relating to general provisions relating to employment taxes) is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"SEC. 3511. ELDERLY AND DISABLED INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING IN-HOME CARE UNDER CERTAIN GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS.

''(a) IN GENERAL.—In the case of amounts paid under a home care service program to a home care service provider by the fiscal administrator of such program—

''(1) the home care service recipient shall not be liable for the payment of any taxes imposed under this subtitle with respect to amounts paid for the provision of services under such program, and

''(2) the fiscal administrator shall be so liable.

''(b) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this section—

''(1) HOME CARE SERVICE PROGRAM.—The term 'home care service program' means a State or local government program—

''(A) any portion of which is funded with Federal funds, and

''(B) under which domestic services are provided to elderly or disabled individuals in their homes.

Such term shall not include any program to the extent home care service recipients make payments to the home care service providers for such in-home domestic services.

''(2) HOME CARE SERVICE PROVIDER.—The term 'home care service provider' means any individual who provides domestic services to a home care service recipient under a home care service program.

''(3) HOME CARE SERVICE RECIPIENT.—The term 'home care service recipient' means any individual receiving domestic services under a home care service program.

''(4) FISCAL ADMINISTRATOR.—The term 'fiscal administrator' means any person or governmental entity who pays amounts under a home care service program to home care service providers for the provision of domestic services under such program.

''(c) RETURNS BY FISCAL ADMINISTRATOR.—For purposes of this section—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Returns relating to taxes imposed or amounts required to be withheld under this subtitle shall be made under the identifying number of the fiscal administrator.

''(2) IDENTIFICATION OF SERVICE RECIPIENT.—The fiscal administrator shall, to the extent required under regulations prescribed by the Secretary, make a return setting forth—

''(A) the name, address, and identifying number of each home care service recipient for whom amounts are paid by such fiscal administrator under the home care services program, and

''(B) such other information as the Secretary may require.

''(d) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary may prescribe such regulations or other guidance as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this section, including requiring deposits of any tax imposed under this subtitle.''.

(b) SERVICE RECIPIENT IDENTIFICATION RETURN TREATED AS INFORMATION RETURN.—Paragraph (3) of section 6724(d) is amended by striking ''and'' at the end of subparagraph (C)(ii), by striking the period at the end of subparagraph (D)(ii) and inserting '', and'', and by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(E) any requirement under section 3511(c)(2).''.

(c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 25 is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''Sec. 3511. Elderly and disabled individuals receiving in-home care under certain government programs.''.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply to amounts paid after December 31, 2008.

SEC. 6. REFERRALS TO LOW INCOME TAXPAYER CLINICS PERMITTED.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (c) of section 7526 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(6) TREASURY EMPLOYEES PERMITTED TO REFER TAXPAYERS TO QUALIFIED LOW-INCOME TAXPAYER CLINICS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, officers and employees of the Department of the Treasury may refer taxpayers for advice and assistance to qualified low-income taxpayer clinics receiving funding under this section.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by this section shall apply to referrals made after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 7. PROGRAMS FOR THE BENEFIT OF LOW-INCOME TAXPAYERS.

(a) VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.—Chapter 77 (relating to miscellaneous provisions) is amended by inserting after section 7526 the following new section:

"SEC. 7526A. VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.

''(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may, subject to the availability of appropriated funds, make grants to provide matching funds for the development, expansion, or continuation of volunteer income tax assistance programs.

''(b) VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.—For purposes of this section, the term 'volunteer income tax assistance program' means a program—

''(1) which does not charge taxpayers for its return preparation services,

''(2) which operates programs to assist low and moderate-income (as determined by the Secretary) taxpayers in preparing and filing their Federal income tax returns, and

''(3) in which all of the volunteers who assist in the preparation of Federal income tax returns meet the requirements prescribed by the Secretary.

''(c) SPECIAL RULES AND LIMITATIONS.—

''(1) AGGREGATE LIMITATION.—Unless otherwise provided by specific appropriation, the Secretary shall not allocate more than $10,000,000 per year (exclusive of costs of administering the program) to grants under this section.

''(2) OTHER APPLICABLE RULES.—Rules similar to the rules under paragraphs (2) through (6) of section 7526(c) shall apply with respect to the awarding of grants to volunteer income tax assistance programs.''.

(b) INCREASE IN AUTHORIZED GRANTS FOR LOW-INCOME TAXPAYER CLINICS.—Paragraph (1) of section 7526(c) (relating to aggregate limitation) is amended by striking ''$6,000,000'' and inserting ''$10,000,000''.

(c) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—

(1) Section 7526(c)(5) is amended by inserting ''qualified'' before ''low-income''.

(2) The table of sections for chapter 77 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 7526 the following new item:

''Sec. 7526A. Volunteer income tax assistance programs.''.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 8. EITC OUTREACH.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 32 (relating to earned income) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(n) NOTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL ELIGIBILITY FOR CREDIT AND REFUND.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—To the extent possible and on an annual basis, the Secretary shall provide to each taxpayer who—

''(A) for any preceding taxable year for which credit or refund is not precluded by section 6511, and

''(B) did not claim the credit under subsection (a) but may be allowed such credit for any such taxable year based on return or return information (as defined in section 6103(b)) available to the Secretary,

notice that such taxpayer may be eligible to claim such credit and a refund for such taxable year.

''(2) NOTICE.—Notice provided under paragraph (1) shall be in writing and sent to the last known address of the taxpayer.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by this section shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 9. PROHIBITION ON IRS DEBT INDICATORS FOR PREDATORY REFUND ANTICIPATION LOANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (f) of section 6011 (relating to promotion of electronic filing) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) PROHIBITION ON IRS DEBT INDICATORS FOR PREDATORY REFUND ANTICIPATION LOANS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out any program under this subsection, the Secretary shall not provide a debt indicator to any person with respect to any refund anticipation loan if the Secretary determines that the business practices of such person involve refund anticipation loans and related charges and fees that are predatory.

''(B) REFUND ANTICIPATION LOAN.—For purposes of this paragraph, the term 'refund anticipation loan' means a loan of money or of any other thing of value to a taxpayer secured by the taxpayer's anticipated receipt of a Federal tax refund.

''(C) IRS DEBT INDICATOR.—For purposes of this paragraph, the term 'debt indicator' means a notification provided through a tax return's acknowledgment file that a refund will be offset to repay debts for delinquent Federal or State taxes, student loans, child support, or other Federal agency debt.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by this section shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 10. STUDY ON DELIVERY OF TAX REFUNDS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the National Taxpayer Advocate, shall conduct a study on the feasibility of delivering tax refunds on debit cards, prepaid cards, and other electronic means to assist individuals that do not have access to financial accounts or institutions.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Treasury shall submit a report to Congress containing the results of the study conducted under subsection (a).

SEC. 11. EXTENSION OF TIME FOR RETURN OF PROPERTY FOR WRONGFUL LEVY.

(a) EXTENSION OF TIME FOR RETURN OF PROPERTY SUBJECT TO LEVY.—Subsection (b) of section 6343 (relating to return of property) is amended by striking ''9 months'' and inserting ''2 years''.

(b) PERIOD OF LIMITATION ON SUITS.—Subsection (c) of section 6532 (relating to suits by persons other than taxpayers) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1) by striking ''9 months'' and inserting ''2 years'', and

(2) in paragraph (2) by striking ''9-month'' and inserting ''2-year''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply to—

(1) levies made after the date of the enactment of this Act, and

(2) levies made on or before such date if the 9-month period has not expired under section 6343(b) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (without regard to this section) as of such date.

SEC. 12. INDIVIDUALS HELD HARMLESS ON WRONGFUL LEVY, ETC., ON INDIVIDUAL RETIREMENT PLAN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 6343 (relating to authority to release levy and return property) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(f) INDIVIDUALS HELD HARMLESS ON WRONGFUL LEVY, ETC. ON INDIVIDUAL RETIREMENT PLAN.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—If the Secretary determines that an individual retirement plan has been levied upon in a case to which subsection (b) or (d)(2)(A) applies, an amount equal to the sum of—

''(A) the amount of money returned by the Secretary on account of such levy, and

''(B) interest paid under subsection (c) on such amount of money,

may be deposited into such individual retirement plan or any other individual retirement plan (other than an endowment contract) to which a rollover from the plan levied upon is permitted. An amount may not be deposited into a Roth IRA under the preceding sentence unless the individual retirement plan levied upon was a Roth IRA at the time of such levy.

''(2) TREATMENT AS ROLLOVER.—If amounts are deposited into an individual retirement plan under paragraph (1) not later than the 60th day after the date on which the individual receives the amounts under paragraph (1)—

''(A) such deposit shall be treated as a rollover described in section 408(d)(3)(A)(i),

''(B) to the extent the deposit includes interest paid under subsection (c), such interest shall not be includible in gross income, and

''(C) such deposit shall not be taken into account under section 408(d)(3)(B).

For purposes of subparagraph (B), an amount shall be treated as interest only to the extent that the amount deposited exceeds the amount of the levy.

''(3) REFUND, ETC., OF INCOME TAX ON LEVY.—If any amount is includible in gross income for a taxable year by reason of a levy referred to in paragraph (1) and any portion of such amount is treated as a rollover under paragraph (2), any tax imposed by chapter 1 on such portion shall not be assessed, and if assessed shall be abated, and if collected shall be credited or refunded as an overpayment made on the due date for filing the return of tax for such taxable year.

''(4) INTEREST.—Notwithstanding subsection (d), interest shall be allowed under subsection (c) in a case in which the Secretary makes a determination described in subsection (d)(2)(A) with respect to a levy upon an individual retirement plan.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by this section shall apply to amounts paid under subsections (b), (c), and (d)(2)(A) of section 6343 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 13. TAXPAYER NOTIFICATION OF SUSPECTED IDENTITY THEFT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 77 (relating to miscellaneous provisions) is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''SEC. 7529. NOTIFICATION OF SUSPECTED IDENTITY THEFT.

''If, in the course of an investigation under the internal revenue laws, the Secretary determines that there was or may have been an unauthorized use of the identity of the taxpayer or a dependent of the taxpayer, the Secretary shall, to the extent permitted by law—

''(1) as soon as practicable and without jeopardizing such investigation, notify the taxpayer of such determination, and

''(2) if any person is criminally charged by indictment or information with respect to such unauthorized use, notify such taxpayer as soon as practicable of such charge.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 77 is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''Sec. 7529. Notification of suspected identity theft.''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply to determinations made after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 14. REPEAL OF AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO PRIVATE DEBT COLLECTION CONTRACTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter A of chapter 64 is amended by striking section 6306.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(1) Subchapter B of chapter 76 is amended by striking section 7433A.

(2) Section 7811 is amended by striking subsection (g).

(3) Section 1203 of the Internal Revenue Service Restructuring Act of 1998 is amended by striking subsection (e).

(4) The table of sections for subchapter A of chapter 64 is amended by striking the item relating to section 6306.

(5) The table of sections for subchapter B of chapter 76 is amended by striking the item relating to section 7433A.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, the amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) EXCEPTION FOR EXISTING CONTRACTS, ETC.—The amendments made by this section shall not apply to any contract which was entered into before March 1, 2008, and is not renewed or extended on or after such date.

(3) UNAUTHORIZED CONTRACTS AND EXTENSIONS TREATED AS VOID.—Any qualified tax collection contract (as defined in section 6306 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as in effect before its repeal) which is entered into on or after March 1, 2008, and any extension or renewal on or after such date of any qualified tax collection contract (as so defined), shall be void.

SEC. 15. CLARIFICATION OF IRS UNCLAIMED REFUND AUTHORITY.

Paragraph (1) of section 6103(m) (relating to tax refunds) is amended by inserting '', and through any other means of mass communication,'' after ''media''.

SEC. 16. PROHIBITION ON MISUSE OF DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY NAMES AND SYMBOLS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (a) of section 333 of title 31, United States Code, is amended by inserting ''Internet domain address,'' after ''solicitation,'' both places it appears.

(b) PENALTY FOR MISUSE BY ELECTRONIC MEANS.—Subsections (c)(2) and (d)(1) of section 333 of such Code are each amended by inserting ''or any other mass communications by electronic means,'' after ''telecast,''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to violations occurring after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 17. SUBSTANTIATION OF AMOUNTS PAID OR DISTRIBUTED OUT OF HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (1) of section 223(f) (relating to amounts used for qualified medical expenses) is amended by inserting ''(and, in the case of amounts paid or distributed after December 31, 2010, substantiated in a manner similar to the substantiation required for flexible spending arrangements)'' after ''account beneficiary''.

(b) REPORTS.—Subsection (h) of section 223 (relating to reports) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (1) and (2) as subparagraphs (A) and (B), respectively,

(2) by moving the text of subparagraphs (A) and (B) (as so redesignated) and the last sentence 2 ems to the right,

(3) by striking ''(h) REPORTS.—The Secretary may require—'' and inserting the following:

''(h) REPORTS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may require—'', and

(4) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(2) RELATING TO SUBSTANTIATION.—Not later than January 15 of each calendar year after 2011, the trustee of a health savings account shall make a report regarding such account to the Secretary and the account beneficiary setting forth—

''(A) the name, address, and identifying number of the account beneficiary, and

''(B) the amount paid or distributed out of such account for the preceding calendar year not substantiated in accordance with subsection (f)(1).''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to amounts paid or distributed out of health savings accounts after December 31, 2010.

SEC. 18. CERTAIN DOMESTICALLY CONTROLLED FOREIGN PERSONS PERFORMING SERVICES UNDER CONTRACT WITH UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT TREATED AS AMERICAN EMPLOYERS.

(a) FICA TAXES.—Section 3121 (relating to definitions) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(z) TREATMENT OF CERTAIN FOREIGN PERSONS AS AMERICAN EMPLOYERS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—If any employee of a foreign person is performing services in connection with a contract between the United States Government (or any instrumentality thereof) and any member of any domestically controlled group of entities which includes such foreign person, such foreign person shall be treated for purposes of this chapter as an American employer with respect to such services performed by such employee.

''(2) DOMESTICALLY CONTROLLED GROUP OF ENTITIES.—For purposes of this subsection—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The term 'domestically controlled group of entities' means a controlled group of entities the common parent of which is a domestic corporation.

''(B) CONTROLLED GROUP OF ENTITIES.—The term 'controlled group of entities' means a controlled group of corporations as defined in section 1563(a)(1), except that—

''(i) 'more than 50 percent' shall be substituted for 'at least 80 percent' each place it appears therein, and

''(ii) the determination shall be made without regard to subsections (a)(4) and (b)(2) of section 1563.

A partnership or any other entity (other than a corporation) shall be treated as a member of a controlled group of entities if such entity is controlled (within the meaning of section 954(d)(3)) by members of such group (including any entity treated as a member of such group by reason of this sentence).

''(3) LIABILITY OF COMMON PARENT.—In the case of a foreign person who is a member of any domestically controlled group of entities, the common parent of such group shall be jointly and severally liable for any tax under this chapter for which such foreign person is liable by reason of this subsection, and for any penalty imposed on such person by this title with respect to any failure to pay such tax or to file any return or statement with respect to such tax or wages subject to such tax. No deduction shall be allowed under this title for any liability imposed by the preceding sentence.

''(4) COORDINATION.—Paragraph (1) shall not apply to any services which are covered by an agreement under subsection (l).

''(5) CROSS REFERENCE.—For relief from taxes in cases covered by certain international agreements, see sections 3101(c) and 3111(c).''.

(b) SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS.—Subsection (e) of section 210 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 410(e)) is amended—

(1) by striking ''(e) The term'' and inserting ''(e)(1) The term'',

(2) by redesignating clauses (1) through (6) as clauses (A) through (F), respectively, and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(2)(A) If any employee of a foreign person is performing services in connection with a contract between the United States Government (or any instrumentality thereof) and any member of any domestically controlled group of entities which includes such foreign person, such foreign person shall be treated as an American employer with respect to such services performed by such employee.

''(B) For purposes of this paragraph—

''(i) The term 'domestically controlled group of entities' means a controlled group of entities the common parent of which is a domestic corporation.

''(ii) The term 'controlled group of entities' means a controlled group of corporations as defined in section 1563(a)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, except that—

''(I) 'more than 50 percent' shall be substituted for 'at least 80 percent' each place it appears therein, and

''(II) the determination shall be made without regard to subsections (a)(4) and (b)(2) of section 1563 of such Code.

A partnership or any other entity (other than a corporation) shall be treated as a member of a controlled group of entities if such entity is controlled (within the meaning of section 954(d)(3) of such Code) by members of such group (including any entity treated as a member of such group by reason of this sentence).''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by this section shall apply to services performed after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 19. TIME FOR PAYMENT OF CORPORATE ESTIMATED TAX.

The percentage under subparagraph (C) of section 401(1) of the Tax Increase Prevention and Reconciliation Act of 2005 in effect on the date of the enactment of this Act is increased by 0.25 percentage points.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. REYNOLDS) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, on Tax Day, it is so important that we bring H.R. 5719 to the floor of the House. Taxpayers must be treated fairly, and they deserve all the help we can give them.

This bill draws, in part, on legislation authored by myself and many members of the Ways and Means Committee. Most of the pieces of this bill enjoy bipartisan support.

This bill will assist victims of identity theft and prevent the misuse of the IRS name in schemes that defraud the public.

The bill helps low-income taxpayers by allowing IRS employees to refer them to low-income taxpayer clinics, expanding earned income tax credit outreach, and authorizing funding for low-income taxpayer programs.

It would, once and for all, repeal the authority of the IRS to enter into private debt collection contracts. This program violates the public trust and must end.

The bill also protects elderly and disabled persons from tax liability on workers provided to them under government programs.

H.R. 5719 enhances the fairness of our tax code and deserves this House's total support.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Madam Speaker, I yield myself so much time as I may consume.

(Mr. REYNOLDS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. REYNOLDS. Today is Tax Day, Madam Speaker, and all across the country, millions of Americans will wait patiently, or not so patiently, in line at the local post office, making sure that their taxes are postmarked by the midnight deadline.

Having recently struggled through the process of filling out my own tax forms, I share the frustrations of millions of American taxpayers, not just with the amount of taxes that we have to pay, but with the dizzying maze of forms, worksheets and calculations required by the IRS as well.

But instead of working together in a bipartisan way to simplify the process and enhance taxpayers rights, the majority has chosen to bring forward a partisan, political bill that has already drawn a veto threat from the administration, and is almost certainly ''dead on arrival'' in the other body.

To be sure, this legislation does contain a number of positive, pro-taxpayer provisions, most of which have already passed the House last year in an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis as part of H.R. 1677. Unfortunately for this House, and for taxpayers across the country, the majority has now abandoned that commonsense bipartisan approach that we brought to last year's bill.

Instead the majority has included a pair of highly controversial proposals that kill any hope of bipartisan cooperation, one imposing a new substantiation requirements on withdrawals from health savings accounts, and another cutting off the ability of carefully selected private businesses to assist the IRS in collecting delinquent tax debt.

Over the course of today's debate, we'll hear much more about the concerns that many Members have about the HSA provision, a provision that was not subject to a single hearing in the Ways and Means Committee, and was inserted into the bill just prior to mark-up without any real understanding of the potential consequences.

So let me take a moment to focus on the other provision of concern, the proposal to repeal the IRS's authority to work with private collection agencies to ensure that acknowledged tax debt is actually paid.

For some Members of this body on both sides of the debate, this particular issue is simple and is simply about policy. For them, it's an abstract question about whether these private collection agencies, so called PCAs, should be able to play a limited supplementary role in ensuring that undisputed tax debts are, in fact, paid.

As we debate this particular issue yet again this afternoon, we'll hear again persuasive evidence making clear just how successful the PCA program has already been in narrowing the tax gap, and while carefully protecting taxpayers rights. And we will also hear how much additional promise this program holds for the future if it's allowed to continue.

But for me and the area I represent, Western New York, the issue is much more than an abstract policy debate. It's also about jobs. As the Member of Congress who represents rural Wyoming County in Western New York, I'm actually more familiar than most Members with the work that PCAs do. After all, the largest single private employer in Wyoming County, Pioneer Credit Recovery, is one of the only two companies nationwide that the IRS has selected to help get this important program underway.

Madam Speaker, Pioneer Credit is a highly respected local business that has created more than 1,400 high-paying jobs for families living in either my district or neighboring districts around Buffalo and Rochester. And as my fellow Members of Western New York's Congressional Delegation know, these jobs have been created in a region that has faced serious economic challenges.

This IRS contract has allowed Pioneer Credit to turn an empty warehouse in Perry, New York into a thriving job center for newly hired employees. In short, it's been a great economic success story in part of Western New York that has desperately needed it.

As someone who fought to give the IRS the authority to partner with these private companies in the first place, I am deeply troubled that the new majority is once again threatening to deauthorize this important program just as it's getting underway.

If this program is allowed to continue, Pioneer Credit will have the opportunity to compete for future IRS contracts that could create many additional jobs in the area of Western New York that I represent. Killing this program, on the other hand, would cost my constituents real jobs at a time when Congress should be working to expand employment opportunities, particularly in hard-hit areas that are struggling economically.

I would also like to note, Madam Speaker, that under the Democrats convoluted PAYGO rules, proposals that reduce anticipated Federal revenues must be offset by other provisions that raise revenue. As a result, today's

proposal to eliminate the PCA program, a program that is currently expected to bring in more than a half billion dollars to the Federal Treasury, over the next decade, also requires them to raise Federal revenue or taxes by the same amount somewhere else. That's right. The majority is raising taxes by a half a billion dollars today in order to eliminate the very program that's helping us to collect undisputed tax debts, more effectively. Only in Washington, Madam Speaker, only in Washington.

This bill is wrong on policy, it's wrong on job creation and it's on the way to mark April 15 for America's hard-working taxpayers.

I urge a ''no'' vote.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN), a member of the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. I thank my colleague from Georgia and thank him for his leadership on this important issue.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation, the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act. It's a set of commonsense reforms designed to make the Tax Code a little more consumer friendly for hardworking Americans.

If the IRS has reason to believe that you've been a victim of identity theft, this bill says the IRS should let you know.

If you're entitled to an unclaimed refund, this bill empowers the IRS to do more to find you.

And if you need help with your taxes, this bill lets the IRS refer you to a qualified taxpayer clinic that can provide assistance.

So whether it's from eliminating nuisance paperwork to publicizing the earned income tax credit to clamping down on predatory ''refund anticipation loans,'' this bill, time and again, sides with the taxpayer.

I'm particularly pleased that it includes legislation many of us have worked on to end the practice of bounty hunting and terminate the program of contracting out the collection of taxes to private debt collectors.

Proponents of this program say it's necessary to close the tax gap. The facts just say they're wrong. The program, to date, hasn't returned a single dime of additional revenue to the U.S. Treasury. In fact, so far as we gather here today, it's been a revenue loser, an ideological driven black hole that has sucked $50 million out of the Treasury last year alone. And we would have been able to raise, and this is according to both Republican and IRS commissioners, we would have been able to raise $1.4 billion in revenue from people who hadn't paid taxes if we'd simply hired more IRS agents to do the job. And that's also the testimony of the National Taxpayer Advocate at the Department of Treasury. That's the person whose job it is to look out for the taxpayers, and she testified this is a bad deal for taxpayers. We should get rid of it.

And we shouldn't be surprised. We had a similar program in the 1990s that was ended because of abusive practices, and it failed to collect the money. Let's learn from history. Let's adopt this legislation.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to my distinguished colleague on the Ways and Mean Committee from Wisconsin (Mr. RYAN), an expert on HSAs and other matters for consideration today.

□ 1645

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Madam Speaker, why are we here? We're here because it's Tax Day and the majority decided they had to have a tax bill to come to the floor to pass on Tax Day.

There are some good provisions in this bill. I want to talk about one provision that is not a good provision. That's what we call HSA substantiation. What that basically means is without a single hearing, the majority wants to bring these new red-taped complicated rules to health savings accounts so that every time somebody goes and makes a health care purchase that's under the deductible, they have to first get permission from their banker or from the government before they do it. That's essentially what substantiation does.

Now, we've heard from banks, from the credit unions, from the NFIB and the small businesses. They're all saying, we're not going to do it anymore. We're not going to offer HSAs to our clients.

Madam Speaker, the key with health savings accounts is that people can save tax free for their out-of-pocket health care savings. Why on earth would we want to bring a bill to the floor which we know will reduce the use of health savings accounts?

The goal of this Congress ought to be to make health care more accessible and more affordable. Unfortunately, this bill goes in the wrong direction. So we want to inflict all of this red tape that we don't inflict on individual retirement accounts or on home equity lines of credits on this, and this will make it harder for people to save tax free for health care. It will tie them up in red tape. It will say to the banks and credit unions that offer these things, don't offer them anymore, and more to the point, we're doing this clumsy legislating without having had one hearing in the Ways and Means Committee.

More to the point, Madam Speaker, is this. The market is already fulfilling the need to have better recordkeeping. The market is already showing us they can do this without this law. But if you impose this law, as this bill does, guess what's going to happen? People in rural America, people in some small towns, people in Janesville, Wisconsin, they won't be able to subscribe to this law. Their retailers don't have the technology that's being required here. So you're going to leave rural America, small town America out, and only urban areas can comply with this.

This is not good legislating. This has not been seen through. No foresight. No hearings. More to the point, it's going to make it harder for people in rural and small towns to save tax tree for health care. It's going to make it harder for anybody to save tax free for health care. This is going to raise health care costs, and it is going to make it harder for patients to really get control of their health care destiny.

And that is why this bill should be defeated. For this piece of policy alone, this bill should be defeated because it was not thought through. It was slammed in there at the last minute, and that is enough of a reason that on this day, on Tax Day, we should not be telling the American people, we're going to raise your taxes if you want to go buy health care. That's wrong, but that's what this bill does; and I think we should reject this bill for that reason alone.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY), a wonderful friend who is a member of the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. POMEROY. Madam Speaker, I appreciate very much the gentleman from Georgia's leadership of the Oversight Subcommittee on the Ways and Means Committee.

A couple of things to respond to.

The matter before us involves a pay-for, because unlike much of the work of my friend, the ranking member of the Budget Committee, this majority pays for things that cost the Treasury.

Now, the HSA issue he just raised involves tax-free accounts and savings accounts to be used for health care. We ask that there be some verification to show the money withdrawn was spent for health care. That's all. What drives us to this is a report that we had from one account manager that shows these funds being withdrawn for everything from body shop repair to fast food restaurants.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Madam Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. POMEROY. Sure I will yield.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. As the gentleman knows, this is their money, and if they choose to withdraw their money for non-health care reasons, they pay taxes.

Mr. POMEROY. Reclaiming my time, and I only have 2 minutes, this HSA, I believe the gentleman would agree, in fact I think he said it in his comments, is for the cost of health care. It gives a tax incentive cost, a tax assistance to taxpayers for health care costs, not for body shop costs. We don't tax incent body shop costs. So we would like to shut that abuse down.

The question is legitimately raised. Is this too onerous? Absolutely not. Many of us have flex savings accounts that are used for medical costs. Now,

all we ask is that the same verification any Federal employee uses when they make a withdrawal in their flex savings account would be used to substantiate withdrawal from the health savings account. This isn't inventing something new. We've done it. It works well.

Another feature of the bill that's drawn such objection is this business of putting out of business the whole notion of private bill collectors being loosed on our taxpayers to collect revenues owed the Federal Government.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I yield the gentleman an additional minute.

Mr. POMEROY. Madam Speaker, I refer my colleagues to the Washington Post, the front page story today, ''Collectors cost IRS more than they raise.''

We have had, in fact, kind of the bill collection version of the $600 toilet seat for the old Pentagon contract procurements. This was advertised to cost very little, $10 to $14 million, well now up to $70 million and counting, a multiple of what was initially advertised. That's the set-up cost. They said it was going to bring all of this money. Well, the reality is it has brought in only a fraction of the money advertised.

And so on a net basis, this whole initiative to bring in money owed us has cost us money. We've been shipping more money to contractors. This is an administration and this is a minority that loves private contractors. And if it costs the Federal Government on the net balance, it doesn't matter because they just so ideologically love private contractors.

We should pass this bill and end this failed experiment of private debt collection.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Madam Speaker, I've been listening to some of my colleagues, and I'm sure we'll have more on the Democratic side of the aisle that have been such proponents of doing away with the collection. I just want to remind some of them of a couple of things that we should look at.

First, this is money that the IRS will not go after. It is part of the goal that Congress said we will pursue to get this money, and it was going to show a $1 billion over 10-year revenue.

Now, we have seen the start-up of PCAs, one in Iowa and one in New York, after a very clear scrutiny by the IRS and by strong oversight of the Congress. And there are start-up costs of the $50 million, as we're beginning to see the program come under way, to pursue money that the IRS either hasn't collected, can't collect, will not collect as the PCAs are pursuing it.

And I have listened to a lot of people describe what they think they understand of a PCA, but they have never really been in tune with it. It kind of reminds me of somebody debating ATM legislation and never actually used an ATM.

Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished senior member of the Ways and Means Committee from California (Mr. HERGER).

Mr. HERGER. Madam Speaker, as Americans send their checks to the IRS today, they have a number of concerns. There are the dozens of tax provisions that expired last year and have not yet been extended adding to economic uncertainty. There is the inefficiency of many Federal agencies resulting in waste of hard-earned tax dollars, and there are the entitlement programs that threaten to double the Federal tax burden over the coming decades if they are not reformed. All of these issues Congress should be considering this Tax Day.

One complaint I have never heard from my constituents is that the IRS doesn't ask them for enough information. Yet the legislation before us would impose burdensome new reporting requirements on 5 million Americans with health savings accounts. Although Congress has held no hearings to determine whether misuse of HSA funds is a real problem, these requirements would make HSAs less convenient for consumers and could lead financial institutions to stop offering HSAs.

Ironically, this bill would also repeal a program that collects bad tax debts. The majority's message seems to be that if you're not paying your taxes, we will let you off the hook, but if you follow the rules, we will increase your burden of compliance.

Madam Speaker, that is the wrong message to send this Tax Day. I urge a ''no'' vote.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, no one on this side of the aisle is suggesting that we all shouldn't pay our fair share.

Madam Speaker, I now yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL), a member of the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. EMANUEL. Madam Speaker, to pick up on my colleague's comments about fairness, one of the provisions in this legislation deals with closing the loophole for KBR, a former Halliburton subsidiary, that used the Cayman Islands to avoid paying taxes. And that is, it was discovered that in fact KBR, they're a company that was doing its operations in Iraq, was not paying and consciously set up a company in the Cayman Islands, just a post office box, set up a company to avoid paying Social Security, Medicare, and unemployment insurance, which is how they became the low bid.

It is the company, by the way, I'm sure you remember this, that served contaminated water to our troops, costing the taxpayers more money to take care of the health of those troops.

They set up an operation in the Cayman Islands, and in fact, their post office was Post Office Box 847, One Capital Place, 4th Floor, Shedden Road, Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands, KY1–1103. And the reason they were the low bidder? They didn't pay their fair share.

And the truth is the American people care about two things when it comes to American taxes: Simplicity of the code and fairness. And this is an example of the unfairness of our code.

In fact, if you look at the Ugland House in the Cayman Islands, one building houses 12,000 companies who have established post office boxes or ZIP codes or modems there, and the only purpose they're there for is to avoid paying their fair share of their taxes. And one of the pieces of this legislation is, in fact, to shut down the operation so companies cannot get contracts doing government work here in the United States, paid for by the taxpayers, whose sole purpose is to avoid paying their fair share.

The company acknowledges that the reason they set up the Cayman Islands was so they didn't pay Social Security, they didn't pay unemployment, they didn't pay Medicare.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. EMANUEL. And the way this was discovered was on a worker who was laid off with 10,000 employees, went to go collect unemployment insurance and was told no, you don't have the money for that because you didn't pay insurance. He said no, I work for an American company, and then discovered, in fact, he didn't work for an American company. KBR was a company set up in the Cayman Islands for the purpose of avoiding paying their fair share of taxes, and it is right here on April 15, when Americans are facing bigger tax bills, higher costs for health care, higher costs for education, higher costs for gasoline, that in fact those companies that are servicing in Iraq pay their fair share and not use the tax code to avoid their responsibility.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Madam Speaker, I would like to yield 2 minutes to my colleague, the distinguished ranking member of the Health Committee of Ways and Means from Michigan (Mr. CAMP).

Mr. CAMP of Michigan. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Madam Speaker, here we are on Tax Day, April 15, talking about a bill called the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act. A great title, but this bill falls remarkably short.

What this Congress should be debating today is legislation to simplify and reform the tax code. The tax code is over 67,000 pages long. It takes taxpayers 6 billion hours and over $260 billion to comply with current tax laws. That's unacceptable.

Instead of this bill, Congress needs to pass legislation to make filing tax returns simpler and fairer. While more and more Americans are demanding Congress make our tax laws easier to comply with, the Ways and Means Committee has held only one hearing on tax reform since the beginning of last year.

And just as the economy struggles in the face of problems in the housing and the credit markets, rising gas and food prices and an up-take on employment, the House Democrat budget proposes to hit families with the largest tax increase in history.

□ 1700

Instead of reforming the Tax Code and lowering the tax burden, the bill before us ignores both those questions. And while there are some good provisions in it, like I support the provision that no longer requires employees to keep track of the cell phone calls they make on their office cell phones, other measures in the bill make it objectionable.

I reject the majority's attempts to impose new administrative burdens on the use of health savings accounts. Millions of Americans are enrolled in HSAs because they provide consumers with the ability to affordably manage their own health care costs. H.R. 5719 will make it harder for people to save for their own health care.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. REYNOLDS. I yield the gentleman an additional minute.

Mr. CAMP of Michigan. HSAs already have a built-in enforcement mechanism that seeks to ensure HSA funds are spent on qualified medical expenses. If a person spends those dollars on a nonqualified expense, they're subject to individual income taxes and a 10 percent penalty. The IRS also has the right to audit HSA withdrawals.

Americans are concerned about the cost of health care. Before Congress rushes to impose new burdens on HSAs, the one innovation that helps patient-centered, individual health care, helps individuals take control of their health care, we should find out first if there really is a problem, and then, how we can fix it without restricting the ability of consumers to take greater control of their health care decision making.

I urge my colleagues to reject this flawed legislation.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER), a member of the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy.

I find no small amount of irony listening to our friends from the other side of the aisle talk about complexity on Tax Day because for the 12 years that they were in charge there was an explosion, hundreds of thousands of additional words added to the IRS code; loopholes and complexity, not simplification.

It is absolute hogwash that there are areas that the IRS won't go after to collect and we have to use private collection agencies. They are the people who decided to underfund the IRS. Testimony before our committee was conclusive: The IRS-trained employees collect eight times as much per person as these bounty hunters that they contract out. With the minimum of a $70 million investment, we will raise over $1.4 billion.

Equally specious is the argument here that we're hearing about HSAs. There are millions of Americans who have benefits, as my good friend from North Dakota pointed out, flexible savings accounts. We have them for our Federal employees. And all they have to do, however, is there is some minimal verification. What they're proposing is that we just ignore it and allow people to use it for car washes and country club memberships and rely on an occasional audit, which is much more difficult because they have cut back on the IRS. That's foolish. It works for millions of Americans with flexible benefit accounts, there's no problem doing it with HSAs.

It is time for us to move forward with these simple, commonsense efforts, steps that make the IRS more effective. More money for the taxpayers prevents inappropriate use of tax exempt money.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Madam Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time is remaining on both sides.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York has 15 minutes remaining. The gentleman from Georgia has 19 minutes remaining.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Madam Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Well, I just want to make sure at least the taxpayers from the countryside I come from realize that H.R. 5719, which we're considering, the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act of 2008, really sounds good. It sounds real good on Tax Day, as I open my remarks by saying that taxpayers are in line now or will be until midnight tonight to have a postmarked April 15 date. But we know that this legislation will face a steep consideration of some saying ''dead on arrival'' in the other body. We've seen the administration have its advisers threaten veto. And yet, while there were so many things that we agreed upon in the Ways and Means Committee, Republicans and Democrats, we have a bill that brings controversy, that brings another one-House bill. It gets tough, as we move towards November of an election year, to explain that we didn't get much done, but boy did we have a lot of action on one-House bills.

I want to just share for the record here on this body what I did in the Ways and Means hearing. Because I think there's two important documents that my colleagues, as this debate goes today, and some of the consideration of what will be difficult on seeing PCAs, as the legislation may come to pass from this body, we will see difficult sledding in the other body, as well as the administration, are two reports.

The Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration wrote one on March 26, only weeks ago, that had inadequate security controls over routers and switches that jeopardize sensitive taxpayer information. It was done by the Inspector General. And I want to just report, because we had it confirmed by representatives of the administration under our examination that this, in fact, has occurred and it's in the report which was submitted to the Ways and Means Committee. And it says, ''Impact to the Taxpayer: Because the IRS sends sensitive taxpayer and administrative information across its networks, routers on the networks must have sufficient security controls to deter and detect unauthorized use. Access controls for IRS routers were not adequate, and reviews to monitor security configuration changes were not conducted to identify inappropriate use. A disgruntled employee, contractor or a hacker could reconfigure routers and switches to disrupt computer operations and steal taxpayer information in a number of ways, including diverting information to unauthorized systems.''

Madam Speaker, that same very day, on March 26, the same Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration issued a second report called, ''The Private Collection Agencies Adequately Protected Taxpayer Data.'' And this information also was confirmed under examination as we made inquiries to the administration that confirmed that the reports exist, and they were well aware of these findings as well. And on page 2 of the Inspector General's report it said, ''We reviewed the computer security controls over taxpayer data provided to the two current PCAs,'' or private collection agencies for those maybe not following the debate, ''and determined that the controls were adequate. In particular, files were securely transmitted from the IRS to the contractors and adequately secured on the contractor systems. In addition work stations used by contractor collection personnel were adequately controlled to prevent unauthorized copying of taxpayer information to removable media or transfer via e-mail. The contractors also maintained adequate audit trails and performed periodic reviews, including reviews to identify unauthorized access to taxpayer data.''

Now, the response from the IRS, contained also on page two of the Treasury Inspector General said, ''The key IRS management officials reviewed the report prior to issuance and agreed to the results of the review.''

We know that in the operation of PCAs, we are going to see the collection pursuit of $500 million over that over the next 10 years. And we know that if this legislation prevails, there is going to be a tax increase of $500 million to pay for this under the majority's PAYGO rules. And so as we continue the debate, make it clearly understood that the pursuit of these PCAs was on proceeds that were not collected, could not be collected, needed to be collected in order to put into the Treasury this money owed by taxpayers to the government. And that as

we look at this legislation, what has brought the controversy to uncontroversial legislation, legislation that both parties could agree to, was the adding of HSA changes and dealing with the PCAs. My colleagues need to consider the type of consequences we're seeing in what will be a misguided change on PCA legislation.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I am delighted to yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Nevada, my good friend, Congresswoman BERKLEY, a member of the Ways and Means Committee.

Ms. BERKLEY. I want to thank the chairman for recognizing me.

I don't have any long Treasury reports to read to you, and I'm not here to tell you what should have been, what we could have done, should have done, would have done. But I'm here to talk on behalf of H.R. 5719 because there are some important components and provisions of this bill that, when taken together, will make future tax days more fair and less strenuous for the average American taxpayer.

H.R. 5719 contains provisions to ensure that taxpayers receive all the tax benefits they're entitled to. This bill will increase outreach to help taxpayers benefit from the earned income tax credit and find unclaimed refunds, effectively lowering taxes for many Americans. I think this is a good provision.

This bill also prevents the IRS from using private debt collectors to collect Federal income taxes. Private debt collectors have proven to be poorly equipped for the job, actually costing the IRS and taxpayers 37 million more than they have collected. This change is an important move to protect taxpayer privacy. And as a taxpayer and as a citizen, I want the government and the IRS to do its job and not send this responsibility out to someone else.

I'm also very supportive of a provision to postpone implementation of the 3 percent withholding requirement on government payment to vendors. This requirement will cause significant administrative and financial burdens on local governments, unfairly penalizing companies, and raising prices on consumers. I think this is a good provision in this legislation.

The bill also helps protect taxpayers by requiring the IRS to notify individuals if unlawful use of their identity is detected by cracking down on Web sites that try to defraud people through use of the official IRS logo.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman from Nevada has expired.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. I yield the gentlelady 15 seconds.

Ms. BERKLEY. All of these taken together aren't earth-shattering and they're not going to change the way that we collect taxes in this country, but it's going to help, and it's going to help millions of our fellow Americans.

On Tax Day, let's pass something and do something positive for the American people.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I am delighted to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York, a member of the Ways and Means Committee, my good friend, Mr. CROWLEY.

Mr. CROWLEY. I want to thank my good friend from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS) for yielding me this time.

My colleagues, this is a good bill, and I ask all my colleagues to support this worthy effort.

And Chairman LEWIS, I want to thank you personally, and your staff. You went out of your way to include language that I had concerns of and wanted to include in this bill to increase the access of eligible taxpayers to the EITC, the earned income tax credit. So I want to personally thank you and your staff for your outreach to our office and including that. Ronald Reagan himself referred to the EITC as the greatest anti-poverty program in the history of our country, so I think it deserves worthy bipartisan support.

Madam Speaker, we heard in testimony last week in the Committee on Ways and Means from the Taxpayer Advocate of the United States that identity fraud against taxpayers is skyrocketing. This bill establishes some of the strongest protections for taxpayers against identity theft scams, especially those at greatest risk of fraud, our seniors and veterans filing this year to claim the economic stimulus rebate check. But my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, my Republican colleagues and the Bush Administration, are adamantly opposed to this taxpayer protection act because they're opposed to the offset that we provide.

□ 1715

No one can argue that some of my Republican colleagues philosophically oppose paying for anything and support the continuation of what I believe was 7 years of Republican economic theory of ''borrow and spend.'' And in case you're keeping count, the results of the Republican borrow and spend credit card economic policy is a $30,000 birth tax on every person born in this country today. In fact, in my own home, it's at $90,000 because I have an 8-, 7-, and 2-year-old. I can't imagine that they would be very happy if they understood what the birth tax was that was placed upon them by irresponsible and reckless fiscal policies over the last 7 years.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I yield an additional minute to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. CROWLEY. Madam Speaker, that's why Democrats are trying to be responsible and we implemented the pay-as-you-go principles, meaning all new tax cuts and new spending increases need to be paid for as we move forward.

In regards to the health savings account, I really don't understand the opposition here. What we're simply asking for is accountability. We know that health savings accounts have been spent for country club membership, massage parlors, women's lingerie shops, casinos and gambling, dating and escort services.

Let's really put this all in perspective. What we're talking about is accountability in health savings accounts. We're not saying they shouldn't be used for health purposes, but they should be held accountable.

People right now, hardworking, honest, faith-loving Americans that want to donate to a charity or to their church with after-tax payments have to account for that charitable contribution before they can take a tax deduction. When it comes to health savings accounts, there is not that requirement. And we're talking about pretax dollars on health savings accounts. There's something wrong here. I wish my Republican colleagues would better understand it. It's simply absurd that they don't support simple accountability.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. I yield to the gentleman an additional minute.

Mr. CROWLEY. It is simply absurd to me that my Republican colleagues can't understand that we're simply asking for accountability, that we're not looking to eliminate them, that if they are using it for legitimate health purposes, that's fine.

Now, I did note that the HSA, the Health Savings Account Council, says that the IRS has the authority to audit these accounts. Are they suggesting that the IRS audit every health savings account to make sure that health savings accounts are being used for health reasons? I daresay that the IRS is looking at probably more often than not the charitable contributions that hardworking Americans make and making sure that those are legitimate charities before they're able to deduct them from their taxes.

So what we are looking for is a little balance here in terms of what really are legitimate tax savings purposes in health savings accounts. That's really simply what the Democrats are looking for.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I have listened very carefully to my friend and colleague from New York as he sees his views.

I thought maybe I might for the record just outline that I have a copy of a letter that numerous groups sent in opposition to this legislation, primarily due to HSAs, to both Chairman RANGEL and Ranking Member MCCRERY. And it leads off with the NFIB and goes down to the National Taxpayers Union, and it has the U.S. Chamber and it has the Retail Industry

Leaders Association, the National Retail Federation, the National Restaurant Association, the National Association of Manufacturers, and so many others. And I will make it available in case some of my colleagues haven't seen it.

This isn't something Republicans on this side of the aisle just kind of dreamed up that there are problems that make this legislation controversial with HSA legislation or with the PCAs. It's well documented by the experts that are using the program.

I also think, rather than some of my colleagues interpreting what the administration may have for support or rejection of the legislation, maybe I should read into the RECORD exactly what the Statement of Administration Policy is on H.R. 5719 so that we all know what the administration's concerns are.

And for the record: ''The administration strongly opposes H.R. 5719, the so-called 'Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act of 2008.' The bill includes provisions that would impose new administrative burdens on the trustees of health savings accounts. These new burdens on HSA administrators are unnecessary for efficient tax administration, inconsistent with the flexibility purposely afforded HSAs at their inception, and could undermine efforts by employers, individuals, and insurers to reduce health care costs and improve health outcomes by empowering consumers to take greater control of health care decision making. If H.R. 5719 were presented to the President with these provisions, his senior advisers would recommend he veto the bill.

''Also, the administration strongly opposes provisions of the bill that would repeal the current statutory authorization for the Internal Revenue Service private debt collection program. As of February 2008, over 98,000 cases have been referred to contractors, representing over $910 million in delinquent accounts. Terminating this program would result in a loss of $578 million in revenue over the next 10 years, according to Congress' Joint Committee on Taxation. These are tax dollars that are legally owed to the government and are otherwise very unlikely to be collected by the IRS due to workload demands. As noted in previous Statements of Administration Policy, the administration strongly opposes elimination of this program, which is not consistent with the administration's commitment to a balanced approach toward improving taxpayer compliance and collecting outstanding tax liabilities. If H.R. 5719 were presented to the President with these provisions, his senior advisers would recommend that he veto the bill.''

That is a Statement of Administration Policy on the record relative to this.

Mr. REYNOLDS. I now would yield to my colleague from New York for a question.

Mr. CROWLEY. Thank you.

Madam Speaker, I note that the gentleman made reference to the fact that the legislation, or at least the interpretation of the administration, that the legislation places onerous responsibilities on the trustees of the HSAs.

Where in the legislation does it say that?

Mr. REYNOLDS. Well, I will ask you to look that up, and at a later time I will yield and you can point it out in my record.

Mr. CROWLEY. Will the gentleman continue to yield?

Mr. REYNOLDS. One more time.

Mr. CROWLEY. I just would point to the record that, in fact, it is not the responsibility of the trustees but of the individual who opens an HSA account that we're placing the burden on, that they prove that the HSA account is for legitimate medical purposes.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Reclaiming my time, Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

I just think it's important we look at this. First, I heard the debate coming from the majority, from the gentleman, that outlined his interpretation of why the administration was opposed to the bill. I listened carefully. I made a decision to read into the RECORD exactly what the administration's policy position was on this so that it was no longer an interpretation from a Member of Congress but exactly in written word what the administration said relative to this bill.

And I think while we're looking at other aspects of this legislation, we do know the following: That the administration is going to veto this legislation, that we also know it has difficult sledding in the other body. And it has in the past because there's a track record, that it appears just with PCA alone, let alone some of the concerns that have been put forth in the letter that I read from earlier on HSAs, that we now have another one-House bill being trumped up and laid out on Tax Day.

And I will say the majority is superb in showmanship. We seem to be able to move legislation to the floor on significant days. Today is tax legislation on Tax Day, April 15.

But I also know that the public is not going to be confused by the fact that while we trump up an extravaganza of legislation on special days, today tax legislation on April 15, that the voters are going to take a real hard look at what really got done, what has gotten through, what was made better for America. And, again, we have another one-House bill that just, sadly, had too much partisanship in it and fell away.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I would like to note that the NFIB has endorsed and supported H.R. 5719. Passage of H.R. 5719 will be considered a key vote for the NFIB.

Madam Speaker, I would like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ROTHMAN), a member of the Appropriations Committee.

(Mr. ROTHMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROTHMAN. I thank the chairman for the time.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 5719, the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act of 2008.

Let me tell my colleagues that this bill simply closes a lot of loopholes that were created when my Republican friends controlled this Congress in the majority years ago and it also addresses some of the disastrous Bush administration policies that were adopted by my friends the Republicans when they were in the majority. But they're no longer in the majority this year.

Let me tell you what this is all about. My Republican friends and the Bush administration love to privatize. They wanted to privatize Social Security. Remember that? They wanted to privatize prescription drugs, and they got away with it, and that's why it's so expensive and convoluted. They wanted to privatize health care at Walter Reed Hospital, and you know the disasters that happened there. Trying to privatize the delivery of the United States mail; privatize security in Iraq by letting private contractors handle these things for the U.S. Army. Blackwater and Halliburton, sound familiar?

Well, one of the things that this bill that we're passing today in the House will do will be to eliminate one of the disastrous Bush and Republican policies that they inserted in a 2004 bill. That policy was where they slashed the number of IRS tax collectors, and then they said, oh, my gosh, we can't collect enough taxes; so you know what we'll do? We'll privatize the collection of taxes. This was after they removed the number of IRS tax collectors. They said we'll hire private folks to collect taxes, but we'll pay them eight times more than it would cost a Federal Government employee.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I yield the gentleman an additional 1 minute.

Mr. ROTHMAN. I thank the gentleman.

So can you imagine, Madam Speaker, they slashed IRS collectors from people who owed taxes, slashed the tax collectors, and wanted to privatize it and pay eight times more to their friends in private industry to do it. Eight times more. It only took now when the Democrats are in control of the House that we are able now to pass this bill today to end that program.

And when my friend from New York on the other side of the aisle says, well, you know, it's only a one-House bill because the Senate won't approve this, ask yourself why that is. Because there are only 51 Democrat Senators in the Senate, and you need 60 votes in the Senate to overcome a filibuster. We

only have 51 Democrats in the Senate. We can't get 9 Republicans to get rid of this ridiculously wasteful program of privatizing tax collection. So it's like that terrible story of the kid who kills his parents and pleads for mercy from the Court because he's an orphan. They slashed the tax collectors. Then they gave it to their cronies. Now they say they can't get Republicans to help us fix this problem that they created. Fortunately, the House has a majority that will.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I yield the gentleman another 30 seconds.

Mr. ROTHMAN. So do you get, my colleagues, the hypocrisy? They slashed the tax collectors, paid eight times more to this private contractor cronies, and then when we get a Democratic majority in the House to pass this to eliminate this wasteful program, they say it won't pass the Senate. Because the Republicans in the Senate won't do it, and we need them to add up to the 60 votes to avoid the Republican filibuster, which they expect to do, to filibuster getting rid of this privatization of tax collection.

I urge the passage of this bill.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Madam Speaker, I think I heard my colleague when he said that Democrats are in the majority in this body, Democrats are in the majority in the other body, but it's the Republicans' fault that this legislation isn't going to happen.

Now, I have explained a lot of tough, challenging things to my constituents, but I don't think they're going to buy that. It's just another one-House bill that is going to the other body and going to see death. It isn't going to see the light of day.

□ 1730

Now, moving to my colleague from New York who asked me the question. I didn't think I could provide the answer to his question quite as soon as I could, and saving him looking it up, because I assume as he went off the floor, he might be looking up this. I want to go back again to the statement of administration policy. The bill includes provisions that would impose new administrative burdens on the trustees of health savings accounts. That is what the administration said in their veto threat.

Now on the bill as reported out of committee by the majority, page 22, line 7, 8 and 9 to my colleagues, says the trustee of the health savings account shall make a report regarding such account to the Secretary and account beneficiary setting forth. So I want everyone to know, including my colleague who asked the question, it is clear in your bill that you set forth that the HSA trustees would have new administrative burdens.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia, a member of the Financial Services Committee, my friend, Mr. SCOTT.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. To my distinguished colleague from Georgia, I want to commend you on your excellent leadership on this very, very important and timely piece of legislation. A lot has been said here today. The two points of contention that the other side has brought have been in two areas. And let me just speak to those directly so that we can get to the facts of the matter.

Now the other side says that they are opposed to the health savings accounts compliance. Now, what we are saying on our side is this: The health savings accounts are set up for the purpose of helping our constituents with health care services. Now if that is the case, then it is very important that we set up a mechanism so that we can check the abuses of that. They are not set up for them to go and to use those accounts for massage parlors, for country clubs, for other issues and areas, and escort services.

So it is important for us to be able to simply do this. The bill simply requires the reporting of a holder of the health service account of any funds used for nonhealth care purposes in order to reduce the tax gap. That's simple.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, the American people are holding on by their fingernails in this terrible economy. And you may laugh and scorn about this being April 15. Of course it is April 15. And it is a day that the American people's minds are totally focused on their personal finances. And it is important that this House of Representatives respond in a way that responds to that interest. And so we are closing the gap.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield an additional 1 minute to the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. So it is very important. And let me get to the other area very quickly, and that is the area of these private contractors. We have received complaint after complaint after complaint from your constituents and our constituents who have been abused by calls. Let me give you one example of an elderly couple that was called 150 times, Madam Speaker, including five times in one day, asking for a taxpayer. And it comes to find out that they are innocent.

Again, the GAO found out that debt collectors were placing over 1 million calls to innocent people just to reach 35,000 taxpayers. The Federal Trade Commission had 130 complaints as of last year giving unaccountable private tax collectors the right to look into and examine personal financial information of our taxpayers. It is wrong.

Now let me tell you this, that the commissioner of the IRS himself, Mr. Douglas Sherman, has asked for this legislation. Madam Speaker, I just simply say that if the IRS is asking for this, that they could do a better job, they are the ones who we are holding responsible. We should make sure we pass this legislation and let the IRS do their job of collecting the taxes and not hand it off to these private bounty hunters.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Madam Speaker, may I inquire on the amount of time left, please.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The distinguished gentleman from New York has 1 minute remaining. The distinguished gentleman from Georgia has 6½ minutes remaining.

Mr. REYNOLDS. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from North Dakota, (Mr. POMEROY), a member of the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. POMEROY. I thank the chairman for yielding.

I want to begin my remarks by commending the fine job Mr. REYNOLDS has done today. He has indicated that this legislation uniquely affects him because many of the people at the Pioneer Call Center, a private debt collector hired to collect this debt, are in his district. And I think we all recognize he has done a fine job in fighting for that business activity in his district today. He has given it everything he has, and I commend him for the job he has done.

But the reality in the policy context is summed up in a simple headline in today's Washington Post, ''Collectors Cost IRS More Than They Raise.'' Why in the world would we want to continue with an arrangement like that? But there are many other parts of this bill that are simplifying the process and are helpful to taxpayers. And that is why we have the support of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the National Association of State Auditors, Comptrollers and Treasurers, the National League of Cities, U.S. Conference of Mayors, Citizens for Tax Justice, National Consumer League, Consumer Federation of America, and a late-breaking one. In fact, this organization has been mentioned on both lists, the NFIB.

Mr. REYNOLDS has indicated they were opposed to the bill. This is probably a development that broke later than Mr. REYNOLDS' information. But in fact, they are for the bill and indicate in a ''key vote alert'' that they will be scoring this as a key vote. They indicate that the ''provisions in this legislation seek to enact simpler tax rules and reduce the paperwork burden associated with tax compliance.''

They talk about a few provisions. One of them is that right now we have an onerous paperwork requirement on employers providing cell phones to employees for business purposes. I commend my Republican colleague on Ways and Means, SAM JOHNSON, for bringing this to our attention. I was pleased to cosponsor legislation with him now included in the bill that

makes this paperwork requirement go away.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman from North Dakota has expired.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I yield the gentleman an additional 1 minute.

Mr. POMEROY. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

And so including the Pomeroy-Johnson or the Johnson-Pomeroy bill in this I think was an important feature to the NFIB deliberation that this is indeed lessening paperwork requirements on small employers, and therefore they support it. They do cite a couple of other provisions, another provision of this legislation amending a recent change to the Tax Code that helps tax preparers better assist their clients by changing an established higher standard of reporting for preparers. That creates a potential conflict of interest between clients and themselves. That is addressed in this legislation.

And they also talk about the legislation including a 1-year delay of the implementation of the 3 percent withholding requirement by Federal, State and local governments on payments for goods and services which puts both an administrative burden on all parties involved and a strain on the daily operating cash flow of small businesses. There are other provisions, as well, but I appreciate the NFIB's laying them out as they have done on this letter.

In balance, this is a bill designed to help taxpayers. That is why we passed it out of the Ways and Means Committee. That is why it is before us on Tax Day. We urge its adoption.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Madam Speaker, I am prepared to close if the gentleman is. I would proceed and then have you close if you are ready.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, we are ready to close.

Mr. REYNOLDS. I thank the gentleman from Georgia who has done a magnificent job of managing his time, and I've enjoyed working with him.

Madam Speaker, today represents yet another missed opportunity on the floor of this House. We could have approached the issues of taxpayer rights and tax simplification in a bipartisan way just as we did last year. But with the election season now in full swing, the majority seems more interested in staging political theater than in actually getting something done for hard-working, middle-class taxpayers. This House and this country deserve more, especially on April 15, Tax Day. I urge a ''no'' vote.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from New York. I enjoyed working with him on this bill. There being no more speakers, I will close, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 5719 is good. It is good. It is good for the taxpayers. And today, when so many people are filing their tax return, we should let them know that we are looking out for them, giving them protections they need and support that they deserve.

This is a good bill. This is a necessary bill.

The private debt collection program is an insult to the American taxpayers and our Federal tax system. It violates the public trust, and this bill will bring it to an end. It must end.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this important bill.

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Madam Speaker, today the House considers legislation related to the burdens placed on everyday taxpayers—the Taxpayer Assistance & Simplification Act. This bill includes a number of good provisions, of which I am supportive. However, the bill also includes a provision which would cost Eastern Iowa hundreds of jobs. While there are various, well-thought-out taxpayer protections in this bill, they do not outweigh the negative impact this bill would have on jobs in the First District. For this reason, I intend to oppose H.R. 5719.

Currently, the Internal Revenue Service is allowed to contract with outside agencies for assistance in collecting overdue taxes. After a rigorous competitive bidding process for these contracts, an Eastern Iowa company was fortunate enough to receive one of the contracts, and has been hard at work ever since. While nobody likes to defend the tax man, the fact is, this company employs more than 625 people in Waterloo and another 200 in West Des Moines.

Unfortunately, the bill on the floor today includes a provision that would threaten these Waterloo and West Des Moines jobs. This provision would disallow any future contracts, which could directly result in the loss of hundreds of Iowa jobs. As the Representative of Iowa's First District, I cannot support the elimination of these jobs.

While I intend to vote against this bill due to this provision, I would like to stress my support for other provisions in this bill:

I am supportive of the provision in this bill that requires the IRS to notify taxpayers who may have had their identity stolen. It is unfortunate that the IRS does not already provide this notification, and I believe that protecting the identities of American taxpayers should be a primary goal of government.

I am supportive of the provisions in this bill that strengthen additional protections against identity theft, by increasing the penalties for those who mislead our citizens in order to steal private information. Identity theft is a very serious problem, and I am glad Congress is working to help protect Americans from this growing epidemic.

I am supportive of the provision in this bill that ensures elderly and disabled individuals receiving in-home care are not subject to employment tax provisions. This is a much-needed change that helps protect our senior citizens and disabled citizens.

I am supportive of the provision in this bill to establish a grant program to expand and improve income tax assistance programs to provide services to taxpayers. I am also glad to see that the bill allows IRS employees to refer taxpayers needing assistance with tax cases to taxpayer clinics. As an ardent supporter of tax simplification, this provision ensures help is available to those having trouble with the very complicated process of filing taxes. Just last night I passed H.R. 3548, the Plain Language in Government Communications Act, out of the House. This bill would greatly simplify income tax forms and documents, but until my bill becomes law, these taxpayer assistance clinics will continue to provide valuable services to taxpayers as tax day approaches.

I am supportive of the provision in this bill that requires the IRS to notify taxpayers if they are potentially eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit. This is a good tax credit that should be utilized by everyone who qualifies, and I believe the IRS should help make sure that those who are eligible receive the full benefit.

I am supportive of the provision in this bill that looks into the feasibility of providing tax refunds on debit cards. This could create a more convenient process of receiving tax refunds for many taxpayers.

I am supportive of the provision in this bill which delays the requirement that Federal, State, and local governments withhold 3 percent from many government payments for goods or services. This 3 percent withholding is bad for small businesses and creates a bureaucratic mess, and I believe this withholding should be eliminated. I am also a cosponsor of H.R. 1023, which would completely repeal the 3 percent withholding.

I am supportive of the provision in this bill that eliminates the requirement for individuals and small businesses to keep onerous records of calls made on cell phones to substantiate business use of such devices. I have heard from employers in Iowa's First District about the administrative burden that this creates, and I am glad Congress is reducing this burden.

I am supportive of closing the loophole that allows foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies, performing services as American companies, to avoid paying taxes. This loophole results in a higher tax burden being placed on America's working families, so I am glad this bill takes this action.

Finally, I am supportive of the provision that helps protect against predatory lending by barring the IRS from providing certain services to companies that offer refund anticipation loans, if the IRS determines that the company charges predatory rates.

Again, I believe that many of the provision in the Taxpayer Assistance & Simplification Act will help protect American taxpayers and simplify the process of filing taxes. However, these good parts of the bill do not outweigh the direct, negative impact that the bill would have on jobs in Iowa's First District, which is why I oppose this legislation.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5719, ''Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act of 2008'', introduced by my good friend from New York, Representative CHARLES RANGEL.

COST AS COMPARED TO THE WAR IN IRAQ

This bill is estimated to cost $22 million dollars over the next 10 years. Before my Republican colleagues balk at this number I want to remind them over the past year, the Administration requested a total of $195.5 billion for FY 2008 emergency war funds at three times—in its original FY 2008 request in February 2008, in an amendment for Mine Resistant Ambush Program (MRAP) vehicles on July 31, 2008, and in an amended request to cover

additional costs submitted on October 22, 2008. Thus far, we have appropriated $90.4 billion for war-related costs of the Defense Department, State/U.S. Agency for International Development, USAID, and the Veterans' Administration including funds in both regular and emergency appropriations acts. As of the enactment of the FY 2008 Consolidated Appropriations, this brings the total for funds appropriated to date to $700 billion for the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and enhanced security.

Let me be clear, we must support our troops and we must defend our Nation, but at a time when this country's economy is spiraling downward, this tax bill will impact Americans regardless of their political affiliation providing assistance at time when they most need it.

SUMMARY OF H.R. 5719

Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act of 2008—Amends the Internal Revenue Code to: (1) modify penalty provisions for tax return preparers who take an unreasonable position in the preparation of a tax return causing an underpayment of tax; (2) eliminate certain restrictions on the tax deduction for employee use of cellular telephones; (3) exempt recipients of home care services from liability for employment taxes for payments made to home care service providers; (4) authorize the Secretary of the Treasury to make grants for volunteer income tax assistance programs; (5) require written notice to taxpayers of eligibility for the earned income tax credit; (6) place restrictions on information relating to refund anticipation loans; (7) require the Secretary to notify a taxpayer of any unauthorized use of such taxpayer's identity (suspected identity theft) uncovered during an tax investigation; (8) repeal the authority of the Internal Revenue Service, IRS, to enter into private debt collection contracts; (9) extend the period during which the IRS may return property seized in a wrongful tax levy; and (10) increase penalties for failures to provide correct tax information and to file partnership or S corporation tax returns.

This bill delays until 2012 the 3 percent withholding requirement on government payments to contractors providing goods and services. It also directs the Secretary of the Treasury to conduct a feasibility study on alternative means of delivering tax refunds. H.R. 5719 seeks to expand the prohibitions against the misuse of Department of the Treasury names and symbols to include misuse on an Internet domain address.

PROGRAMS FOR THE BENEFIT OF LOW-INCOME TAXPAYERS

There are parts of this tax bill that help the working poor and our elderly, making this tax bill truly live up to its name of being one of Taxpayer Assistance . . . not just a credit to the top 2 percent of Americans. This bill would authorize an annual $10 million grant for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, VITA, programs, increasing the annual aggregate limitation authorized on grants to qualified low-income taxpayer clinics to $10 million.

This bill would allow IRS employees to refer taxpayers needing assistance with tax cases to qualified low-income taxpayer clinics so they can get the help they need. Many people are struggling with how to manage complicated tax cases when they can barely afford to pay their mortgage. This portion of the bill will alleviate the fear that is sometimes associated with IRS tax cases particularly among people who cannot afford legal counsel.

ELDERLY AND DISABLED INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING IN-HOME CARE

This bill would make the administrators of State and local government programs liable for paying the employment taxes on amounts paid by government programs to in-home care workers provided to elderly and disabled persons. This is yet another provision of the bill that benefits our most vulnerable populations.

CONCLUSION

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to examine this bill in its entirety and recognize that it benefits all Americans. I fully support what Representative RANGEL and the Committee on Ways and Means has done to alleviate some of the burden on taxpayers.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of this very timely and important measure. Its enactment will make a number of worthwhile changes in the current tax laws and the policies of the Internal Revenue Service, IRS.

To protect people against identity theft, it will require the IRS to notify a taxpayer if IRS finds that someone else may have made unauthorized use of the taxpayer's identity.

It will increase both the civil and criminal penalties that can be imposed on those who use misleading websites that imitate to seek to get personal information. This is important because people are losing thousands of dollars in tax refunds to such frauds.

It will strengthen IRS outreach to make sure that people know that they are entitled to tax refunds or to payments under the Earned Income Tax Credit, EITC. It would also permit the IRS to refer these taxpayers to low income tax clinics and increase funding for those clinics, and strengthen taxpayer protections from ''predatory'' providers of refund anticipation loans. And it clarifies that the IRS can use its website to publicize unclaimed taxpayer refunds.

To help small businesses, the bill will eliminate the outdated requirement to maintain and submit detailed call records to substantiate business use of employer-provided cell phones.

Of great importance to State and local governments—including every county in Colorado—it will delay for one year the imposition of a 3 percent withholding requirement on government payments for goods and services made after December 31, 2010.

Further, to protect all of us, the bill includes the ''Fair Share Act,'' which closes a loophole that now allows government contractors to avoid paying Social Security and Medicare taxes.

An example of how the current law could permit this was recently reported in the press account of how a company operating under Federal contracts for reconstruction work in Iraq has listed the people doing that work as being employees of a subsidiary company based in the Cayman Islands. As a result, while people formally employed by the company with the Federal contract would be subject to the 15.3 percent payroll tax for Social Security and Medicare (half technically paid by the employer, the other half technically paid by employees), that is not the case with people who are counted as working for a foreign company. This is not fair or just. It should not be permissible, and this bill would stop it by closing the loophole.

In addition, the bill would strengthen accountability and protect taxpayers by repealing the authorization for the Internal Revenue Service to use private contractors to collect Federal income taxes.

Just today, the press is reporting that this program, while perhaps well-intentioned, has cost the government—that is, the taxpayers—some $37 million more than the total amount of taxes it has collected, while the contractors have collected commissions of up to 24 percent for their efforts. The program has been marked by harassment, abusive calling, and violations of taxpayer rights and disclosure protections. The Government Accountability Office has reported that debt collectors placed over one million calls, many to innocent people, trying to reach 35,000 taxpayers and the Federal Trade Commission reports that as of last year it had received 130 complaints and the National Taxpayer Advocate has counted many more. The House has already twice voted to end this private collection program, and we should do so again today.

Madam Speaker, some have criticized this bill because it includes measures to implement the requirement that taxes be paid on funds withdrawn from a Health Savings account for purposes other than those related to health care. I think the purpose of these provisions is appropriate, but it may be that they could be more finely-tuned in order to achieve that purpose in a better way—something that may occur as the legislative process proceeds. In any event, I am not convinced that whatever shortcomings there may be in that or other parts of the bill are sufficient to outweigh the benefits of the rest of the legislation.

Overall, this is a good bill that will help the taxpayers and our country, and I urge its passage.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my opposition to H.R. 5719, the Taxpayer Assistance and the Simplification Act of 2008. While this bill has some good provisions, such as the delayed implementation of the 3-percent withholding on Government contracts, the bad provisions simply outweigh the good. Specifically, I am troubled by the section that would alter reporting requirements for Health Savings Account, HSA, owners.

This bill would require individuals using HSAs to provide exhaustive documentation of their medical expenses in order to qualify as a tax-exempt expense. More than 5 million Americans are taking advantage of these accounts, and approximately 25 percent of HSA owners had no health insurance prior to their participation. Currently, every HSA account holder must file specific tax forms to provide details about spending from the account. We must expand this program so we can help families afford healthcare coverage and bring healthcare costs down. Requiring unnecessary and duplicative paperwork is not the right way to accomplish this goal.

HSAs are a very valuable asset to many of my constituents. The manufacturing industry is one of the premier sources of jobs in my district, and most of these manufacturing entities are small in nature. In fact, approximately 93 percent of the more than 1,500 manufacturing firms in my district employ less than 100 people. Employees of these small businesses are the primary beneficiaries of HSAs. In a time when the cost of health care is sharply rising, it is crucial for us to promote the use of innovative health care products such as HSAs, helping families afford the health care they

need. I am concerned that we will inevitably deter these families from utilizing HSAs by adding such draconian reporting requirements for HSA owners. This will ultimately increase the cost of health care for a large number of my constituents who currently take advantage of this valuable product.

It is also worth noting that the best assistance we could provide to taxpayers is to protect them from the largest tax increase in American history. Sadly, many of my colleagues are more interested in dealing with minutia in the Tax Code rather than addressing the looming massive tax hike. Families in my district in Michigan, home of this country's worst economy, simply cannot afford to pay any more in taxes. A tax increase of this size would devastate families struggling with sky-high unemployment, the mortgage crisis, and rising gas prices. It would add insult to injury to ask them to pay more to this Government as well.

A tax increase of this scope would also be devastating for job providers and small businesses, This Congress should be doing everything it can to be helping our economy by creating jobs and encouraging growth. Dramatically raising taxes would do just the opposite.

Madam Speaker, implementing the largest tax increase in American history is a slap in the face to all the families currently struggling to make ends meet. It has been made abundantly clear today who stands with working families and who stands with wasteful Washington spending. I, for one, stand with the hard working men and women of Michigan and across this great land.

Mr. CANTON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to oppose a provision in this bill that will discourage the use of HSAs. HSAs are a new and innovative product in the health insurance field. Their glowing track record promises a tremendous breakthrough in the effort to expand and improve health care. In 3 short years, we have seen these accounts grow to cover 4.4 million people, and will likely reach 6 million when the new numbers come out next month.

For those Americans who need health care most, HSAs are working. Of HSA applicants, 43 percent did not indicate previous insurance when they signed up, and 66 percent of HSA account holders are families with children. HSA users have demonstrated a greater likelihood to seek preventive care, something we have always strived to achieve across the entire health arena. And, one-third of small employers who now offer HSAs did not previously offer insurance.

We need to be looking for bipartisan ways to help people get access to affordable health care, not take it away from them.

Mr. CARSON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 5719. It is fitting that we are debating a bill that provides much needed assistance for low and moderate income taxpayers. The Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act recognizes the need for enhanced financial literacy for those individuals by authorizing an annual $10 million grant for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance programs and increases the authorization levels for grants targeted to qualified low-income taxpayer clinics to $10 million.

These free taxpayer assistance programs walk these individuals through what can be a daunting tax preparation process and alert them to assistance they may be eligible for.

A provision of particular importance to me and the taxpayers in the 7th Congressional District is a requirement for IRS to notify taxpayers of potential eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit for all open tax years and directs the IRS to notify individuals who have not filed a return, but who may be eligible for the credit based on previous return information.

In Indianapolis, there are tens of thousands of individuals who qualify for the credit who do not claim it. This credit assistance is critically needed by many families in my district.

As an advocate for financial literacy I am pleased to lend my support to this legislation that enables organizations to better reach out to those low income individuals who have been hit so hard during this turbulent time in our economy. I thank Chairman RANGEL and my colleagues on the Ways and Means Committee for their hard and thoughtful work on this bill.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 1102, the previous question is ordered on the bill, as amended.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT OFFERED BY MR. HERGER

Mr. HERGER. Madam Speaker, I have a motion to recommit at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman opposed to the bill?

Mr. HERGER. I am opposed to the bill in its current form.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. Herger moves to recommit the bill H.R. 5719 to the Committee on Ways and Means with instructions to report the same back promptly with the following amendment:

Add at the end the following new sections:

SEC. 20. DENIAL OF TAX EXEMPT INTEREST WITH RESPECT TO BONDS OF SANCTUARY STATES AND CITIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (1) of section 103(c) (defining State or local bond) is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: ''Such term shall not include any obligation of a State or political subdivision thereof, if such State or political subdivision has in effect a policy (whether statutory or otherwise) specifying that employees of such State or political subdivision are not required to notify Federal officials of an alien who may be unlawfully present in the United States.''

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by this section shall apply to bonds issued after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 21. EFFORTS TO ADMINISTER EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT.

The Secretary of the Treasury shall increase the efforts of the Internal Revenue Service to ensure, to the extent possible, that aliens unlawfully present in the United States are not allowed a credit under section 32 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (relating to earned income).

Mr. HERGER (during the reading). I request unanimous consent that the reading be dispensed with.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. I object.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The Clerk will continue to read.

The Clerk continued to read.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes in support of his motion and a Member in opposition to the motion will be recognized for 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. HERGER. Madam Speaker, Federal law requires local governments to cooperate with the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Local law enforcement authorities may turn over individuals who have been apprehended if the police believe they are not legally present in the United States.

Unfortunately, many local governments flaunt this requirement and openly boast that they refuse to cooperate with the Federal Government in helping to enforce our immigration laws establishing an irresponsible precedent and frustrating our shared goal of having safe and secure borders.

As you know, taxpayers all across the country subsidize local governments through a provision of Federal law that permits States and localities to issue debt that is exempt from Federal taxes.

□ 1745

The motion presents the Members of Congress with a simple question: Is it reasonable to put some strings on this subsidy?

If adopted, the motion would clarify that the Federal tax subsidy does not apply to new debt issued by States or localities that declare themselves by statute or other manner to be a sanctuary city for illegal immigrants. In other words, having self-helped themselves out of helping the Federal Government address the growing burden of illegal immigrants, then they should not expect American taxpayers to subsidize their debt.

Madam Speaker, on April 15, we are reminded again about the many Americans who are playing by the rules, yet still feel the squeeze on their family budgets, particularly at tax time. Isn't it only fair that we ask our city mayors and county boards to do the same?

This brings me to the second piece of our motion to recommit. Many American families benefit from the Earned Income Tax Credit. It has helped millions of low-income families help make ends meet, though its cost to the Treasury is not insubstantial. Studies have often showed that the earned income tax credit is overclaimed by as much as 30 percent. In other words, many of those who receive the benefit are not actually entitled to it.

As the underlying bill includes a provision directing the IRS to conduct outreach to inform individuals that they may be eligible for the earned income tax credit, the motion would add language directing the IRS to improve its efforts to identify individuals who may be ineligible for the EITC on account of their citizenship status.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to vote for this motion to recommit. While I am greatly concerned about the message sent by the underlying bill that somehow we are going to take away an effective tool to ensure we all pay our fair share of taxes, this motion helps correct that wrong-headed tilt by trying to prevent tax benefits from going to illegal aliens and cities and States who shelter them from our immigration laws.

I urge passage of the motion.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. POMEROY. Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from North Dakota is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POMEROY. Madam Speaker, we have just obtained the motion in terms of trying to sort through the tax provisions, with an eye, among other things, to wondering whether or not people holding bonds of municipalities could suddenly find themselves with taxes they didn't think they were going to have when they bought these bonds.

Trying to work our way through these, one word jumped out on this motion to recommit that really has shut down all further analysis by us, and that is the word ''promptly,'' because this is yet another one of those motions to recommit that is designed for one purpose and one purpose only, and that is to kill the bill they are trying to attach it to. That is because this would take the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act that we want to pass than April 15th and pack it off back to the Ways and Means Committee, dispensing any possibility of passing it off the floor today. It is a procedural move by the minority to try and stop us from moving forward with this legislation.

What is unfortunate about that is there are taxpayers that are going to be benefited, benefited substantially, by this legislation, small businesses that right now are subject to IRS audit exposure if they are not keeping detailed call records on cell phones that they give their employees. We want to take this relief away through this motion to recommit? I don't think so.

We go through so many positive, taxpayer-friendly provisions in this bill, provisions that have received the support of so many diverse organizations, from the League of Cities, Association of Mayors, NFIB and Consumers Federation of America, it would take that and take it off the table today, preventing the House from moving this forward.

Now, you think, why? What is the motive behind a motion like this? Why would they not want this taxpayer bill to move forward? Well, my friends, you can find it on the front page of today's Washington Post. Basically, they are trying everything they can to preserve private bill collectors hired by the IRS to chase after taxpayers.

So here on Tax Day, April 15th, we are trying to stop private bill collectors from going after taxpayers on behalf of the IRS, an endeavor that has cost taxpayers millions and brought in not enough by any measure to cover the cost; a forgone revenue opportunity of $81 million, testified by the Taxpayer Advocate, if we simply took the money we sent to these private contractors and hired employees to go ahead and collect that debt. But they are so completely convinced that they have got to pull every trick out of their hat to try and stop our efforts to rein in these private bill collectors that they brought this motion to recommit.

I would yield such time as I have remaining to the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY).

Mr. CROWLEY. I thank the gentleman.

I perused the motion to recommit by Mr. HERGER. I think it is interesting, the other side has pointed out we have chosen today, Tax Day, to bring this bill to the floor. It is also interesting they take this motion to recommit the same day that the Pope has arrived here in the United States, who is with the President right now at the White House; the same Pope who has decried the xenophobic nature of some of the legislation that has been coming out of this House by the other side of the aisle.

I think it is interesting to note that no illegal aliens will be hurt by this motion to recommit. In fact, it will be the elderly woman who relies upon her opportunities to buy these bonds for their income later in life. I would also point out it is quite possible that New York State and California, the States of two of the gentleman here today, could potentially be hurt by this motion to recommit.

I think it is foolhardy. It obviously is an attempt to kill the bill by requiring it be promptly reported back to committee, and therefore the attempt is clear, once again to use anti-immigrant rhetoric to kill the bill and to use ''promptly'' to kill the bill.

I urge my colleagues to reject this motion to recommit and to vote for the underlying legislation.

Mr. POMEROY. I yield back the balance of my time.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman please state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Madam Speaker, isn't it true the Chair has ruled multiple times on the fact that a bill reported promptly out of the House may return to the House floor at the discretion of the committee, and the fact that the Ways and Means Committee brought this to the floor, it could easily do so within a relatively short period of time, a matter of days?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. As the Chair reaffirmed on November 15, 2007, at some subsequent time, the committee could meet and report the bill back to the House.

Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to recommit.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. HERGER. Madam Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Evidently a quorum is not present.

The Sergeant at Arms will notify absent Members.

Pursuant to clause 8 and clause 9 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on the motion to recommit will be followed by 5-minute votes on passage of the bill, if ordered; and suspension of the rules with respect to H.R. 5517.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 210, nays 210, not voting 12, as follows:

[Roll No. 189]

YEAS—210

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Altmire
Bachmann
Bachus
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bean
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono Mack
Boozman
Boren
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Broun (GA)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carney
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Cubin
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Donnelly
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Ellsworth
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foster
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gingrey
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hill
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Kanjorski
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Lampson
Latham
LaTourette
Latta
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mahoney (FL)
Manzullo
Marchant
Marshall
Matheson
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McIntyre

McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Mitchell
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Patrick
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Paul
Pearce
Pence
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuler
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Space
Stearns
Sullivan
Tancredo
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield (KY)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman (VA)
Wolf
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NAYS—210

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
DeLauro
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ros-Lehtinen
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Speier
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Tsongas
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—12

Culberson
Cummings
Delahunt
Gohmert
Honda
Mack
Pallone
Peterson (PA)
Radanovich
Richardson
Rush
Wilson (NM)

□ 1821

Ms. ESHOO, Messrs. ALLEN, BRADY of Pennsylvania, NADLER and Mrs. DAVIS of California changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Messrs. BURGESS, SOUDER and TERRY changed their vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the motion to recommit was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRIES

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Madam Speaker, parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman may state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Madam Speaker, is it not true that you are the deliberator and the decider of rules in this House?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair rules on questions of order. Does the gentleman have a parliamentary inquiry?

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Madam Speaker, further parliamentary inquiry. Is it not the job of the Speaker to interpret the rules of this House?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does the gentleman have an inquiry to state? Would the gentleman please state that inquiry.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Madam Speaker, is it not true that under rule XX of this House, that it says that no votes will be kept open to change the outcome of that vote; is that true?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. As the Chair advised on March 11, 2008, a challenge to the Chair's actions under clause 2 of rule XX may be raised collaterally.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Madam Speaker, further parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman may state his inquiry.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Madam Speaker, as a parliamentary inquiry, and I beg your pardon, but I don't believe this is a hard question to answer.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his inquiry.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. The parliamentary inquiry, Madam Speaker, is this: Is the Speaker the deliberator and the decider if the rules of this House are being followed?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair rules on questions of order.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Ma'am, I don't know how else to put it other than maybe a point of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman may state his point of order.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. The point of order is: Is the Speaker of this House the deliberator and the decider if the rules of this House are being followed?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has recognized the gentleman for a point of order. Would the gentleman please state his point of order.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. The point of order is: Is it the Chair's responsibility to rule on a point of order?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has stated a parliamentary inquiry. The Chair does rule on points of order.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Madam Speaker, I make a point of order that the electronic vote just completed violated clause 2(a) of rule XX which provides in part ''a recorded vote by electronic device shall not be held open for the sole purpose of reversing the outcome of such vote.''

The SPEAKER pro tempore. As the Chair advised on March 11, 2008, a challenge to the Chair's actions under clause 2 of rule XX may be raised collaterally.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Madam, I am raising that point.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has just ruled.

The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

RECORDED VOTE

Mr. REYNOLDS. Madam Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 238, noes 179, not voting 14, as follows:

[Roll No. 190]

AYES—238

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
DeFazio
DeGette
DeLauro
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Feeney
Filner
Foster
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Lampson
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch

Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McHugh
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (MI)
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murphy, Tim
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Perlmutter
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ros-Lehtinen
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (NJ)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Speier
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Tsongas
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NOES—179

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono Mack
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Braley (IA)
Broun (GA)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Cubin
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Deal (GA)
Dent
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gingrey
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
Latta
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Manzullo
Marchant
Marshall
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pearce
Pence
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Stearns
Sullivan
Tancredo
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield (KY)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman (VA)
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—14

Culberson
Delahunt
Gohmert
Honda
Johnson, E. B.
Mack
Pallone
Paul
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Radanovich
Richardson
Rush
Wilson (NM)

□ 1833

Mr. CRENSHAW changed his vote from ''aye'' to ''no.''

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

TEXAS MILITARY VETERANS POST OFFICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5517, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5517.

This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 413, nays 0, not voting 18, as follows:

[Roll No. 191]

YEAS—413

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Bachmann
Bachus
Baird
Baldwin
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono Mack
Boozman
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boustany
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Braley (IA)
Broun (GA)
Brown (SC)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Butterfield
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Carter
Castle
Castor
Chabot
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cohen
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Cramer
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cubin
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
DeFazio
DeGette
DeLauro
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doolittle
Doyle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Edwards
Ehlers
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Everett
Fallin
Farr
Fattah
Feeney
Ferguson
Filner
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foster
Foxx
Frank (MA)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gingrey
Gonzalez
Goode
Goodlatte
Gordon
Granger
Graves
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hall (TX)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hobson
Hodes
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Hooley
Hoyer
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Inslee
Israel
Issa
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Jordan
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Keller
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Klein (FL)
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Lampson
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
LaTourette
Latta
Lee
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Manzullo
Marchant
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (CA)
McCarthy (NY)
McCaul (TX)
McCollum (MN)
McCotter
McCrery
McDermott
McGovern
McHenry
McHugh
McIntyre
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Mica
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller (NC)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murphy, Tim
Murtha
Musgrave
Myrick
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Neugebauer
Nunes
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Pearce
Pence
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (GA)
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Rahall
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Rodriguez
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruppersberger
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Salazar
Sali
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Saxton
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schmidt
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Sestak
Shadegg
Shays
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuler
Shuster
Simpson
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Souder
Space
Speier
Spratt
Stark
Stearns
Stupak
Sullivan
Sutton
Tancredo
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Tierney
Towns
Tsongas
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Walz (MN)
Wamp
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Wexler
Whitfield (KY)
Wilson (OH)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman (VA)
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—18

Cardoza
Chandler
Courtney
Culberson
Delahunt
Dicks
Gohmert
Honda
Linder
Mack
Pallone
Paul
Peterson (PA)
Radanovich
Rangel
Richardson
Rush
Wilson (NM)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). There are 2 minutes remaining on this vote.

□ 1840

So (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AUTHORIZING THE CLERK TO MAKE CORRECTIONS IN ENGROSSMENT OF H.R. 5719, TAXPAYER ASSISTANCE AND SIMPLIFICATION ACT OF 2008

Mr. MCNULTY. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Clerk be authorized to make technical corrections in the engrossment of H.R. 5719, to include corrections in spelling, punctuation, section numbering and cross-referencing, and the insertion of appropriate headings.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

HONORING THE 125TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL CRITTENTON FOUNDATION

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

Mr. WATT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize an historic anniversary of the National Crittenton Foundation, which was the first charitable organization created under a congressional charter, and is celebrating 125 years of service.

People who recognize the Crittenton name often recall only the maternity homes that were usually hidden and welcomed girls and young women seeking support during their unplanned pregnancies. Much less is known about the influence of the national network of affiliated Crittenton agencies and their lasting impact on the social work profession.

The unique relationship between the National Crittenton Foundation and the Crittenton family of agencies is based on the belief that addressing compelling social issues in the United States is best done through a network of independent local agencies supported by a national body.

There are now over 23 Crittenton agencies across the country. Together they have provided over 2,200 years of continuous service to 5 million vulnerable girls, young women and their families.

Madam Speaker, I ask you and my colleagues to join me in wishing the National Crittenton Foundation and its family of agencies across the country happy anniversary, and our best wishes for another 125 years of success.

□ 1845

TAX DAY

(Mr. MCCAUL of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCCAUL of Texas. Madam Speaker, once again, the tax man cometh. Today, April 15, is a day American taxpayers scramble to comply with a tax code over 67,000 pages long.

In 2007, individual taxpayers spent over 3 billion hours complying with the Federal income tax laws. Individuals spent $26.5 billion for tax software, tax repairs, postage, and other costs related to filing their Federal income taxes. And corporations spend over $156 billion to comply with the Federal tax laws.

Americans may send $2.5 trillion to the IRS, but the costs to our economy is much greater. Despite this, the majority party is forcing a $654 billion tax increase on the American people, the largest tax increase in American history. It is time to scrap this oppressive tax code. It is time to take a look at the fair tax or the flat tax as viable alternatives to our overly burdensome tax code, and it's time to stop punishing taxpayers and pass fundamental tax reform.

AMERICA, WE ARE ON YOUR SIDE ON TAX DAY

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, today is Tax Day, April 15, and that's why the Democrats have risen today to be able to tell the American people we're on your side. The Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act of 2008 may cost $22 million, but I can assure you that it pales in comparison to the money that my friends are spending on the unending war in Iraq.

I am glad to stand with the taxpayers of America, making sure that the elderly and the disabled are exempted from liability for employment taxes or payments to home care service providers. They deserve our respect, and today we give it to them.

I am glad that we are requiring a written notice to taxpayers of the eligibility of the earned income tax credit. It's a shame that so many think that there is so much fraud for hardworking Americans who don't file for their taxes who deserve it, and I'm delighted to stand with Americans to repeal the authority of the IRS to enter into private debt collection, those guys who have harassed the elderly, the shut-ins, hardworking Americans because they are private bounty hunters.

Today we stand with hardworking Americans. We will do so as well. And we honor our troops, declare the war's end, bring them home and reinvest in America.

LOWERING THE COST OF FUEL

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Madam Speaker, it is, in essence, the third day in the legislative schedule when I come to the floor to talk about energy prices.

When this Democrat majority took over the House, the price of a barrel of crude oil was $58 a barrel. Today, it hovers around $111 a barrel.

In 2006, the Democrat leadership promised lower gas prices. What we've seen, in reality, is higher gas prices. We've seen negative change, which has caused bitterness in rural America with the high-increasing cost to travel around rural America. All we're asking is for a plan to bring on more supply.

I have been in this well numerous times in this Congress to talk about coal-to-liquid technologies. We shouldn't limit it to that. We should talk about expanding renewable fuels. We should talk about the outer continental shelf. We ought to talk about ANWR. We need to bring more supply to lower the cost of fuels because the average American citizens are tired of paying these high gas prices, and it hurts the economy of this country.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Arizona (Ms. GIFFORDS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. GIFFORDS addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

IRS EQUALS IRAQ REVENUE SUPPLIERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, today is April 15, Tax Day. Right now, millions of Americans are hurrying to report their incomes to the IRS. Usually, ''IRS'' stands for ''Internal Revenue Service,'' but today, it might as well stand for ''Iraq revenue suppliers'' because so much of our tax revenue is paying for the occupation of Iraq.

Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel Prize winning economist, has calculated the occupation will cost at least $3 trillion. That means that the occupation will cost each of our 300 million citizens $10,000, or an incredible $40,000 for a family of four.

America's hardworking families are struggling to keep their heads above water as we sink into a deep, what I

call, Iraq recession. Yet, they're being asked to hand over $40,000, most of which goes to the foreign nations that are lending us the money to keep the occupation going. And that $40,000, Madam Speaker, will get much bigger if the occupation goes on for another few years, for 100 years as some cheerleaders for the occupation are discussing.

What have we gotten for our occupation money? General Petraeus told us last week that the security situation in Iraq has gotten much better. But 19 of our incredibly brave soldiers died last week. And our top military leaders continue to warn us that our obsession with Iraq is breaking our military and that we may wake up one day to find that we can't meet a real threat to our national security.

Next month, the IRS will mail out economic stimulus checks. I'm glad that that relief is on the way. But the best economic stimulus plan would be to end the occupation of Iraq. The American people agree. A recent New York Times/CBS poll found that 89 percent of the American people believe that the cost of the occupation has contributed to our economic problems.

Last month, the Progressive Caucus put forth an alternative budget that showed that we can actually achieve an end to the occupation in Iraq and reorder our spending priorities. The budget is truly remarkable. We were able to fully fund the education that our children deserved and that our Nation must have to remain competitive in the global economy.

We were able to invest in green jobs that could employ millions of our citizens and put our Nation on the path to the energy independence we must have to fuel our economy and ensure our national security. And we were able to provide health care coverage to every American who lacks it, not only fulfilling our promise to care for each other, but making our country stronger and more competitive in the process.

But instead of revving up these engines of economic growth and social justice, the administration will soon send to Congress yet another request for emergency Iraq funding. This time around, the request will be for $108 billion.

Madam Speaker, I agree that we must spend money on Iraq but not the way the administration wants to spend it. It wants an open-ended occupation. Instead, we must fully fund the safe, responsible redeployment of our troops and military contractors out of Iraq.

And we must help, not do it all, but we must help to reconstruct Iraq. We've all heard of the so-called Pottery Barn rule: If you break it, you own it. We need to expand that saying: If you break it, you have a moral obligation to help rebuild it.

It's time for the madness to end, Madam Speaker. It's time to bring our troops home, get our fiscal house in order, give the Iraqi people back their sovereignty and help them rebuild their country and their lives.

AMERICA'S DOMESTIC OIL SUPPLY CANNOT MEET ITS DEMAND

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

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, the price of gasoline goes up every day, and Congress is partially to blame. The price of crude oil is increasing because demand is increasing. Our domestic energy supply cannot meet that demand. The global demand for oil is also rising with the industrialization of China. And increased demand for oil leads to increased prices for many products, including products made out of plastic.

The problem is that Congress has made it difficult for our supply to meet that demand. There is a solution to the problem. The solution is to increase our supply by exploring domestic energy sources and drilling in ANWR.

Like it or not, crude oil is still the energy base of our Nation. Unlike every other country on the planet, the United States does not take advantage of its own natural resources. When Congress abolished tax credits for domestic exploration and production, Congress effectively abolished reasonable oil prices and then raised taxes on oil companies to $18 billion, taxes that are eventually passed on to us, the consumer. Thus, higher prices at the pump.

And this Congress decided to even award Venezuelan Dictator Chavez and his nationalized oil company with a large tax break, a tax break they did not give to American oil companies.

It's common knowledge that, if you tax something, you're going to get less of it. If you tax oil, you get less of it. Less of what? Less production and less crude oil. Less oil on the market equals higher prices at the pump. And if we look at the world crude oil reserves, 80 percent of the world crude oil is controlled by foreign nationalized oil companies. We call them OPEC. Six percent is controlled by Russian companies, and only six percent of the world oil reserves is controlled by American-owned oil companies. You know, those American-owned oil companies that are capitalistic, that have stockholders, we call them Americans. And those companies are making about 8 percent, 8½ profit.

So the world is controlled by OPEC, not American oil companies. We may be the world power, but the United States does not control the world oil market.

The only control we have is over our domestic energy supply, which we don't take advantage of because of the U.S. restrictions on offshore drilling and exploration. We have succumbed to the environmental fear myth that we cannot drill safely offshore. Other nations, including Britain, Norway, Holland, and Denmark, take full advantage of their natural resources and even permit offshore drilling in the North Sea, that area of the world where offshore drilling is the most difficult, and they do it without environmental damage.

□ 1900

We can increase our energy supply and reduce the price of gasoline at the pump by also allowing drilling in ANWR.

On top of the heightened demand for crude oil, there is a heightened demand for new refineries. Madam Speaker, I represent 21 percent of the Nation's refineries in southeast Texas, but we don't have any new ones. The last oil refinery was built 32 years ago. Our oil refineries have been punished by bureaucracy and unnecessary Federal regulations. Too many unnecessary Federal regulations, too many government controls, too many high taxes, the second highest corporate income tax in the world, and what happens? They leave town, they go somewhere else. We must lift these burdens and encourage refinery development. Our gasoline prices will eventually drop as soon as we build new refineries and we drill offshore and we drill in ANWR.

The high prices of gasoline have thrown the airline industry into chaos. Twenty-two percent of the Nation's jet fuel is made in my district. But one example, Madam Speaker, it costs an airline company $44 a minute to allow a plane to idle on the runway. Thus, every plane that takes off that's been sitting there about 30 minutes costs $1,500 in additional oil prices.

The high gas prices even affect the 170,000 independently owned gas stations in the country. They no longer make a profit on selling fuel. They hope to make one cent on every gallon, so they are thrilled if they make that penny. They make money by selling lottery tickets, donuts and beer, that's how they make their profit.

It's time for us in Congress to encourage more domestic oil production, lift the restrictions to offshore drilling, and take care of ourselves. We must stop relying on unstable, volatile regions in the world and pompous dictators who hold Americans hostage with their crude oil.

We have a problem, but we can solve it. Otherwise, we'll be parking our vehicles on the side of the road, riding bicycles to work, then blissfully wondering where all the crude oil went.

And that's just the way it is.

THE STATE OF OUR ECONOMY

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

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to address the House for a few moments.

I think it's very appropriate for us to pause for a moment here and just reflect on where we are as a Nation and as a people when it comes to our economy and our financial House. This April 15, it's Tax Day. It's important

that this House of Representatives be mindful of the difficulties that the American people are faced with.

Madam Speaker, millions of American people and families are absolutely hanging on by their fingernails. They're on the verge of losing their homes. Many have already. And so much of it has been because of bad policies by their government. It is important for us to understand that, Madam Speaker, so much of this could possibly have been prevented had we moved quicker, had we made different policies.

This is a very sobering time. Two major events happened today. One is, the American people, many are in line at post offices as we speak trying to meet the midnight deadline to pay their taxes. Others are struggling to do so. Others are having difficulty even beginning to comprehend the complexities, the complications of a tax code that even if they sat down to read it, it would take them over 1 year trying to read the tax code, let alone trying to understand it, just the volume of trying to read it.

And Madam Speaker, we in Congress must take into consideration how difficult that is, the fact that the American people, many are not even taking the credits or getting the deductions that they should have because they don't understand it. Twenty-five percent of American families that are entitled to the Earned Income Tax Credit don't even get it because they don't understand how to do it.

Last year, over 65 percent of American families had to get a private person from the outside to come help them with their taxes. That has increased up 25 percent, since just 10 years ago it was 40. And in 1950, it was just 20 percent that did that. The complexity of our tax code is just out of whack. Many are gathered around the kitchen tables right now trying to find out how they're going to have ends meet.

And Madam Speaker, the other phenomenal event in our economy that took place today was the merger of Delta Airlines and Northwest Airlines, making the largest airline company in the world. That is certainly room to celebrate, but it's very important that we be very mindful to both Delta and Northwest to understand the implications of that, to have the sensitivity that there are many thousands of families that are impacted, and that we do not use the word ''synergy'' to equate with a loss of jobs, but that there are no jobs lost.

We in Congress must have the empathy of putting ourselves into the mindset of the American people, and we must show that we understand the difficulties that the American people are faced with; we understand the difficulties of knowing when they wake up the next morning, their car may be repossessed, they may have a foreclosure notice.

Our policies must be, here in this House of Representatives going forward, to keep Americans in their homes, even if it means coming up with the policies and moving as fast as we can. If we could move with lickety-split speed to save Wall Street, Bear Stearns, and Madam Speaker, I believe that was the right thing to do because, had we not, global markets would have cascaded and we would have had an extraordinary world calamity in the financial markets, but just as aggressively as we moved with those policies that helped Wall Street and Bear Stearns, we must move to help our homeowners and our families.

And then finally, Madam Speaker, the real elephant facing us in the room, the real looming threat economically and financially to this country is our overwhelming debt. Madam Speaker, it is staggering to look at the debt that we are in. Every dime we are spending is on borrowed money. And we have spent, Madam Speaker, as I conclude, in the last 5 or 6 years, more money from foreign governments than in the entire history of this country.

Madam Speaker, that's the state of our economy. And it's very important that we reflect it from the perspective of the American people. And I thank you for this opportunity.

COMPLEXITY OF TAX CODE

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

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, you know, it is said that nothing in the world is certain except death and taxes. And I'll tell you, being a physician in my former life, that sometimes even death is a little less complicated than our tax system.

The complexity of the tax code is a consequence of countless deductions and exemptions that are aimed not at collecting revenue, but steering a social agenda. And the result is a Federal law that is fraught with opportunities for avoiding taxes and full of loopholes to be exploited, all at the expense of fellow Americans.

My criticizing the tax code is as American as apple pie and baseball, and for good reason, because every year Americans spend billions of hours and billions of dollars, and that's not counting the billions of hours that we spend complaining about the tax code. Time is money, and time should be spent growing the economy and creating jobs.

There is a strong prescription for real change in our tax code. We caught a glimpse of it when Ronald Reagan cut the tax code in half back in 1986. As a result of that reform, the economy grew, revenues increased, and jobs were created. The prescription is pretty simple: Flatten the tax, broaden the base, and shift the burden away from families and small businesses.

And we do have a practical and effective blueprint, it's called the flat tax. Back in 1981, Robert Hall and Alvin Rabushka proposed a radically simple structure that would transform the Internal Revenue Service and our economy by creating a single tax rate for all Americans. Today, several States have implemented a single rate tax structure for their State income tax, and from Utah to Massachusetts citizens are realizing the benefit.

In Colorado, a single rate tax generated so much income that it was reduced 10 years after its implementation. In Indiana, the economy boomed after a single rate went into effect in 2003, and since that time the corporate income tax receipts have grown by 250 percent.

Now, several people in Congress are working on the problem. I have a bill, H.R. 1040, which is a voluntary flat tax. A companion bill was introduced by the senior Senator from Tennessee just this past week. We have bills from DAVID DREIER, the gentleman from California, PAUL RYAN from Wisconsin, all trying to accomplish the same goal, and it is so simple. You have a single rate, you have a single piece of paper. You put in your name, just a little bit of identification data, write in your income, there's a line for personal exemptions, calculate your deductions from personal exemptions and calculate your taxable income, multiply it by a flat rate, subtract the taxes already withheld, and you're done. And what did that take? Not even 30 seconds. No more expensive tax attorney bills, no more hours of stressful research, no more headaches. It is much less costly, saving the taxpayers more than $100 billion per year. And it would increase tax compliance. The result: Increase in personal savings, and there is a stimulus package that would have an immediate effect on our American economy.

Recent polling by a group called American Solutions shows that over 80 percent of Americans favor an optional one-page tax return form with a single rate. Now, we hear a lot of talk about change this year. You practically cannot turn on the television without some political commercial talking about change. Well, let's consider how change could improve the most complicated of institutions, the Internal Revenue Service. And more importantly, consider how that change could deliver prosperity and return time, the precious commodity of time, to the American taxpayer. Now, that's a stimulus package worthy of everyone's vote.

THE REAL CULPRIT FOR RISING FOOD PRICES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Madam Speaker, the world is beginning to understand what my constituents have known for far too long, higher food prices and higher

commodity prices are destroying prosperity for millions and millions of people here at home and abroad. Whether there is a hungry person in Toledo, Ohio or in Haiti, the rising costs of basic food are really placing the world's marginalized and poor in even a tighter squeeze.

Getting in the front of devastation that higher commodity prices can cause is a challenge to all of us. While I am pleased that the leaders of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have called for half a billion dollars more to feed the poor of the world, I'm deeply troubled that these leaders have pointed to the same tired rhetoric in diagnosing the cause of these rising prices. It's been very interesting for me to hear them say they're blaming higher food prices on the production of ethanol and biodiesel in agricultural America, which is actually a new value-added market for our farmers. It's actually a new market that's taking land that is just laying fallow for years, where we have paid commodity payments and gotten nothing, now we are beginning to reuse some of that land again.

The real culprit for rising food prices is rising oil prices. Our world is facing a crisis precipitated by the greater competition for dwindling supplies of world energy that has caused all the prices of basic goods to skyrocket. But instead of dealing with that reality of how oil is embedded in every aspect of life in this country and globally, they're trying to blame this on the new developing market of renewable energy.

Yes, under current technology biofuels consume some food stocks for the production of fuel. Corn has been utilized by some ethanol producers, for example. But to claim that biofuels are the cause of rising food prices, that's disingenuous at best. Look to the rising oil prices at over $113 a barrel, and this oil-dependent economy must become energy independent here at home again. And renewable fuels based in agriculture are a part of the solution for this country in the world.

Take a look at the rising cost of fertilizer that can be directly attributed to the increasing cost of natural gas and smaller crop sizes. According to the recent Texas A&M Agriculture and Food Policy Center analysis, rising fertilizer costs have led to a $3 million acre reduction in planted corn in the 2006, 2007 crop year.

Let's look at another major cause globally of why food prices are going up: Drought. World food production has gone down because in Australia and eastern Europe, and because of poor weather in Canada and western Europe and Ukraine, we've seen overall production reduced. With such world stocks for wheat at 30-year lows, buyers are turning to the United States for supplies. Has the IMF offered suggestions to these nations for dealing with the drought that global warming is causing? No. They're just blaming America's farmers.

Higher incomes around the world are boosting demand for processed foods in countries such as India and China. And this higher demand has skyrocketed the need for products produced across the supply chain. Now, has the IMF sought to better manage the uncontrolled growth in developing countries? No. They're just blaming America's farmers.

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With the U.S. dollar in free fall, American agricultural goods have become extremely attractive internationally and have placed great demand on foodstuff production domestically. With greater competition for food, with more U.S. exports, our weak dollar due to terrible economic policies here at home has decreased the power of Americans to purchase food produced right here in our country. Has the IMF identified the weak dollar as the challenge to millions of Americans faced with food shortages? Of course not. They just blame the U.S. farmer and the new developing market of biofuels.

With the price of oil reaching over $110 a barrel, the world's addiction to oil is driving up the production costs of agricultural products. How much do you think it costs to haul a truckload of bell peppers from Salinas Valley in California to Cleveland, Ohio?

I cannot accept IMF's wanton attack on the investment in rural America. If we follow their formula, we would not be growing any food domestically. If we were following IMF's advice, we would not be developing the infrastructure and capacity to produce our own renewable energy here at home and help lead the world in a real energy-independent transformation of this country.

Madam Speaker, Americans simply must commit to cutting off our oil addiction and restoring energy independence here at home.

[From IMF Survey Magazine, Apr. 10, 2008]

FOOD PRICE RISES THREATEN EFFORTS TO CUT POVERTY—STRAUSS-KAHN

Higher food prices have particularly adverse effect on the poor.

Projections show nearly all African countries suffering food price shocks.

IMF Spring Meetings to discuss global strategy on food price crisis.

A rise in food prices of 48 percent since end-2006 is a huge increase that may undermine gains the international community has made in reducing proverty, IMF Managing Director Dominique Strauss-Kahn warned.

He told an April 10 news conference in Washington that policy responses to higher food prices have to be tailored to meet the needs of each country.

Strauss-Kahn said the IMF could take four steps to help address higher food prices in the short term:

Support countries in designing appropriate macroeconomic policies to deal with shocks; provide advice and technical assistance for countries where rising food prices are eroding terms of trade, through targeted income support for the poor—without jeopardizing hard-won gains on economic stabilization; in countries where price shocks are affecting the balance of payments, provide assistance through IMF lending facilities, and work, along with other agencies and donors, to help countries mitigate negative impacts.

OPEN TRADE POLICIES

Longer-term answers to the problem of higher food prices centered on removing obstacles to increased supply, Strauss-Kahn said.

The IMF cites increased trade as a policy option for mitigating the effects of higher commodity prices on national economies. IMF chief economist Simon Johnson told an April 9 World Economic Outlook briefing: ''As a way to reduce global pressure on food and energy prices, more open trade policies in those products would be a good start. Less insular biofuels policy in advanced economies would help relieve some pressure. At the same time, we encourage countries to avoid raising taxes or imposing quotas on their food exports. These reduce incentives for domestic producers and also increase international prices.''

IMPACT ON INFLATION

IMF research shows that higher prices for food pose new challenges for African policymakers and could have particularly adverse effects on the poor. Because food represents a larger share of what poorer consumers buy, a global increase in food prices has a bigger impact on inflation in poorer countries.

IMF studies show the rise in food prices reflecting a mixture of longer-term factors such as food crops being diverted to biofuel production; higher food demand from emerging economies; and higher energy and fertilizer costs. Temporary factors, such as droughts, floods, and political instability, also contributed to higher food prices.

Strauss-Kahn displayed a map at the press briefing that showed the impact of projected food price increases on global trade balances.

''Almost all African countries have a negative impact from these food prices,'' Strauss-Kahn told the briefing. A problem in trade balances meant problems in current accounts. Problems in current accounts meant problems that the IMF could help address, he said.

New projections on the effects of higher food prices follow publication of a World Bank-IMF report warning that most countries will fall short on the Millennium Development Goals, a set of eight globally agreed development targets that the international community is aiming to achieve by 2015. The report said that though much of the world is set to cut extreme poverty in half by then, prospects are gravest for the goals of reducing child and maternal mortality, with serious shortfalls also likely in primary school completion, nutrition, and sanitation goals.

NEW KIND OF IMBALANCE

In Africa and Asia the effect of higher food prices would have to be seen not only in terms of undermining the efforts to fight against poverty but also as representing a new kind of macroeconomic imbalance, Strauss-Kahn said. For a large part of Africa, a shock could be expected that was as big as, and maybe bigger than, previous shocks.

Strauss-Kahn welcomed an initiative launched by U.K. Prime Minister Gordon Brown that urges the IMF, the World Bank, and the United Nations to develop a global strategy to address higher food prices. ''The initiative taken by Gordon Brown is perfectly timely, We need now to consider the rise in food prices as something which is not just happening for one or two months but as probably more structural,'' Strauss-Kahn said.

The Brown proposal would probably be on the agenda of the IMF-World Bank Spring Meetings and of the ministerial meeting of the Group of Seven industrial countries, he added.

FOREIGN SHORTFALLS IN IRAQ AID PLEDGES

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

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of the House and to the American people a disturbing situation involving a shortfall in Iraq aid pledges. This morning during a hearing of the House Armed Services Committee, I also brought this issue to the attention of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, and Admiral Michael Mullen.

On January 30, 2008, USA Today reported that allied countries have paid only $2.5 million of the more than $15.8 billion they pledged to help rebuild Iraq. The article further reports: ''The biggest shortfalls in pledges by 41 donor countries are from Iraq's oil-rich neighbors and U.S. allies, namely Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Madam Speaker, it is extremely troubling that some of the countries that may benefit most from a secure and stable Iraq, particularly its neighbors in the region, are not providing the money they pledged to help achieve that goal.

The United States, on the other hand, has already spent $29 billion to help rebuild Iraq, and Congress has approved an additional $16.5 billion. And unlike the United States, which is borrowing money from foreign governments to pay its bills, many of Iraq's neighbors are running record surpluses because of profits their governments receive from their national oil companies.

In 2001 a gallon of gasoline cost Americans $1.42. Today that same gallon costs us $3.36. In 2001 oil was $28 per barrel. Today that same barrel is almost $114. Many of the countries who are falling short on their pledges to Iraq are withholding oil production and causing gas prices to rise on the American consumer. These countries have the economic resources to meet their commitments to Iraq.

Madam Speaker, in a letter on February 8 of this year, I expressed these concerns to Secretary Rice. Since then I received a response from the Department of State. They say they share my concern that for some countries the pace of their assistance to Iraq has been too slow. The State Department also indicates that top officials continue to urge their government to follow through on their pledges, and with the increased successes, the department is working through multilateral forums to encourage donors to meet their pledges.

During this morning's hearing, Secretary Rice also pledged that she will redouble her efforts to encourage allies in the region to pay their way in Iraq. Madam Speaker, out of fairness to the American taxpayer, I am hopeful that these efforts will be successful. It is time for Arab countries that are running surpluses to start paying their share of the bills in Iraq.

Madam Speaker, I have said many times and said it today at the hearing that it's our men and women who are in Iraq losing their legs, being paralyzed for the rest of their life, and losing their life for this country. It is the least that these Arab countries can do that are making dollars every time we put gas in our cars. It is time that they meet their obligation to fulfill the $15.8 billion that they pledged to help rebuild Iraq.

With that, Madam Speaker, before I close, I ask God to continue to bless our men and women in uniform, and I ask God to continue to bless America.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 5715, ENSURING CONTINUED ACCESS TO STUDENT LOAN ACT OF 2008

Ms. CASTOR, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 110–590) on the resolution (H. Res. 1107) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 5715) to ensure continued availability of access to the Federal student loan program for students and families, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

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

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

WEEK OF THE YOUNG CHILD

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

Mr. LOEBSACK. Madam Speaker, this week is Week of the Young Child, and I stand before you and my colleagues this evening to call for the full funding of Head Start, our Nation's premier early education program, and for Child Care and Development Block Grants.

I understand firsthand how important Head Start and subsidized child care programs are for low-income working families. I grew up in poverty, and I had a single mother who suffered from mental illness. I relied on support from my extended family, community, and friends. And as a result of the support that I received, I was able to focus on school, work hard, and achieve the American Dream. However, not all children are fortunate enough to have this sort of support system outside of their homes, and even with this additional support, many of Iowa's children could benefit from attending Head Start. Additionally, many hard-working, low-income parents could more easily push their families out of poverty if provided access to affordable and reliable child care. This is why it is critical that we properly fund Head Start and Child Care and Development Block Grants so we can expand enrollment and provide greater support to working families and opportunity to our Nation's children.

For years we have been provided with statistics proving the benefits of Head Start and affordable child care. We know that children enrolled in Head Start will excel academically, have fewer health problems, and adapt better both socially and emotionally.

However, to appreciate fully the benefits, Madam Speaker, one simply has to speak with the parents of these outstanding young students. In Iowa's Second District, which I am proud to represent, I have been lucky enough to visit a number of Head Start locations, and I have received letters from the parents of a number of these students. One of these letters was from Trina Thompson, a single, hardworking parent of two. Her youngest child attends Head Start in Iowa City, where she shared with me that ''The staff and the program itself at Head Start are invaluable to my family and many others. It is a well-run program that has been vitally beneficial to my daughter and my family.'' Ms. Thompson went on to say, ''I can go to work every day secure in the knowledge that my daughter is safe in a positive learning environment with amazing people.'' Ms. Thompson is not alone in her praise of these critical programs and the outstanding educators and child care providers.

The photo behind me today is a photo of one of these exceptional providers. Kelly Mathews of Iowa City is pictured here with children at the child care center she runs in Iowa. Ms. Mathews works 50 hours a week with the children at this center. Then she spends additional time filling out paperwork, completing continuing education credits, shopping for supplies, and creating a challenging and exciting curriculum for the children under her care. Ms. Mathews does all this for one clear reason: ''to change the world.'' But we know this goal isn't easy, especially when Ms. Mathews is receiving a very modest salary with no benefits and no paid time off. We must do better for Ms. Mathews, better for all the child care providers and Head Start teachers, better for the children in Iowa and across the country, and better for hard-working families.

Unfortunately, this year the President failed to stand up for our country's children. He failed to prioritize their needs, forgetting that these children are the key to our country's future success. This year the President proposes flat funding for child care that will cause 200,000 children to lose access to child care assistance by 2009. The administration also acknowledges that fewer children will be served in

Head Start under their proposal. Should these cuts be implemented, the Kelly Mathews of the world will find it even more difficult to make ends meet, and the Trina Thompsons and their young children will find it next to impossible to secure a spot at their local Head Start. And this is simply not acceptable.

I urge all of my colleagues to take a moment this week in honor of the Week of the Young Child to think about the tens of thousands of children you represent that could be provided a wealth of opportunity and hope in their lives if we simply reject the President's budget proposal and choose to invest in the future and well-being of our children.

SUNSET MEMORIAL

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

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Madam Speaker, I stand once again before this body with yet another Sunset Memorial.

It is April 15, 2008, in the land of the free and the home of the brave, and before the sun set today in America, almost 4,000 more defenseless unborn children were killed by abortion on demand—just today. That is more than the number of innocent American lives that were lost on September 11th, only it happens every day.

It has now been exactly 12,867 days since the travesty called Roe v. Wade was handed down. Since then, the very foundation of this Nation has been stained by the blood of almost 50 million of our own children.

Some of them, Madam Speaker, cried and screamed as they died, but because it was amniotic fluid passing over their vocal cords instead of air, we couldn't hear them.

All of them had at least four things in common.

They were each just little babies who had done nothing wrong to anyone. Each one of them died a nameless and lonely death. And each of their mothers, whether she realizes it immediately or not, will never be the same. And all the gifts that these children might have brought to humanity are now lost forever.

Yet even in the full glare of such tragedy, this generation clings to a blind, invincible ignorance while history repeats itself and our own silent genocide mercilessly annihilates the most helpless of all victims to date, those yet unborn.

Madam Speaker, perhaps it is important for those of us in this Chamber to remind ourselves again of why we are really all here.

Thomas Jefferson said, "The care of human life and its happiness and not its destruction is the chief and only object of good government."

The phrase in the 14th amendment capsulizes our entire Constitution. It says: "No state shall deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law." Mr. Speaker, protecting the lives of our innocent citizens and their constitutional rights is why we are all here. It is our sworn oath.

The bedrock foundation of this Republic is that clarion Declaration of the self-evident truth that all human beings are created equal and endowed by their creator with the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Every conflict and battle our Nation has ever faced can be traced to our commitment to this core self-evident truth. It has made us the beacon of hope for the entire world. It is who we are.

And yet Madam Speaker, another day has passed, and we in this body have failed again to honor that foundational commitment. We failed our sworn oath and our God-given responsibility as we broke faith with nearly 4,000 more innocent American babies who died today without the protection that we should have given them.

Madam Speaker, let me conclude, in the hope that perhaps someone new who heard this sunset memorial tonight will finally embrace the truth that abortion really does kill little babies, that it hurts mothers in ways that we can never express, and that 12,867 days spent killing nearly 50 million unborn children in America is enough; and that the America that rejected human slavery and marched into Europe to arrest the Nazi Holocaust, is still courageous and compassionate enough to find a better way for mothers and their babies than abortion on demand.

So tonight, Madam Speaker, may we each remind ourselves that our own days in this sunshine of life are also numbered and that all too soon each of us will walk from these Chambers for the very last time.

And if it should be that this Congress is allowed to convene on yet another day to come, may that be the day when we finally hear the cries of the innocent unborn. May that be the day we find the humanity, the courage, and the will to embrace together our human and our constitutional duty to protect the least of these, our tiny American brothers and sisters, from this murderous scourge upon our Nation called abortion on demand.

It is April 15, 2008—12,867 days since Roe v. Wade first stained the foundation of this nation with the blood of its own children—this, in the land of free and the home of the brave.

THE U.S.-COLOMBIA TRADE PROMOTION AGREEMENT

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

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I rise to express concern about an action taken by this House this past week, and let me begin by asking this House who is America's best friend in Latin America?

Well, the answer is pretty loud and clear, and that is America's best friend in Latin America is the democratic Republic of Colombia, a nation of 42 million people, the second largest Spanish-speaking nation in the world, a nation which is recognized throughout Latin America and, frankly, throughout the world as United States' most reliable partner in counterterrorism, United States' most reliable partner in counternarcotics. It's the Republic of Colombia.

Well, this passed week the House of Representatives, the Democratic majority, which controls it, voted to turn its back, this Congress's back, on our most reliable partner in Latin America, sending a terrible signal to all of Latin America that if you are a good friend of the United States, you're not very important and you're not a very big priority, and when we have an agreement, we'll ignore it.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have a trade promotion agreement with Colombia and the United States. It's a good agreement. Why is it a good agreement? Because it's a win-win-win for Illinois workers, Illinois farmers, Illinois manufacturers. The majority of this House, an overwhelming bipartisan majority of this House, voted earlier this past year to pass trade preferences for the Andean region, for countries like Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru. And what the trade preferences do is allow all the products that come in from Colombia that enter the United States duty free, no taxes, no tariffs. So agricultural products and manufactured goods made in Colombia and produced in Colombia enter the United States duty free. However, without the trade promotion agreement, products made in Illinois by Illinois workers or farm goods like corn and soybeans produced by Illinois farmers and, of course, manufacturers and workers all suffer taxes or tariffs on U.S.- and Illinois-made goods exported to Colombia.

We have often heard from constituents that say trade's important in Illinois and it just doesn't seem right when one country's products come into the United States duty free but we don't get reciprocity. And the U.S.-Colombia Trade Agreement gives us that reciprocity. In fact, farm organizations will tell you that the U.S.-Colombia Trade Agreement is the best ever negotiated to give U.S. farmers and growers and producers access to a foreign market. And when it comes to manufactured goods, 85 percent of the manufactured goods exported to Colombia would be duty free immediately.

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In my district, I have 8,000 constituents, union members, who work for a company which makes the yellow bulldozers and yellow construction equipment. Right now, those bulldozers made in America suffer a 15 percent tariff, which means the cost of that product is 15 percent more, making Illinois-manufactured construction equipment, like bulldozers and mining trucks, 15 percent more expensive but also less competitive with Asian competition.

We need this trade promotion agreement. And we need to have that brought to the floor for an up-or-down vote. Because I believe if it is brought to the floor for an up-or-down vote, the majority of this House would agree that we need to continue to expand our markets overseas for Illinois-manufactured goods and Illinois farm products as well as American farm products and American manufactured goods. It is a good agreement.

Now, there are those who say, ''Colombia, yeah, they are our partner, and, of course, they are the oldest democracy in Latin America. But there has been violence in that country.'' Historically they are right. President Uribe, when he was elected, pledged to defeat the FARC, the left-wing narcotrafficking terrorist group which has troubled the nation of Colombia over the last 40 years. And he has made tremendous progress.

In fact, President Uribe today enjoys 80 percent approval. Eight out of 10 Colombians approve of the leadership of President Uribe. And if you look at this Congress, this House of Representatives, this Congress has an 18 percent approval rating. So clearly, the Colombians think more of their president than the American people do this Congress. And at the same time that he has made progress defeating the left-wing narcotrafficking FARC, 73 percent of the Colombian people believe he has made Colombia more secure and safer while respecting human rights. In fact, today the murder rate in Colombia is lower than in Washington, D.C. It is lower than in Baltimore. In fact, it is safer in Colombia than it is in our Nation's Capital.

The U.S.-Colombia trade promotion agreement is a good agreement for American workers, American farmers and American manufacturers. Let's bring it to a vote.

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 North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA VOTING RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia?

There was no objection.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, this is a special day for all Americans, none more so than the people I represent, the residents of the District of Columbia. And so I have come this evening to offer some remarks, remarks that I think are particularly justified today when the residents of the District of Columbia, like all other American citizens, are paying their Federal income taxes. The difference is they are doing so without any voting representation on the floor of the House or the Senate.

First, I begin with some gratitude to my colleagues, the so-called Blue Dogs, for whom this hour had been claimed, but who gave it to me this evening because of the subject matter of this special order. I very much appreciate their support. For those of you who don't know who the Blue Dogs are, they are the more conservative Members of the House. They supported the D.C. Voting Rights bill that indeed passed the House, one of the first.

We hadn't been here 6 months, I don't think we had been here more than 4 months before this bill to give the District of Columbia citizens, the citizens of the Nation's Capital, voting rights only in this chamber, the people's House. It was indeed passed by the House of Representatives, mind you, the only House that is affected. In a Nation known more for its incrementalism than for rapid change to effect justice, we have accepted the notion that we must begin with the House, the people's House. After more than 200 years of meeting every obligation that has been met by every other citizen, we think it is not too much to ask that the residents of the Nation's Capital have the vote at least in the people's House. We are asking for no more than that.

Our thanks go especially to the Speaker of the House, NANCY PELOSI, who made it a priority to pass this bill and put her full energy behind it. She was willing to bring it to the floor. She made it clear that she, as the leader, the first woman to lead the House of Representatives, wanted to put her signature on this bill and asked four Members on both sides of the aisle to support it. Majority Leader STENY HOYER, a longtime supporter of this bill, as well, put all of his energy in it. Particularly when it was stopped first by a parliamentary maneuver, he worked tirelessly until he got this bill passed. He has been with us every step of the way. These two leaders have stood for full representation and equality for Americans in so many ways. No one should be surprised at the leadership they have given us on this bill.

I have to very especially mention Congressman TOM DAVIS who doggedly started us on what has been a truly bipartisan path. When I was in the minority and he indeed became the chief sponsor of the House-only bill, I discovered indeed a partner for us. The State of Utah barely missed getting a House vote in the last census. And they missed it for reasons I have to put into the RECORD. Utah sends many of its citizens who willingly agree to go away and become missionaries when they are young for a few years of their lives. They, of course, are missionaries for their Mormon church. And they are coming home to their families. Like others who come home, the State of Utah wanted them counted since they remained residents. They took the matter all the way to the Supreme Court. And because of the way the Census Bureau and the administrative process had ruled, the Court allowed the census to stand. And all of these missionaries exercising their freedom of religion, their freedom of speech, while being residents of their State, lost their State a seat.

To say the least, residents of Utah were not joyful about this. And they have joined us in what would seem to be the example par excellence of win-win in our country. A heavily Republican district and State, some would say the most Republican State in the union, a big city in the United States tends to be Democratic, this one is, joined together. It's a wash politically. Nobody gains and nobody loses. Why hasn't this bill passed?

Well, it has almost passed. And we will get into that in a minute. Just a few more indications of gratitude. HENRY WAXMAN, chairman of the committee that has direct jurisdiction, along with another chairman, JOHN CONYERS, were extraordinary leaders in this process. I mentioned Utah. I thank Governor Jon Huntsman for coming here to testify about the importance of the bill and the entire Utah delegation, Representatives BISHOP, CANNON, and MATHESON.

I particularly thank the 219 Democrats and 22 Republicans who won a vote of 241–177 and passed this bill last year. And may I thank the 8 Republicans and 49 Democrats who have brought us so close that it is hard to believe that we are not already there.

Only in the other body is 57 percent not a majority. The Senate has required 60 votes. We are three votes short. We are so close. I have every reason to believe that we will, in fact, this year pass the D.C. Voting Rights Act, creating a historic 110th Congress that every Member, I think, will be proud of.

I have to thank the local and national civil rights organizations that have been a formidable force spreading around the country the message. There are too many of them to name on the local level. The great leader has been DCVote Ilir Zerka and his army of residents in the region and in the city carrying a message for us, the leadership conference on civil rights, the Nation's great leader on civil rights matters has been a major figure in this bill. We could not possibly have gotten this far without them, along with every major civil rights organization in the country.

I particularly thank my own mayor, Adrian Fenty, and city council chair, Vincent Gray, who joined every mayor and city council of the District of Columbia in supporting our residents and

this bill. And I especially thank the residents of the District of Columbia, living and dead, who have fought for equal citizenship over the ages.

I have not yet mentioned my Senate partners, but they have been equally important to this bill. You don't pass a bill just in the House. Senator JOE LIEBERMAN was the lead Democratic sponsor. Consistent with the way he has helped me on voting rights in every iteration, and there have been several different kinds of bills, he became the lead sponsor here.

A very special word of thanks goes to Senator ORRIN HATCH of Utah. Some of you may think that ORRIN HATCH comes to this because, after all, he represents Utah. And he does. But had you had the pleasure of hearing Senator HATCH in the committee hearings, you would understand that he is moved by a deep principle about voting rights. His principal reason for voting rights dominated much of what he had to say about people who pay taxes and go to war without representation. I thank Senator ORRIN HATCH who was a good friend of mine before this bill. He has endeared himself to me in ways I will never be able to pay by the way in which he has stood fast with us, yes, because his State is involved. Of course, that is his primary obligation. But making it clear in the way he discusses the bill that there is a deeply rooted principle in his support.

The many supporters of this bill will forgive me for not making this a calling of the roll. But I come to the floor because on tax day in the District of Columbia, people have gone all over the city to assure residents of the very substantial progress we are making. DCVote and its coalition have been all across the United States targeting seven States and have done a remarkable job. I have a little bit to say about that.

What I want to do this evening during this special order hour is to essentially discuss this issue from three perspectives. Whose rights are we talking about? What barriers are there? And whose responsibility is it to remedy this matter?

□ 1945

I start with whose rights they are, because the greatest frustration I have had as a Member of the House is that most Americans do not know that 600,000 people live in the Nation's Capital and don't have the same rights as they have. A lot of them have been in the armed services with people in Washington, DC. They come here, 20 million of them, every year. There is no indication, until they begin to see license plates that say ''no taxation without representation'' on those official license plates, which was put there precisely to relieve our frustration that most people simply do not know.

I have a word to say about that, because increasingly people do know and support us. According to the Washington Post poll, 61 percent say they support the bill I have come to the floor to speak to tonight. That is close to an American consensus today.

Why would people be for the vote? They are Americans, that is why. Do you really think that in this country today, at war, a country where love of country is manifest in everything we do, they will do anything but say that people who have fought, yes, and died in every war since the country was created, including the war that created the country itself, the American Revolutionary War, that people who pay taxes the same way they do, are just like them, should not have representation? It is a thoroughly American idea. So don't be surprised that 61 percent today support this bill, in the House only, because that is all that is before the other body, the Senate, as we speak.

Who are these people? We thought we would let you see exactly who we are talking about. This man's name is Larry Chapman, a resident of the District of Columbia. I am proud to represent him. I don't know him. I checked him out. He lives here. I represent him. By the way, note his uniform. He is a firefighter. He is a man who risks his life for whoever is here, a Member of Congress, a visitor, a resident, a regional resident.

I don't represent this man, Jayme Heflin. He lives in Maryland. He does the same thing for Maryland that Mr. Chapman does for the District of Columbia.

I don't think you will find an American citizen, if you went out with a microphone, who thinks that Larry Chapman, who lives in the District of Columbia, should not have representation in the Congress, someone who can vote on war or peace or raising or lowering taxes, and that Jayme Heflin should.

That is who I represent. The difference between these two men cannot be seen in their faces, cannot be seen in their jobs. The only difference is where they live. They live within a few miles of one another, because Maryland is part of our region, a region without borders, as a matter of fact. If you go to Maryland, you won't even know you are there.

Both of them pay Federal taxes. Both of them don't like it, and both of them do it. There should be no difference between Larry Chapman and Jayme Heflin. There is no difference. The only difference is a difference that only this body can correct.

Why do I say only this body? Because the Congress has exclusive jurisdiction over the Nation's Capital. The Framers were intent upon one thing and one thing only when they set up the Nation's Capital. It certainly wasn't to deprive us of the vote. It was to make sure we weren't in a State, because you couldn't tell when the State's jurisdiction would conflict with the Federal jurisdiction. That is the only principle that was at stake. And, indeed, all the evidence is that the last thing they would have done would have been to give a vote to Mr. Heflin and not to Mr. Chapman.

The reason we know it is that four signers of the Constitution which gave the Congress this jurisdiction were from Maryland and Virginia, which contributed the land for the city where we are today, two from Maryland and two from Virginia. They contributed land on which a sizable number of their own constituents were living.

They made sure that in the 10-year transition period during which the land was being shifted, that their residents would still have the vote. But once, of course, it left the jurisdiction of Maryland and Virginia, it was up to the Congress. And the first Congress, in so many words, promised that when the land came after 10 years under the complete jurisdiction, that these residents would indeed continue to have the vote.

We know it for sure, because not only were these residents of Maryland and Virginia living in the territory, but among them were men who had fought in the Revolutionary War. The one slogan that every school child knows from that war is we are fighting against no taxation without representation. It is inconceivable and it is impossible and it simply did not happen that the Framers of the Constitution from Maryland and Virginia gave the land and said, take away the vote from the people we represent once you have jurisdiction.

Maryland couldn't give us the vote once we became the Nation's Capital. Virginia couldn't do it. Only the Congress can do it. The Constitution itself makes clear that the grant of exclusive jurisdiction to the Congress means that the Congress is empowered to offer this correction that has been needed for much too long.

This is another resident of the District of Columbia whose work all of us would admire, because she is a teacher. Her name is Chandra Jackson-Sounders, teaching and counseling in the D.C. public schools for 17 years. A native Washingtonian, like me. She pays Federal income tax, like all the rest of us who live here. We are not immune from that. There she is, teaching children.

Who would deny this young woman, who has committed herself to one of the hardest jobs in the country, who pays hefty federal income taxes, the same rights that they have? No American. No one imbued with the spirit of our Constitution or of the native ethic, the ethic that gave birth to the country, no taxation without representation.

The more people know about D.C. voting rights, the more support we have. I ought to thank Stephen Colbert right here on the House floor, because at least four times he has invited me on the Colbert Report to make fun of the District of Columbia for not having voting rights, until under cross-examination one day on his program I found

out that he was born in the District of Columbia himself. He has managed to get himself in the portrait gallery, to be sure, either in the men's room or in a corner close to it.

But I must here pay tribute to Stephen, whom I call Colbert, because, more than all we have been able to do, he has gotten the message out that 600,000 people live in the Nation's Capital, pay taxes, and do not have the same representation as they do. He makes fun of me. That is why I go on and allow it. ''You must not be in the United States.'' He said, ''Who could you possibly represent?'' ''Why don't you move into the country?'' That is what I have to take.

But taking what Colbert has thrown at me has gotten people to understand, yes, through his jostling and joking, what is a very serious matter; that in a country that is trying to bring democracy all over the world, including particularly Iraq, where we have given so many American lives, over 4,000, there are people right here who don't have the same rights that people from the District of Columbia are, as I speak, fighting to get for the residents of Iraq, Afghanistan and so many other countries.

Support for D.C. voting rights keeps going up. I noted earlier that 61 percent say that they are specifically for that bill, because that is the question we asked. You ask them the question, this is the kind of response you get. ''Do you support equal voting rights for the people of the District of Columbia?'' In 1999, you got 72 percent of Americans saying yes. In January 2005, you got 82 percent.

Thank you, Colbert, D.C. Vote, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, and all of those who have helped us get the message out. Eighty-two percent of the American people. Not a surprising figure, not in the United States of America.

What you may believe is that, well, they have got a lot of liberals up here, and what do you expect? A very scientific poll was done behind these figures. With 72 percent and 82 percent, you know there must be some bipartisanship here.

But are they all piled up in one part of the country? Are they all really young people or older people? Who are these people who support D.C. voting rights? ''Norton says who the people are who want voting rights. Well, who are these people who registered these large numbers, 61 percent for this bill, up to 82 percent if you ask the bald question about equal voting rights in Congress for the people who live in the Nation's Capital?''

This is perhaps the most important data, and it is fascinating for the Senate in particular to bear in mind, because it breaks down who we are talking about in the American public.

Notice how far out the blue bar goes. That is because there is no support less than 77 percent among all adults, and 82 percent is that figure I just showed you. Women, 86 percent; men, 78 percent.

Let's look at the age groups. Is this all a young persons' thing, or what? Young people, well, they were raised to believe that democracy is for everybody. They are off the charts, 87 percent. But look at 35–54. They are at 78 percent. And look at 55 years old and above, many of whom were raised at a time when many Americans did not have equal rights and perhaps imbued that culture. 55-years-old and above, 82 percent of the American people support equal voting rights for the people who live in the Nation's Capital.

Sometimes we find that some parts of the country favor certain kinds of action more than others. You are quite aware that some parts of the country are more military, some parts of the country are considered more liberal, so it was important to know who are we talking about. And this I found perhaps the most fascinating part of the revelation.

□ 2000

Northeast, 84 percent of the people; midwest, 80 percent of the people, these are for equal voting rights; south, ladies and gentlemen, put aside your stereotypes, 84 percent of southerners support equal voting rights in Congress for the people of the District of Columbia; west, 80 percent.

So the south and the northeast give us the largest majority or super majorities, 84 percent each with midwest and west right behind them at 80 percent. In this metropolitan area, where they know us best, have seen us at our best and our worst, the metropolitan area includes Virginia, Maryland, and the figure is 82 percent.

In the nonmetropolitan area, beyond the counties immediately surrounding the District where people tend to be more conservative, hardly any difference, 83 percent there support it; 82 percent in the immediate area.

I am still looking, friends, for some break in the public of the kind we regularly see on things like guns or the military or the war. It will not be found in this graph, not on this Tax Day, not tomorrow, not in the America of the 21st century, maybe in the America of the 19th century, early 20th century.

But now for decades, I believe it would be difficult to find Americans who would stand up and salute the proposition that people who are paying Federal income taxes, that people who are fighting and dying in war are being denied a say-so on those issues in this House.

You break it down even further to see who you are talking about, how about those who have a family member in the military, 82 percent support D.C. voting rights. How about a favorite that is often cited as difference among Americans, regularly attend services, we note at a moment when the Pope has just arrived in town, but we see that that's 82 percent of those who regularly attend religious services.

We, of course, have family or friends living in D.C., I wouldn't even cite those. You would expect those people to perhaps be more aware and more inclined to be with us.

Registered voters, 81 percent of registered voters support equal voting rights for the residents of the city, and here is one that cannot be put aside, because this is the great divider, Republicans and Democrats, 77 percent of Republicans, 82 percent of independents, 87 percent of Democrats, no statistical difference even by party on so basic a matter as whether or not the people I represent, and I should be required to do whatever this chamber says, along with the others, and not have any say, utterly and thoroughly un-American even to state such a proposition.

Well, the Republicans who supported us in the House on this bill, led by TOM DAVIS, including a number of others who voted for us, didn't have this figure before them. They had a gut instinct of what it means to be an American.

There are any number of them who could be quoted. Among the most eloquent was Representative MIKE PENCE, who actually wrote out what was in his head and published it and posted it, ''Why I Voted for D.C. Representation in the House,'' and the senior Senator LUGAR, one of the eight Republicans who voted for this bill. But it was MIKE who started it here, because the bill started here.

Let me quote from Representative MIKE PENCE, a leader of most conservative matters here, understood to be a leader in the House and particularly a much-respected conservative leader. He is a wonderfully affable man, but he would be the first to note that he and I have considerable differences on issues that come before this House.

But at the time this bill was pending, Representative PENCE wrote, ''The fact that more than half a million of Americans living in the District of Columbia are denied a single voting representative in Congress is clearly a historic wrong and justice demands that it be addressed.''

He goes on to say, ''The old book tells us what is required,'' and he quotes the Bible, ''do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with Your God.''

Then he says, ''I believe that justice demands we right this historic wrong. The American people should have representation in the people's House. I believe that kindness demands that, like Republicans from Abraham Lincoln to Jack Kemp, we do the right thing for all Americans regardless of race or political creed. And I believe humility demands that we do so in a manner consistent with our Constitution, laws and traditions. The D.C. voting bill gets this test, and I am honored to have the opportunity to continue to play some small role in leading our constitutional republic ever closer to a more perfect

union.'' Those are the words of Representative MIKE PENCE. I believe they are words that history will remember.

The support continues to grow, the support reflected here, just to name a few of the States that have been visited, not by me but by residents in the city of the region. I want to thank the citizens of Oregon; of New Hampshire, where a whole resolution has been introduced to support the bill; of Montana, where the editorial boards of the major newspapers, in Montana, the Butte Chamber of Commerce, have accorded the residents of the District of Columbia every courtesy in meeting with them and the papers have editorialized for voting rights. I named those States because DC Vote—Leadership Conference on Civil Rights have targeted those States among others.

I particularly note a resolution in New Hampshire, pending in both the New Hampshire House and Senate that is quite extraordinary. It expresses regret that New Hampshire's two U.S. Senators voted against the D.C. voting rights bill and calling upon them to correct that in the next vote.

As one of the sponsors, Representative Cindy Rosenwald said, and I am quoting her, ''We are, here in our small corner of the country, democracy's most passionate supporters. Therefore, I believe we should expect the same level of commitment and passion for representative democracy from those elected officials who represent New Hampshire in Congress.''

Thank you, New Hampshire. I thank many others whose efforts today, up to 10 States, I cannot specifically acknowledge in the time allotted to me.

I bring you deep gratitude from the residents of the District of Columbia who have only my voice, no voice in the Senate, only my voice, and whose voice, of their own, you will see in the Internet but who do not have ways to reach you, which is why I am here this evening.

I must thank, in particular, the legal scholars who have come forward. In searching for legal comment, we found many willing to come forward, and from constitutional scholars of various views, there were any number who were particularly helpful in expressing and answering the hard questions that have been raised, hard questions, not because most Americans would consider them such, but if you happen to be a constitutional lawyer, and I, myself, practice constitutional law, these questions become closer questions than if you are an American who does not have to take the Constitution into effect in forming your own view.

I particularly thank Kenneth Starr, former judge Kenneth Starr; former judge, Patricia Wald. Kenneth Starr is a Republican. Patricia Wald is a Democrat. Both have testified for the bill.

I thank Professor Viet Dinh who has come forward in a quite extraordinary way. He is the point man on constitutional issues, or was, when Mr. Ashcroft was the attorney general. He has been, perhaps, the foremost conservative scholar to come forward for the bill.

I particularly thank Walter Smith, a former corporation counsel, or attorney general, as it is now called. Richard Bress of Latham & Watkins, Walter Smith of D.C. Appleseed, these are different scholars who are from different parts of the constitutional spectrum who have come forward to be helpful.

But you I think that I ought to cite conservative scholars. Frankly, those are the scholars on whom we have chiefly relied because we believe that if we relied chiefly on Judge Wald or Walter Smith or many others who have helped us, then we would have greater difficulty in showing that this bill is eminently constitutional.

Remember, it's the constitutional issue to which the opponents have been pushed back. They can't make an argument that sounds in American terms that the average person could understand. So they go into the Constitution.

That, my friend, is defamation to the framers, because what they are saying, hey, the framers did it to you. We don't have anything to do with it.

Of course, if the Framers did it to us, then we must pass the bill and let the only part of our Government that is empowered to tell us that do so, and that's the Supreme Court.

But, no, they sit back and fancy themselves constitutional scholars for the purpose of saying that 600,000 residents who pay taxes like they do, have served in the country's wars, should not have the same rights they do. This in the 21st century, no less.

Professor Viet Dinh, who served as a scholar, who served in the Bush Justice Department under former Attorney General Ashcroft, and, therefore, advised the whole Justice Department, he was the man who advised them on constitutional matters, testified there are no indications, textual or otherwise, to suggest that the Framers intended that congressional authority, under the District clause, that's the District of Columbia clause, extraordinary and plenary power in all other respects, would not extend to grant District residents representation in Congress.

You see, we are left with either the Framers intended to have the people who lived in the Nation's Capital they just set up without the same rights as everybody else, or they intended somebody to be able to give it. Now, if they intended us not to have the same rights then we, of course, have to amend the Constitution.

But I would suggest that unless you can cite evidence of somebody getting up and saying that, that you have got to find a better reason.

□ 2015

To hide behind the Framers is an act close to cowardice. If you think we shouldn't have it, you should say why. Take the responsibility, but do not say that the Framers of the Constitution from Maryland and the Framers of the Constitution from Virginia meant to disenfranchise their own residents. Do not say that the Framers of the Constitution meant once you crossed the District line, you would lose the rights you had on the other side in every other State of the Union.

The opponents rest on one word, and that is the Constitution says that the vote in the House should go to Members of States. They say ah-hah, the District is not a State; ergo, no vote for you people.

Well, the fact is that since the passage of the Constitution, this government, this Congress, has defined the District as a State in over 500 provisions of United States Code. The only way in which we are not defined as a State respects our voting rights, and that brings me to the floor today.

Cite chapter and verse to prove that, and I shall. And what I am citing is not only the language of the Constitution, I am citing the Supreme Court of the United States who interprets the Constitution. The Supreme Court has approved action by this Congress equating the District of Columbia with the States for constitutional purposes. Here is the language from the Constitution that the Supreme Court over the years says includes the District of Columbia although the word ''State'' is used.

''Commerce among the States'' taken to court, the District is not a State and shouldn't be included in the commerce clause. Answer from the Supreme Court: For these purposes, the Nation's Capital is included when the word ''State'' is used.

Suits between citizens of different States, means something special for the District of Columbia, it was alleged, not a State, took it to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court says citizens of different States of course includes the Nation's Capital. They said this is not what we meant, we only meant that the District of Columbia would not be a part of a State. We set up something that for lack of a better word we called a District of Columbia.

What, is the Commonwealth of Virginia not a State? Are they not a State because they are called a Commonwealth? Is the Commonwealth of Massachusetts not a State? How in the world can one hinge a right so precious in this democracy on the use of the word ''State'' when it has been interpreted by the Supreme Court of the United States in decade after decade to include the District of Columbia?

I must cite on this April 15, Tax Day, my very favorite. If indeed States means or does not mean the District of Columbia, the people I represent want every dime we have paid to the Federal Treasury back because the 16th amendment says there shall be direct taxes by the Federal Government. Direct taxes only on citizens of the States; if we are not a State, you owe us a lot of money. It is almost silly to even try to argue from so slim a use of language.

When one reads the Federalist Papers, if one reads American history, if one reads decade after decade where the matter of State has been challenged when someone was trying to pay less taxes or trying to get out of the commerce clause, and in a dozen other ways I could name and the Supreme Court has simply pushed them back, I don't think you would be quick to continue to make that argument.

I want to especially thank the Blue Dogs again for their generosity in giving me their hour. I want to thank all of those on both sides of the aisle who have rallied after more than two centuries finally to this idea.

I want to leave you with a picture in your mind, this young woman, Chandrai Jackson-Saunders who pays her Federal income taxes and teaches our children and doesn't have the vote.

I am moved to tears and to laughter by a series of cartoons making fun of our country for not giving the residents of the District of Columbia a vote. Here is one that happened to be in the Washington Post. It says ''Import Democracy'' on a raised placard, then in small print at the bottom it says ''No Invasion Necessary.'' No, all that is necessary is that we face up to 200 years of obligation.

For me, I confess that this matter is deeply personal. I am the third generation of Holmes family to live here. My great grandfather, Richard Holmes, was really born in Virginia as a slave. One day he left the plantation. He just walked away; nobody must have been looking. In my family no one says that he gathered together in some kind of heroic way—he left the plantation—and got as far as here and started our family.

My father was born and raised in District public schools, just like my grandfather. My grandfather entered the D.C. Fire Department in 1902. We have long been without our rights here. So for me it is first and foremost a matter for the people I represent.

But in the interest of revealing all that is concerned, hiding nothing, it is hard for me to say that there is not a personal matter associated here, particularly when I see it is in the Senate that the bill is now awaiting 60 votes, although it already has 57 percent of the Senate, because what I remember as a child growing up without a mayor, without a city council, there was no representation whatsoever here. The place was ruled by the Congress. The President appointed three commissioners; no democracy of any kind. And it was a segregated city. Oh, how segregated. The schools were not integrated until Brown v. Board of Education.

When I was at Dunbar High School and had mostly finished high school, the District was one of six Brown v. Board of Education cases. So the notion of filibuster rings far too personal to me. I remember the filibusters of the Senate, my friends, as a child. In the Senate, the N-word was routinely used. This place was entirely controlled by southern Democrats who controlled every subcommittee and every committee because racial rhetoric and racial prejudice were used to get them back to the House each and every year.

It gives me great grief and sadness to see that Republicans have not been in the forefront of this bill except for those who have stepped forward and unabashedly embraced the bill and Republican traditions because it was after the Civil War that the District first got a delegate and home rule. It was the Republican Congress that first gave us democracy. It was the so-called radical Republicans who in the Nation's Capital exercised their right and their obligation to see that democracy came here. It was the end of Reconstruction and the Tildon-Hayes compromise with the withdrawal of Federal troops from the South and the resurrection of Democrats that overturned home rule for the District of Columbia and sent a delegate who had only a term or two back to where he came from. It was Republicans who were in the leadership then. In the name of the great leaders who gave birth to their party, you would expect them to be in the leadership now.

The interesting thing is that this is a now-majority African American city, but that is a recent vintage. The segregated city I grew up in was a majority white city. It didn't become majority black until close to 1960. Black people in the minority took a lot of white people down with them because the fact is that race played a central role in the denial of voting rights and home rule to the District of Columbia. Today it is partisanship. But it was unabashedly race. Even though blacks were a minority, there were enough blacks here so that southern Democrats wanted to be sure there was no home rule and no representation, even a delegate. They were not bashful about it.

To quote one Alabama Democratic Senator, ''The Negroes flocked in, and there was only one way out, and that was to deny suffrage and power to every human being in the District,'' that means regardless of race, creed or color.

□ 2030

I don't want to hide from whence cometh what gave birth to the issue here.

Senator Ed Brooke, a native Washingtonian, became the first popularly elected Black Senator, born and raised in the District of Columbia, went to the same high school I did. But he had to go outside the District of Columbia to get any vote at all, and certainly a vote in the Senate.

So there's a very sorry racial history behind it all. The last thing Republicans want to do is to attach their partisanship to that history because they're not a part of that history. That history was led by Democrats, and mostly southern Democrats.

Now, the Democratic Party, to its great credit, has taken that off of itself, scrubbed that terrible stain, that racial stain off. To their great credit, the Republicans joined us when we reauthorized the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

There is no difference, no difference whatsoever here. There's no difference when you are talking about the District of Columbia which, in the Vietnam war, lost more men than did 10 States; in World War II, lost more men than did four States; World War I, lost more men than did three States, and the Korean War, lost more than did eight States. We have fought, died, bled for the country we love.

The notion that there would be a Member who'd have to come to the floor to ask for such a right in 2008 should be unthinkable.

I particularly, tonight, dedicate these remarks not only to those who paid their taxes today, but to those who've given their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan and most recently, Darryl Dent, the D.C. National Guard, Specialist Darryl Dent, Army Reservist Lieutenant Colonel Paul Kimbrough, Marine Lance Corporal Gregory MacDonald, Marine Lieutenant Colonel Kevin M. Shea, among thousands over the years that we have sent to war, proudly so.

I dedicate these remarks to Wesley Brown, the first black graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy is still living. There have been at least 20 Blacks who had gone to the Naval Academy. They had to be what we called super Black. They were driven out by the most horrendous racial harassment. The story of sacrifices made—what's my time?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. TSONGAS). Ten seconds.

Ms. NORTON. The story of sacrifices made is not a story I should need to tell. All I should need to say is what I leave you with this evening, with my gratitude for your support and friendship.

I am an American. I represent 600,000 Americans. Please do all you can to see to it that we are treated as you would want to be treated, like other Americans.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, today is Tax Day and it is the day that D.C. residents pay their Federal income taxes. Yet D.C. residents remain without a vote. D.C. residents enjoy many of the benefits of U.S. citizenship but they lack the vote.

The rest of the Nation votes as District residents pay their taxes and serve in wars abroad in Iraq and Afghanistan. Andy Shallal, a D.C. citizen said it best, "People like me of Iraqi ancestry and even my son, who was born in the United States, are entitled to vote in the Iraqi's election due in large part to the service of the citizens of the District of Columbia and other Americans who have fought and died in Iraq." In spite of D.C. residents' service in foreign wars and even in the American Revolution, and every war since where U.S. was involved, D.C. residents cannot vote in their own country.

Tax Day is a bitter reminder to the Nation that the founders of our country who staged their revolution for representation would then deny representation to residents of their very

own capital city. Professor Viet Dinh, President Bush's former assistant attorney general for constitutional matters, has wiped away the major argument that because the District is not a state, its American citizens cannot vote in the House by detailing the many ways in which "since 1805 the Supreme Court has recognized that Congress has the authority to treat the District as a state and Congress has repeatedly exercised this authority." My favorite is the 16th amendment which requires only that citizens of states pay Federal income taxes. Why then have District residents continuously been taxed without representation?

There is a terrible racial stain that has been at the core of the denial of the rights of D.C. citizens. Congress required the same racial segregation in schools and public accommodations in D.C. and other parts of the South until the 1954 Brown decision. As one southern Senator put it, "The Negroes . . . flocked in . . . and there was only one way out . . . and that was to deny . . . suffrage entirely to every human being in the District."

Former Republican Senator Edward Brooke, a native Washingtonian and the Nation's first popularly elected black Senator wrote, "The experience of living in a segregated city and of serving in our segregated armed forces perhaps explains why my party's work on the Voting Rights Act reauthorization last year and on the pending D.C. House Voting Rights Act has been so important to me personally. The irony of course, is that I had to leave my hometown to get representation in Congress and to become a Member."

Today, on Tax Day, we need to move to abolish the irony and the tragedy of the many who have come to the Nation's capital seeking freedom for well over 200 years. It is on this day, that D.C. residents pay their Federal income taxes without a vote.

Presently, only three votes are needed for Senate passage of the D.C. Voting Rights Bill. I am a supporter of the bill in the House. I appeal to your conscience and ask for your vote so that finally there will be a vote for your fellow Americans here, who have paid for this precious right many times over in blood and tears. Support the voting rights bill today.

COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

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

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, thank you very much. It is true that today is the day that the American people have their obligation to pay taxes for the American government to continue to function. And obviously, there are many good things that the Federal Government does, and there are many not so good things that the Federal Government does.

But one of the things that I think is very important for us to focus attention on, especially as we deal with a challenging economy, is the need for us to ensure that, as stewards of those taxpayer dollars, those dollars fund this institution, the greatest deliberative body known to man, and we need to ensure that we put into place policies that will encourage strong, dynamic, economic growth and to make sure that there are opportunities for every single American. And Madam Speaker, we're going to talk about that this evening.

I have to say that my original intentions for this special order were a little different than they are going to end up being tonight. I'd planned to join tonight with several of my colleagues who have spent time in Colombia. I'd planned to talk about what I've personally witnessed there, and I'd invited many of my colleagues to do the same.

I'd hoped to make this a bipartisan endeavor, and I extended invitations to several of my Democratic colleagues to participate this evening. And I will say that I still do hope that we might have a chance to do that. And one of our Democratic colleagues did come up to me and say that he had hoped to participate.

I thought that this was very important, because I knew that when the President sent, a week ago today, when he sent the implementing legislation for the U.S/Colombia Free Trade Agreement, a 60-day clock, under trade promotion authority, would begin. We would have 60 legislative days to hold a vote on the agreement. This meant that the House of Representatives would face a vote on the U.S./Colombia Free Trade Agreement some time in probably late July. That would leave us 3 months for debate, discussion, education, and enlightenment about what this agreement would mean to the American people.

However, despite the ample time granted under trade promotion authority, I knew that many of my colleagues, particularly my Democratic colleagues, remained deeply ambivalent on the trade agreement itself. We certainly saw that as we had this debate last week.

For this reason, it was my hope that this special order this evening would be opening the 3-month discussion in a bipartisan way, and what I wanted to do was I wanted to shift the focus away from the free trade agreement, and I'd hoped that a group of Republicans and Democrats who've gone to Colombia could come together here on the House floor to simply share our experiences and describe what we've seen in Colombia, over the past year, or at least a half a year.

I knew that much of the free trade agreement debate would hinge on the current situation, as it exists in Colombia, what progress has been made, what steps has the Colombian government taken.

I wanted this debate to stay grounded in facts and a full understanding of the Colombia, of 2008, not a caricature of the Colombia past. I'd thought that bipartisan, firsthand testimony would further that goal of allowing the American people and our colleagues to understand the changes that have taken place in Colombia.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, the landscape here in the House was drastically altered last week when my California colleague, Speaker PELOSI, took the unprecedented step, never before had this been done, but it was a step of changing the Rules of the House in order to block a vote on the free trade agreement.

In one fell swoop, she ended 3 months, what would be the beginning, and tonight would have been part of that, of substantive, bipartisan deliberation before it even had the chance to begin. Apparently, she didn't like her odds in what would clearly have been a fair fight, so she changed the rules in the middle of the game.

The condemnation from around the country came swiftly. Now, I have control of the floor now for an hour, and I could easily fill the entire 1 hour simply by reading the scathing editorials that have come about over the past week reproaching the Democratic leadership for their petulant act. The New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Washington Post, hardly mouthpieces for Republicans or President Bush. And even Speaker PELOSI's hometown newspaper, the San Francisco Chronicle. All, Madam Speaker, have had the harshest of words for the dangerous and unprecedented action that was taken here last week.

Now, I'll read just a few of those highlights. I mentioned Speaker PELOSI's hometown newspaper, the San Francisco Chronicle, a paper that I actually enjoy reading myself, but again, far from being a Republican mouthpiece. They accuse Speaker PELOSI of "pandering" and "playing politics."

It points out that the decision to block a vote on the agreement is especially egregious, considering that she represents a region that heavily depends on exports for its economic competitiveness and job creation, particularly through its ports.

My hometown paper, the Los Angeles Times, stated it very plainly, and I quote. "Halting the vote wasn't about the U.S. economy and wasn't about Colombia. It was about politics." That's what the Los Angeles Times, again, hardly a Republican mouthpiece, had to say.

It points out that the FTA creates quite a bind for the Democratic leadership because what is good for their party is bad for the United States of America.

It highlights the current imbalance in our trade relationship. We have an open market, yet face barriers in Colombia.

I'll say that again. And Los Angeles Times pointed that out, Madam Speaker. We allow the rest of the world, including Colombia now, under the ATPA, the Andean Trade Preference Agreement, we allow them access to the U.S. consumer market. All this agreement that we had hoped to be debating now, but the clock has stopped on that. All this agreement would do was level that playing field and allow

U.S. workers to have a chance to send their products into Colombia.

The New York Times, in its editorial, Madam Speaker, emphasizes not just the economic consequences but the foreign policy implications as well. It declares that last week's actions ''reduce the United States' credibility and leverage in Colombia and beyond,'' adding that it ''serves human rights in Colombia no good'' whatsoever. The cause of human rights, about which many of our colleagues rarely talk, and which we're all concerned about, would do no good by not proceeding with consideration.

The New York Times is certainly, as I said, no knee-jerk supporter of the agreement. Actually, they, last year, in the New York Times, proposed postponing the consideration. And that was last year. And yet this year they are strong proponents of our moving ahead with this.

The Washington Post, Madam Speaker, was the quickest of all the major papers to condemn Speaker PELOSI's decision, equating the move to telling Colombia to ''drop dead.'' That's what the Washington Post had to say, and calling into question the Democrats credibility and judgment.

The message from around the Nation has been clear and unequivocal. The unprecedented rule change was a grave mistake that should be corrected immediately by proceeding with a vote. The damage described in those editorials is twofold, economic and international. Now, I would add an additional level to that that really hasn't been pointed to in a lot of these editorials, the institutional damage that has been done.

Now, first the economic damage. As I said just a moment ago, the Andean Trade Preferences Act, which Congress renewed just a few weeks ago, allows all Colombian goods, virtually all Colombian goods to enter the United States duty free. They have full access to our market, and we don't get the same treatment today. American goods face an average of 14 percent tariff on goods that we are sending into the Colombian market, with agricultural products facing particularly steep barriers.

These preferences, like all of our preference system, have enjoyed overwhelming bipartisan support in Congress. So Democrats and Republicans have come together to say that we should allow these Colombian goods to come into the United States, their products, whether it's coffee, cut flowers, bananas, it allows them to virtually tariff free come into United States. So Democrats and Republicans alike said that's good for our consumers.

And yet, this free trade agreement, which would end the imbalance and extend that same preferential treatment for American exports, is opposed by the Democratic leadership.

It's a bizarre quirk of American politics. The Democrats always support trade as charity. They'll gladly give away one-sided trade without a second thought. But as soon as we propose to make it reciprocal and create a direct benefit for our own workers as well, they cry foul. To add to the absurdity, they do it in the name of protecting American workers.

Now, we're in a time, as I said, today is Tax Day, April 15. We're dealing, unfortunately, with an economic slowdown, and there is a great deal of economic anxiety throughout the United States of America and in other parts of the world. You might think that we could finally put politics aside and make the rational, logical decision to give American workers equal treatment and to protect American exports by creating new markets for U.S. goods and services. But unfortunately, and bizarrely, that's apparently not the case. By blocking a vote on the Colombia Free Trade Agreement, the Democratic leadership has blocked a clear win for our exports and the workers who produce those exports.

□ 2045

The second form of damage that has been done is in the international arena. Again, we wander into the absurd. Time and again, I hear my Democratic colleagues decry what they call our diminished standing in the world. President Bush has, in fact, diminished our standing and in fact is a big part of the presidential campaign.

They accuse the administration of unilateralism and a disregard for our allies. They say that that has hurt our leadership and our credibility in the international community. And in the presidential campaign, they promise, Senators CLINTON and OBAMA, they promise to restore our prestige.

And yet the Democratic leadership raced to sabotage our relationship with our best and closest ally in South America with what could only be described as reckless abandon. Following a mere 1 hour of debate, they chose to treat our close democratic friend in our very own hemisphere, a slap in the face is the way this was described by the Vice President of Colombia, or as the Las Vegas Review Journal put it, a stab in the back. That's how the action that was taken here last week has been characterized.

Colombian democracy has grown steadily stronger under the courageous leadership of President Uribe with whom I spoke today. His popularity has soared above 70 percent and stayed there because he took his country from the brink of a failed State and put it back on the path of peaceful and prosperous stability. He's strengthened democratic institutions, not least of which is a Justice Department that has aggressively tackled the culture of impunity for murderers.

Under Uribe's presidency, crime has plummeted, largely because he has aggressively pursued the eco-terrorist guerillas and the equally murderous paramilitaries. The former have been pushed from their stronghold, and the latter have been systematically dismantled and their leadership imprisoned. The rank-and-file are beginning the long and difficult process of rehabilitation and reintegration into society with the help of government-funded social programs. The same has been offered to rank-and-file guerrillas who wish to surrender their arms.

Now, Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to witness the real-world implications of these demobilization efforts. When I was in Colombia last August, several of my colleagues and I had the chance to sit down with former paramilitary members. These are young men and women, and I do mean young, teenagers in most cases, who had heart-wrenching tales to share with us. We heard from one young man who described his parents' murder right before his eyes. In his grief and anger, he turned to vigilantism. Like so many Colombians spanning multiple generations, he experienced the horror of violence, and he turned to violence himself.

The leaders of these paramilitary groups, like their guerrilla counterparts, committed heinous acts of violence and are now paying their debt to society. As remarkable an achievement as that is, the much harder part is bringing these young men and women, like those who I met, back into society.

I met them at a vocational training facility where they are learning the skills that will allow them to provide for themselves and become responsible members of society. They're learning to leave their violent past behind them and contribute to a peaceful and prosperous Colombia.

These efforts undertaken by President Uribe's government are already serving as a model for other post-conflict countries that have faced similar challenges. The process, Madam Speaker, of demobilization and reconciliation is not easy. There is still a great deal of work that needs to be done. While most paramilitary groups have been dismantled, there are still vigilantes in the jungle. There are still violent leaders at large who must go to jail. The guerrilla groups have yet to lay down their arms. And even as demobilization goes forward, the work of reintegration will take years.

But, Madam Speaker, I saw firsthand, as I know my colleagues who are going to be participating in this Special Order have. Tough work is being done, and it is being done with great success.

At the same time this transformation is taking place, Colombia has also faced a formidable foe of democracy on its border. We all know very well. Hugo Chavez has long been working to dismantle democratic institutions and free markets in his country of Venezuela and to export his authoritarian designs throughout the region. He suppressed dissent, trashed the Venezuelan constitution and squashed free

enterprise. He's interfered with the elections of his neighbors and drawn Ecuador and Bolivia into his orbit.

He keeps company with Daniel Ortega, Fidel Castro, and Mahmoud Ahmedinejad. His anti-democratic institutions for this hemisphere are no secret, and he is as openly hostile to the region's bulwarks of democracy as he is to the United States of America. Just weeks ago, he sent troops to his border with Colombia in a naked act of hostility. Flush with oil money, we all know that Hugo Chavez poses a grave threat to Latin America.

President Uribe, facing enormous challenges within his own borders and on the front lines of this ideological battle, is standing up. Colombia, under his leadership, is actively countering the influence of Hugo Chavez by acting as a model of the great gains to be made in a free and transparent democracy.

With seemingly little thought for the cause of democracy or U.S. interests, the Democratic leadership has disregarded both with last week's vote. Only time will tell the extent of the damage to our relationship with Colombia or our struggle to rein in the influence of Hugo Chavez. The damage to our credibility may be even more durable, unfortunately.

We have now sent a clear message to our partners: our word at the negotiating table is cheap, and if we don't like how things are going, we will just change the rules in the middle of the process. The implications extend well beyond trade. The United States is engaged in a great many negotiations on a great many issues: Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, nuclear nonproliferation, regional diplomatic efforts for Iraq. If our word to our close friends can't be trusted, how will we effectively engage around the globe?

Our credibility, Madam Speaker, and our leadership in the international community can hardly endure when they are so casually disregarded by this body.

This was the main thrust of the criticism from editorial boards across the country. But to economic and foreign policy damage, I would add institutional damage. Ironically, the vote to kill the free trade agreement succeeded because the Democratic leadership effectively argued to its membership that it was in the House's interest, this institution's interest to do so. They appealed to that institutional and party pride. I have already discussed the issue of party pride, Madam Speaker, as the L.A. Times editorialized, it's no secret on this issue, Democratic party interests run counter to our Nation's interest.

But the claims of institutional prerogative are utterly specious. During the rule debate last week, I went through the administration's requirements under Trade Promotion Authority chapter and verse, and I won't belabor them here. Suffice it to say, the Trade Promotion Authority was not ambiguous in its demands. I was involved in the negotiations in putting trade promotion authorities together. It is very, very rigorous because I believe in the first branch of government, I'm a believer in this institution, and I believe that we have very important rights.

The requirements for any administration under Trade Promotion Authority are laid out very clearly, and as my colleagues who are here on the floor know, this administration followed those directives to the letter in both spirit and in letter. They followed it to a T. These requirements were designed to ensure that Congress is consulted at every single step of the way. This goal was demonstrably and unequivocally achieved.

But under Trade Promotion Authority, there are two sets of processes: There is the negotiating process, which closely involves Congress but is led by the administration, and there is the congressional process. Both processes are unambiguously defined by very strict timetables.

The first timeline was followed. The second timeline was abrogated. One side followed the rules in good faith; the other side cheated. The Charlottesville Daily Progress outlined the implications of these actions perfectly, and they said, ''If rules of procedure mean nothing, then the legislative process can be warped, and moreover, it can be warped at the discretion of a single powerful person. This is not the way democracy should work. The effort to change the rules after the process was under way dishonors Congress.''

Those are not my words. Those are the words of the editorial written in the Charlottesville Daily Progress.

Madam Speaker, so much for institutional pride. The message the Democratic leadership has sent is that the ends justify the means. And what lofty goal did they sacrifice institutional integrity for? Killing an agreement, killing an agreement that extends preferential treatment to American workers and strengthens a key democratic ally in our own hemisphere.

No wonder the condemnation came so swiftly, and my staff has done a great deal of research. We have yet to find an editorial that is in support of the actions of the Speaker. As I said, her hometown paper, the New York Times, the Washington Post, on and on and on, we're going to discuss some of those further in just a minute. It is not too late though, Madam Speaker, it is not too late to correct this.

We were supposed to have a 3-month process of debate and deliberations. We can still have it. We were supposed to have a vote at the end of that process. The Democratic leadership can still commit to do it.

I mentioned the fact that I spoke with President Uribe a few hours ago. He's patient and he's optimistic. Frankly, he has no choice other than to be patient and optimistic. Madam Speaker, I call on Speaker PELOSI and Majority Leader HOYER to make a commitment to hold a vote on this very important Colombia Free Trade Agreement prior to the August recess. I call on them to quit demagoging this issue and let their rank-and-file Members vote their conscience.

I will say that I completely disagree with the statement made by Speaker PELOSI here last week. She said that one of the reasons she didn't want this vote is that she was afraid it would go down to defeat. As I look at my colleagues who have joined me here, we've been working in a bipartisan way, and I'm not going to state the names of any of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle; but the fact of the matter is, in going through this 3-month process, I have every confidence that a bipartisan majority of this institution would recognize that helping American workers, strengthening a democratic ally, doing everything that we can for the word of this institution, would be the right thing to do. I know that because, frankly, more than a few Democrats have told me that they want to have a choice to vote for and support this measure.

Passage of the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement is clearly in our economic and our foreign policy interest. Blocking it is clearly not. And changing the rules in the middle of the game because you're afraid of a fair fight is not defensible. It's time for us to exert true leadership as an institution and make sure that we pass this agreement.

So those are my prepared remarks, Madam Speaker. And I'm so proud that I have been joined by a number of my colleagues, all of whom have been great champions in this effort and have worked on the notion of expanding opportunities for U.S. goods and services to be sold all around the world.

And one of the great leaders who has been pursuing this, specifically in this hemisphere for many, many years and was a great champion of the Central American Free Trade Agreement and a wide range of other free trade initiatives, comes from a State, by the way, that is the headquarters for Caterpillar, and we know that by not passing this free trade agreement, we are preventing good, hardworking Caterpillar employees from having an opportunity to duty-free sell their very important equipment into Colombia. And I'm very happy at this time to yield to my very, very good friend who I'm saddened to say will not be joining us in the 111th Congress because he's chosen to retire to spend time with his wonderful, wonderful and very young family, but I'm happy to yield to my friend from Illinois (Mr. WELLER).

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. I want to thank the gentleman for yielding. I also want to thank Mr. DREIER for your leadership tonight as well as your continuous leadership on trade issues because, as you pointed out, the actions of this House last week have done a lot of damage to the reputation not only

to the House of Representatives but the reputation of the United States in Latin America.

President Uribe is a popular elected official. This Congress has an 18 percent approval rating. President Uribe enjoys an 80 percent approval rating because he's made such progress in addressing five decades of violence and civil problems in the democratic Republic of Colombia. And as a result, today, 73 percent of Colombians say they feel more secure because of President Uribe's leadership, but also they feel that he has brought security while respecting human rights.

□ 2100

Mr. DREIER. If I could reclaim my time, I would like to pose a question, if I might, to my friend.

As we hear this 73 percent support level in Colombia, we know that the opposition here in the United States to this is being led by the AFL–CIO and organized labor. Now, I'm sure that my friend has seen in Colombia, as I have, that the private sector unions in Colombia are strongly supportive of this agreement. Is that the case or not?

I would be happy to yield to my friend.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. I thank you for your generous time.

This past week, as we all know, there was a delegation of labor leaders from Colombia, including both the private sector and as well as public sector unions, and they made the point that the majority of industrial unions, private sector unions support the U.S.-Colombia Trade Agreement, but the opposition is coming from the government employees, who are not even impacted.

Mr. DREIER. In no way impacted by this agreement at all.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. That's correct. And one point you made earlier that I would like to—and I don't want to be greedy with the time, you've been very generous.

Mr. DREIER. I would just like to include our colleagues here with the discussion.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. But I would just like to comment on one point that you made.

You said Illinois is headquarters to Caterpillar, and people think of the yellow construction equipment. There is more to it than you think, and that's why this trade agreement is so important. I have 8,000 Caterpillar employees residing in the 11th Congressional District of Illinois. They're union members, every one of them. And Caterpillar, of course, would benefit from this, and that means their workers would as well. Half of their production in Illinois is dependent on exports.

Mr. DREIER. So maybe there would be more than 11,000 workers if this agreement were to go through.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. There would be. And their growth has come as a result of export.

But the point that really needs to be made is there is tremendous economic growth going on in the Andean region, which Colombia is leading, and a lot of that is in the energy and the mining and raw material sector, which means they're going to use construction equipment. And right now, the construction equipment that union workers make in the district I represent, places like Joliet, Aurora, Pontiac and Decatur, it faces a 15 percent tariff when exported to Colombia. Now, some would say, what does that mean? That's a 15 percent tax on the price of that bulldozer. So that makes U.S. products less competitive, say, than competing with Japan.

Mr. DREIER. If I could reclaim my time, I would say taxes are something very important today to discuss. I mean, we talk about that tax on April 15.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. And of course these tariffs would be eliminated immediately upon implementation of the U.S-Colombia Trade Agreement. I yield back the time, but it is so important to point out, Illinois is a big winner, manufacturers as well as farmers.

Mr. DREIER. I thank my friend. I hope that you can stay for a few minutes because I know we would like to get in some other questions.

When my friend began discussing the fact that a delegation came from Colombia of union leaders to the United States, I thought that you were going to mention the fact that a delegation of Members of the United States Congress went last week to Colombia. One of those who went was the distinguished secretary of the Republican Conference, our very, very good friend, Judge John Carter, a gentleman from Texas. And I would love to hear his thoughts, having just been in Colombia a week ago, on his trip. And I am happy to yield to my friend.

Mr. CARTER. I thank you for yielding to me. My friend from California is gracious to do so.

Let me start off by telling you what happened when I decided I was going to Colombia. My daughter, who lives here in Washington, called me up and said, Daddy, I told you not to go down to Colombia. Didn't you see ''Clear and Present Danger?'' Didn't you see that movie? Have you lost your mind?

I want to point that out because I think that's a lot of what the American people think about Colombia when it comes to their mind, they think of that movie and that book. And I am pleased to say that I was very pleasantly surprised to find a very peaceable place where an awful lot of people have done an awful lot of hard work to get violent people out of their country and to get those people who joined defense bands and guerrilla bands to lay down their weapons.

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my friend, did you have a chance to visit Medellin?

Mr. CARTER. I was in Medellin.

Mr. DREIER. Medellin was the murder capital of the world, clearly the most dangerous spot in the world. And now Medellin has a murder rate that is too high. We have a murder rate that is too high in the District of Columbia. We have a murder rate that is too high in the United States of America. But the transformation of Medellin under the great Mayor Sergio Fajardo, with whom I'm sure you met, has been so dramatic. His leadership and the leadership of President Uribe has just transformed that city. Is that what my friend found?

Mr. CARTER. Absolutely. Transformed it completely. It's a joy to be in Medellin, it really is. And, you know, the Medellin cartels are gone, and they are prospering.

And, you know, they talked to us and they said, look, we are trying to stand up for democracy and free enterprise, we believe in this system. And this trade agreement is the linchpin that holds it all together for this country that has worked so desperately to solve problems that, quite frankly, not very many countries in the world would have been able to solve. Getting 40,000 people to lay down their arms is a major project.

Mr. DREIER. And Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my friend if he, in fact, had the chance to meet with any of these young people who had been former paramilitaries, and I wonder if he has any anecdotes that he can share with us.

Mr. CARTER. We did. We divided into groups and met with an assortment of both male and female. And you're right—

Mr. DREIER. Share one of those stories.

Mr. CARTER. You know, the first question, they all started talking about how they joined the paramilitary unit. They told about families being slaughtered, being separated from their families, having to run and escape the guerrillas that came out of the woods. And they ran to escape, and then came back to find their families slaughtered, and so they joined a paramilitary group. And a question was asked, rather naively, I think, by us, you mean, you were carrying weapons? Absolutely. Every one of them, male and female, were carrying weapons. And now they are working in programs that are changing the culture of these people that joined the violent behavior. They have laid down their weapons. We asked them why. They said the comandantes said we have talked to the president, we lay down our weapons, and they did.

They are out studying. They're proud to say they're getting high school educations. They're proud to say they're going to trade schools. A few were proud to say they had received admission to university. These were jungle fighters just a short while ago, and now they are coming into society and working very hard because they see a future for Colombia. And this future rests upon a world of free enterprise and trade, and this agreement starts the

process that gives them many opportunities for free trade around the world.

Mr. DREIER. Absolutely. My friend is absolutely right. And I will tell you, these meetings are always, for me, I've participated in several of them, very emotional. As I said in my opening remarks, I remember very vividly seeing this young, I mean, a kid, he said he was 18 years old when he watched the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the FARC, which we all know that acronym, they came in and they murdered his mother and father right in front of him. And of course he was, like any of us would be, so angry and so bitter that he joined with the paramilitary and began being, as you said so well, Mr. CARTER, a guerrilla fighter. And he was able to become productive because of the trade schools that have been put into place.

And the patriotism that these young Colombians have for their country and their desire for a peaceful nation is so great. They were forced into this because these narcoterrorists in the FARC were resorting to murdering their parents. And so many others have been tragically murdered there. To see this take place and to hear those individual stories, they are very, very emotional. In fact, as you listen to these people, I mean, I'm getting emotional thinking about it because of the fact that these young people who have been forced into this are now becoming productive members of society. And the notion of our not doing what we can to bring about peace and stability in this hemisphere is, I think, very, very distressing.

I am happy to see that we're joined by the very distinguished ranking member of the Subcommittee on Trade of the Ways and Means Committee, my California colleague, Mr. HERGER. And I would be happy to yield for some comments to my very good friend.

Mr. HERGER. Well, I want to thank my good friend, Mr. DREIER, for setting this up this evening.

This is so incredibly important. It's important to our Nation, it's important to our workers at a time when we're seeing our economy dipping, when we need to be able to produce jobs. And we look at how we produce jobs. Since last year, some 27 percent of our increase in gross domestic product came from exports. It's projected that just this year of our increase in gross domestic product, some 40 percent will be again from exports.

And I wish it weren't true, but it seems like perhaps the best kept secret in our Nation today is that the United States is the largest trading nation in the world. We're the largest exporting nation in the world.

I represent, as my good friend knows, a very rich agricultural district north of Sacramento in northern California.

Mr. DREIER. Beautiful area.

Mr. HERGER. One of the richest agriculture areas in the world, second largest rice producing district. Some 60 percent of all the dried plums in the world, prunes, are grown there, walnuts, almonds, these specialty crops. And America cannot consume all that we produce. As a matter of fact, one-third of all that we produce we need to be able to export. And to be able to see, again, talking about Colombia, what this does for American workers, we just heard about Caterpillar from our good friend from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) just earlier in his district, the thousands that it affects. And so it affects in the district I represent.

Right now, because of our duty free status for the Andean nations, which we've gone in to try to help Colombia, Colombia was not always this great nation where some 42,000 former paramilitary, as we were talking about earlier, have gone from fighting the country to now being part of the country and supporting them. As we know, it wasn't always that way. And so some years ago we gave these Andean nations, including Colombia, Peru, Panama, and others, the ability to be able to export into the United States duty free, duty free, but yet we still have export duties, some as high as 60, 70 percent, going into their country.

And what this free trade agreement would do is it would be able to give us the same access to their markets that they currently have to ours, to our rice, to our walnuts, to our wheat, to our corn, to other commodities that are so very, very important.

So it is important what we're doing. It's important not only for, we were discussing the change in Colombia itself, which is our strongest ally in South America; we cannot turn our back on them, we cannot slap them in the face.

And Madam Speaker, I would like to place into the RECORD some of these editorials that you were speaking about, Mr. DREIER, for the RECORD.

[From the New York Times, Apr. 12, 2008]

TIME FOR THE COLOMBIAN TRADE PACT

American workers are understandably anxious. Their incomes went nowhere through six years of economic growth. Many are losing their jobs as the economy slips into recession. Yet concern about workers' plight should not lead Congressional Democrats to reject the trade agreement with Colombia. This deal would benefit the American economy and further the nation's broader interests in Latin America.

It is time for Congress to ratify it.

The trade pact would produce clear benefits for American businesses and their workers. Most Colombian exports are exempt from United States' tariffs. American exports, however, face high Colombian tariffs and would benefit as the so-called trade promotion agreement brought them down to zero.

The deal also would strengthen the institutional bonds tying the United States to Colombia, one of America's few allies in an important region that has become increasingly hostile to the United States' interests. Perhaps most important, the deal would provide a tool for Colombia's development, drawing investment and helping the nation extricate itself from the mire of poverty that provides sustenance to drug trafficking and a bloody insurgency.

Violence in Colombia is way too high. We remain very concerned over the killing of trade unionists by right-wing paramilitary groups. Last year, we advised Congress not to ratify the trade agreement until Colombia demonstrated progress in investigating the murders and prosecuting and convicting their perpetrators.

Though by no means ideal, the situation today has improved. Thirty-nine trade unionists were killed last year, down from 197 in 2001, the year before the government of Álvaro Uribe came to office. Prosecutors obtained 36 convictions for the murder of trade unionists—up from 11 in 2006 and only one in 2001. The budget of the prosecutor general's office has increased every year. Last year, it created a special unit to prosecute labor murders that has obtained 13 sentences.

Pressure from the United States Congress has contributed to this progress, nudging the Colombian government with its offer that gains on the human rights front would lead to ratification of the trade agreement. Washington must sustain the pressure to ensure the energetic prosecution of crimes by paramilitary thugs and further reduce violence against union members. It has a powerful tool to do so: about $600 million a year in mostly military aid for Colombia to combat drug trafficking. The money must be approved by Congress every year.

Rejecting or putting on ice the trade agreement would reduce the United States' credibility and leverage in Colombia and beyond. In a letter last year to Congressional Democrats, a group of Democratic heavyweights from the Clinton administration and previous Congresses wrote: ''Walking away from the Colombia trade agreement or postponing it until conditions are perfect would send an unambiguous signal to our friends and opponents alike that the United States is an unreliable partner without a vision for cooperation in our hemisphere.'' It would serve human rights in Colombia no good.

Unfortunately, the agreement has become entangled in political jockeying between the White House and Democrats. The Democrats are right to demand assistance for American workers, and the Bush administration should work with Congress to expand the safety net for workers displaced by globalization. But this should not stop the Colombian trade pact from coming to fruition.

[From the Washington Post, Apr. 10, 2008]

DROP DEAD, COLOMBIA

The year 2008 may enter history as the time when the Democratic Party lost its way on trade. Already, the party's presidential candidates have engaged in an unseemly contest to adopt the most protectionist posture, suggesting that, if elected, they might pull out of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Yesterday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi declared her intention to change the procedural rules governing the proposed trade promotion agreement with Colombia. President Bush submitted the pact to Congress on Tuesday for a vote within the next 90 legislative days, as required by the ''fast-track'' authority under which the U.S. negotiated the deal with Colombia. Ms. Pelosi says she'll ask the House to undo that rule.

The likely result is no vote on the agreement this year. Ms. Pelosi denies that her intent is to kill the bill, insisting yesterday that Congress simply needs more time to consider it ''in light of the economic uncertainty in our country.'' She claimed that she feared that, ''if brought to the floor immediately, [the pact] would lose. And what message would that send?'' But Ms. Pelosi's decision-making process also included a fair component of pure Washington pique: She accused Mr. Bush of ''usurp[ing] the discretion of the speaker of the House'' to schedule legislation.

That political turf-staking, and the Democrats' decreasingly credible claims of a death-squad campaign against Colombia's trade unionists, constitutes all that's left of the case against the agreement. Economically, it should be a no-brainer—especially at a time of rising U.S. joblessness. At the moment, Colombian exports to the United States already enjoy preferences. The trade agreement would make those permanent, but it would also give U.S. firms free access to Colombia for the first time, thus creating U.S. jobs. Politically, too, the agreement is in the American interest, as a reward to a friendly, democratic government that has made tremendous strides on human rights, despite harassment from Venezuela's Hugo Chávez.

To be sure, President Bush provoked Ms. Pelosi. But he forced the issue only after months of inconclusive dickering convinced him that Democrats were determined to avoid a vote that would force them to accept accountability for opposing an agreement that is manifestly in America's interest. It turns out his suspicions were correct.

''I take this action with deep respect to the people of Colombia and will be sure that any message they receive is one of respect for their country, and the importance of the friendship between our two countries,'' Ms. Pelosi protested yesterday. Perhaps Colombia's government and people will understand. We don't.

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, let me express my appreciation to my friend for pointing to these editorials because, as I said a few minutes ago, we've done a great deal of research. We've been trying desperately to find an editorial anywhere in this country that has been written in support of the egregious action taken by the Democratic leadership in this institution, undermining the ability to open up this very important new market for U.S. workers, agricultural products and manufactured goods. We hear from California and Illinois and other States as well. And I actually have, I think, about 15 of these editorials here with some incredible quotes that are pretty damning. And again, these come from publications that are hardly considered Republican mouth pieces.

You know, we had this very harsh criticism level at the President of the United States, and he somehow was trying to ram this thing through and rush it. We know that this agreement, the negotiation began 4 years ago, it was completed 2 years ago, and a year and a half ago it was signed. There have been constant attempts to bring this up; 27 meetings held with the Democratic leadership by this administration, and yet, as has been pointed out in these editorials, this terrible action was taken.

I'm very pleased that one of the great free traders in this institution who represents the very important port town of Houston, Texas, has joined us, another hardworking member of the Ways and Means—I guess we've got three members of the Ways and Means Committee here, so I'm particularly pleased to have members of that very, very important committee with us, including my good friend, as I said, from Houston, Mr. BRADY.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Thank you, Mr. DREIER. And thank you for your leadership. I'm glad to join all the Members here tonight on this important issue.

The reason this country is so dismayed by the action last week is that it was such a huge loss for American jobs, for security in our hemisphere, and a big loss for America's prestige around the world.

□ 2115

Colombia's a remarkable trading partner, as you have noted. They are a remarkable study and model in progress, in democracy, and human rights, pulling themselves up by their bootstraps by rule of law and freedom of speech and freedom of trade, all the American traits that you have to admire. They're in our backyard. They're in our hemisphere. A remarkable trading partner.

I think last week many in America wondered just what happened to this great country. Who could imagine that America, with the world's largest economy, would cower from Colombia behind walls of protectionism? Who could imagine the world's strongest democracy would be afraid to even debate, even consider this agreement? And who could imagine, by changing the rules after we had already shaken hands and signed an agreement, that we would send a signal to the rest of the world that we are no longer not even a reliable trade leader in this world but we are not even reliable negotiators, that our word, our bond, our agreements mean nothing?

And the loss in jobs, as you know, America is wide open, Mr. DREIER. As you know, we can buy anything from almost any country anywhere we want in our communities.

Mr. DREIER. And that's a good thing.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. But when we try to sell our goods and services around the world, we find too much of it blocked. As we have said before, it's not enough anymore to just buy American. We have to sell American. We have to sell our goods and services throughout the world. But when we do, we find so much of the world is closed off, locked away from us.

Colombia, a great partner, has been selling their goods and services into America since 1991, but we face real barriers when we try to do the same, and this trade agreement creates that two-way trade.

For Texas I know it's critical. We're the largest seller of goods to Colombia. We sell about a little over a billion dollars a year in chemicals, construction, equipment and machinery and computers. And under this agreement we would sell another billion dollars of not only that but grapefruit and beef and financial services. A number of services our small businesses could sell into Colombia, our neighbor in the backyard and in our hemisphere. So we lost jobs here in America.

Colombia lost jobs because they lost a guaranteed market because by not acting, by changing the rules, they are now coming at a disadvantage to their neighbors, in Peru and Central American countries. So they actually lost ground from a jobs perspective.

And, finally, to turn our back on what a tremendous ally, as you have noted over and over, who has made such great progress, who we deserve to engage more and be a stronger partner with, not to turn our back on, it's a huge loss.

Mr. DREIER. I thank my friend for his very thoughtful contribution, Madam Speaker.

And one of the issues that has come to the forefront, and I would be happy to yield to any of my colleagues who would like to comment on this, has been this notion that the Colombian Government is somehow murdering union leaders. We have continued to hear this. And it is true. In the past it's been absolutely outrageous to see the treatment.

But in the last several years under the leadership of President Uribe, very important steps have been taken to bring to justice any of those who have been responsible for the heinous act of murdering these union leaders. And the government has done something which is totally unprecedented. The government does not want to see union leaders killed; so what do they do? There are 1,500 union leaders who enjoy full security protection paid for by the Government of Colombia. And yet we continually hear arguments put forward by our friends at the AFL–CIO that ''the Colombian Government is murdering our brothers.'' I mean I've heard that chant over and over and over again. Because, of course, as these very thoughtful arguments that my colleagues have put forward are there, the only response that they can have is the Colombian Government is murdering, is murdering, our brothers.

I would be happy to further yield to my friend.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Very briefly, Judge Carter was with me and others here 2 weeks ago as we met with the general prosecutor, an independent prosecutor, for the country of Colombia.

Mr. DREIER. I believe he's called the Fiscalia.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Yes. And he told us straight out, because we asked him, he said there is no thread, no direct or indirect thread at all, between the Colombian Government and any murders of anyone, much less union leaders. And he said what you've said, that this government has not only sat down to prosecute those who would commit violent crimes against union leaders but provides protection. In fact, it is safer to be a union leader in Colombia than just the general population might be. That is such an effort they have made. That government is providing a lower level of violence, a safer country for all citizens.

So the argument that they are targeting or that they are allowing it or just looking the other way is exactly

wrong, and the unions themselves told us that.

Mr. DREIER. That's right because, as I pointed out earlier, the private sector unions, and Mr. WELLER and I had this exchange, are very supportive of this. And I suspect that on your trip, you had a chance to meet with a number of those union leaders.

Let me just say that one Member who is here that we haven't heard from is the distinguished gentleman from Iowa.

Madam Speaker, I would be very happy to yield to my friend from Iowa (Mr. KING).

Mr. KING of Iowa. I thank the gentleman from California for yielding, and I thank him especially for gathering us together here for this Special Order.

Being mindful of the clock, there are a few points I would like to make. And one of them is to address our trade deficit. We have had a trade deficit over the last several years that has grown an average of about 20 percent a year. Now, it's flattened out in this last year because the weaker dollar has shifted so that we have more exports in proportion. However, I believe the dollar needs to be shored up. And why would a nation that has a trade deficit refuse to allow a trade agreement that would open up a country to allow our goods to go in?

I'm astonished continually at the continuing shift on the part of the Democrats. And I looked through the trade agreements that we have dealt with here since I have been in this Congress, and I'm thinking of trade agreements like Singapore and Chile and Australia and Morocco, the Central American Free Trade Agreement, DR–CAFTA. All of those gave us opportunities that were advantageous to us. And the logic in this is just as clear and simple: If you market something or if you're doing business with people, where you buy it from is where the jobs are. That's where the production is. We have production in the United States. We need to market more goods overseas. If we shore up the dollar, and I think we should, we're going to need to be more aggressive marketing our goods overseas. Colombia's sitting there waiting to open that up.

I have to say a couple kind words about our pork producers. They sold $8.5 million worth of pork into Colombia last year, not a lot. They're losing money on every head today. They need to open up this market. It would be in multiples if we would simply allow that tariff that's in Colombia to disappear, which would happen immediately if we could sign into this free trade agreement. That's some of the components.

But I am also more concerned about our relationships in the Western hemisphere. And as we watch Hugo Chavez teaming up and picking up the legacy of Fidel Castro and watching the unrest that's being promoted or watching tanks roll up to the border, these things are taking place in our hemisphere. And this Monroe Doctrine, I think, calls upon us to be good diplomats, good stewards of the money, and good promoters of trade, taking care of American jobs and protecting our opportunity to compete in the rest of the world. All of this comes together in this Colombia Free Trade Agreement.

What happened here in this Congress was a shameful act. And Americans have to be viewed as having character, the kind of character that holds up when a business deal is a deal. We did more than shake hands on this. This Congress passed it. The President signed it. This agreement was negotiated under terms that said this trade agreement will come to the floor of this House and it will be brought forward for a vote, up or down, in 90 days. That's the deal. That's the deal it was negotiated under. That's the deal that it should have been brought to the floor of this House under.

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, I would like to reclaim my time so I could propound a question to my friend, and I don't mean to interrupt his very thoughtful statement.

But as I listened to the arguments that have been made by Speaker PELOSI and others against this, they said we have an economy that is weakening. We all know that is the case. Our economy is facing very serious challenges. Here again, this is Tax Day, April 15, and it is hard for people to make ends meet. It has become more difficult. So the argument has been made. I hear Speaker PELOSI regularly say we need to focus on American workers and their concerns rather than some kind of agreement, and so we should put off this agreement until our economy is stronger.

And I just don't quite understand that. And I wonder if my friend might enlighten me on exactly what the point of that statement is.

And I further yield.

Mr. KING of Iowa. If we took that position with every country on the globe, you could virtually guarantee our economy would collapse, not get stronger. We need to make every move that we can make to improve this economy. I'm really not as concerned as the pundits are, but it's prudent for us to open trade. Free trade, fair trade smart trade is a better code word for this, and it means jobs in America. The U.S. market is open to Colombia. They're saying, let's open our market to you. I'm happy to send Caterpillars down there. We buy them in my business. And I'm happy to send the pork down there that we produce and everything that we can compete with. This global market that we're involved in demands that we export, and the Western hemisphere demands that we lead. And that means we need to promote strong, strong relationships in the Western hemisphere. And as we watch the bullying tactics of Hugo Chavez, I think that cries out for us to shake hands with President Uribe and complete this Colombia Free Trade Agreement.

Mr. DREIER. So basically this would best be described as a win-win all the way around. It's a winner for the cause of democracy and freedom and the rule of law in South America, which we all know is very important. It's a winner when it comes to stopping those drug traffickers who are selling drugs, poisoning our children and grandchildren. And then we look at the opportunity created for the United States of America, our workers. They're greatly benefited by this.

And that's why I continue to try to figure out why it is that anyone would oppose this. I mean we use the term ''no brainer'' to describe this. It really is a no brainer. We used that in the debate last week. I know that the distinguished ranking member of the Ways and Means Committee, Mr. MCCRERY, and a couple of others have said this is a no brainer.

And these editorials that have been written, I think we probably should share some of the words of these publications that often criticize Republican policies who have come forward with this. I know a number of things have been put forward. But one thing just today, the Wall Street Journal had an editorial that was in strong support of a letter, an open letter, that came from former senior administration officials from the Clinton administration and Democratic Members of Congress, and it was signed by 35 of them, former colleagues of ours who are Democrats. And it includes people, by the way, just some of the signatories of this letter, the former Commerce Secretary William Daley, who is from Mr. WELLER's State that we talked about; Stuart Eizenstat, a very prominent brilliant economic mind; General Barry McCaffrey; our former colleague who was a Republican Senator but went on to be the Secretary of Defense in the Clinton administration, Bill Cohen, signed this. So a lot of people have signed this letter.

It says: ''We believe this agreement is in both our vital national security and economic interests. We feel that the treaty should be considered as soon as possible.'' I remind people it's not actually a treaty; it's an agreement. ''We feel that the treaty should be considered as soon as possible and that any obstacles be quickly and amicably resolved.''

The letter cites ''an overwhelming national security imperative'' and that ''President Uribe has been a strong and faithful ally. To turn our back on the Colombia Free Trade Agreement would be a severe blow to that relationship and would send a very negative message to our friends in a volatile region?

The letter praises Colombia for its ''dramatic improvement in security'' and for being ''a model of open market democracy that supports fundamental U.S. national interests'' and points out that these are ideals that many in the

region ''openly scorn,'' of course, referring, as my friend just said, to Hugo Chavez. The letter goes on to praise Uribe personally for his ''great personal courage'' in aggressively going on the offensive in fighting narcoterrorists and dramatically increasing drug interdiction and eradication of criminals to the United States, or extradition of criminals. Eradication of criminals too, we want to do that. It also praises his substantial progress in the issue of violence against trade unionists, pointing out that Uribe has provided special security protection to some 9,400 individuals. This number says including 1,900 trade unionists. I said 1,500, and this letter that these officials of the Clinton administration and former Democratic Members of the United States Congress said 1,900 trade unionists have been able to receive this kind of protection.

And that's why I implore my colleagues in the Democratic leadership to bring this up for a vote.

Mark my words, and I would ask any of my colleagues who are here if they disagree with my assessment, if after we go through these arguments, which we have begun talking about tonight and we talked a little bit about last week, is there any doubt that we would have strong bipartisan support with many Democrats joining with us in support of this?

□ 2130

I would be happy to yield to any of my colleagues who have any thoughts or comments on that at all. I suspect you might agree with me, but if you have any thoughts on it, I would be happy to.

Mr. BRADY, you look like you would like to cast your vote.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Absolutely. There have been a number of Democrat colleagues who have traveled to Colombia to see that remarkable progress firsthand, who have assessed it themselves rather than playing the politics of it, and who have been both public and private in their support for this agreement. I think all they would like is an up-or-down vote, a fair chance to debate this issue and bring it to the floor. I am confident with it would pass. And I am confident we would send a completely different signal to our allies like Colombia and the rest of the world.

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, my friend is absolutely right. And it is very interesting. We have heard the Speaker, Speaker PELOSI, talk about the need for trade adjustment assistance, a second stimulus package. And Madam Speaker, I would argue that the Colombia free-trade agreement, which will create an opportunity for more U.S. workers to sell their goods and agricultural products into Colombia is, in fact, trade adjustment assistance itself. And I would argue that this agreement, job creating, is in fact an economic stimulus package in and of itself. So if the commitment is to trade adjustment assistance and economic stimulus so that we can create more jobs in the United States of America, the answer is, pass the U.S.-Colombia free-trade agreement.

I would be happy to yield to my friend from Texas.

Mr. CARTER. I agree wholeheartedly that I think an up-or-down vote and we will have a Colombia free-trade agreement. I think that our Democratic colleagues will be reasonable and understand this. And I think we have the votes to get it done.

But I think Speaker PELOSI needs to release this and let us have a vote. That is the key thing. And you notice that letter you just read kept talking about national security. What we really have here, if you look at it closely, is a contest of two socialist—we used to call them Communist—a regime in Hugo Chavez, and we have Uribe who is trying to create a free democracy, and a free enterprise system. These are two, side-by-side competing systems that will influence that entire continent.

And that is why this is in our national security interest. It is not just a trade agreement which is going to benefit American workers. It is a security agreement that points to the direction that we stand up for what we believe in, democracy and free enterprise.

Mr. DREIER. My friend makes a very good and important point here. And I was talking to my colleague, Dan Lungren, who served here, I was pleased to serve with him during the 1980s when we were in the midst, and I know my friend from California came in 1986 to this institution. We have spent time, energy, resources and weapons in dealing with the expansion of Communism in Central America as we were providing resources to the Democratic resistance in Nicaragua known as the Contras. And we regularly hear criticism from Democrats that what we should be doing in Iraq is we shouldn't be using weapons, we should, in fact, be engaging and using trade and other things.

And what is it we have here? We have Democrats, the Democratic leadership, unfortunately, saying that as we seek to build a stronger relationship with a country that is standing up to narcoterrorists, that is standing up to the expansion of Hugo Chavez on their borders trying to extend into the country, and they are saying ''no'' to this. They are saying ''no'' to this because somehow they believe it is going to hurt U.S. workers.

To me it is absolutely outrageous that this has taken place. And Madam Speaker, let me express my appreciation to my colleagues for the time that they have spent here this evening. And I hope very much that Speaker PELOSI and the Democratic leadership will, in fact, schedule a vote on the U.S.-Colombia free-trade agreement before the August recess. Let's begin the process of debate and voting right now.

I thank again my colleagues, Madam Speaker, and with that I yield back the balance of my time.

IRAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) is recognized for 60 minutes.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. WATERS. The subject of my Special Order is Iran.

Madam Speaker, at the time the war in Iraq began in March of 2003, who would have thought that we were being led into perhaps the worst foreign policy disaster in America's history? Many of us voted against the war authorization in the first place. But many more Members wish they had voted against it. We now know that this country was led into this war with faulty intelligence and a deafening war drum from the administration.

The question that we raise tonight is this: Could the Bush administration possibly be planning for a war with Iran? There isn't any empirical evidence to prove that the Bush administration is planning for war. But there are experts that are indeed worried that the same playbook that was used to bring this country into the Iraq war is now being used to toward Iran. The administration is pushing suspect intelligence. And it has severely increased and sharpened since their rhetoric first began toward Iran.

We come to the floor tonight to resist efforts by this administration to paint war with Iran as a necessary next step in our so-called war on terror. A vast majority of foreign policy and military experts agree that war with Iran would be a colossal error.

Allow me to spend a few minutes to explain why I feel that U.S. strikes against Iran are a real possibility. Let us look at some of the signs that we may be headed for war. The increased rhetoric. The administration is building the volume of inflammatory rhetoric toward Iran in a similar fashion to the run-up to the Iraq war. Strong statements about Iran's intervention in Iraq could set the stage for U.S. attack on Iranian military or nuclear facility.

Surrogates in the administration, including the President himself, have increasingly stressed a full range of negative Iranian behavior, including that Iran is killing U.S. soldiers in Iraq, supplying weapons, training and funding to special groups.

They also say that Iran is interfering with the peace process in the Middle

East. And they go on to talk about General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker as they argued that Iran is the major future threat to stability in Iraq.

Iran seeks to build nuclear weapons. When this point was dismissed by the recent National Intelligence Estimate stating that Iran had long since halted their nuclear enrichment, the administration criticized the report.

Allow me to read a short selection of clips from recent press clippings that expose the irresponsible rhetoric coming from the Bush administration. This headline from the Daily Telegraph on April 7, 2008: British Fear U.S. Commander is Beating the Drum for Iran Strikes. ''British officials gave warning yesterday that America's commander in Iraq will declare that Iran is waging war against the U.S.-backed Baghdad Government. A strong statement from General David Petraeus about Iran's intervention in Iraq could set the stage for a U.S. attack on Iranian military facilities, according to a Whitehall assessment.''

Another headline: Petraeus Says Iranian-Backed Groups Are Greatest Threat to Iraq. This is in the Bloomberg News April 9, 2008. ''The so-called 'special groups,' which are funded, trained and armed by Iran, played a 'destructive role' in the recent clashes between extremist militias and Iraqi Government forces in Basra and Baghdad, Petraeus said. 'Iran has fueled the violence in a particularly damaging way,' he told the House Armed Services Committee today in Washington, his second day of testimony to lawmakers. 'Unchecked, the 'special groups' pose the greatest long-term threat to the viability of a Democratic Iraq.''

Again, that was the Bloomberg News, April 9, 2008.

Another headline, the Voice of America, April 2, 2008, Israel to Redistribute Gas Masks Amid Fears of War with Iran.

''Israel's security Cabinet has decided to redistribute gas masks to the entire population amid fears of a nonconventional war with Iran. The last distribution was just before the U.S. invasion of Iraq 4 years ago.''

Another headline in the New York Times, April 12, 2008. The headline reads, Iran Fighting Proxy War in Iraq, U.S. Envoy Says.

''Iran is engaging in a proxy war with the United States in Iraq, adopting tactics similar to those it has used to back fighters in Lebanon, the United States ambassador to Iraq said Friday. While Bush administration officials have long denounced what they have described as Iran's meddling in Iraq, Mr. Crocker's language was unusually strong from Mr. Bush down, administration officials this week have been turning up the volume on Iran.''

A further sign that the U.S. may be headed for war is Admiral Fallon's resignation. In the aftermath of the disastrous invasion of Iraq, there has been discussion within media and in the military that senior military officers should have resigned when they knew the White House to be heading to a reckless war in Iraq.

Some are speculating that the recent retirement of Admiral Fallon is a direct result of his steadfast opposition to war with Iran. He even made his disagreements with the administration public before his retirement.

In a now-famous profile that Admiral Fallon agreed to do for Esquire magazine, he was characterized as the only man standing between war with Iran.

Let me read an excerpt from that article.

This was Esquire magazine, March 11, 2008. The title is ''The Man Between War and Peace.'' The article goes on to say that if in the dying light of the Bush administration, we go to war with Iran, it will all come down to one man. If we do not go to war with Iran, it will all come down to one, that same man. So while Admiral Fallon's boss, President George W. Bush, regularly trash-talks his way to world war III and his administration casually casts Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as this century's Hitler, a crown it has awarded once before, to deadly effect, it's left to Fallon, and apparently Fallon alone, to argue that, as he told al Jazeera last fall, this constant drumbeat of conflict is not helpful and not useful.

Another sign that the U.S. may be thinking about war is the offensive against the Mahdi Army. Moqtada al Sadr has promised full-scale attacks on America's interests in Iraq in the event of strikes on Iran. As commander of the multinational force in Iraq, General David Petraeus still presides as the commander of the Iraqi security forces as well. Any operation against the Mahdi Army would have been authorized by him. What motivation did the United States have in fueling a violent confrontation with the powerful militia at a time when al Sadr had declared a truce and the progress of the surge was being reported to Congress?

One explanation is that recent operations against al Sadr's militia, the Mahdi Army, may have been meant to neutralize possible resistance inside of Iraq in the event of a strike on Iran.

□ 2145

The following five reasons are taken verbatim from an article in U.S. News and World Report that was published on March 5th entitled ''Six Signs the U.S. May Be Headed For War in Iran.''

Before I go into the five reasons that I have taken verbatim from this article in U.S. News and World Report, I am going to recognize the Congresswoman from Oakland, California, BARBARA LEE, who is cochair of the Progressive Caucus. She is one of the co-founders of the Out of Iraq Caucus. She has been consistent in her resistance to this war in Iraq.

She is an organizer. She is a constant speaker on the speaking engagement circuit, speaking with groups and organizations all over this country who want to hear from BARBARA LEE about what is going on in Congress.

The question she is most confronted with is when will this Congress end the war and bring our soldiers home? What are you going to do about a President who is ignoring the will of the people and ignoring the will of Congress in their attempts to resist the continued funding of the war? Every weekend, somewhere in this country, BARBARA LEE is attempting to answer those questions and engage the American citizens about what is happening here.

I yield to BARBARA LEE.

Ms. LEE. Madam Speaker, let me begin by thanking my colleague Congresswoman MAXINE WATERS, the gentlewoman from California, for organizing this very important special order tonight. Let me just say to you, Congresswoman WATERS, your clear voice and your sound judgment as the co-founder of the Out of Iraq Caucus has helped guide this antiwar movement, not only here in the House of Representatives, but throughout the country.

Your boldness and your vision in organizing those of us who knew that this war was wrong from day one in putting together over, what, some 77 members now of the Out of Iraq Caucus, I have to salute you and thank you for that, because we will never go back again. All we can do is go forward to try to end this occupation and try to prevent another preemptive war against Iran.

It is very timely that Congresswoman WATERS has called us here tonight to sound the alarm on Iran. It is truly disturbing to me to hear many of the same drumbeats on this administration 's march to war with Iran as we saw 5 years ago in the run-up to the war in Iraq. So I want to provide just a little bit of history on Iraq to draw out some of these parallels, in the hope that they will provide Congress and the American people with a clear warning signal.

Madam Speaker, this discussion is also timely today because today is April 15th, and millions of Americans across our country are right now racing the clock to beat the tax filing deadline. Lots of them are asking, how much do they owe and what is the government doing with their money?

One answer, Madam Speaker, is that in the last 5 years, this administration has spent nearly a half trillion dollars on the Iraq war and occupation. This Iraq tax, and that is what it is, an Iraq tax, comes out to approximately $16,500 for every American family of four. Has the tax been worth it? Let's look at what we have gotten in exchange.

More than 4,000 of the Nation's best and bravest have been killed. More than 30,000 others have been wounded, many suffering permanent and debilitating injuries. Tens of thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians have died, and millions have been internally displaced or sought refuge in neighboring countries. Meanwhile, the occupation of

Iraq has caused serious damage to America's international reputation and created a generation, mind you, a generation of future enemies incensed by the endless occupation of their country by a foreign power.

Madam Speaker, compounding the folly of this strategic blunder, the $500 billion which American taxpayers already have spent on this occupation is now undermining our ability to finance the investments needed to address the pressing domestic needs of the American people and to revive our sagging economy. Given what the Iraq tax has brought American families, and this $500 billion is quickly mounting to almost $3 trillion very soon, is anyone really surprised that the American people are angry and demanding change?

The saddest aspect of this whole story and this whole episode, Madam Speaker, is it did not have to be that way. Along with 125 of my colleagues, a substantial majority of House Democrats, I opposed the war, like Congresswoman WATERS did, from the beginning, and we voted against the resolution authorizing the use of military force.

I offered an amendment Congresswoman WATERS supported, we got 72 votes during that period, to the original use of force resolution to prohibit the administration, remember this, Congresswoman WATERS, we tried, we tried, we did everything we could do to try to keep the administration from taking military action until the United Nations could complete their inspections and confirm that Saddam Hussein's regime indeed possessed weapons of mass destruction which it intended to use against us or to give to our sworn enemies.

Had the Lee amendment been adopted, we would have learned much sooner and at far less cost what the whole world knew, that evidentially we didn't know, but some of us knew, but the whole world now knows, including the American people, that Iraq did not pose an imminent threat to the United States, was not involved in the September 11th attacks, had no ties to al Qaeda and had no weapons of mass destruction.

The war and occupation has also exacted an awful toll on our military force, our structure, our readiness, and the men and women in uniform and their families. General Richard Cody, the Army Vice Chief of Staff, testified before the Congress that the Army is out of balance. The current demand of our forces in Iraq and Afghanistan exceeds the substantial supply and limits our ability to provide ready forces for other contingencies.

Because of this administration's mistake, tens of thousands of servicemen and women have been required to undertake lengthy deployments into the war zone, two, three, and some even four times. This has placed enormous strain on them and their families and increased their risk of struggling with mental health issues, including when they return home many, many posttraumatic stress issues that we have never seen before. Nearly 60,000 veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder, and most experts in the field believe the numbers could be much higher.

Some may ask, why is it necessary to review this history? Well, as the old saying goes, those who forget history are doomed to repeat it. The other reason for reviewing this history is because it goes straight to the veracity and the credibility of this administration that brought us this debacle and which may be maneuvering to reprise its strategic and geopolitical incompetence by taking preemptive military action against Iran.

If you listen carefully, you can hear the same distant drumbeats of a coming war with Iran. The signs are very familiar. Nearly on a daily basis we read or hear these from the administration, and let me just repeat a few of these drumbeats that we hear.

They say Iran is the single greatest threat to the stability in Iraq, although when I asked General Petraeus last week if Iran was in Iraq 5 years ago, he said they weren't really ''kissing cousins.'' I think that is what his comment was. No, Iran was not in Iraq 5 years ago.

Iran is building nuclear weapons.

Iran is killing American soldiers in Iraq, arming, training and funding insurgents and terrorists.

Iran is interfering with the peace process in the Middle East.

I am reminded how the administration sent General Colin Powell, do you remember that, Congresswoman WATERS, the Secretary of State, by far the most effective and respective spokesman, before the United Nations Security Council to make the case to the world that Iraq posed an imminent threat to regional peace and security. The case presented by General Powell accomplished its mission, but its factual foundation rested on falsehoods, misinformation and speculation masquerading as evidence. To this day, General Powell regards his performance that day as really a mark on an otherwise distinguished career of public service to our Nation.

General Petraeus is the 2008 version, quite frankly, of General Powell. He inspires more confidence than President Bush and is far more credible than Vice President CHENEY. But so did General Powell inspire and bring this credibility to this administration, and he turned out to be wrong; terribly wrong.

Again last week, General Petraeus testified that Iranian-backed so-called special groups posed the greatest long-term threat to the viability of a Democratic Iraq. He testified that it was these groups that launched Iranian rockets and mortar rounds at Iraq's seat of government two weeks ago, causing loss of innocent life and fear in the capital and requiring Iraqi and coalition actions in response.

This is starting to sound like the groundwork being laid for the need to take defensive action against Iran. This is unacceptable. We should not be looking for an excuse to attack Iran. Congress should not stand for yet another so-called preemptive military strike, and we should take action to clearly prohibit any such attempt against Iran.

As I stated, we have been down this road before. We have learned a simple truth from five hard and bitter years in Iraq. No unjust war ever produced a just and lasting peace. It has not worked in Iraq. It will not work in Iran.

What is needed is not another rush to unwarranted, unnecessary and misguided military action, but rather a strong diplomatic surge for peace and reconciliation. And, yes, I do believe that a nuclear-armed Iran poses a danger. I believe we need to move forward with nonproliferation efforts, including looking at our own arsenal of nuclear weapons in our own country. Nuclear weapons should not be an option at this point, given the dangers of the world. So we need to address nuclear nonproliferation in the context of a strong diplomatic initiative.

One of the most important first steps we should take is to have direct, comprehensive and unconditional bilateral talks with Iran. To facilitate this goal, it is imperative for the administration to show that it is serious in this endeavor by appointing a special envoy. I think we need to appoint a special person, an individual who does nothing but ensure that we move forward to reduce the tensions in the region, and this envoy should receive the necessary support to carry out his or her mandate.

That is why I introduced H.R. 5056, the Iran Diplomatic Accountability Act of 2008. Among other things, this bill directs the President to appoint a high level envoy empowered to conduct direct, unconditional, bilateral negotiations with Iran for the purpose of easing tensions and normalizing relations between the United States and Iran. No one says this is going to be easy, but we must start somewhere.

The latest National Intelligence Estimate released last week representing the consensus view of our 16 intelligence agencies clearly indicates that Iran is nowhere close to having nuclear weapons capability. The NIE assessment underscores why it is critical for Congress to ensure that this administration's saber rattling against Iran does not turn into a march to war. We have been down this path before.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, the last 5 years in Iraq demonstrates the folly of rushing off to start a war. We don't need another war in Iran. We need to end the war in Iraq and fully fund the redeployment of American troops so that they may be reunited with their families in the United States. We need to use our funds to support them, protect them, and bring

them home. And we need to begin to move forward to address the real issues with regard to Iran and begin to take the military option off of the table, because our President, this country always has the military option, and it makes no sense to use this or to talk about it if we truly intend to reduce tensions and look for some form of global peace and security.

Thank you, again, Congresswoman WATERS for calling us together today.

Ms. WATERS. I would like to thank the gentlewoman from California for her consistent and persistent leadership on this issue of war in Iraq, and I thank her for coming to the floor this evening to help sound the bell against a possible march to war with Iran.

We have been joined by another one of our colleagues who too has been consistent in his opposition to this war. From the very day that he first came to this chamber, he made it clear where he stood on this war. He has joined with us on the floor on many other occasions and it is a constant part of his agenda wherever he is to remind people that we are in a war that makes no sense, where lives are being lost, and hopes and dreams are being dashed.

He brings a special kind of understanding about what is going on because of his familiarity with the Arab nations and with Islam, and he has done a wonderful job of helping to teach and introduce to the Members of this Congress other cultures and helping us to understand how they operate, what they are all about, and helping us to gain respect for those that sometimes are singled out for war, when, of course, problems and issues could be handled with diplomacy.

I am proud to yield time to Representative KEITH ELLISON to sound the alarm.

□ 2200

Mr. ELLISON. I would like to thank you, Congressman WATERS and Congressman LEE. Before I got to Congress I thought both of you just were towering heroes of peace. Now that I have been here and had the chance to get to know both of you, I am certain that I was right from the very first impression I had of you. Thank you for standing up and calling this special order tonight.

The point I would like to make is simply this. We see in Iran a country we have not had any open diplomatic relationships with since 1979, except for brief moments around IEDs last summer. The meetings have not been continued, and, in essence, we have had no real diplomatic relationships with Iran in many, many years.

Many Americans don't remember the day when we did have relationships with Iran. Yet, despite all these years of having no diplomatic ties to Iran, no open communications, channels of communications, it really has not solved any of the problems. Not talking has not helped.

I want to join with Representative WATERS and Representative LEE in calling for an open dialogue, unconditional bilateral dialogue. Dialogue is not a gift, dialogue is not a present, dialogue is not a reward.

Dialogue is a tool that can help us stabilize the world, bring peace to millions and millions of people all over the world. Dialogues should not be used as some sort of a gift. It doesn't make sense for any nation to say capitulate to our demands, and then we will talk to you. The very purpose of negotiation is to say, let's talk, and the first agenda item could be serious problems we have with one another.

But the start is talking, unconditional talking, talking with a clear agenda in mind, talking with no illusions about differences. But talking, nonetheless, is something that I think we need, and we need it now.

I want to say that our effort to isolate Iran by not talking to Iran, reminds me of our effort of trying to isolate Cuba by not talking to Cuba. Now everybody in the world does business with Cuba except the United States. American farmers wanting to sell grain, Cubans want to buy stuff from the U.S., people wanting to see family, those things are hampered because we are the only ones in the world maintaining this policy of nondialogue. I fear that we could end up in the same way with Iran.

Let me just point out an article in the Times online from March 3, 2008. The headline is, ''Four kisses, then the band played: the day former foes became friends.''

It starts out describing a meeting between Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Nouri al-Maliki. It goes on to talk about how a young girl dressed in a white dress clutched a bouquet of flowers as she waited with a small boy in a smart suit to greet President Ahmadinejad of Iran, who began a historic visit to Iraq.

Earlier today, we heard a speaker who I won't name say that, oh, the United States needs to get with China and Russia to isolate Iran. China and Russia, we can't even get Iraq to isolate Iran.

We can't even get Iraq, a country we have invaded and essentially have taken over, though it does operate under the guise of sovereignty, we can't even get them to say don't talk to Iran. They have open relationships with Iran and are building them more and stronger every day. It doesn't make any sense.

Now, it's not just Iraq that has a welcome mat for Iran. But let me just say that when Americans, Members of Congress go to Iraq, all of us know we go into military aircraft that takes evasive maneuvers into Baghdad, because we are concerned about our safety.

This is a fact. So much for isolating Iran from Iraq. Okay, well, then, what about another country, Pakistan. We send a lot of money to Pakistan. Yet Pakistan announced in a March 5, 2008 article, the Times of India, Iran, on Wednesday, said it was ''ready to sign the India-Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline deal,'' but technical issues between the two are hindering the process.

''We are ready to sign the agreement as soon as possible,'' Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs said. ''Everything is okay from our side. There are some technical issues between India and Pakistan,'' he said.

''The India-Pakistan-Iran pipeline, which is dubbed as the 'Peace Pipeline,' is stuck over issues such as price and transition fees.''

So much for isolating Iran from Pakistan and India. All right, so Iraq, they are talking to them, Iran, Pakistan and India are talking, but, okay, maybe we can still get Russia and China, countries that have militaries, countries that have economies, countries that have been freestanding and independent for many, many, many, many, many years.

Okay, what about Afghanistan? Isn't that country essentially a failed state which we invaded and kicked out the Taliban and now are trying to reconstruct today?

''In the electricity substation just outside of Herat, western Afghanistan, there's the loud hum of power—Iranian power,'' that's right. ''More electricity reaches Herat than the city can use, but the industrial park just across the road from the NATO military base is putting it to good use.

''Small plastic bottles of fizzy orange juice shuffle along the conveyor belt to be labeled and packed—the building is noticeably Iranian in design and the markings on the machinery show exactly which country helped these Afghan businessmen.

''The camels grazing outside cautiously cross the fast, straight, asphalt road—one of the best roads in Afghanistan stretching 120km to the border.

''Soon a railway will link Afghanistan to Europe, or so boasts the Iranian government.''

I would just mention, with a quick Google search, Iraq, India, Pakistan and, now, Afghanistan are all coalescing economically with Iran. We are not talking to Iran. We don't talk to Iran. We don't want to try to get into that market of 70 million people. We don't want to try to open up diplomatic ties and work on issues.

We are not trying to solve this nuclear conflict with dialogue, discussion and open conversation. We are just trying to isolate them, but nothing suggested we are being successful at doing that.

The fact is maybe isolation of Iran is not the right tactic. Maybe the right tactic is to try to talk to them, to try to build a better relationship, to try to have cultural exchange, try to have exchange of views, different though they may be, with an eye toward a more peaceful world, with an eye toward a world in which people can have security and in which an eye toward which the world can rest and feel their children are safe at night.

The fact is this saber rattling, I remember that it was about maybe 16 months ago that I sat in my first meeting that I ever had with the President, with, I believe, Representative LEE and Representative WATERS. I think it was Representative LEE who said, are you, Mr. President, planning on hitting Iran? He gave us a sure statement that he was not.

Yet ever since that time, all we have been hearing, time and time again is that Iran is the problem.

I don't know how Iran could be the problem in Iraq without the complicity of the Iraqi government. I mean, I need somebody to correct me on this point because I just don't get it. How can Iran be an issue in Iraq unless Iraq wants them in the country. It just doesn't make any other kind of sense to me, and I need somebody to explain that, because maybe I have just not been in Congress long enough to get it.

Let me just say, I want to move aside now, and I want to thank the two Members who have been leading the charge, along with Congresswoman WOOLSEY, who is recovering from back surgery. I know if she was feeling better she would be right better with you, the triad, the triad for peace. I admire you so much.

Ms. WATERS. Thank you very much, I am so pleased and proud to have been joined by my colleagues here this evening to sound the alarm. Let me say that again, we are sounding the alarm. We are opening up the debate. We are raising the questions. We are challenging this administration on the issue of war with Iran.

We are saying, Mr. President, we have watched, we have listened, and we have learned. We are smarter people when we hear talk about war, when we hear accusations being made. When we hear a march to war we now recognize it for what it is. It is a given that we have this knowledge that we have acquired since we have been here since the start of the war with Iraq. We do not intend to sit idly by without opening up the discussion, without making the challenge, without raising the questions.

As I said, prior to the opening lines of the presentation that was just given by Congresswoman BARBARA LEE, there were signs of war that have been identified, not only by some of the experts that we have been talking to, but by those who have been writing and watching what has been going on.

As I mentioned before, there is talk, and there are news articles.

U.S. News & World Report, published on March 11, title, ''6 Signs the U.S. May Be Headed for War in Iran.'' Let me repeat that, U.S. News & World Report published on March 11 titled ''6 Signs the U.S. May Be Headed for War in Iran.''

Warships off of Lebanon, with the Army fully engaged in Iraq, much the contingency planning for possible military action has fallen to the Navy, which has looked at the use of carrier-based war planes and sea launch missiles as the weapons to destroy Iran's air defenses and nuclear infrastructure.

''Two U.S. warships took up positions off Lebanon earlier this month, replacing the USS Cole. The deployment was said to signal U.S. concern over the political stalemate in Lebanon and the influence of Syria in that country. But the United States also would want its warships in the eastern Mediterranean in the event of military action against Iran to keep Iranian ally Syria in check and to help provide air cover to Israel against Iranian missile reprisals. One of the newly deployed ships, the USS Ross, is an Aegis guided missile destroyer, a top system missile defense against air attacks.''

This article goes on to talk about ''Vice President Cheney's peace trip: Cheney, who is seen as a leading hawk on Iran, is going on what is described as a Mid East trip to try to give a boost to stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. But he has also scheduled two other stops: One, Oman, is a key military and ally and logistics hub for military operations in the Persian Gulf. It also faces Iran across the narrow, vital Strait of Hormuz, the vulnerable oil transit choke point into and out of the Persian Gulf that Iran has threatened to blockade in the event of war. Cheney is also going to Saudi Arabia, whose support would be sought before any military action given its ability to increase oil supplies, if Iran's oil is cut off. Back in March, 2002, Cheney made a high-profile Mid East trip to Saudi Arabia and other nations that officials said at the time was about diplomacy to Iraq and not war, which began a year later.''

Vice President CHENEY has been on that trip, as we pretty well know, based on the advanced intelligence revealed by this very, very well-placed article.

They go on to talk about the Israeli air strike on Syria.

□ 2215

Israel's air strike deep in Syria last October was reported to have targeted a nuclear-related facility, but details have remained sketchy, and some experts have been skeptical that Syria had a covert nuclear program.

An alternative scenario floating in Israel and Lebanon is that the real purpose of the strike was to force Syria to switch on the targeted electronics for newly received Russian anti-aircraft defenses. The location of the strike is seen as on a likely flight path to Iran. That is also crossing the friendly Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq. Knowing the electronic signatures of the defensive systems is necessary to reduce the risk for warplanes heading to targets in Iran.

They go on to give the other identification markers that should be watched and should be vetted.

Israeli comments. Israeli President Shimon Peres said earlier this month that Israel will not consider unilateral action to stop Iran from getting a nuclear bomb. In the past, though, Israeli officials have quite consistently said that they are prepared to act alone if that becomes necessary to ensure that Iran does not cross a nuclear weapons threshold. Was Peres speaking for himself, or has President Bush given the Israelis an assurance that they won't have to act alone?

Israel's war with Hezbollah. While this seems a bit old, Israel's July 2006 war in Lebanon against Iranian-backed Hezbollah forces was seen at the time as a step that Israel would want to take if it anticipated a clash with Iran. The radical Shiite group is seen not only as a threat on its own, but also as a possible Iranian surrogate force in the event of war with Iran. So it was important for Israel to push Hezbollah forces back from their positions on Lebanon's border with Israel and to do enough damage to Hezbollah's Iranian-supplied arsenals to reduce its capabilities. Since then, Hezbollah has been able to rearm through a United Nations force that polices a border buffer zone in southern Lebanon.

So as you can see, there is quite a bit of reason to be concerned about the administration's saber-rattling towards Iran. There is no way to prove their intentions, and I hope we are wrong, but we really can't afford to be wrong.

Another encounter like in January between the U.S. Navy and an Iranian speedboat could be used as an excuse for retaliation similar to the Gulf of Tonkin incident that began the Vietnam War. The White House would simply claim that we were ''provoked'' and were defending ourselves.

I would like to stop at this time and yield time to the gentlelady from Houston, Texas, who has been consistent in her work with the Out-of-Iraq Caucus in an attempt to bring our soldiers home. It is with great pleasure that I yield to Congresswoman JACKSON-LEE.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I thank the distinguished chairwoman, MAXINE WATERS. I would say I am delighted to be part of the Out-of-Iraq Caucus, but that is not the appropriate term. I am delighted, however, to join my colleagues, Chairwoman WATERS and Congresswoman BARBARA LEE and the other members who have participated and submitted their statement.

I wanted to join my colleagues because it has been a very long journey. I remind Congresswoman WATERS in the fall of 2002, we were working hard for people to study the resolution being put before them. We garnered some 133-plus votes to vote in opposition to the then-Iraq resolution.

I want to speak constitutionally and why this special order and the position that Members are taking in opposing any preemptive attack or invasion of Iran and standing solidly against the perceived authority that the President may have.

Frankly, if we look at the 2002 resolution, we will find that it can be assessed that the President's authority

has expired. Saddam Hussein is no longer there. Elements of the resolution required that. The government has changed. There has been a democratic election, and there may be some question as to whether the adherence of the U.N. Security Council resolution is still part of that 2002 war resolution. But I would argue that there have been so many resolutions in the U.N. we could also concede the point that we have protected or adhered to those resolutions.

I truly believe that we are at such a point in history that any actions by the President would warrant extreme actions; or I should not suggest extreme, I should suggest constitutional actions by this Congress. It may warrant raising issues of impeachment. The reason I say that is to use the War Powers Act in a way that ignores the constitutional privilege and right of this Congress to declare war, I believe, is not doing well by the American people.

We already know the results of a war without end, the Iraq war, that is costing $339 million a day, that has already gone past a trillion dollars, that has seen 9,500 of our soldiers injured or maimed, sometimes injured or maimed for life, to see 4,000-plus die. It is a war without end.

Frankly, the question has to become what is the President's goal and intent if he has an idea that Iran is the next target. Has he looked to diplomacy and looked to the question of working with China or Russia to contain Iran? Has he looked at negotiation with the individuals in Iran who really may be interested in some sort of resolution? Is he buying into the constant refrain that Iran is providing the weapons in Iraq? Is he also looking to the perceived friendship between the Iraq government and the Iran government? None of the above.

What I sense in the administration is a percolating attempt to attack Iran, and that percolating attempt based upon the representation of nuclear weapons. I don't want Iran to possess the capacity to engage and to utilize nuclear weapons, nor am I interested in protecting an Iran that has been hostile to the world. I am not interested in coddling terrorists. But we can clearly see that the policies in Iraq have not deterred the terrorists. They have only grown the terrorists. And I would question whether the only way to create peace in the Mid East is to again attack another country in the Mid East.

It is important that we continue to engage for two distinct states, the Palestinian and Israel negotiations. I would have hoped that this administration would have spent their time following through on the road map that the President announced some few years back. I believe that we were distracted in Iraq. We were distracted in Iraq from Afghanistan and from solving the Palestinian-Israeli question.

So I rise today to join my colleagues and say not on my watch, absolutely not. The statistics of the war in Iraq are devastating. Yes, I am prepared today to declare a military success in Iraq. A military success means that our soldiers on one and two and three and four redeployments have done everything the Commander in Chief has asked them to do. Saddam Hussein is gone, there have been democratic elections, and U.N. resolutions adhered to. Bring those soldiers home, declare a military success, and make the statement to the American people that we will never recklessly invade another country.

Iran is somewhat different from Iraq; and, therefore, may have a different story to tell. It may not be the easy route that they might have thought Iraq was. But frankly, my view is that we have crossed the constitutional bounds and that as I yield back to the distinguished chairwoman, I simply believe that we have come to a crisis point that this Congress must accept its duty and say to the President that no war can be declared without a vote of the United States Congress under the Constitution, and I would join with my colleagues, the chairman of the Human Right Subcommittee on International Issues of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Chairman DELAHUNT, to suggest that the War Powers Act should be amended and should now be that it can only be utilized by a President when the Nation is under imminent attack and when there is necessity to go forward to protect our citizens. Other than that, that War Powers Act should be amended, it should be drawn down, and we should stand with the Constitution. No invasion of Iran on my watch, and constitutional implications for the President of the United States if such attack is proposed.

I thank the distinguished gentlelady for her leadership in the Out-of-Iraq Caucus.

I join my colleagues here tonight to discuss a very important issue: the possibility that this Administration may be intent on leading us into another war in the Middle East, this time against Iran. I would like to thank my colleague Congresswoman WATERS for organizing this special order on Iran. Even as we remain engaged in a war in Iraq to which there is no military solution, this Administration has begun beating the drum for war with Iran. I strongly urge my congressional colleagues to send a clear message to President Bush that he does not currently have authorization to use military force against Iran.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that using a military strike against Iran would be a colossal error. As a nation, we are still paying an unacceptably high price for this Administration's ill-advised and ill-executed invasion of Iraq in March 2003. In 2002, when I voted against the Joint Resolution to Authorize the Use of United States Armed Forces Against Iraq, I did so because I believed that this would be a war without end. I believed this resolution would trap us in a conflict that, like the Vietnam War, would consume American resources and lives without tangible yield. Unfortunately for the people of both this country and Iraq, this has proven true.

As a nation, we have already paid an enormous price for the war in Iraq. We have squandered an exponentially increasing amount of money, and, worst of all, lost an unacceptably large number of American lives. However, the over 4,000 U.S. casualties and the $3,919 per second ($123.6 billion per year) we are spending in Iraq have bought neither peace nor security.

Mr. Speaker, even as our troops are caught in the midst of instability and civil war in Iraq, the President has begun the march to war with Iran. We cannot compound the mistakes of the Iraq war with the even bigger mistake of opening up a second military conflict in the Middle East. And yet, the Administration has begun to set the stage for a U.S. attack on Iranian military or nuclear facilities by issuing strong statements about Iran's intervention in Iraq, and using inflammatory rhetoric against Iran in a similar fashion to the run-up to the Iraq war.

In recent weeks, the Administration has increasingly referred to negative behavior of the Iranian regime. Despite contrary findings by the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), Bush has increasingly stated that Iran is building nuclear weapons. The Administration has also cited Iran as a cause of instability in Iraq, and has argued that Iran is killing U.S. soldiers and supplying weapons, training, and funding.

I certainly believe that the current state of affairs in Iran, and specifically those issues relating to U.S. sanctions on Iran and the security of the region, are extremely important and in desperate need of discussion. As a Member of Congress, I find Iran's support of terrorist organizations, pursuit of nuclear weapons, and dismal human rights record to be extremely worrisome. However, I am also concerned by what appears to be movement by this Administration toward yet another war in the Gulf region, without having first exhausted diplomatic means of addressing any conflicts.

I have long been an advocate of a free, independent, and democratic Iran. I believe in an Iran that holds free elections, follows the rule of law, and is home to a vibrant civil society; an Iran that is a responsible member of the region and the international community, particularly with respect to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. An Iran that, unfortunately, we do not see today.

The only effective way to achieve lasting peace and prosperity in the region, along with bringing about reforms in Iran's polity, is to assist the Iranian people in their quest to achieve political, social, and religious liberty. Every government can be judged with the way in which it treats its ethnic and religious minorities, and the current Iranian government gets a failing grade for its treatment of its many and diverse minorities.

The controversy surrounding Iran's procurement of nuclear energy is cause for great concern; however, the administration's avoidance of any and all diplomatic relations with Iran is cause for greater alarm. Moreover, the current rhetoric from the Bush Administration regarding war with Iran is both counterproductive and highly inflammatory. While full diplomatic, political, and economic relations between the U.S. and Iran cannot be normalized unless and until enforceable safeguards are put in place to prevent the weaponization of Iran's nuclear program, these policy objectives should not constitute pre-conditions for any diplomatic dialogue.

Establishing a diplomatic dialogue with the Government of Iran and deepening relationships with the Iranian people would help foster greater understanding between the people of Iran and the people of the United States and would enhance the stability and the security of the Persian Gulf region. Doing so would reduce the threat of the proliferation or use of nuclear weapons in the region, while advancing other U.S. foreign policy objectives in the region. The significance of establishing and sustaining diplomatic relations with Iran cannot be over-emphasized. Avoidance and military intervention cannot be the means through which we resolve this looming crisis.

Mr. Speaker, Middle East experts have repeatedly stated that a U.S. attack on Iran would have disastrous consequences. Among possible outcomes, many experts agree, would be an Iranian counter-attack on U.S. and Israeli interests in the region or throughout the world. Such an attack could also lead to a greater Middle East War, and would undoubtedly bring with it a greater loss of life and financial burden.

Mr. Speaker, now is the time that we need to be looking to ending one Middle East conflict, not to beginning another. We need to work to rebuild our standing in the international community, not to raise further enmity in the Middle East and beyond by attacking another nation. I strongly urge my colleagues to speak out against any potential military strike in Iran.

Ms. WATERS. I thank the gentlelady from Texas, and I am very, very appreciative of the fact that the gentlelady is one of the Members of Congress that we can always count on to confront the challenges that we are confronted with, particularly as it relates to this war, and at this time I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE).

Ms. LEE. I, too, want to commend the gentlelady from Texas for raising some of the constitutional issues that we have to grapple with each and every day.

I would like to talk briefly about the issue of the preemptive strike which is central to this administration's foreign and military policy.

In essence what the Bush administration has decided is that it is all right, and actually it is their standard, to be able to use force not necessarily in the face of an imminent threat, but it is all right and it is a policy of this administration to be able to use force to prevent a future perceived threat. All of this is couched in this global war on terror where oftentimes they believe they do have a blank check to use force wherever they want to go in the world.

When you look at what they are trying to do now in Iraq with regard to the security agreements, they are trying to negotiate a permanent military presence in Iraq without even coming back to Congress to try to get the authority to do that. I think minimally, and we have several bills that have been introduced into this body, that basically just say before the administration decides to use force or take military actions or strike Iran, minimally they must come to Congress to seek authorization.

Well, for the life of me, this is the People's House. I cannot figure out why we cannot have a resolution as basic as that come to this body so we can pass that. I think that should be a minimum standard to protect the American people from first of all what could be total chaos. Secondly, when you just look at the expenditure of resources and what a possible preemptive strike could cost as it relates to Iran in terms of treasury, blood, our young men and women and also our financial resources. We may just be a few voices in the wilderness crying out tonight, but we are crying out very loudly and asking the American people to look at these signs because as Congresswoman WATERS said, we are sounding the alarm so we can stop what appears to be on the horizon.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. If the gentlelady would yield, I just came back from Iraq, and you are so right. After going and I think getting a very wide view of the status of affairs there, clearly as we have understood or understand, the government is leaning on the captains of our military. Ranks at the captain level are like the government. There is no seeming intent or plan that would cease the Maliki government from leaning on the United States military, using it as a crutch. So there is no evidence that suggests that they don't intend to have permanent military bases. In fact, every indication from the presentations of the military and others is that they would have it. I believe they are in violation of maybe not the rules of this House, but certainly the respect of the three branches of government.

Finally, I would say that I have legislation that declares a military success, that lists the criteria under which our soldiers went in, and moves it to a diplomatic surge. We should not fool ourselves. The intent is a permanent base that allows them to do the preemptive strike that you are speaking of against any country in the Mideast, and in particular Iran. I believe we have to stop it now, and we have to stop it forever, and we have to lean on the Constitution because we have seen over the last couple of years the Constitution ignored, and that simply cannot stand in this place called America.

□ 2230

Ms. WATERS. Thank you very much to both SHEILA JACKSON-LEE and BARBARA LEE for, again, their constant and consistent struggle working in this House against the war.

Mr. Speaker, and Members, press reports have given us some indications of the thrust of current White House directed planning. The strike would be against Iranian terrorist facilities, the Revolutionary Guard units and/or nuclear production facilities, a limited air strike operation with the objective of changing Iranian behavior. Those who argue for the strike are saying there will be very few U.S. casualties and very few Iranian civilian casualties. Nevertheless, we all know that U.S. strikes against Iran would be disastrous.

Middle East experts generally agree that Iran would respond to a U.S. strike by attacking U.S. and Israeli interests throughout the region and possibly globally. These strikes would lead to a greater Middle East war, including greater loss of life, financial burden, over stretch of our military and worse.

We're sounding the alarm this evening and we are sending a message to the President of the United States of America and to the Vice President, particularly now to the Vice President, who, when he was reminded by an ABC News reporter that the recent polls show that two-thirds of Americans say the fight in Iraq is not worth it, his response, ''and so?''

Well, Mr. Vice President, our ''and so'' to you tonight is, and so the American people do not want us to continue this war in Iraq and to air strike in Iran. We're sounding the alarm. And I will yield time to the gentleman who just left the Speaker's seat to complete this colloquy that we've had here this evening.

Mr. ELLISON. Madam Speaker, I just want to again thank Representatives WATERS and LEE and SHEILA JACKSON LEE.

I just want to make a few quick points. We're under no illusions. I think that by this special order, I don't think anyone intends to excuse bellicose, inflammatory remarks that have been made by the President of Iran. There's no excusing that. But you don't deal with bellicose remarks with a war. You deal with bellicose remarks by issuing a statement condemning those statements, but not with a war. And I don't think any bellicose statements or inflammatory remarks by the President of Iran could ever justify an attack which will result in the massive loss of life.

I also want to say that a strike against Iran, no one can predict what the consequences of that will be. Will it excite the Shiia community in Pakistan, of which 30 percent of the people are Shiia there? What will it do to Afghanistan?

Again, Iran is providing electricity in Afghanistan in an effective way, much, much more than other countries have done. Again, Kabul and Kandajar are not electrified 100 percent of the time.

What will happen in Lebanon? Will that inflame another war such as the one in the summer of 2006? That could inflame the region, and no one knows whether bombs will start falling from other parts of the region.

This war against Iran, a strike against Iran has no clear outcome. It is a very bad idea. And I think that what we must do is pursue diplomatic negotiations, and remember that negotiation is not a reward, it's not a gift, it's not a present; it's a tool for the security of the world.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, and Members, I am pleased that we have

taken time from our schedules to come to the floor tonight to sound the alarm. The saber rattling is going on by this administration. The remarks that we're hearing day in and day out are more accusatory toward Iran. We are made to believe that we are somehow being placed at a great threat by Iran.

And so we know where this is going. We know what this means, and we're saying, we must not rule out diplomacy. We must believe that we can settle differences by way of diplomacy.

We know that we've still got work to do on Iraq. We've still got to make many Members of this House feel comfortable with the idea that they can confront their President, that they can still be very, very patriotic as they stand up against war and bringing our soldiers home. We know that the work has to be done, but we've got to add to that work the fact that we can stop an airstrike on Iran and we can stop the notion that somehow we must send more soldiers in.

AN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE ON THE WAR IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ELLISON). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. GILCHREST. I thank the Speaker for the time. And Mr. Speaker, what I would like to talk about today, and it's actually a pretty good follow-up to the previous special order by Ms. WATERS, who is a classmate of mine, going back to, I was going to say 1891, but going back to 1991, MAXINE and I came in as freshman and we've been here now for the past 17 years. And the previous discussion about the Iraq war, the relationship with Iran, I think, leads fairly well into the special order that I am prepared to give tonight.

Mr. Speaker, what I would like to do is to give a presentation on the war in Iraq, the Middle East, an American perspective on the Cold War that engulfed the world for many decades, an American perspective on the Cold War and how it impacted the Middle East, the present crisis in the Middle East and Iraq, from an American perspective, and an American perspective on the way forward.

When I say an American perspective, tonight, Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to relate an idea that the United States, for the past 50 years, has seen itself not as a lone super power in the world, but as a Nation, as Walt Whitman described, the race of races, the United States, the melting pot.

The United States has engaged itself in the fiber of the international community, and has not seen itself as a lone ranger in the international arena of conflict, of economy, of culture, of exchanges. The United States has seen itself as an integrated part of the international community in much of its history. And so, tonight, when I talk about the U.S. view of the war in Iraq, it is to illustrate the complexity of that conflict, the complexity of the intrigue and violence that we are now seeing, the complexity of the way forward, but, in fact, there is a way forward.

So I want to give a brief history covering about the last 60 years. And what I would like to share with the American people, Mr. Speaker, among many, many periodicals, many books, many resources, I'd like to share ideas tonight from seven books.

The first one is Violent Politics by William Polk, who served in the Kennedy and Johnson Administration. Violent politics is not what we see here on the House floor. Violent politics is when diplomacy fails and war begins, war usually that engulfs communities or regions, not in what we saw in World War II, but in insurgencies, where there are no munitions factories to bomb, there are no supply lines to bomb, there are no massive armies to bomb or thousands of tanks to take out, but violent politics as it envelops regions in insurgencies.

And is there an effective counter insurgency to that particular break down in diplomacy?

We're seeing an insurgency in the Middle East, in the Middle East, in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and certainly in other places. In Violent Politics, William Polk gives an idea of how an insurgency actually works, and how you can deal with an insurgency like we're experiencing now in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The other book is Fiasco by Thomas Ricks. How did we get involved in Iraq? What were the mistakes, the very clear, obvious mistakes over the planning in the first few years?

The next one is by Steven Kinzer, All the Shah's Men; America's relationship with a large country that is seeking to have influence for self-defense purposes, mainly, the country of Iran.

The next one is Trita Parsi who wrote Treacherous Alliance. What is the arrangement or what has been the arrangement or the alliance and sometimes the verbal conflict between Israel and Iran?

The next is Tony Zinni, who was Commander of CENTCOM for a number of years, spent much of his military Marine career in the Middle East. He wrote a book about the Battle for Peace. Tony Zinni, like President Eisenhower, knows you need a strong military, strong intelligence, and consensus in dialogue and diplomacy. That plays a vital role in actions that the United States is involved in.

An interesting book called Human Options by Norman Cousins. What kind of decisions do we make? Why do we make them? And do we know all the options that are before us?

The last book is a little bit older. It's about the Vietnam war, called Why Vietnam? How did we get involved in that conflict? It's written by a man called Archimedes Patty, who was among the first Americans to meet Ho Chi Minh in 1945; sent there by this government as the head of the OSS or the Office of Strategic Services, which was the forerunner of the CIA, to find out how we can find people in Indochina, to see, to gather intelligence about the Japanese troop movements in that region of the world since we couldn't get any intelligence from the French or the Chinese or anybody else.

And Archimedes Patty discovered this man, the head of the Viet Minh, known as Ho Chi Minh that was willing to help and in fact did help the United States gather intelligence on Japanese troop movements in Indochina; helped many, many, many Americans, downed pilots and so on, and allied himself with the United States in 1945, hoping to get help from the United States, not from Russia, not from China, to gain his independence from French colonial rule. A fabulous book that shows the intricacies of how diplomacy works sometimes, and how the bureaucracy doesn't always work too well when communicating those kinds of pieces of information.

Seven books, Violent Politics, Fiasco, All the Shah's Men, Treacherous Alliance, Battle for Peace, Human Options, Why Vietnam. Sounds like a tall order.

But, Mr. Speaker, I can imagine the American public, who have some dissatisfaction, some apprehension, some anger, some wanting a ray of hope about the conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan, I can see the American public, over the next many months, turning the television off every single night for 1 or 2 hours, every night, and dedicating themselves to help the solution, the American solution, the American solution of how to solve this difficult problem in the Middle East, by becoming informed, by finding out information, by becoming more knowledgeable about these issues, not waiting for the government that people sometimes assume is competent, but being a part of the process.

Now, I mentioned the book Human Options by Norman Cousins. And I want to give you two quotes out of that book to frame this discussion tonight. The first one is, ''Knowledge is the solvent for danger.'' You want to solve a problem? You need a couple of things. You need initiative, of course. You're going to turn the TV off and read these books. You need initiative. And then as you read this material, some of it is pretty intricate, exquisite detail, complicated. But you need some ingenuity and intellect to figure it out. And you have that.

But what this assignment will give to you is knowledge. It'll give you information. It'll give you a depth of information so that, you, as an individual, can become more competent to share this with your fellow Americans and maybe even write your congressman.

The other one in Human Options, the quote, is ''History is a vast early warning system.'' We know more about

Vietnam, or we should today, than we did 40 years ago, 50 years ago when we became embroiled in that tragic conflict.

And we say we should have had, you know, it's okay to say it now, and hindsight is better than foresight. We've had 40 years of experience to know what was good and what was bad about that conflict. But I will tell you that when the United States became involved in that violent conflict, we already had all the information we need to know. We needed to understand the history of our relationship with Indochina, with China, and their relationship, Vietnam, with the rest of the world. But we didn't bother to understand or listen carefully enough to what Archimedes Patty was saying when he spoke to Ho Chi Minh. We didn't know the history of Vietnam in 1945 in 1965, and we should have.

□ 2245

History is a vast early warning system. We owe it to the soldiers in Iraq, we owe it to the soldiers in Afghanistan, we owe it to eighth graders and ninth graders in high school today who will graduate in just a few years and should not have to be involved in a conflict that, if we put our intellect together with enough knowledge, this can be solved.

So I would suggest to the American people, Mr. Speaker, that every single night, if you're a patriotic American, you want to solve this problem. You want to commit yourself to bringing the troops home in a responsible fashion, find some source of information, read it objectively.

You know, Rudyard Kipling, the writer and poet from Great Britain, traveled the world, spent much time in India, had a son who died in World War I in northern France in a violent struggle. And to express his sorrow, Rudyard Kipling said, why did young men die because old men lied?

I want to paraphrase that today. Old men should talk before they send young men to die. We should talk. We should be knowledgeable. We should spend the time to understand the nature of history, the nature of conflict.

Let's take a short walk back in history to the Cold War and some of its successes and failures.

President Eisenhower and the leader of the Soviet Union, Premier Khrushchev, Nikita Khrushchev, bitter enemies, faced off with thousands of nuclear weapons all armed, ready to go at a moment's notice. We know that Khrushchev told the United States and the Western powers many, many times that he was going to bury us. One time in the United Nations, we remember this, Nikita Khrushchev took his shoes off, pounded the podium, looked right at the western diplomats—ours was Henry Cabot Lodge at the time—pointed his finger and said, we will bury you.

What was Eisenhower's response during the time that he was President of the United States to these kinds of threats from the Soviet Union, from Nikita Khrushchev? Open dialogue. He invited President Khrushchev to come and tour American cities, ride on American trains, go to our suburbs, visit our farms, visit our schools. President Eisenhower's response was dialogue.

What happened in 1962 when it was discovered by our spy planes that Cuba, Fidel Castro, had deployable nuclear weapons in Cuba 90 miles off the coast of Florida? What was Kennedy's response? Call the Kremlin. Have a dialogue. Negotiate with the Soviet Union. Talk to Nikita Khrushchev. What happened? The weapons were removed; we avoided war.

China, Communist China, said that they would not mind if half the population of China was wiped off the face of the earth as long as they destroyed the United States. Violent rhetoric pointed at the United States. What was President Nixon's response to Mao Zedong? Nixon went to China. Nixon opened the dialogue that continues today.

Is China today a model democracy? No. Does China have human rights violations? Yes. Are they well-known? Do we know that they continue to violate freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of religion? Do they continue to violate human rights? The answer is yes. What is our response to China? It's our biggest trading partner. We constantly have a dialogue. The Olympics will be held there. Do we condemn the Chinese for human rights violations? How do we deal with it? Do we get ourselves in violent politics? No. The answer is dialogue.

Those were our successes. They continue to be a struggle. They continue to be a challenge, but we continue to pursue them through dialogue.

What happened in Vietnam? Ho Chi Minh. A tiny old man with slight whiskers who, in 1945, wanted to ally himself with the United States to gain sovereignty from under the French colonial rule. What happened in the 1950s? Senator McCarthy talked about communism. John Foster Douglas wanted to contain Communism. We somehow didn't listen to the people in the State Department or the CIA. We somehow didn't follow that path to dialogue with Khrushchev or dialogue that got ourselves out of the Cuban missile crisis or dialogue with Mao Zedong.

So what happened because there wasn't a dialogue? 58,000 Americans died. Hundreds of thousands were wounded. Post-traumatic stress syndrome still affects thousands of Vietnam veterans. Well more than a million Vietnamese died because we didn't have the dialogue.

It's time, Mr. Speaker, for the American public to really understand the complexities of international politics. The dialogue, communications, consensus can be a strong and powerful tool to enhance America's interest. America does not become stronger by putting more people in cemeteries as a result of these violent conflicts.

Let's take a look at the Middle East, the area that we're now dealing with, during the Cold War.

Then, as now, it was a complex place. There was intrigue there, and there was a great deal of violence. Let's look at some of the incidents that the United States has been involved in or was involved in.

In 1953, actually in 1950, Muhammed Mossadeq was a duly elected Prime Minister of Iran running a secular country moving toward democracy. But because of some misunderstandings, believe it or not, between what the British Petroleum Company, called the Anglo Persian Petroleum Company, which is now today BP, British Petroleum, they had some strong disagreements with Muhammed Mossadeq. The United States, under John Foster Dulles, was thinking, although they were wrong, that Muhommad Mossadeq had a strong relationship with the Soviet Union and he might turn to communism.

In 1953, we were at the very early stages of the Cold War, and a lot of things were going on. But as a result of some misunderstanding, the United States planned a coup inside its embassy in Tehran, and it turned out to be a very violent, very bloody coup in which their duly elected prime minister was removed from office, put under house arrest for the rest of his life. And we put in the Shah. The United States put in the Shah. In 1953, we broke down a relationship that we had had with Iran for many, many years.

The United States was looked upon as being the beacon of hope around the world by many people, including Iranians, hoping the United States would help them gain some equality with the British extracting oil from Iran. In 1953, we started a violent coup in Iran.

What happened in 1979? Most of us would remember. In 1979, there was a revolution in Iran. The United States embassy in Tehran was taken over by the Revolutionary Guard, and all relationships with the United States were broken. But it's interesting that the American embassy was taken over in Tehran, the same embassy that planned the coup in 1953. That was a mistake. We lit a slow fuse in 1953 that blew up in 1979.

What about the Soviet Union in the Middle East during the Cold War? It's like a roller coaster ride. Sometimes they were allied with certain Arab nations; sometimes they were not allied with certain nations. Most Arab nations always distrusted the Soviet Union because they were a country of atheists, and Arab nations were a country under Islam.

How about Israel during the Cold War? It's interesting, and you ought to read the book ''Treacherous Alliance'' by Trita Parsi, to understand the nature of the relationship between Israel and Iran between 1948 and 1991. Israel

and Iran had many enemies in common. They were both enemies of the Soviet Union. They were both enemies of many Arab states, especially Iraq under Saddam Hussein. And as a result of that, because they had the same enemies—and Iran is a Persian country, does not speak Arabic, speaks Farsi, it is an Islamic State, but Israel and Iran had many similar enemies. And so they had secret arrangements: Oil for technology. That went on to 1991.

Russia invaded Afghanistan from 1980 and the war went on to just about 1989. They call it Russia's Vietnam. Iran and Iraq went to war in 1980 to 1988. There were more people killed in the Iran-Iraq War than all of the Americans killed in World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. More people killed between 1980 and 1988 between two neighboring states. The blood, the bitterness, the fear, remains to this day.

1979, Egypt decided that they were going to recognize Israel, and Egypt became more of an American ally than a Soviet ally. Jordan followed not far behind.

What I'm trying to present to you is that the Middle East, in most of recent history, has been a place of intrigue, a place of complexity, and a place of violence. What do we see now today in the Middle East?

We know that in the three great religions faith is very important. It's a part of everyone's life. The three great religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. And in many places in the Middle East, the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims live together. There is even intermarriage. The children go to school, and when they learn about their faith, they just move to different classrooms. When they learn about math, they move back to the math classroom together or the history classroom together. And this is throughout much of the Middle East.

So there is a strong religious component. Faith is important in their life. But in many communities, the three great religions live side by side, and for the most part, harmoniously.

Oil is a vital component of their economic viability. We know that and the world knows that. The oil exports from the Middle East are extremely vital for their economy, and that's why we have not seen the Gulf of Hormuz, where most of that oil comes out of, we have not seen that, we have not seen any of those countries in the Middle East try to shut that route out.

Today, as in the past, but especially today, the geopolitical balance of power is fractured. What does that mean? That means, which direction is the Middle East going to go?

Mr. Speaker, who is going to have more influence in the Middle East? Will it be Saudi Arabia? Will it be Iran? Will it be Israel? Will it be Russia? Will it be China? Will it be Europe? Will it be the United States? Nobody knows exactly right now. But what we do know is the Middle East has been a focus of America's attention since 9/11, an absolute focus of America's attention mainly because we were attacked, thousands of Americans were killed. We invaded Afghanistan to get rid of the source of the attack, al Qaeda and the Taliban, and then we subsequently invaded Iraq in which we eliminated a brutal dictator, Saddam Hussein. We eliminated a potential for weapons of mass destruction.

We are beginning and we have developed a working Iraqi Government. Iraq has been the focus of America's attention, but how much information do we know about this region, about Iraq?

□ 2300

But again, I would recommend reading especially some of these books to bring us up to date on some of that information.

The Shiites, the Sunnis and the Kurds, the main factions in Iraq, the Shiites and the Sunnis are Muslim, the Kurds are Muslim. What is the difference between the Shiites and the Kurds and the Muslims? Much of it has to do with historic understanding about who would be inheriting Muhammad's role in the Muslim faith. But the average Muslim, I will tell you, whether they're a Sunni, a Shia or a Kurd, the average Muslim wants to live their life in peace, wants human rights for themselves and their family. They want to raise their family.

There is no bitter quarrel among the average Muslim about who's a Sunni or a Shia, who is supposed to inherit the role of Muhammad. The average Muslim wants to live their life in peace. They want human rights. They want justice. They want the rule of law. They want freedom of religion, freedom of thought, freedom of expression. Where the trouble comes with the Islamic faith is with al Qaeda, with the Taliban. Sometimes I would even say with the teachings of Wahhabi, where they confine themselves to a certain monstrous certainty.

Iran, by the way, as do most other Arab countries, oppose the teachings of al Qaeda. They oppose the teachings of Taliban. One of our problems in the Middle East is to find allies, is to have a dialogue with other countries. And I will tell you, when the Taliban took over Afghanistan, just think about this, when the Taliban took over Afghanistan, every country in the world pulled their embassy out except Iran. Iran left its embassy in Kabul. And what did the Taliban soldiers do? They went to the Iranian Embassy in Kabul, pulled out the 11 Iranians, and they shot them, the only embassy left in Kabul. What did the Taliban do? They shot the Iranians. Who helped them? Al Qaeda. Is Iran a friend of these Islamic extremists? No. Is Iran a friend of the Taliban and al Qaeda? No. Is Iran open to discussion about these issues to bring stability? The answer is yes.

There are many differences between these Arab countries, whether it's Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria, Qatar, Amman, Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, you name it. They all have some differences in the way they look at religion and the way they look at their leadership. They're either democracies or they're monarchies or they're dictatorships, but what they have in common is they want stability in that region.

The present crisis, the war in Iraq, the war in Iraq is not World War II. It is not like World War II. There are no munitions factories to bomb anywhere in Iraq like there were in Germany and Japan. There are no standing armies. There are no supply lines. We are fighting an insurgency, a very multi-complex insurgency.

Where are we now? Why is there a sense of urgency to find a resolution, an end to this conflict? We say there's 34,000 casualties. What does that mean, 34,000 American casualties? That means there's more than 4,000 young American soldiers dead. Thirty thousand wounded. What does that mean? That means 30,000 Americans have come back that have been brutally blown up and have lost limbs, been burned severely. Their physical lives are, for the most part, ultimately and absolutely changed. They will never be the same. With courage, they can pick up the pieces of their life and move on with strong families.

There are tens of thousands who have post traumatic problems. I will say that everyone that enters a war zone, 100 percent comes back with post-traumatic stress. Now, what does that mean? That means that the violence that they see, the violence and destruction of explosions, of human bodies being torn to pieces, that image that they see and experience never leaves their memory. They will always remember that. That image never goes away. It just happens that your soldier can deal with it effectively and become a productive citizen and take that image in their mind and figure out how to conduct themselves in a normal fashion so they can lead a good life, they can raise a family, they can have a relationship, they can deal with it. Some cannot. Some are psychologically scarred for a long time to come.

The war so far is costing a little over $600 billion. That's where we are as far as the Treasury is concerned. The American people want a conclusion to the conflict. How are we going to end the war in Iraq?

There is global dissent about our policy at present. There is a struggling Iraqi Government. Are they ready to take over completely with their politics, with their military, with their infrastructure, with their economy? Not quite yet, they aren't. Some of our Arab allies, including Saudi Arabia, our strongest ally in the Middle East, have stated publicly that America's war in Iraq is illegal. That is where we are at this point.

Can we leave Iraq, like some of our generals have suggested; drive them to

Basra, put them on boats and airplanes and bring them home? Many people are suggesting that. But I would remind the American people, Mr. Speaker, of something that General McCaffrey said. We left Mogadishu abruptly, and it was chaos. If we abruptly leave Iraq, that chaos will be multiplied by a thousand times.

When the French began to pull out of Vietnam, they left some military there. And the famous battle of Dien Bien Phu has been retold many times. If we leave Iraq under the present conditions and leave some American troops there, how many should we leave? We don't want another Dien Bien Phu for American soldiers in Iraq.

General Petraeus said there is no military solution in the war in Iraq. Is there a political solution? What is the road ahead?

There is a great deal of talk about elections in October. We really have to work toward that goal. What about a hydrocarbon law? Is there a strong local police force? Is there a strong Iraqi national army? Is there a stable government? How do we achieve these goals, and many more? We don't achieve them with military power alone. That simply is not going to work.

Let's take a look at the way forward. What do we do? Very complicated situation. History, to a certain extent, can be a guiding post to avoid certain obstacles that we don't anticipate, but let's take a look.

Iraq. The United States and the United States military is the skeletal structure upon which the entire Iraqi society rests right now. We are the structure that that government depends upon. If we pulled out, to a large extent, at least for a time, hard to predict, there would be chaos. So we are the skeletal structure upon which the entire Iraqi society rests.

If we just focus on Iraq, though, we understand there is no long-term military solution to its insurgency, there is no basic long-term political solution if we just focus in on Iraq. The United States needs to understand the region and how we impact the region and how we can be interconnected with many of the problems that are there. And that will also begin to help resolve the Iraqi question.

Many of the insurgents in Iraq still are al Qaeda and the Taliban. Many of the recruiting tools to bring more people into that violent extremist movement is the Palestinian-Israel question. So if the United States, and we've already begun that, we've seen the Bush Administration in Annapolis, we've seen some discussions in a number of levels trying to resolve and reconcile the differences between the different factions in Palestine and the different factions in Israel. If the United States becomes an objective arbitrator with the Palestinian-Israel question, we will reduce significantly the number of people that are recruited into the violent Islamic community known as al Qaeda.

Our discussions with Saudi Arabia, that we're not going to abandon the region, Saudi Arabia still has some fear that Iraq could be an Iranian satellite. And Saudi Arabia fears too much Iranian influence in the region. So our discussions with Saudi Arabia are pretty important.

Our discussions with Iraq, obviously, can be very interesting, especially with the Iranians, because the Iraqis have diplomatic relations with the Iranians, and vice versa; Maliki has gone to Tehran, Ahmadinejad has gone to Baghdad. So the Iraqis can see us as being a little closer to their relationship as far as the Iranians are concerned.

Now, the Iranians, obviously, we talked a little bit about the Iran-Iraq war that lasted from 1980 to 1988 and how many hundreds of thousands of Iranians were killed. The Iranians fear the kind of government that could do that again in Iraq.

The differences between the Ba'athist party, the Sunnis, the old Saddam Hussein regime is could that possibly come back? So our relationship, our open dialogue with the Iranians is pretty important.

No one in the Middle East wants too much Russian influence. They remember the old Soviet Union, they remember Afghanistan. They simply don't know if Russia has found its soul yet, so many in the Middle East fear too much Russian influence. Many in the Middle East fear too much Chinese influence because they know China is looking for resources, especially oil.

So the U.S. involved in the Middle East in all these areas, including Syria, including, I will say, Hamas and Hezbollah, it is America's power that gives us the ability to negotiable, to dialogue, to communicate, to find some way to talk to our allies, our friends, and also our enemies in the Middle East. This is not Chamberlain giving away Czechoslovakia. This is the United States, the most powerful country in the world militarily, economically, and with our diplomats, discussing the issues in the Middle East with our friends, our allies, and our enemies, not giving up anything, certainly not giving up territory, not giving in to threats, not giving in to proliferation of nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction. This is the United States, with its power, negotiating its way to find a solution with our strength.

Eisenhower said in the 1950s, and it's true today, the United States' ability to be a super power, to be strong, is a three-legged stool, a strong military, a strong intelligence system, and consensus and dialogue. That's in our arsenal as well, diplomacy, trade, education, technology, social exchanges, science exchanges, cultural exchanges. That's the beacon, that's our strength.

So let's take a look at some ways to resolve this problem. We have the military. People know we're strong. We have the best intelligence in the world. We talked about a military surge about a year ago. Let's take a look at a diplomatic surge, with present and former diplomats in the United States covering the gauntlet in the Middle East to talk about these kinds of reconciliation measures.

International support structure from the international community, that has worked so well for many decades, and integrated security alliance. We have it, we've had it for some time with NATO. We've had it with SEATO, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. We've had it with Latin America, the Organization of American States. The Soviet Union had it. They know how these integrated security alliances work. We are fully aware of the Warsaw Pact, that gave those countries participating a certain amount of strength.

An integrated economic system can help immensely. And I'm not saying that you will have a NATO-type alliance among Middle Eastern countries, but you can begin to discuss an integrated security alliance.

□ 2315

Continue the current military drawdown of American troops that is now ongoing strategically and in a responsible manner. Continue to work toward a reconciliation among the different factions in the Shia community, the Sunni community, and the Kurds. And we have seen recently in Basra between Iraq, the United States, and the country of Iran, the resolution to that violent conflict in Basra among the different Shia factions. Reconciliation among those factions can work.

And let's take a quick look historically at how these alliances can work. In 1941 the United States signed the Atlantic Charter with a number of European countries. And in part how did that Atlantic Charter work? What were some of the provisions? It said that all peoples have a right to self-determination. Trade barriers were to be lowered. There was to be global economic cooperation and advancement of social welfare, freedom from want and fear, disarmament of aggressor nations. Why did we sign the Atlantic Charter actually in September of 1941? Because we knew the war wasn't going to last forever and we knew that we needed some agreement about sovereignty and human rights that we could work toward. Those would be our goals.

That, I have to say as an aside, it was signed in 1941. In 1942, with Ho Chi Minh living under Japanese rule with the blessings of the French in Indochina, Ho Chi Minh said, ''I hope that means that that Atlantic Charter also includes Asians.'' And, unfortunately, he went on to say a few years later, since the Atlantic Charter talked about sovereignty, he said, ''I guess the Atlantic Charter did not include Asians.''

A couple of decades after the Atlantic Charter was written and signed,

there was something called the Helsinki Accords. The Helsinki Declaration was signed in December, 1975, by many European countries, including the Soviet Union, including Eastern Europe. And, by the way, the Atlantic Charter was what led into the United Nations to help secure sovereignty for countries, human rights, freedom of expression, freedom of thought, and so on. In 1975, and I want to bring this out for another particular reason and how it can apply today in the Middle East, in 1975 a number of countries signed the Helsinki Declaration, and what did that say in part? It said ''sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty.'' It said, ''refraining from the threat of use of force.'' This helped trigger dialogue between the differences of nations that had conflict. ''Peaceful settlements of disputes.'' We didn't go to war with the Soviet Union. We didn't go to war with East Germany. We didn't go to war with a number of other conflicts around the world. ''Nonintervention in internal affairs. Respect for human rights, including the freedom of thought. Equal rights and self-determination of peoples. Fulfillment in good faith of obligations under international law.''

Now, Brezhnev actually liked this. Premier Brezhnev of the Soviet Union, Prime Minister Brezhnev, liked that because he thought that all the land that the Soviet Union then occupied, he would be able to occupy that territory forever. But what, in fact, did the Helsinki Accords actually do to people around the world, Eastern Europe, and Soviet Republics like the Ukraine? What did it do? It gave them official permission to say what they felt, to say what they thought, and the world would listen, and the world did listen. People living in the Ukraine today, the former Soviet Union, will tell you that the Helsinki Accords was that trigger, that slow fuse that led to their self-determination, their sovereignty, their independence. The Atlantic Charter, the Helsinki Accords.

What the United States can do in the Middle East is to remember those words, bring about a Middle East summit in which there can be Middle East accords, to bring about sovereignty, to bring about human rights, to bring about the respect for international law, to bring about respect for human thought. It can do for the Middle East what it did for former Soviet Republics that are now independent, now free. And the Ukraine is trying to get into the European Union. The Ukraine is trying to get into NATO, as is Kosovo, as is Macedonia, former Soviet Republics. View of the Helsinki Accords is what led to their ability to become sovereign and free nations and develop democracy. What can happen in the Middle East under these circumstances is the same thing. Eisenhower talked to Khrushchev. Kennedy avoided war in Cuba. Nixon talked to Mao Tse-tung. Knowledge is the solvent for danger. History is the vast early warning system.

What is our policy now based on in the Middle East? Do we have a definite direction? Are we sure about our power, our power to influence, our power of trade, our power of human dignity? What is our policy now in the Middle East?

Sam Rayburn, former Speaker, former Member of the House, the building right across the road is named after him, the Rayburn Office Building, where I work. What did Sam Rayburn say years ago that is actually applicable today? ''Any mule can kick a barn door down, but it takes a carpenter to build one.'' It takes a carpenter to build a barn.

We need more carpenters. We need more people who understand the nature of conflict. We need more people that have a sense of urgency.

The soldiers in Iraq that are driving in convoys that actually in the next few minutes might run over a land mine, those soldiers need to know, those soldiers in Iraq who are stunningly competent about what they do, need to know that we, the policymakers, are also stunningly competent in how we developed a policy that they have to take out.

But I will tell the American people, Mr. Speaker, just don't wait for the government to be competent. You're hoping they are competent. You're hoping they know what they are doing. Turn your television off 2 hours every night and start trying to understand the nature and the culture and the history and the intrigue and the complexity of the violence in the Middle East so you're better able to understand it.

Rudyard Kipling lost his son in France a long time ago, and to soothe his pain, he said, ''Why did young men die because old men lied?'' Today old people should talk before they send young people to die.

As we look back on the landscape of human tragedy, what and who in every instance was the enemy? What caused the violence? What caused the pain? What caused the despair? What caused the suffering? I will tell you we have three enemies in the landscape of human tragedy: ignorance, arrogance, and dogma. When you put those three things together, it leads to this monstrous certainty, this oversimplification of what the issues actually are, this monstrous certainty that comes out of al Qaeda that I'm right and you're wrong, this monstrous certainty that comes out of the Taliban, I'm right and you're wrong. A suicide bomber should do his job, that's what God wants. We know that's not right. We know that's wrong.

What's the antidote over history to ignorance, arrogance, and dogma? Knowledge to replace ignorance, humility to replace arrogance, and tolerance to replace dogma. We, as the policymakers, need to be knowledgeable and informed so we are competent to create a policy that will lead us out of this conflict, that will take us through the violence and understand the nature of this conflict so a resolution can come to the fore.

Mr. Speaker, I want to wish the American people well in their assignment to read these books that will bring knowledge to the fore: ''Violent Politics'' by William Polk, ''Fiasco'' by Thomas Ricks, ''All the Shah's Men'' by Steve Kinser, ''Treacherous Alliance'' by Trita Parsi, ''The Battle For Peace'' by Tony Zinni, ''Why Vietnam?'' by Archimedes Patti, and ''Human Options'' by Norman Cousins.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. PALLONE (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today.

Mr. CULBERSON (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today and the balance of the week on account of official business.

Mr. LOBIONDO (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for April 14 and up until 6 p.m. today on account of visiting servicemen and women in Afghanistan.

Mr. MACK (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for April 14 and the balance of the week on account of an illness.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. MCNULTY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. GIFFORDS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. LOEBSACK, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. POE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. POE, for 5 minutes, April 22.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, April 22.

Mr. SALI, for 5 minutes, April 16.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois, for 5 minutes, today and April 16.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 25 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, April 16, 2008, at 10 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

6078. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Ferric Citrate; Inert Ingredient; Exemption from the Requirement of a Tolerance [EPA-HQ-OPP-2006-0479; FRL-8071-2] received March 31, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

6079. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Fenhexamid; Pesticide Tolerance [EPA-HQ-OPP-2007-0303; FRL-8357-2] received April 3, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

6080. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Buprofezin; Pesticide Tolerance [EPA-HQ-OPP-2007-0426; FRL-8356-9] received April 3, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

6081. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — S-Abscisic Acid, Temporary Exemption From the Requirement of a Tolerance [EPA-HQ-OPP-2008-0092; FRL-8357-4] received March 27, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

6082. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Flonicamid; Pesticide Tolerance [EPA-HQ-OPP-2007-0338; FRL-8356-7] received March 27, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

6083. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Dicamba; Pesticide Tolerance [EPA-HQ-OPP-2007-0325; FRL-8356-6] received March 27, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

6084. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Acequinocyl; Pesticide Tolerance [EPA-HQ-OPP-2006-0678; FRL-8356-6] received March 27, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

6085. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Flumioxazin; Pesticide Tolerance [EPA-HQ-OPP-2007-0308; FRL-8352-5] received February 29, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

6086. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Bifenazate; Pesticide Tolerance [EPA-HQ-OPP-2007-0302; FRL-8351-6] received February 29, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

6087. A letter from the Directors, Congressional Budget Office and Office of Management and Budget, transmitting a joint report on the technical assumptions to be used in preparing estimates of National Defense Function (050) fiscal year 2009 outlay rates and prior year outlays, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 226; to the Committee on the Budget.

6088. A letter from the Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts and Member Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities, National Foundation on the Arts and the transmitting the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities' thirty-second annual report on the Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Program for Fiscal Year 2007, pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 959(c); to the Committee on Education and Labor.

6089. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting as required by Sections 913(b)(2) and Section 902(g) of the Healthcare Research and Quality Act of 1999 (Pub. L. 106-129), reports entitled ''The National Healthcare Quality Report 2007'' (NHQR) and ''The National Healthcare Disparities Report 2007'' (NHDR); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6090. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environment Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — National Perchloroethylene Air Emission Standards for Dry Cleaning Facilities [EPA-HQ-OAR-2005-0155; FRL-8547-4] (RIN: 2060-AO52) received March 27, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6091. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Federal Implementation Plan for the Billings/Laurel, Montana, Sulfur Dioxide Area [EPA-R08-OAR-2006-0098; FRL-8551-2] (RIN: 2008-AA01) received March 31, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6092. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Delegation of New Source Performance Standards and National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants for the States of Arizona and Nevada [AZ and NV-EPA-R09-OAR-2006-1014 FRL-8551-1] received March 31, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6093. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Delegation of National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants for Source Categories; State of Nevada, Nevada Division of Environmental Protection [EPA-R09-OAR-2008-0229; FRL-8550-9] received March 31, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6094. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Alabama: Final Authorization of State Hazardous Waste Management Program Revision [EPA-R04-RCRA-2007-0992; FRL-8550-3] received March 31, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6095. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Final 8-hour Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards Designations for the Early Action Compact Areas [EPA-HQ-2008-0006; FRL-8550-1] (RIN: 2060-AO83) received March 31, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6096. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval and Promulgation of State Air Quality Plans for Designated Facilities and Pollutants; State of Maryland; Control of Large Municipal Waste Combustor (LMWC) Emissions from Existing Facilities [EPA-R03-OAR-2008-MD-0209; FRL-8552-5] received April 3, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6097. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Revisions to the Nevada State Implementation Plan; Updated Statutory and Regulatory Provisions; Rescissions [EPA-R09-OAR-2007-1155; FRL-8548-8] received April 3, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6098. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; North Carolina: Approval of Revisions to the 1-Hour Ozone Maintenance Plan for the Raleigh/Durham and Greensboro/Winston-Salem/High Point Areas [EPA-R04-OAR-2008-0036-200801(a); FRL-8551-9] received April 3, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6099. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Virginia: Final Authorization of State Hazardous Waste Management Program Revision [EPA-R03-RCRA-2008-0256; FRL-8548-9] received March 27, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6100. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Revision to the California State Implementation Plan, Bay Area Air Quality Management District [EPA-R09-OAR-2007-0970; FRL-8547-6] received March 27, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6101. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — NESHAP: National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants: Standards for Hazardous Waste Combustors; Amendments [EPA-HQ-OAR-2004-0022 FRL-8549-4] (RIN: 2050-AG35) received March 27, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6102. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; State of Missouri [EPA-R07-OAR-2008-0103; FRL-8549-8] received March 27, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6103. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; State of Missouri [EPA-R07-OAR-2008-0100; FRL-8549-6] received March 27, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6104. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Utah: Final Authorization of State Hazardous Waste Management Program Revisions [EPA-R08-RCRA-2006-0127; FRL-8538-1] received February 29, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6105. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Partial Withdrawal of Direct Final Rule Revising the California State Implementation Plan, Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District and San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District [EPA-R09-OAR-2007-1074, FRL-8537-9] received February 29, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6106. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental

Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; Commonwealth of Virginia; Control of Particulate Matter from Pulp and Paper Mills; Correction [EPA-R03-OAR-2005-VA-0011; FRL-8537-6] received February 29, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6107. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; State of Maryland; Revised Definition of Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) [EPA-R03-OAR-2007-1157; FRL-8532-4] received February 21, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6108. A letter from the Chairman, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting the Commission's FY 2007 Annual Report required by Section 203 of the Notification and Federal Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002, Pub. L. 107-174; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

6109. A letter from the Inspector General, U.S. House of Representatives, transmitting the Inspector General's final report on the Management Advisory review of the Exchange 2003 Implementation; to the Committee on House Administration.

6110. A letter from the Acting Administrator, FAA, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Federal Aviation Administration's Capital Investment Plan (CIP) for fiscal years 2009-2013, pursuant to 49 U.S.C. app. 2203(b)(1); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

6111. A letter from the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Department of Defense, transmitting the Administration's position on the budgeting for the Park River at Grafton, North Dakota, flood damage reduction project; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

6112. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Transportation, transmitting a report entitled, ''Fundamental Properties of Asphalts and Modified Asphalts-II'' submitted in accordance with Section 6016(e) of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), Pub. L. 102-240, and Section 5117(b)(5) of the Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA-21) and the extension of those provisions through FY 2007; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

6113. A letter from the President and Chief Executive Officer, National Railroad Passenger Corporation, transmitting Amtrak's Grant and Legislative Request for FY09, pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 24315(b); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

6114. A letter from the Board of Trustees, National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust, transmitting the National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust's annual management report covering FY 2007, pursuant to 45 U.S.C. 231n Public Law 107-90, section 105; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

6115. A letter from the Director, National Science Foundation, transmitting the Foundation's Performance Highlights for FY 2007; to the Committee on Science and Technology.

6116. A letter from the Chairman, Board of Veterans' Appeals, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting a copy of the Report of the Chairman for FY 2007; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

6117. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting a copy of a draft bill entitled, ''To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve veterans' health care benefits and for other purposes''; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

6118. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's biennial report on evaluation, research and technical assistance activities supported by ''The Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program''; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows:

Ms. CASTOR: Committee on Rules. House Resolution 1107. Resolution providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 5715) to ensure continued availability of access to the Federal student loan program for students and families (Rept. 110–590). Referred to the House Calendar.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mr. DEFAZIO (for himself, Mr. COSTELLO, Mr. PETRI, Mr. DUNCAN, Mr. OBERSTAR, Mr. LIPINSKI, Mr. FILNER, Mr. COHEN, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. CAPUANO, and Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California):

H.R. 5788. A bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to establish prohibitions against voice communications using a mobile communications device on commercial airline flights, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

By Mr. WU (for himself, Mr. GORDON, Mr. BAIRD, and Mr. WILSON of Ohio):

H.R. 5789. A bill to reauthorize the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program and the Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Small Business, and in addition to the Committee on Science and Technology, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. FOSTER:

H.R. 5790. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow the deduction for State and local real property taxes whether or not the taxpayer itemizes other deductions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Ms. SHEA-PORTER (for herself and Mr. LATHAM):

H.R. 5791. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to clarify the effective date of active duty of members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces receiving an alert order anticipating a call or order to active duty in support of a contingency operation for purposes of entitlement to medical and dental care as members of the Armed Forces on active duty; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. MOORE of Kansas (for himself, Ms. PRYCE of Ohio, Mr. CAMPBELL of California, and Mr. KLEIN of Florida):

H.R. 5792. A bill to amend the Liability Risk Retention Act of 1986 to increase insurance competition and available coverage for consumers; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California (for herself, Mr. CANNON, Mr. COHEN, Mr. CHABOT, Mr. MEEKS of New York, and Mr. SENSENBRENNER):

H.R. 5793. A bill to restrict any State or local jurisdiction from imposing a new discriminatory tax on cell phone services, providers, or property; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BRADY of Texas (for himself, Mr. AKIN, Mr. BACHUS, Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina, Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland, Mr. BILBRAY, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. BROUN of Georgia, Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Mr. CAMPBELL of California, Mr. CARTER, Mr. CHABOT, Mr. COLE of Oklahoma, Mr. CONAWAY, Mr. EDWARDS, Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania, Mr. FEENEY, Mr. FLAKE, Ms. FOXX, Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey, Mr. GOHMERT, Mr. GOODE, Mr. HALL of Texas, Mr. HENSARLING, Mr. HERGER, Mr. HOEKSTRA, Mr. INGLIS of South Carolina, Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. JONES of North Carolina, Mr. KING of Iowa, Mr. KINGSTON, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. MCCAUL of Texas, Mr. MCCOTTER, Mr. MCKEON, Mr. MACK, Mrs. BONO MACK, Mr. MARCHANT, Mrs. MYRICK, Mr. MILLER of Florida, Mr. MORAN of Kansas, Mr. NEUGEBAUER, Mr. PAUL, Mr. PENCE, Mr. PITTS, Mr. PRICE of Georgia, Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin, Mr. SENSENBRENNER, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. SHIMKUS, Mr. STEARNS, Mr. TERRY, Mr. THORNBERRY, Mr. WELLER, and Mr. WESTMORELAND):

H.R. 5794. A bill to provide for the periodic review of the efficiency and public need for Federal agencies, to establish a Commission for the purpose of reviewing the efficiency and public need of such agencies, and to provide for the abolishment of agencies for which a public need does not exist; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. CAMPBELL of California:

H.R. 5795. A bill to require the Secretary of the Interior to notify units of local government when a Native American group files a petition to become a federally recognized Indian tribe and before the decision on the petition is made, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Ms. CLARKE:

H.R. 5796. A bill to provide funding for the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation for mortgage foreclosure mitigation activities; to the Committee on Appropriations.

By Mrs. DRAKE:

H.R. 5797. A bill to amend title 5, United States Code, to provide for a qualified Roth contribution program under the Thrift Savings Plan; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. HILL:

H.R. 5798. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a credit for care packages provided for soldiers in combat zones; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas:

H.R. 5799. A bill to amend titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act to improve the transparency of information on skilled nursing facilities and nursing facilities and to clarify and improve the targeting of the enforcement of requirements with respect to such facilities; to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. KANJORSKI:

H.R. 5800. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to impose a windfall profit tax on oil and natural gas (and products

thereof) and to appropriate the proceeds for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program; to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Appropriations, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. LAMPSON (for himself, Mr. BOSWELL, Mr. SPACE, Mr. HILL, Mr. BARROW, and Mr. MELANCON):

H.R. 5801. A bill to provide for direct access to electronic tax return filing, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Ms. LEE (for herself, Mr. ELLISON, and Mr. DAVIS of Illinois):

H.R. 5802. A bill to amend the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 to repeal the denial of food stamp eligibility of ex-offenders; to the Committee on Agriculture.

By Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California:

H.R. 5803. A bill to direct the Election Assistance Commission to establish a program to make grants to participating States and units of local government which will administer the regularly scheduled general election for Federal office held in November 2008 for carrying out a program to make backup paper ballots available in the case of the failure of a voting system or voting equipment in the election or some other emergency situation, and for other purposes; to the Committee on House Administration.

By Mr. McDERMOTT (for himself, Mr. TIERNEY, Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts, Mr. STARK, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mr. DOGGETT, Mr. EMANUEL, Mr. PASCRELL, Ms. BERKLEY, Mr. CROWLEY, Ms. SCHWARTZ, Mr. DAVIS of Alabama, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California, Mr. HARE, Ms. SUTTON, Mr. HONDA, Mr. HIGGINS, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. KAGEN, and Mr. LEVIN):

H.R. 5804. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify the rules relating to the treatment of individuals as independent contractors or employees, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. PEARCE:

H.R. 5805. A bill to establish a new solar energy future for America through public-private partnership and energy leasing for reliable and affordable energy for the American people, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. RUSH (for himself and Mr. UPTON):

H.R. 5806. A bill to permit universal service support to schools under the Communications Act of 1934 to be used for enhanced emergency notification services; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. SALAZAR:

H.R. 5807. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for the distribution of a share of certain mineral revenues, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. SLAUGHTER (for herself, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mrs. CAPPS, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. HINCHEY, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. MCNULTY, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Mr. MORAN of Virginia, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. WAXMAN, and Mr. HONDA):

H.R. 5808. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to develop multidisciplinary research centers regarding women's health and disease prevention, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Ms. SLAUGHTER (for herself, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mrs. CAPPS, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. HINCHEY, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. MCNULTY, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Mr. MORAN of Virginia, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. WAXMAN, and Mr. HONDA):

H.R. 5809. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to conduct and coordinate a research program on hormone disruption, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committees on Natural Resources, and Science and Technology, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. VELÁZQUEZ:

H.R. 5810. A bill to amend title V of the Social Security Act to provide grants for school-based mentoring programs for at risk teenage girls to prevent and reduce teen pregnancy, and to provide student loan forgiveness for mentors participating in such programs; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Education and Labor, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. WAXMAN (for himself, Mr. CLAY, and Mr. HODES):

H.R. 5811. A bill to amend title 44, United States Code, to require preservation of certain electronic records by Federal agencies, to require a certification and reports relating to Presidential records, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. YOUNG of Alaska (for himself, Mr. PAUL, and Mr. CANTOR):

H.R. 5812. A bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to authorize waivers by the Commissioner of Social Security of the 5-month waiting period for entitlement to benefits based on disability in cases in which the Commissioner determines that such waiting period would cause undue hardship to terminally ill beneficiaries; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. CONYERS (for himself, Ms. KILPATRICK, Mr. KILDEE, Mr. UPTON, Mr. MCCOTTER, Mr. CAMP of Michigan, Mr. EHLERS, Mr. DINGELL, Mr. WALBERG, Mr. KNOLLENBERG, Mr. ROGERS of Michigan, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. STUPAK, Mr. HOEKSTRA, and Mrs. MILLER of Michigan):

H. Con. Res. 327. Concurrent resolution congratulating and saluting Focus: HOPE on its 40th anniversary and for its remarkable commitment and contributions to Detroit, the State of Michigan, and the United States; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. ENGEL (for himself, Ms. BALDWIN, Mrs. CAPPS, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. FARR, Mr. FATTAH, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. GUTIERREZ, Mr. HOLT, Mr. HONDA, Mr. LOEBSACK, Mrs. LOWEY, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, Mr. MCDERMOTT, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. MCNULTY, Mr. NADLER, Ms. NORTON, Mr. PALLONE, Mr. ROTHMAN, Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. SIRES, Ms. SOLIS, Mr. STARK, Ms. SUTTON, Mr. TOWNS, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. WEINER, Mr. WEXLER, and Ms. WOOLSEY):

H. Con. Res. 328. Concurrent resolution supporting the goals and ideals of the National Day of Silence with respect to anti-lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender name-calling, bullying, and harassment faced by individuals in schools; to the Committee on Education and Labor, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. SHAYS (for himself and Mr. REICHERT):

H. Res. 1108. A resolution expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that future Iraq reconstruction should be paid for by the Government of Iraq; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

By Mr. SIRES:

H. Res. 1109. A resolution honoring the memory of Dith Pran by remembering his life's work and continuing to acknowledge and remember the victims of genocides that have taken place around the globe; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions as follows:

H.R. 25: Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina.

H.R. 351: Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. NORTON, and Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania.

H.R. 406: Mr. BUYER, Mr. COBLE, Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky, Mr. DOOLITTLE, Mr. EHLERS, Ms. GRANGER, Mr. HAYES, Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. MARCHANT, Mr. RAMSTAD, Mr. ROYCE, Mr. SHUSTER, and Mr. TURNER.

H.R. 471: Mr. LOBIONDO, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. KELLER, and Mr. HINOJOSA.

H.R. 510: Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, Mr. BARTON of Texas, Mr. CALVERT, Mr. LEWIS of California, Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California, Mr. HOEKSTRA, Mr. WITTMAN of Virginia, Mr. PEARCE, and Mr. SULLIVAN.

H.R. 643: Mr. VAN HOLLEN.

H.R. 657: Mr. HONDA.

H.R. 661: Mr. ELLISON.

H.R. 688: Mr. JONES of North Carolina and Mr. GERLACH.

H.R. 728: Mr. ALTMIRE.

H.R. 919: Ms. FOXX.

H.R. 953: Ms. FOXX.

H.R. 981: Mr. RYAN of Ohio.

H.R. 1043: Ms. SLAUGHTER.

H.R. 1050: Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Mr. ELLISON, and Mr. HONDA.

H.R. 1056: Mr. HOEKSTRA.

H.R. 1057: Mr. HOEKSTRA.

H.R. 1076: Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky and Mr. MCKEON.

H.R. 1185: Mr. GRIJALVA.

H.R. 1190: Mr. TOWNS and Mr. GRIJALVA.

H.R. 1228: Mr. ALLEN.

H.R. 1293: Mr. AKIN.

H.R. 1303: Mr. CHANDLER.

H.R. 1380: Mrs. BONO Mack.

H.R. 1524: Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Mr. CASTLE, Mr. HARE, Mr. ORTIZ, and Mr. WALBERG.

H.R. 1540: Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mrs. LOWEY, and Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland.

H.R. 1707: Mrs. LOWEY.

H.R. 1742: Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Mr. LYNCH, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, and Mr. JEFFERSON.

H.R. 1776: Mr. CARNAHAN, Mr. LOEBSACK, and Mr. CHANDLER.

H.R. 1843: Mr. BLUNT and Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania.
H.R. 1884: Ms. KAPTUR, Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Mr. PASCRELL, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. HILL, and Mr. HELLER.
H.R. 1921: Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts.
H.R. 1932: Mr. TIBERI and Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee.
H.R. 1983: Mr. CHANDLER.
H.R. 2188: Mr. GERLACH and Mr. ALLEN.
H.R. 2267: Mr. PLATTS.
H.R. 2329: Mrs. BACHMANN, Mr. KLEIN of Florida, Mr. WELCH of Vermont, and Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania.
H.R. 2332: Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, and Mr. SHADEGG.
H.R. 2343: Mr. KENNEDY.
H.R. 2371: Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Mr. ROSS, Mr. TERRY, Mr. TOWNS, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. ALTMIRE, and Mr. BRALEY of Iowa.
H.R. 2380: Mr. KAGEN and Mr. HOBSON.
H.R. 2421: Ms. TSONGAS.
H.R. 2458: Mr. BRADY of Texas.
H.R. 2593: Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. SUTTON, and Mr. HONDA.
H.R. 2676: Mr. PLATTS and Mr. BRALEY of Iowa.
H.R. 2686: Mr. MCINTYRE and Mr. POMEROY.
H.R. 2892: Ms. LEE and Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts.
H.R. 2976: Mr. COHEN and Ms. SCHAKOWSKY.
H.R. 3054: Ms. WATERS.
H.R. 3149: Mr. CARTER.
H.R. 3189: Mr. CONYERS.
H.R. 3463: Mr. BLUMENAUER.
H.R. 3543: Mr. MCGOVERN.
H.R. 3544: Mr. HINOJOSA, Mr. HILL, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. CRAMER.
H.R. 3616: Mr. MOORE of Kansas.
H.R. 3642: Mr. MCGOVERN.
H.R. 3652: Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, and Mr. OBERSTAR.
H.R. 3654: Mr. CARSON and Mr. HILL.
H.R. 3658: Mr. MCDERMOTT.
H.R. 3660: Mr. SESSIONS and Mr. HUNTER.
H.R. 3728: Ms. WOOLSEY, Mr. FATTAH, and Ms. SCHAKOWSKY.
H.R. 3797: Mr. KIND.
H.R. 3818: Mr. LATTA and Mr. HUNTER.
H.R. 3886: Mr. RYAN of Ohio.
H.R. 3981: Mr. ALEXANDER.
H.R. 4044: Mr. GONZALEZ, Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, and Mr. HINOJOSA.
H.R. 4061: Mr. MARSHALL.
H.R. 4093: Mr. ARCURI.
H.R. 4126: Mr. MCKEON, Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania, Mrs. JONES of Ohio, and Mr. NUNES.
H.R. 4188: Mr. HONDA and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.
H.R. 4204: Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.
H.R. 4236: Mr. WALZ of Minnesota.
H.R. 4279: Ms. WATSON.
H.R. 4310: Mr. HARE.
H.R. 4651: Mr. WELCH of Vermont.
H.R. 4775: Mrs. MALONEY of New York and Mr. WAXMAN.
H.R. 4838: Mr. WELCH of Vermont.
H.R. 4926: Mr. BLUMENAUER.
H.R. 4927: Mr. UDALL of Colorado.
H.R. 4930: Mr. BRALEY of Iowa.
H.R. 4934: Mr. WILSON of Ohio.
H.R. 4987: Mr. CALVERT.
H.R. 5032: Mr. DOOLITTLE, Mr. SENSENBRENNER, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. TIAHRT, Mr. PICKERING, and Mr. SHADEGG.
H.R. 5057: Mr. MOORE of Kansas.
H.R. 5131: Mr. BURGESS.
H.R. 5174: Mr. MCNULTY.
H.R. 5176: Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas.
H.R. 5223: Ms. BERKLEY and Mr. HARE.
H.R. 5236: Mr. SHADEGG.
H.R. 5315: Mr. CARSON.
H.R. 5441: Mr. LIPINSKI and Mr. MICA.
H.R. 5443: Mr. FOSSELLA.
H.R. 5445: Mr. ELLISON and Mr. KLINE of Minnesota.
H.R. 5447: Ms. SCHWARTZ, Mr. HONDA, Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. HINOJOSA, Mr. BRALEY of Iowa, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, and Mr. BERMAN.
H.R. 5450: Mr. ALTMIRE.
H.R. 5461: Mr. ALLEN.
H.R. 5466: Ms. SUTTON.
H.R. 5473: Mr. DELAHUNT, Mr. WALZ of Minnesota, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MCINTYRE, Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, Mr. WILSON of Ohio, Mr. BARROW, Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut, Mr. HINCHEY, Mr. HODES, Ms. GIFFORDS, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. BRALEY of Iowa, Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mrs. CAPPS, and Mr. CARSON.
H.R. 5481: Mr. YOUNG of Alaska.
H.R. 5488: Mr. MCDERMOTT and Mr. KUCINICH.
H.R. 5490: Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina.
H.R. 5515: Mr. GOHMERT.
H.R. 5546: Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania.
H.R. 5561: Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN and Mr. MCHUGH.
H.R. 5585: Mr. PRICE of North Carolina.
H.R. 5591: Mr. SOUDER, Mr. WALBERG, and Mr. HINOJOSA.
H.R. 5595: Mr. SOUDER, Mr. CARSON, Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania, and Mr. HARE.
H.R. 5596: Mr. SENSENBRENNER, Mr. TANCREDO, Mr. BILBRAY, and Mr. FRANKS of Arizona.
H.R. 5609: Mr. PAYNE.
H.R. 5611: Mr. PLATTS and Mr. AKIN.
H.R. 5613: Mr. LOBIONDO, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. KLEIN of Florida, Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida, Mr. MELANCON, Mr. RUSH, Mr. COHEN, Mr. BACA, Mr. HINOJOSA, Mr. COURTNEY, and Mr. RYAN of Ohio.
H.R. 5627: Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. SHULER, Mrs. MILLER of Michigan, Mr. PENCE, Mr. KUHL of New York, and Mr. KNOLLENBERG.
H.R. 5629: Mr. DELAHUNT and Mr. NUNES.
H.R. 5642: Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California and Mr. GOHMERT.
H.R. 5646: Mr. KINGSTON, Mr. WESTMORELAND, Mr. LINDER, Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. AKIN, Mr. DEAL of Georgia, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Mr. GOHMERT, Mr. MARCHANT, Mr. ADERHOLT, and Mr. FEENEY.
H.R. 5659: Mr. PAUL.
H.R. 5684: Mr. WELCH of Vermont, Mr. HINOJOSA, Mr. SPACE, and Mr. ROSS.
H.R. 5695: Mr. GINGREY, Mr. HELLER, and Mr. GALLEGLY.
H.R. 5709: Mr. BOSWELL, Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania, and Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas.
H.R. 5712: Mr. SARBANES, Mr. BRALEY of Iowa, Mr. HODES, and Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut.
H.R. 5717: Mr. YOUNG of Alaska.
H.R. 5731: Mr. CAMPBELL of California, Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California, and Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania.
H.R. 5734: Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, Ms. Linda T. Sánchez of California, Mr. MCDERMOTT, Mr. ELLISON, and Mr. MCGOVERN.
H.R. 5737: Mrs. DRAKE, Mr. SOUDER, and Mr. BUCHANAN.
H.R. 5740: Mr. SIRES, Mrs. MILLER of Michigan, Mr. CARSON, Mr. DONNELLY, and Mr. FEENEY.
H.R. 5749: Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. POMEROY, Mr. DINGELL, Mr. WILSON of Ohio, Mr. STUPAK, and Mr. KILDEE.
H.R. 5752: Mr. MANZULLO.
H.R. 5753: Mr. MCGOVERN.
H.R. 5759: Mr. HASTINGS of Washington.
H.R. 5762: Mr. DEFAZIO.
H.R. 5770: Mr. HONDA.
H.R. 5775: Mr. SHADEGG.
H. Con. Res. 70: Mr. DELAHUNT.
H. Con. Res. 195: Mr. TANNER, Mrs. CAPPS, Mr. COHEN, Mr. MARCHANT, Ms. BORDALLO, Ms. GRANGER, and Mr. HINOJOSA.
H. Con. Res. 223: Mr. WALZ of Minnesota.
H. Con. Res. 244: Mr. HUNTER, Mr. MAHONEY of Florida, Mr. CULBERSON, and Mr. DICKS.
H. Con. Res. 295: Mr. MCCARTHY of California, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, and Mr. WITTMAN of Virginia.
H. Con. Res. 298: Mr. BURTON of Indiana.
H. Con. Res. 322: Mr. HIGGINS, Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida, Mr. MICHAUD, Mr. ALTMIRE, Mr. DAVIS of Alabama, Mr. PERLMUTTER, Mr. HELLER, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mr. REHBERG, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, Mr. COSTA, Mr. YARMUTH, Mr. UDALL of New Mexico, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. SHAYS, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. SALI, Mr. POMEROY, Mr. SOUDER, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. CRENSHAW, and Mr. NUNES.
H. Res. 353: Mr. BUTTERFIELD.
H. Res. 373: Ms. TSONGAS.
H. Res. 887: Mr. MCINTYRE.
H. Res. 896: Mrs. BONO MACK.
H. Res. 1008: Mr. WAMP.
H. Res. 1011: Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California, and Ms. ESHOO.
H. Res. 1043: Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. HARE.
H. Res. 1069: Mr. MANZULLO.
H. Res. 1091: Mr. MICA, and Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida.
H. Res. 1095: Mrs. JONES of Ohio.
H. Res. 1096: Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. UDALL of New Mexico, Mr. BOSWELL, Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. ISRAEL, Mr. WU, Mrs. CAPPS, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. GONZALEZ, Ms. BERKLEY, Mr. BAIRD, Mr. TAYLOR, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. POMEROY, Mr. KIRK, Mr. MATHESON, and Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN.

CONGRESSIONAL EARMARKS, LIMITED TAX BENEFITS, OR LIMITED TARIFF BENEFITS

Under clause 9 of rule XXI, lists or statements on congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits were submitted as follows:

The amendment to be offered by Representative GEORGE MILLER of California or a designee to H.R. 5715, the Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act of 2008, does not contain any congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined in clause 9(d), 9(e), or 9(f) of Rule XXI.

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PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 110th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 154 WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, APRIL 15, 2008 No. 59

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JON TESTER, a Senator from the State of Montana.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we come to You in weakness and seek Your strength. Without Your presence, life's challenges overwhelm. Lift our burdens and fill our life with Your joy.

Strengthen our lawmakers. Use their talents and abilities to make a positive difference in our world. Empower them with Your providential care to find creative paths that will bring this Nation to a desired destination. Inspire their minds with insight and wisdom, their hearts with resiliency and courage, and their bodies with vigor and vitality. May your peace flow into them, calming their spirits, directing their dispositions, and controlling all they say and do.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JON TESTER led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 15, 2008.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, section 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JON TESTER, a Senator from the State of Montana, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. TESTER thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of Senator MCCONNELL, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators allowed to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

I ask unanimous consent that the first 30 minutes be given to the Republicans and the final 30 minutes to the majority.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following that time, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1195.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess from 12:30 until 2:15 p.m. today to allow for the weekly caucus luncheons.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. I thank the Chair.

RECOGNITION OF THE REPUBLICAN LEADER

THE ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

POPE BENEDICT XVI'S VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this week we welcome his Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, for his first visit to America as Pope.

Here in Washington, Pope Benedict will meet the President at the White House, marking only the second time in America's history that a pontiff has visited the White House. He will offer Mass at the newly opened Nationals Park, and deliver an address at Catholic University.

Pope Benedict will then travel to New York, where he will address the United Nations, visit Ground Zero, site of the devastating 9/11 terrorist attacks, and say Mass at Yankee Stadium.

During his visit, the Pope will also champion a brotherhood of faith between the religions, by meeting with leaders from the Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, and other faiths.

The Pope's visit observes some important anniversaries. Wednesday, April 16, will be his 81st birthday, and Saturday, the 19th, will mark the third anniversary of his election as Pope.

His visit also coincides with the 200th anniversary of four of the oldest dioceses in the United States, one of which was established in my own State of Kentucky. Two hundred years ago this month, Pope Pius VII carved the Diocese of Bardstown from one of the oldest dioceses in the New World.

The territory of the Bardstown Diocese once covered a giant swath of land, including what are now the States of Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Iowa, Wisconsin, Missouri, and half of Arkansas.

The Bardstown Diocese was established alongside the dioceses of Boston, Philadelphia, and New York. Its seat was eventually moved to Louisville, KY, and made an archdiocese. But its place in the history of American Catholicism continues to be a point of pride across Kentucky.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

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Kentuckians celebrate this bicentennial throughout the year at the St. Thomas Church, considered the ''Cradle of Catholicism'' in the Bluegrass State and still located in Bardstown. A two-story log house that stands on St. Thomas' property is the oldest structure related to the Catholic faith in our region of the United States.

Built in 1795 by Thomas and Ann Howard, the property was willed to the church by Mr. Howard in 1810, and it became the first home of the St. Thomas Seminary, the first seminary west of the Alleghenies. It later served as the residence of Bishop Benedict Joseph Flaget, first bishop of the Bardstown Diocese.

Bishop Flaget and others who worked to establish the Bardstown Diocese were pioneers of the land as well as of the spirit. Kentucky was the western frontier of the young United States at that time, and frontier life posed many hardships.

Yet Bishop Flaget successfully made his work and presence felt throughout the diocese, and the St. Thomas Church still cites his influence today, two centuries later.

The resolve and faith displayed by the founders of that Bardstown Diocese are the same resolve and faith that have enabled so many other Catholic missionaries to attract more than 1 billion adherents to the Catholic faith.

As the Bishop of Rome, the Pope's leadership inspires millions with confidence that mankind can find God's will amidst the chaos of this world.

Yet, for all the obvious affection people show him, Pope Benedict would be the first to recognize that he is merely ''a simple, humble laborer in the vineyard of the Lord.''

We are honored by his visit. And in Bardstown, Washington or elsewhere, we welcome Pope Benedict VXI to bring his labors to America.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

PAPAL VISIT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, tomorrow the President has invited a number of people to the White House to greet the Pope on the south lawn. That will be at 10 o'clock in the morning. We are going to be in session and have a regular session tomorrow. We will make sure there are no votes between 10 and 11.

On Thursday, for the Mass, for those Members of the Catholic faith, and others who wish to attend the Mass at the baseball stadium, we are not going to come in until 12:45. That will allow people to go to the Mass and give them time to come to the Capitol. We will start legislating at 12:45 on Thursday. Hopefully, we will complete some legislation at that time. Hopefully, we will be on the technical corrections bill or another piece of legislation.

JACKIE ROBINSON

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, Jackie Robinson broke baseball's color barrier on this day in 1947. He immediately made his mark on the field and off the field, winning the Rookie of the Year Award in 1947 and suffering painful indignities from fans and opposing players with both patience and grace.

As a young man growing up in Louisville, I always took pride in the fact that Pee Wee Reese, a graduate of my high school, had become a Major Leaguer and even the captain of his team, the Brooklyn Dodgers. But I was even more proud of the fact that Pee Wee walked over to Jackie one day when the taunts were especially tough, put his arm on Jackie's back, and sent a message to the fans that Jackie Robinson was no different than anyone else they came to root for that day.

Reflecting on Jackie's courage, a baseball commentator said this week that it is remarkable to note that in all the photographs from those years, Jackie always seemed to be smiling, despite the jeers and taunts and the hatred.

We honor Jackie Robinson today for his courage and his example and for accelerating the march toward equality for all Americans.

TAX DAY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, most Americans view April 15 as a sort of national anti-holiday, when they are forced to take a hard look at how much of their money goes into a Washington spending machine instead of their childrens' education or their gas tank.

It is worth noting that most people don't dread tax day as much as they used to; as much as they did before Republican policies significantly reduced the share of the family budget that goes from taxpayer wallets to the Treasury Department.

According to a recent Gallup poll, 43 percent of middle income earners say they are paying too much in taxes—43 percent, but still far fewer than the 59 percent who thought they were being overtaxed 7 years ago.

The reason for the drop-off isn't too hard to figure out: The reason a lot fewer people think their tax burden is too high is that their tax burden is a lot lower than it was 6 years ago.

Married couples and families with children have benefited from tax credits, tens of millions of Americans have benefited from tax cuts on dividends and capital gains, including more than 250,000 people in Kentucky.

And that is why it's critical that middle class Americans understand the path that Democrats are headed down.

At a time when the economy is slowing and Americans are paying record prices for food, gas, and healthcare, our Democrat friends are preparing the largest tax hike in U.S. history—nearly three times larger than the previous record.

We saw the plan last month in a budget that only one Democrat in the Senate voted against, a blueprint that raises taxes on middle class families by $2,300 a year.

Our friends won't admit this is a tax hike; they won't say they're raising taxes; they plan to do it quietly, by letting all the recently enacted tax cuts and credits that Americans have benefited from over the past several years expire.

If you ask about it, they will tell you these tax cuts were only for the rich anyway.

Don't listen to them—unless, of course, you think 43 million American families with children who will pay thousands more in taxes under the Democrat budget are rich, and should be taxed more; or that all 18 million seniors who will pay thousands more in taxes under the Democrat budget are rich and should be taxed more; or that every owner of the 27 million small businesses in the U.S. who will have to pay $4,100 more in taxes under the Democrat budget are rich and should be taxed more.

Under the budget that every Democrat in the Senate but one voted for last month, taxes will go up on anyone who makes more than $34,000. Are these people rich? Should they pay more in taxes?

The first-year teacher in Louisville who makes $35,982—is he or she rich? Does he or she need to be taxed more? I will bet they don't think so.

How about the veteran teacher with a Ph.D. who maxes out at $73,418—is he or she rich? Does he or she need to be taxed more? I will bet they don't think so.

Our Democrat friends have their own answer to these questions: they voted for an amendment last month that extends tax breaks on married couples and children.

The problem, of course, is that they voted for a similar amendment last year, and then they didn't do a thing about it. They had no intention of making it into law.

So if past experience is any indication of future events, our friends won't act on the amendment this year either. They cast a vote that's intended to appeal to working families, but their record shows they won't follow through by actually doing anything about it.

As Americans struggle to pay the bills and millions worry about falling home values and whether they will even be able to keep their homes, they should be able to expect more from Congress than political cover votes and class warfare rhetoric.

All the recently enacted tax cuts will soon expire. These cuts have helped tens of millions of American families and seniors. These folks should know what is coming. And Democrats in Washington should relent on their plans to return to the bad old days when 60 percent of them thought their tax bills were too high.

That is the road our friends on the other side are taking us down. They

have shown us the blueprint. It certainly was not written with working families in mind.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business for up to 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half.

The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

TAX DAY

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, today millions of Americans are reminded about Ben Franklin's poignant observation: Nothing is certain but death and taxes.

Today families across the Nation are being forced to tighten their belts as the Federal Government takes more and more of their hard-earned money. For working families, the tax bill that comes due every April 15 is often a tremendous burden. In fact, the average American pays more in taxes than it spends on food, shelter, clothing, and transportation combined.

For American families, tax day is a real eye opener. This year, families will work the first 113 days of the year to pay their Federal, State, and local taxes. Unfortunately, this year tax day has come around when families are facing spiking energy, housing, and health care costs, runaway college tuition, and high rising prices for consumer goods.

While the Senate has acted to help these families in the short term, the stimulus and housing relief bills, a long-term fix is a long way off and badly needed. We should support long-term economic growth policies that lower taxes, create more jobs, and grow our American economy.

Our distinguished minority leader, the Senator from Kentucky, Mr. MCCONNELL, has outlined the dangers of going back to a high-tax era. We all know that the tax reductions adopted by Congress in 2003 which gave relief for capital gains taxes encouraged more small businesses to invest, gave them the resources to grow, and small businesses are the dynamic engine of this country.

That tax relief provided some 8.4 million new jobs. But as Senator MCCONNELL said, my friends on the other side of the aisle have proposed a budget that includes the largest tax increase in American history and would raise taxes on every American taxpayer by doing nothing, intentionally doing nothing.

The plan of the Democrats raises taxes on the average American family by $2,300 a year. A $2,300 increase in taxes will be a devastating hit to American families. For families in Missouri and across the Nation, this is $2,300 they will no longer be able to use to buy groceries, put gas in their car, pay tuition, or purchase prescription drugs. And, as Senator MCCONNELL pointed out, there will be an even larger tax increase on small businesses—small businesses that we expect to create the new jobs we will continue to need as our economy and technology evolves.

Unfortunately, not only are taxes getting higher, they are getting more complicated. According to the President's panel on tax reform, there have been more than 14,000 changes to the Tax Code since 1986. With all of these changes, it is no wonder that the average time burden for all taxpayers filing a 1040 is 30 hours, and now more than 6 in 10 Americans hire someone to help prepare their returns every year.

So in addition to taking 113 days in wages, the Federal Government requires you to spend an initial day and even more money to hire a professional to make sense of what you owe. It is a daunting task for anyone, particularly if they have a family and business activities to make sense of what they owe.

In January, I introduced a radical solution, and I think the time has come for a radical solution to bring some common sense to this process. My bill, the Fair and Simple Tax Act, will simplify the Tax Code and help American families keep more of their paychecks. It will get rid of the AMT and the double calculations middle-income taxpayers must make. It will eliminate higher tax rates, get rid of the myriad targeted reductions, credit givebacks, phase-ins, phase-outs, and other special interest provisions.

The Fair and Simple Tax Act will provide a simpler, lower, flat income tax option, as well as offer historic tax relief for families and businesses to create jobs for American workers.

This bill will reduce the tax rate on families and the employers who create jobs, make permanent existing tax relief, keep current deductions for home mortgage interest and charitable deductions, but give Americans more control over their health care by providing tax relief to individuals and families who do not now have access to employer-provided health care.

Also, my bill will eliminate the death tax which is a significant burden for farmers and small businesses.

The best fiscal policy is economic growth, job creation, and keeping taxes low for middle-class families. And the best economic or fiscal policy is also the best social policy. There is no better policy than assuring a good-paying job for hard-working Americans.

The last thing our economy needs right now is a tax increase, which is what Americans will receive when the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts expire. And you know what will happen. It will not only be a tax increase on individual families; by increasing significantly taxes on small business, it is going to curb job growth, it is going to cut the ability of people to find a job.

Let me be clear. Unless we stop this looming tax hike, which would be the largest in history, more than 2 million Missouri families will face higher tax bills. My bill would prevent the family-budget-killing tax hikes. My bill would simplify the tax rate for millions of Americans. My bill would mean tax relief and real money back into the pockets of American families.

Let's get real about taxes and bring back some common sense to a Tax Code that is too complex, too confusing, and too costly. This plan will give American taxpayers what they need: a fairer system that puts more of their own money back in their pocketbooks and takes off their back the hassle of April 15.

I ask for the support of my colleagues in bringing a radical but simple commonsense reform to our Tax Code.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, 20 years ago today, Senator Malcolm Wallop of Wyoming came to the Senate floor to speak about the tax burden Americans face. He came to the floor because it was April 15, tax day. He came to extend his sympathies to the many, as he called it, ''frustrated taxpayers who were probably at this minute,'' he said, ''sweating bullets over a form 1040 while gnawing through yet another pencil.''

He spoke 2 years after Congress enacted the landmark 1986 tax reform bill, legislation intended to reform and simplify the Code and make the chaos of past April 15s mere memories. That legislation did not reform the Tax Code, and it fell far short of tax simplification.

Senator Wallop voted against final passage, and he knew that history would be on his side.

The same day, he introduced into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD a 1988 guest editorial from the Casper Star Tribune, a newspaper in Wyoming. The editorial reflected the sentiments similar to those expressed by Senator Wallop. Less than 2 years after enactment of that 1986 law, tax reform and simplification spawned 2,704 changes in the Internal Revenue Code, 42 new regulations, 65 announcements, 32 revenue rulings, and 48 new tax forms.

The changes were so complicated that in a nationwide study of 50 tax preparers who were given hypothetical identical pieces of information about what a family would do in trying to figure out their taxes, none of the 50 tax preparers came out with the same

result in terms of how much that family would owe. The system was that complicated.

Senator Wallop said that guest editorial summed up the feelings of taxpayers across the Nation. The author of that guest editorial submitted 20 years ago today into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD was a Wyoming physician named JOHN BARRASSO. That is right, the current occupant of Senator Wallop's Wyoming Senate seat.

The reform envisioned by Congress failed miserably to achieve its desired result. Today, Americans continue the painful experience of frantically attempting to complete their tax returns and write their checks to the Government before the clock strikes midnight.

The Tax Code is even longer today, 6,000 pages and over 2.8 million words, and it is growing. Provisions within the Code regularly expire, and then they are extended on an irregular basis. The IRS estimates that the average amount of time an American taxpayer is going to take to fill out their tax returns in this year is over 30 hours. More than 6 in 10 Americans hire someone to help prepare their returns for them. Hundreds of billions of dollars are spent annually trying to comply with our complicated tax laws.

Many post offices across America will be staying open until midnight tonight. Why? To give taxpayers one last shot to meet the deadline.

It is no wonder that more than 10 million Americans will request an extension this year. The future does not look much better for American taxpayers, both in terms of tax simplification and in terms of tax relief.

Americans work day in and day out to pay for Washington programs that they would not wish on their worst enemy. In too many families, one parent works to put food on the table and the other parent works to pay for the Washington bureaucracy.

The Government is too big. It spends too much. Americans get it. Americans have to balance their own budgets. They have to balance their own checkbooks. The Government should do the same. And the Government should do it the same way that American families do it—by controlling spending.

The current tax system is a mess, it is too complicated, it is antigrowth, and it discourages additional investment in America. The American taxpayer rightfully deserves a system that is simple. The American taxpayer deserves a system that provides certainty. The American taxpayer deserves a system that encourages success and innovation, and the American taxpayer deserves a system that is based on what is in their best interests and not the best interests of Government.

Have you ever wondered why tax day is April 15 and not, say, 6 months later, October 15? Imagine, if you will, if tax day were right before election day. Then the voices of the taxpayers would register loudly and clearly. Maybe this is the solution necessary to ensure that people, not the Government, come first because, after all, the money belongs to the people, the hard-working people of Wyoming and every other State in this country, not to the Government. It is the people's money; it is not the Government's money.

The American taxpayer deserves better, the American taxpayer deserves tax simplification, the American taxpayer deserves tax relief, and the American taxpayer deserves action.

Change the system? Well, it is not an easy undertaking but a necessary one. Four criteria are necessary to make the effective change. It must be fair so people pay their fair share. It must be simple so people can quickly file their own returns. It must be uniform. No matter who you are, the system must be applied equally to every taxpayer. And, No. 4, it must be consistent. Changing the system every year is not good for the economy and is not good for taxpayers.

During his floor speech on April 15, 1988, 20 years ago today, Wyoming Senator Malcolm Wallop said that his vote against the tax reform conference report, as he said, ''was one of the best things I have done since I have been in the Senate.'' He was right on target. His words have survived the test of time. Let us hope that 20 more years—20 more years—do not pass before we get it right.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, how much more time remains for business on our side?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Fourteen and a half minutes.

Mr. CORNYN. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, recently, I noted a story in the Wall Street Journal that preceded the primary date of March 4 in Texas, and Ohio as well. Not to pick on our friends in Ohio by any means, but I was interested to see the story discussed of why it is jobs and people were leaving Ohio and why people were moving to Texas. We have had 3 million people move to Texas since 2000.

Basically, the journalist said it boiled down to three things: He said, No. 1, Texas is a State that believes in free trade. We believe NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, has actually increased jobs in our State and in the United States by creating jobs for those goods that are manufactured here and then sold in Canada and Mexico.

No. 2, the article pointed out Texas is a right-to-work State. In other words, you don't have to join a labor union in order to get a job. You can if you want to, but you are not required to do so as a condition of employment.

No. 3, this article pointed out Texas did not have a State income tax, and I assure you we never will. The people in my State like government as small as possible. They like to keep taxes low, and they realize the decisions we have made in our State have made it a conducive environment for job creators to move to our State to create opportunity for people to move there, to get a job, to raise their family, and to seek to achieve their dreams.

Today, we are talking about tax day for the Federal taxpayer, and I think we ought to learn something from the lessons we have found demonstrated in places such as Texas, where we have kept taxes low. Having lower tax rates is perhaps the best stimulus package you could ever pass. We have passed a couple stimulus packages so far this year. First, the bipartisan package, which will result in a check being written to many taxpayers that they will receive in the next few weeks, and then we also passed a housing bill last week. But I submit the best stimulus we could pass is by keeping taxes low.

This first chart I have demonstrates an uncomfortable fact, and that is the American taxpayer has to work until April 23 of this year in order to pay their taxes. In other words, here we are on April 15, and taxpayers still have another few days, another week or so to work to pay their tax bill before they can begin to work for themselves and for their families and for their small business.

This is another revealing chart, I think, because it points out how many days of the year an individual works, or the average taxpayer works, to pay for essentials such as housing, which is very much a part of our agenda recently because of the housing crunch; health care, health care costs are a significant portion of every family's budget, and the average taxpayer works 50 days a year to pay for their health care; food, equating to 35 days; and transportation, 29 days. As you can see, to pay Federal taxes, an individual has to work 74 days; to pay the State, local, and other taxes, it is another 39 days.

Particularly at a time when the economy is not doing as well as we would like, Congress seems to be acting inconsistently, first of all, in passing a stimulus package which is sending checks to taxpayers because we are worried taxpayers don't have enough money to spend to help stimulate the economy. Yet at the same time, both the House of Representatives and this body passed a budget that raises taxes, imposing almost $2,400 more in taxes onto my constituents in Texas.

Now, it may not seem like a lot of money to some here in Washington, but I can assure you that to many of my constituents, this is real money and money they would prefer to have to invest in their businesses and spend according to their own desires rather than to have Uncle Sam tap them for an additional $2,400.

I would also note this has an antistimulus effect—raising taxes—and is inconsistent with what we are doing with regard to trying to get more money in the hands of the American

people to help us boost and stimulate the economy. To turn around and impose an additional almost $2,400 per person in taxes is inconsistent, to say the least, and is antistimulus.

The Heritage Foundation has estimated that if in fact this tax increase goes into effect—the one contemplated by the 2009 budget—more than 70,000 Texans will likely lose their jobs because the budget assumes higher taxes, which will harm job creation and reduce economic output.

I know there is a lot of revisionist history in Washington about what the last 5 or 6 years has been like in terms of the economy, but the fact of the matter is the economy has been very good, by and large. At least 8 million constituents of mine in Texas benefitted from the tax relief we have passed since 2001. I would note, roughly, that same number of new jobs was created across the country—roughly 9 million new jobs—since the tax relief we passed in 2003. In 2007, at least 6.9 million Texans benefitted from the new low 10-percent tax bracket created back in 2001, and more than 2 million Texas families used the $1,000 child tax credit, all of which are timed to expire in 2011, unless Congress acts to make that tax relief permanent.

If there is one thing we could do that would have the surest impact of bolstering the economy, giving people more money to spend as they see fit, it would be to make the tax relief permanent—the relief that was made temporary back in 2001 and 2003. The dividends and the capital gains reductions we passed in 2003 will also expire as well. These, of course, most often impact people when they buy and sell things they own—when they buy stock in their retirement plans, the dividends tax relief in particular. We are going to see that increase dramatically, unless Congress acts to stop the antistimulative effect I mentioned a moment ago.

Today, of course, as I said, is an important day for every American, but it is certainly not a day for celebrating. This is not a holiday for most Americans. Today is a day of observance that is mandated by the Federal Government and an observance which is universally dreaded by the American people—tax day. One of the biggest reasons people hate tax day is because it reminds them of the complex, incomprehensible system through which a faraway agency, known as the Internal Revenue Service, sends them a pile of forms they have to navigate to figure out how much they owe the Federal Government.

They may ask: Do I get a W–2 or a W–4? Can I fill out the 1040EZ or should I get the schedule D form? Do I fill out the 1099 miscellaneous and the 1099 dividend form? What is form 5498 for or 1065 or 4562?

Well, you get my point, hopefully. Our tax laws continue to proliferate and become increasingly complex and increasingly incomprehensible to most Americans. That is why so much money is spent by average Americans getting someone else to help them figure out how to comply with the law. The only thing going down is our comprehension and our understanding of the tax system; all other costs associated with this unnecessarily complex and impenetrable system are going up.

Families and entrepreneurs, as I said, spend a lot of money—billions of dollars—and thousands of hours each year trying to figure out how to do the right thing and how to comply with the Internal Revenue Code. In fact, they will spend more than 6 billion hours complying with the Federal income Tax Code, with an estimated compliance cost of more than $265 billion. This has more than doubled since the mid-1990s. Estimates are it will continue to increase at an even faster rate.

Every year, the National Taxpayer Advocate highlights this complexity in one way or another as one of the top 10 problems taxpayers face. We know the Tax Code is full of special interest loopholes and that with each year the American taxpayer spends more and more time and more and more money to try to figure out how to comply with its burdensome provisions. Taxpayers, as I indicate, are working longer each year to pay for Government—a total of 113 days this year. I think most American taxpayers, if you asked them the question: Do you like the system as it exists now or would you like tax reform, something simpler, flatter or fairer? they would say: Whatever our Tax Code, whether it be a flat tax, a sales tax or an income tax, it should be based on three fundamental ideas: simplicity, fairness, and transparency.

I have to tell you our Tax Code does not, as currently written, meet any of those three requirements—of simplicity, fairness or transparency. I think these simple standards ought to guide us in reforming and simplifying the income tax code. I have heard several proposals made in the last couple days. Senator WYDEN, from Oregon, has talked about a flat tax he has proposed. Senator ALEXANDER, from Tennessee, likewise has proposed a tax return you could fill out in one page. Wouldn't that be great, to have a single page, something so easy to understand you could send in a single sheet of paper and know you have complied with your obligations to pay and report your income taxes due?

While comprehensive tax reform may not be right around the corner, the last thing we should do is to raise taxes on families and entrepreneurs by letting the tax relief passed by Congress in 2001 and 2003 expire. I have already talked about the budget and its impact on people in my State, but the budget passed last month would now require 27 million small businesses all across the country to owe an additional $4,100. That is, if, in fact, the revenue projections in that budget are kept, 43 million families will owe an extra $2,300 each, and 18 million seniors will each owe an additional $2,200.

Amazingly, these tax hikes and increased Federal spending come weeks, as I pointed out, after Congress actually voted to send money back to the taxpayers in order to get them to spend it so it would stimulate the economy. We did this at the same time we are raising taxes and basically taking that same money away and more. If we agree that putting more money in the pockets of the American people is the best way to stimulate the economy, why are we still looking to take more money from them during tax season?

One of the most effective tools for combating this and wasteful spending, in general, is more information, and I think a proposal I made yesterday, which I would talk like to talk briefly about, will actually help us hold the Federal Government more accountable for the money it spends and give the American taxpayers more information so they can make sure their voice is heard when it comes to tax policy and how much money we take out of their pockets in order to fund the Federal Government.

Yesterday, I introduced a bill called the Federal Spending and Taxpayer Accessibility Act of 2008. This bill creates an online earmark tracking system taxpayers can use free of charge to search for earmarks by recipient, appropriations bill, State, and Member in real time during the appropriations process. This legislation also directs the IRS to provide each taxpayer with a concise and easy-to-read personal record of the amount of taxes they have already paid, as well as a projection of the taxes they will owe into the future, up until the time they retire. If this sounds familiar, that is because the Social Security Administration sends a similar statement of Social Security taxes paid and how much you can expect, upon retirement, to receive in benefits. I think it can play an important role when taxpayers are planning their future, to provide them with a better idea of how much they will owe in the future so they can take that into account.

These statements would provide taxpayers with a reminder of how much our Government is spending and give them even more reason to keep track of how their money is spent, along with the political accountability that would flow from that. This legislation would also build on the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, which created a one-stop, searchable Web site for all Federal contracts and grants. This legislation would expand the Web site by including the expenditures of all Federal agencies, including salaries, rent, supplies, and transportation. I know not every American is going to be interested in that level of detail, but I think it is important it be made available to everyone who is interested and particularly for the press who can report on it and let the American people know what the facts are.

On this tax day, I urge our colleagues in the Senate to take a new stand

against growing Government, growing spending, and growing taxes.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip is recognized.

DELAYING TACTICS IN THE SENATE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am going to yield to the majority leader when he comes to the floor, which could be momentarily. But I would like to, if I may, in morning business, address an issue which I think goes to the heart and soul of what the Senate is all about. One hundred men and women come together in this Senate, two from each State, to be part of a rich tradition in the history of this country, part of a national debate about the issues that are timely and important. It is an opportunity for the American people, through us, to have a voice and actually speak to these issues.

Unfortunately, time and again, this voice has been silenced, delayed by tactics from the minority side of the aisle.

I see the majority leader is here. I am going to yield to him at this point. I know he wanted to make the opening statement in morning business.

I yield to the majority leader.

FILIBUSTERS AND DELAYS IN THE SENATE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I extend my appreciation to my good friend, the senior Senator from the State of Illinois.

Today is April 15. It is a big, red-letter day for people because it is the last day to file your income tax returns. As we send in our taxes—and some, as will happen tonight, will wait in line to file their tax returns—it is a good time to give thought to the economic state of our families and our economy, generally.

Since President Bush took office, the cost of gasoline has gone up more than 100 percent, more than doubled. The cost of home heating has skyrocketed. The price we pay for groceries has never been higher.

The head of the World Bank said, 3 days ago, that 31 countries will be in desperate need of food within a matter of months, and there could be riots in those countries. We are very fortunate in America, we don't have a shortage of food. But people are having trouble paying for the food they would like to eat. The same is true for health care, for prescription drugs—for college tuition. At the University of Nevada, we have a new law school. I was happy to see in the latest rankings it came out ranked 78th—a new law school ranked 78th in the Nation. That is remarkable. They have done such a good job.

But they also announced they are going to double the tuition at that new small law school—double the tuition. The cost of going to State institutions is going up. Why? Because the economies of our States are so desperately bad. In the State of Nevada, because of the downturn in the economy, the Governor, with the State legislature, has had to cut almost $1 billion in programs that are there in the State—road construction, new buildings, new programs—and cutting some of the old programs. Of course, they have a program to let prisoners out of our prisons more quickly, not because it is good for the people of the State of Nevada but because they are desperate for money.

We are paying record prices for nearly everything. Yet the average household income has dropped. American families are earning less and paying more. The Republican answer, for 7 years, has been to slash taxes for the ultrawealthy, to side with big business, oil companies, utility companies, and let the little guy fend for himself.

We have worked hard, as the Democratic Party—first in the minority, now in the majority—to cut taxes for the middle class, to end the dependence on oil that keeps our gas and heating bills sky high, to make health care and college tuition more affordable for families. We have now tried for days to quickly pass a highway bill that takes care of some of the problems we had in the massive bill we had before. There are corrections we would like to make on that. Last Thursday evening, the distinguished assistant leader was on the floor, as was the assistant leader for the Republicans. We talked about: Why are we having another filibuster on this? My friend, the junior Senator from Arizona, said: Oh, there will be no filibuster on this, everything is going fine—words to that effect. We had to vote last night to invoke cloture, and rather than being able to legislate on the bill, we are talking on the bill, stalling, wasting time.

We could have started on this legislation Thursday night. We could have legislated all day yesterday and all day today. But, no, we are not going to be able to do that. We are going to use the full 30 hours.

This is a number—it is probably higher than this, but let's assume this is right. The last time we came out and said there were 70-plus filibusters, they came out and said: Oh, no, not that many, not that many. So say 65, for purposes of this discussion.

In the history of this country previously—and I am going to use leader time, not morning business time, Mr. President, during my presentation.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator has that right.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, in the entire history of the country, no matter what has been going on in this country—and we have been through some difficult times—the most filibusters we ever had were 61 or 62 during a 2-year period of time, during an entire Congress. But now, in the first year of this Congress, they broke that record—stalling, slowing things down so we cannot legislate the people's business. That is because they are protecting the status quo.

Can you imagine filibustering a bill that is correcting technical mistakes made by the two Houses in passing this legislation previously? They are filibustering that—commas, semicolons, dotting an ''i,'' crossing a ''t,'' that is what we are doing, that is what this legislation is all about, technical corrections—supported by the ranking member, Senator INHOFE, and the chairman, Senator BOXER. They are filibustering this, making us use all the time.

Some may ask why they are doing this. The main reason is they are protecting the status quo. Time after time, Republicans seemed intent on obstruction only for obstruction's sake. They pursued this course on legislative matters large and small. It doesn't have to be, as they have done many times, stopping us from moving forward on matters relating to Iraq—many times. Let's consider that a big issue. But let's consider what we are doing today a small issue—technical corrections on a bill.

Look what is going on in the country today. Look what is going on in the world today. We listen to the news or find it in the newspaper. Today in Iraq—scores of people killed in Iraq. Bombs here, bombs there, two American soldiers killed in Iraq yesterday. We have learned 2.7 million people are displaced in Iraq. That is Iraqis. The population is only 25 million people to begin with and 2.7 million of them are wandering around trying to find a place to live in Iraq. About 3 million have left the country. They have blocked us from doing anything about that.

We had General Petraeus talk about what is going on in Iraq. He didn't answer the question: Are we any safer now than we were before this Iraq war started, before the surge started? No answer to that. When are we going to get our troops home? No answer to that. They have even gone forward on tactics delaying matters on legislation they ultimately came to support—stalling for time.

The most unfortunate aspect of Republican strategy is real people suffer because of it. Why do I say that? There are a lot of things we need to do as a country. We have, now, a big merger that took place making big business even bigger. Delta Airlines has joined with Northwest. They will have 75,000 or 80,000 employees. Now there is talk of United joining with other companies. We have heard Southwest Airlines—they were flying airplanes that were in bad shape, but they did it anyway.

We have learned in recent weeks the Federal Aviation Agency is protecting the airlines and not the consumer. We have a bill we need to do, FAA reauthorization. We need to do that bill. We would like to bring up that bill, but we cannot because we are being stalled on a technical corrections bill—only stalling for time.

Veterans health care—Senator AKAKA has asked for months: Why

can't I bring up my bill? Every time, I say to him: Senator AKAKA, we are doing our best, but they stalled us on this and they stalled us on that. That is something we want to do this work period, as we do the FAA legislation.

There is an important piece of legislation—genetic nondiscrimination. A lot of things are happening in medicine. We have the ability to look at people and find out what their genes are going to forecast for the future. But we don't want, as a result of advances in medical care and treatment in this regard, to have someone who may be prone to getting some disease 10 or 15 years from now be discriminated against in the workplace. This is an important piece of legislation, and it is being held up; we can't get to that.

Flood insurance—we want to be able to do this. It is important to the American people. We hear a lot about the Federal Emergency Management Agency. What they deal with more than anything else—more than earthquakes, tornadoes, fires—is floods. Flooding is the most devastating natural disaster we have every year in America, and we want to do something to have the flood insurance program in this country mean something. We saw the never-ending litigation in Louisiana and Mississippi and Alabama as a result of Katrina. One of the reasons for that litigation is the legislation was not clear. It was not good legislation. We need to change that.

Food safety? My friend from Illinois has been working for a long time to do something about food safety—what can we do to make it better, so that when you go to a fast-food restaurant, you don't get salmonella; if you get a steak, it is OK. Has it been inspected? We have not been able to legislate in that regard.

It is disheartening to recognize and realize what we are not able to do, as a result of the Republicans wanting to maintain the status quo. Why can't we go through this piece of legislation, let Senator BOXER move forward on completing it, and then go to one of the other matters. There are a lot of other matters we need go to. I have only mentioned a few of them.

When I go home, people ask: Why aren't you getting more done? I tell them the Republicans are stalling, they want the status quo. Here is a perfect illustration, I say to my friends who have asked that question. Why are we being asked to waste valuable Senate time—that is all we have is time—valuable Senate time on something that is so unnecessary. We are waiting here. We came in at 10. The Republicans say we can't go to the bill; they want to go to their caucus and discuss what they want to do on the technical corrections bill.

I hope that my friends on the other side of the aisle, the Republicans, would let us start legislating. After we passed the stimulus bill for housing, I thought we could enter into a program where we would start doing that. I do not know what they could talk about in their caucus about how difficult this particular technical corrections bill is. I said we are not going to fill the tree, which means they can offer amendments. Let them offer amendments. We invite them to offer amendments. But let's move forward on this legislation.

The Republican filibusters of this Congress, 65, is recordbreaking. They should be proud of that. We invoked cloture on more than 65 of those issues. We are still counting. Today is one of those counts that continue. I am very disappointed that we are being stalled again on something as insignificant as a technical corrections bill on highways.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, will you alert me when I have spoken 10 minutes in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator will be notified.

Mr. DURBIN. A filibuster is a way to stop the Senate from acting. A filibuster is an effort to make sure the Senate does nothing. You saw the movie with Jimmy Stewart, ''Mr. Smith Goes to Washington.'' He took to the floor as a freshman Senator and stood there speaking in a filibuster until he collapsed in physical exhaustion.

Well, it does not quite happen that way anymore. What happens, of course, is someone says: I am going to stop the Senate, and you are going to have to come up with 60 votes to stop me.

Well, Democrats have 51 votes in this current Senate; the Republicans have 49. So anytime we want to move forward with a piece of legislation to which a Republican Senator objects, we need their help to stop a filibuster. They know that.

So their strategy this year has been to slow us down to a crawl so nothing happens and to make sure when something comes up that they think might be a delicate vote for them to face, they start a filibuster. Then we cannot come up with 60 votes, and we move on to something else.

The net result of this filibuster strategy from the Republican side of the aisle is that critically important issues, such as the ones mentioned by the majority leader, cannot be addressed in the Senate. The House passes important and timely legislation and sends it over, and the Republican strategy on this side is to stop anything from happening.

Look at the issues we are facing in this country. The Senator from California is here. She is the chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, and this committee is considering critical legislation on the question of global warming. This is important for us as a nation. It is important for our planet. And we know when this critical legislation which has now been reported from her committee comes to the floor, we will face a string of filibusters.

That is part and parcel now of the procedure in the Senate. But you say: Well, wait a minute. That is a big issue. Global warming is a controversial issue with some. You expect some political controversy. Right?

Well, accepting that argument, I then have to ask you: Why were we involved in a filibuster until last night by the Republicans on the bill before us today? This is a technical corrections bill. When we passed the highway bill, the Federal highway bill years ago, it was a huge bill affecting the entire United States of America. Then, as we combed through it, word for word, line for line, page for page, we found there were technicalities that needed to be changed: punctuation, references to a road instead of a trail. You find them in here. They go on for hundreds of pages.

But they are technical in nature; it is not a big policy debate. This kind of bill usually passes in the Congress by a voice vote late at night and no one notices. It is housekeeping. That is ordinarily what we do when we try to catch up and make sure everything is done just right.

Senator BOXER has worked long and hard to bring it out of her committee and bring it to the Senate floor, and the Republicans initiated a filibuster against the technical corrections bill. That is like having a resolution to salute motherhood and having them initiate a filibuster. Where is the controversy? There is no controversy in this bill. If they want to offer amendments, we said on this side: If they are germane amendments to the bill, have at it. That is what the Senate is all about, after all.

But the Republican strategy of filibusters, as indicated by this chart, in the history of Congress, the minority party has initiated no more than 57 filibusters in any 2-year period of time. That is the record, 57 in 2 years.

So far in this Congress, we are barely a few months into the second year. The minority party, the Republicans, has initiated 65 filibusters, and we are still counting.

You say to yourself: Well, they must have been some pretty controversial issues they had to filibuster. A technical corrections bill? So why do they filibuster? So that we burn the clock and eat up days so we cannot address the issues that are even more important to this country.

Would it not be great for us as a Senate to consider and debate a national energy policy to bring down the price of gasoline in the United States? No way. The Republicans insist on filibustering a bill that focuses on punctuation. Would it not be timely for us to consider the cost of health insurance to businesses and families across America and find a way to make it more affordable and accessible? No way. The Republicans want to debate a bill which changes the word ''trail'' to ''road'' and filibuster it.

That is the reality. And time and again when we have brought up issues,

the Republicans have initiated a filibuster in this Congress. You cannot read this; I can barely read it. It is a list of the Republican filibusters so far in this Congress, 65 and still counting.

Let me give you a couple of examples, if I can, of the egregious Republican filibusters in this Congress. We had a bill to implement the 9/11 Commission Report to fight terrorism in America—filibustered by the Republicans.

We had a bill authorizing the intelligence agencies to make America safer—filibustered by the Republicans.

We had a bill for court security so that judges and their families would be safe when they are at work or at home—filibustered by the Republicans.

We had a water resources bill to deal with the infrastructure of America and create good-paying jobs right here at home—filibustered by the Republicans.

The Clean Energy Act, an effort to use renewable, sustainable energy to reduce pollution and stimulate the needs of our economy—filibustered by the Republicans.

The CHIP reauthorization bill, a bill for health insurance for poor children across America, not poor enough to qualify for Medicaid, not lucky enough to have health insurance—filibustered by the Republicans.

The economic stimulus package to get this country out of the recession and moving—filibustered by the Republicans.

A Consumer Products Safety Commission overall to stop toys with lead-based paint from coming into this country from China—filibustered by the Republicans.

GOP used to stand for Grand Old Party. That is what the Republicans called their party, the Grand Old Party. But when it comes to the Republicans in the Senate, GOP stands for ''Graveyard of Progress.'' They want to stop this Senate from making any progress on critical issues for this country. They want to run out the clock by filibustering a technical corrections bill.

There is only one remedy for this. It comes in November. The American people will have a chance to speak then. They can initiate a filibuster which the Republicans will hear. They can speak long and loudly and clearly that it is time for change in this Senate. The old ways of Washington dominated by special interest groups really hidebound to the partisanship that will not even let us bring up these technical correction issues has to change.

Voters in this country have the last word in November to elect agents of change, people who will make a difference for improving this country.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask that you notify me when I have gone 10 minutes in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator will be so notified.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I, too, rise in strong support of the transportation technical corrections bill. First, I commend my friend and colleague, Senator BOXER, on her hard work and leadership in putting in these corrections.

I thank Leader REID for his determination to get this act through the body. Yet it seems our colleagues across the aisle will stop at nothing to obstruct our efforts which will improve the lives of working Americans who struggle to make ends meet and filibuster a comma, filibuster an exclamation point, filibuster the name change of a road to a way.

What is going on here? What is going on? Well, I have two points I would like to make. But first I ask my colleagues across the aisle, is there any topic that you will not filibuster? If you will filibuster a technical corrections bill, name changes, punctuation changes, corrections in terms of where the miles were supposed to be and where they are, what will you not filibuster?

Now, let's talk about two things. First, this bill is a win-win for the American people. We are entering a recession. We all know we need to prime the pump. Many of us believe we should have a large public works spending program. But the question is, Should we pay for it or should we not?

But in the SAFETEA–LU bill, this technical corrections bill, the money is already allocated. It cannot be spent because of some nonpolitical small error in the drafting. So this bill makes those corrections and hundreds of projects can sally forth and employ people with no particular cost to the Federal Government. Who could object to that? Do my colleagues want to tell the construction workers and those who have little diners and lunch places and restaurants where construction workers eat, and those who supply the construction industry: Heck with all of you, we are filibustering.

So on the merits it makes no sense to block this bill—on the merits. I have to say this to our minority leader: I know there are probably Members on his side who say: I want something else. I do not want to let this bill go through. There is a larger obligation. If we let every single Member of the other side of the aisle paralyze this body, then we are doing America a disservice.

I would plead with the minority leader to tell his individual Members: You do not have—each one of you does not have veto power over anything, particularly something as trivial as this.

So why is this happening? That is the second point I wanted to address. I will tell you why. The other side is basically paralyzed. They have no program for America. They have no agenda for America. They do not know what to say except the old nostrums that were rejected years and years and years ago. They cannot say yes and so they try to show some kind of position. They just say no. That is what is going on here. It is the internal problem on the other side of the aisle, the hard right versus the right, versus the mainstream versus the moderates. They are all in a knot, and they cannot come to an agreement on anything, even a technical corrections bill that everyone has agreed to on the substance.

So the only thing that can unify them is a two-letter word: N-o.

Well, let me say that to allow any single Member to obstruct this bill is not living up to what the Senate is all about. It is not living up to what America is all about. It is not living up to what democracy is all about. Our leader has not said you cannot amend. Our leader has not said you cannot debate. I know there are a few Members on the other side of the aisle who believe there may be changes made. Let them debate it and let's vote.

But, no, the answer is only no. It has not been only on this bill. My friend and colleague from Illinois went through a long list of bills that are even more consequential than this one. Now, this one is not inconsequential. The changes are inconsequential, but the results are consequential. Again, it will employ thousands of people and release millions of dollars that have already been paid for to do worthy projects.

That, nobody disputes. But instead we have 65 filibusters already; 57 is the record—65 and going up. The filibuster used to be used on issues of major importance. It is now being used for everything, even the changing of punctuation and spelling, misspellings. Why? Because the only thing that unifies the other side is the word ''no.''

Well, the American people, come November 2008, are going to say ''no'' to the other side.

They are going to say: No more of this obstruction. We are going to give our side the number of votes we need to move forward, because 50 votes is not enough. Sixty is the need. This temporary refuge in the word ''no'' of a false unity will only be temporary.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor, along with the majority leader and my colleagues, to express our extreme frustration with what the minority, the Republicans are doing to block basic bills from getting through the Senate. We are trying to move to debate and offer amendments on a basic bill that needs to be done, called a technical corrections bill for transportation projects, changing minor things in the law so it can move forward. Normally this bill is done late at night; everyone agrees to it; there is no objection; it moves on; it takes only a few hours of time. It has gone through a lot of work in committee, which Senator BOXER chairs. They have done all their homework. It has passed on a bipartisan basis, and it was approved by the Senate late last night as a procedural move. But we are here today, spending hours and hours with no ability to move forward, no ability to offer

amendments, no ability to pass it, because the Republican minority has decided to filibuster this bill.

I go home every week, 2,500 miles away from here to the State of Washington. People come up to me and say: What are we going to do about the rising cost of health care? What are we going to do about the fact that fewer and fewer doctors are seeing seniors going into Medicare? What are we going to do about veterans waiting in line to get the care they have been promised? What are we going to do about the housing crisis? What are we going to do about Iraq and the President's request for $109 billion more? In Washington, Boeing workers come up to me and say: What are we going to do about a procurement process that has allowed our military to send $40 billion to a European-owned company, our tax dollars, at a time when our economy is struggling, to a European-owned company to start producing the backbone of our military, our air tankers? What are we going to do about that?

These are issues that we as Democrats want to bring to the floor and have major debates on, move legislation forward. They will take time. There is disagreement. Growing up in Washington State, when somebody said there is a filibuster, I assumed it was a major argument of the day. We would rush to find out what it was about and see which Senators were arguing which way and wonder in what direction this would change our country in the future.

We are a long way from that today. The filibuster is now being used as a delaying tactic so we won't get to those critical pieces of legislation, those critical debates we ought to be having in the Senate.

Republicans have engaged in an historic, record-setting level of obstruction over the last 14 months. They haven't filibustered the bills themselves, but they have filibustered motions to proceed to basic bills that we need to pass to keep Government running. They have delayed us from moving forward even after voting in favor of these bills. That is where we find ourselves today. Once again, Republicans have decided to keep us from moving forward simply to delay progress. They don't oppose the legislation. In fact, after filing cloture on the motion to proceed last Thursday and waiting the obligatory 30 hours, last night the Senate voted, and 93 Senators wanted to move this legislation forward. So why are we sitting here today delaying 30 more hours before Senators can even start to offer amendments, if they so choose, so that we can then move the bill to final passage, unless, of course, we have to file a motion to end debate and get to another filibuster of 30 hours, which will take a lot more time.

We have seen this before. It is about delaying. It is about not allowing America to move forward. It is about not allowing progress. The word ''filibuster'' gets thrown around a lot here. People think of ''Mr. Smith Goes to Washington'' and the movie appears in their head. That is the most celebrated version of a filibuster. But there are all kinds of filibusters. We have learned that firsthand, because at the core a filibuster is any procedural move to delay the Senate. Any one Senator has the power to delay us. The majority and the minority have the power to talk to Members and say: This is important to enough of us that we need to move past those objections and begin to move this forward. We need to work toward an agreement so we can move forward.

Time and time again we have seen people use delays on motions to proceed, and then the Senate has to wait 30 hours, 30 long hours with people such as me sitting out here talking on the floor on miscellaneous subjects until we can finally get through 30 hours so we can then be on the floor for hours waiting for Senators to offer amendments. That kind of delay has forced this Senate in this Congress for over a year now into weeks and weeks and weeks of wasted time. No wonder the American people think nothing is getting done in Washington. We are seeing delay after delay. Believe me, we are all frustrated that we cannot get to those important topics of the day, to be able to have perhaps a real filibuster on a real issue that is important, that would change the direction of this country. That is what a filibuster ought to be about. But here we have to file cloture on the motion to proceed to basic bills. We have had to file procedural motions on whether to follow the 9/11 Commission recommendations, which then passed 97 to nothing, once we got through all of those hours of waiting around. On the intelligence authorization bill, we had to file a motion to proceed to the bill, had to wait the 30 hours, and then the vote was 94 to 3. So a couple of Senators forced an entire Senate to wait 30 hours and not get anything done. Bill after bill I could list a desire on the part of the minority to delay progress.

What we are seeing is Republicans who are united for obstruction on issue after issue. Month after month, Republicans have put delay before debate, procedure above progress, and obstruction before solutions.

The American people, certainly in my State of Washington, want us to move forward and deal with the issues critical to their families. They are struggling today with the economy. They are worried about their ability to retire. They are worried about being able to send their kids to college. Certainly, our men and women who have gone to fight the war in Iraq are coming home and facing delays. Yet we can't get a veterans bill up on this floor because of the delays we are seeing.

Here we are today, waiting around to vote on a technical corrections bill to a transportation bill that ought to take a few minutes.

It is a sad day in the United States. I hope our colleagues will talk to their leaders and say: We need to move on. It is time to get the business of this country done. That is our job.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, could the Chair tell me what the current state of the parliamentary situation is right now?

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

HIGHWAY TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS ACT OF 2007—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 1195, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to consideration of Calendar No. 608, a bill (H.R. 1195) to amend the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, to make technical corrections, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from California is recognized.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am very hopeful we can move this bill. When my kids were a little younger, they used to say: Mom, it is a no-brainer.

This is a no-brainer. This is something we need to do. We passed a very important bill several years ago that funds our highways and our transit. As often happens—because the years pass and the studies take place and you find there were errors in such a big bill that encompasses so many programs—there were certain very important transportation projects, highway projects that got stymied because of a technical problem. We also had one account that was oversubscribed and we need to make some fixes there because that particular account funds research into the state of our bridges, our highways, our transit systems, and we all know with bridges collapsing in America today, we can't short ourselves on the funding. We need to find out exactly what is the state of our fiscal infrastructure.

In a great economy, you can't move people and you can't move goods without a transportation infrastructure. That means roads that are not falling

apart, bridges that are not falling apart, transit systems that work. Especially in this time of more awareness of being efficient, energy efficient, all of this works together as we look at global warming and the best ways to combat that.

This is a very simple bill. Why are we standing here without actually voting on a few amendments that we know some of my Republican friends have? It is because there is a move by some Republican Senators to slow us down, slow down our work. My colleagues heard about it previous to my taking the floor today. Several colleagues talked about the unprecedented number of filibusters.

But I have to say on the bright side, this is a bill that Senator INHOFE and I have worked very closely on. We agree on it. It is bipartisan in nature. There are a couple of colleagues who don't like a couple of things in here. We will deal with that. We will deal with it, but let's get moving. It seems a shame to have the Presiding Officer sitting in the chair in front of an empty Chamber while the time clicks away and we can't get anything done on a technical corrections bill.

I might say everyone is quite aware that we are in an economic slowdown. I look at this bill as a little bit of a ministimulus package, because it will unleash about $1 billion for very important projects already approved. It will unleash those funds. For every billion dollars, tens of thousands of new jobs are created in the construction industry. We have a very long list of people supporting us on this bill. Again, I call on my friends and colleagues on the other side of the aisle who for some reason are holding up this bill: Please. We are willing to have votes on your objections in the form of an amendment. We are willing to work with you. We want to get this bill done. The American people need this bill done. There is no reason to get it caught up in other political arguments and questions.

I hope I can come out here in short order with the news that my Republican friends have decided to let us go to the amendment process so we can move forward and complete our work on this bill.

At this point I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONGRATULATING BOSTON COLLEGE MEN'S ICE HOCKEY TEAM

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I welcome this opportunity to congratulate Boston College Eagles men's ice hockey team on their Division I National Championship and to offer a Senate resolution with my colleague from Massachusetts, Senator KERRY, to recognize the team's extraordinary accomplishment.

This past Saturday, in Denver, Boston College defeated the University of Notre Dame four goals to one to claim their third national championship and their second since 2001. For the Eagles and their legion of supporters, known as the ''Super Fans,'' this victory marks the culmination of years of hard work in which they reached the Frozen Four's championship game in 3 consecutive years. Junior Nathan Gerbe was named the Frozen Four's Most Outstanding Player.

Led by head coach Jerry York, Nathan Gerbe, captain Mike Brennan, and assistant captains Matt Greene and Dan Bertram, the Eagles compiled an impressive overall record of 24 wins, 11 losses, and 8 ties during the 2007 to 2008 season, which also included Boston College's 14th victory in the historic Beanpot Championship.

With their work ethic and dedication, the Eagles have made the entire Boston College community and all of us in New England proud. We congratulate the entire team, its coaches, and fans.

We also thank Father William P. Leahy, president of Boston College, who has proved that you can foster a collegiate environment in which both academic and athletic excellence are the order of the day. The team deserves great credit for its extraordinary achievement, and I urge my colleagues in the Senate to approve this resolution.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that an article from the Boston Globe be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Boston Globe, Apr. 14, 2008]

AT BC, A MOMENT TO SAVOR

(By Nancy Marrapese-Burrell)

DENVER.—When Boston College won its NCAA championship in 2001, Bobby Allen was one of the team captains. So it seemed fitting that it was Allen who gave the 2007–08 Eagles a crucial pep talk last week just prior to their departure for the Mile High City and this year's Frozen Four.

In essence, Allen told the players to live in the moment, to revel in the joy of the event and remember that hockey is a labor of love.

The team took that message to heart. After beating Notre Dame, 4–1, in the title game Saturday night at the Pepsi Center, the seniors in particular felt the weight of the world lifted off their shoulders. They were the ones who most acutely realized it was their last chance after two consecutive failed attempts at the crown. Senior center Dan Bertram said they were determined it wasn't going to elude them a third time.

''I think [the experience factor] helped us a lot,'' said Bertram. ''I know with our senior class here, we were all pretty tight. We didn't know exactly what the feeling was like to be on the other side and we sure as heck didn't want to have that this year. Everyone else really saw the passion from our captain [Mike Brennan] all the way down and you can't say enough about just this feeling and the achievement.''

When Allen and his teammates were celebrating their victory, John Muse was only 12 years old. The Falmouth native, who backstopped the Eagles in all 44 games this season, allowed only two goals in the Frozen Four, one each to North Dakota and Notre Dame.

''He's been unbelievable,'' said Bertram. ''I think everyone is going to know who John Muse is now. We're so proud of him and we had so much confidence in him. That's a hard thing, to come in as a freshman, and the whole year he has played solid, consistent hockey. The way he played in the Frozen Four is unbelievable. These guys are lucky to have him for another three years.''

While Muse was keeping out goals in his end, neither the Fighting Sioux nor the Fighting Irish could do a thing about junior left wing Nathan Gerbe, who tallied 4 points in each game (five goals, three assists) on the way to being named the tournament's most outstanding player. It's as if Gerbe was playing on an entirely different stage than anyone else. All they could do was watch.

''In our eyes, he's the best player in the country,'' said Bertram. ''To show up in the biggest games, I think that's the best [praise] someone can give you. He's a big-game player. To lead this team and score those big goals, he's going to be a great player at the national level, too, but it's just so nice to experience and play with him here and just see that talent first-hand. He's a game-breaker and if you give him some chances and loosen up a little bit, he's going to make you pay. The last two games, he was unbelievable.''

The seniors provided strong leadership throughout the season, which was not always very smooth. There were winless streaks, injuries, and player dismissals. But the steady upperclassmen helped right the ship for the stretch run and none allowed themselves to get too excited until practically the final seconds ticked off the clock.

''I wasn't exhaling until I looked up with six seconds left and said, 'All right, I don't think they can score three goals with six seconds left,' '' said Bertram. ''It's almost surreal when you're sitting there and kind of watching the clock go down, 30 seconds at a time. I guess when it got to 1:30 [left] and I'm thinking, 'This is really in out of reach now.' Six seconds was the only time I was like, 'OK, start enjoying it a little bit.' ''

Senior Matt Greene said in his 22 years of living, the feeling of accomplishment is unmatched.

''I can't say this is the best feeling I'll ever feel, but this certainly is the highlight of my life so far,'' he said.

Greene acknowledged, however, it hadn't quite hit him that although the seniors went out on the ultimate high, his collegiate career is over.

''I've got a couple more weeks to stick around the BC campus,'' said Greene. ''It's the last time I'll stare across and give [Andrew] Orpik a wink or maybe throw a tape ball at [Brian Gibbons] or maybe a little bit of ice at [Kyle Kucharski]. That's all a part of being a team.

''Hockey is a special sport because you grow in relationships more than I think in any other sport. We deeply mean what we say and it's going to hit me for sure.''

Bertram said as devastated as they were to lose in the two title games prior to this one, that's how incredible the feeling is to win.

''You never want to lose,'' said Bertram. ''It's nice as senior, you're remembered for your last game. There is no better feeling than leaving Boston College, which has been so good to us, on top and winning. It's something I'll never forget and it's something forever I will be proud of.''

The Eagles will hold an autograph session at Conte Forum at 5:30 this afternoon, followed by a victory celebration at 6:15 p.m.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 514 submitted earlier today.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 514) congratulating the Boston College men's ice hockey team on winning the 2008 National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I National Ice Hockey Championship.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motions to consider be laid upon the table, and any statements be printed in the RECORD without intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 514) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 514

Whereas, on Saturday, April 12, 2008, the Boston College men's ice hockey team (referred to in this preamble as the ''Eagles'') won the 2008 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I National Ice Hockey Championship by defeating the University of Notre Dame men's ice hockey team by the score of 4 to 1 in the final game of the Frozen Four;

Whereas the University of Notre Dame men's ice hockey team deserves great respect for reaching the Frozen Four for the first time in the team's history and then advancing to the National Championship game;

Whereas the victory for Boston College marked the Eagles' third national hockey championship, after the team's first championship win in 1949 and its second championship win in 2001;

Whereas the Eagles earned the number 1 seed in the NCAA hockey tournament with an impressive overall record of 24 wins, 11 losses, and 8 ties during the 2007–2008 season;

Whereas the Eagles were led by junior Nathan Gerbe, the Nation's leading scorer in men's college ice hockey, who came in second for the Hobey Baker Memorial Award, with 35 goals and 32 assists during the season;

Whereas the Eagles have made the National Championship game in each of the past 3 years, demonstrating extraordinary teamwork and dedication;

Whereas the remarkable 2007–2008 season also included a memorable victory for the Eagles in the historic Beanpot Championship in February 2008, earning Boston College its 14th Beanpot Championship;

Whereas Boston College ''Super Fans'' traveled great distances all year and gave the Eagles strong support throughout their championship season; and

Whereas Boston College and its student athletes are well known for their commitment to both athletic and academic excellence, ranking sixth nationally among NCAA Division I schools in the graduation rate of student athletes: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates—

(A) the Boston College men's ice hockey team for winning the 2008 National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I National Ice Hockey Championship; and

(B) the players, coaching staff, faculty and staff of the university, student body, and fans whose determination, strong work ethic, drive, and support made the 2007–2008 championship season possible;

(2) congratulates the University of Notre Dame men's ice hockey team for its success in the 2007–2008 season and for reaching the Frozen Four for the first time in the team's history; and

(3) directs the Secretary of the Senate to transmit an enrolled copy of this resolution to—

(A) Boston College President Father William P. Leahy, S.J.;

(B) Boston College Athletic Director Gene DeFilippo; and

(C) Boston College Head Coach Jerry York.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 2:15 p.m. this afternoon.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:24 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. CARPER).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California is recognized.

HIGHWAY TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS ACT OF 2007—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am very hopeful that our Republican friends had a good meeting about this SAFETEA-LU technical corrections bill and that they decided to work with us to get this job done. This, as we say, is definitely not rocket science. It is a bill that is going to correct some mistakes we made in this enormous highway transportation bill that was passed several years ago. It is going to make very important corrections so the Department of Transportation can proceed to investigate the status of our highways, our bridges, and our transit systems.

The bottom line is, as we get ready for our next highway bill—and, Mr. President, you are such a key player on our committee. You know this as well as I do. We see bridges collapsing. We need to know the extent of the problems we are facing.

Because of a problem in the bill, the account that we need to fund these investigations and studies is oversubscribed, which is a fancy way of saying we need to figure out another way to complete our work. That is taken care of in this bill.

We need colleagues to help us. We are not adding one dime to the spending on transportation systems and highways. All we are doing is making technical corrections to make sure some of the projects that have been stymied—let's say because the environmental report came in and said we can't do alternative 1, we have to do alternative 2, and alternative 2 was not authorized—will be allowed to move forward.

I did a press conference today with both management and labor of the building trades. The construction workers are hurting out there. We know we are in a recession. This is a mini-economic stimulus bill. We are not suggesting it is a cure-all by any means. It is a small bill, but it will unleash $1 billion across this great Nation of ours. When you unleash $1 billion of spending, what it means is tens of thousands of workers will get jobs. They are doing important projects—fixing bridges, fixing roads, building transit systems—all the good work that makes our Nation work.

I am here. It is about 2:20 in the afternoon. We have been on the floor of the Senate since early Monday. Frankly, this bill could have been done in an hour or two. We are very willing to take the few amendments there are and work with the authors of those amendments. We may have to have just an up-or-down vote because, frankly, we are not going to entertain anything that changes the law. This is just a technical corrections bill. But if there are things we can do to accommodate our colleagues, we are happy to do them.

When I say ''we,'' I not only mean the Democratic members of the committee but the Republican members of the committee. Senator INHOFE has been working very closely with me, and we feel very good about our work together. We managed to get our WRDA bill through, the Water Resources Development Act, in 7 months after it languished 7 years. We can do it on this too. On that we had to override the President's veto. The President sent us a little note that he doesn't love this bill; there is one thing he doesn't like. The fact is, the one thing he doesn't like was signed off on by Republicans and Democrats on the Banking Committee. It has to do with how we prioritize transit projects. The desire of the committee to put this in the bill is a reiteration of SAFETEA-LU. It really doesn't change anything, it just stresses it. The President does not like it, but I am hopeful he is not going to veto. He didn't say he is going to veto. He just said he didn't appreciate the guidance we are giving him. We don't believe it is a veto threat. We believe we can get this to his desk.

Think about how good we will feel to know that people who are hurting can get jobs right now—that is really what

it is about right now—and, frankly, companies that are hurting can get contracts.

Again, this is a no brainer, for want of a better term. This is something we should do. We should do it quickly. I stand by ready, willing, and able to get this work done.

I do not see anyone else on the Senate floor wishing to speak. Mr. President, I will be back when I have to be back.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, here we are. It is 2:15, 2:20. The caucus has ended for the Republicans, and there is still no decision on the momentous decision on whether we can legislate on a technical corrections bill. It is too bad that we cannot move forward; we have so much to do in this body to meet the needs of the American people. We need to do something about the reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Agency. We have an equal pay issue we have to deal with. We have a veterans health matter we have to deal with. We have to deal with a long list of legislation, and we are being stopped from doing that today. We were stopped from doing it yesterday. We were stopped from doing it on Thursday.

I want to be spread on the record that this obstructionism of the Republicans has been carried to a fine art. They are doing a great job. They are basically obstructing everything, stalling for time to maintain the status quo. We have had 7-plus years of this administration which has brought this country down, not up. We have an economy that is staggering. We have a housing crisis like we have rarely seen—maybe during the Great Depression but not since then. We have a war that is costing us $5,000 a second, and the Republicans want to maintain the status quo.

The only thing they talk about is let's have the Bush tax cuts go on a little bit longer. Let's do tort reform. It is no longer a serious debate on legislation. It is a serious debate on how to keep attention away from the failed Presidency of George Bush.

We can have a vote at 11:30 tonight, approximately. It takes a majority vote. That is all it takes to move forward on this legislation. Until then we can do nothing. We cannot legislate until the 30 hours is used. In the 65 or 70 filibusters they have conducted in the Senate—my math is not good enough instantaneously to tell you how many hours we have eaten up on days like this just doing nothing, just letting the statutory 30 hours run out—but during that period of time we really can't do anything. They know that. But I believe the American people will recognize in November what has happened in the Senate.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALLARD. I ask unanimous consent that I speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TAX REFORM

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about an issue that is very important to the hard-working men and women of our great country; that is, tax reform. I believe the Federal tax burden is excessive and overly intrusive. Reform of the IRS and the current tax system is long overdue.

If our Democratic colleagues have their way, the Tax Code will continue to be excessive and overly intrusive. In recent years it has become abundantly clear to me that we have lost sight of the fact that the fundamental purpose of our tax system is to raise revenues to fund our Government.

In its current application, the U.S. tax system distorts the economic decisions of families, of businesses, leading to an inefficient allocation of resources and hindering economic growth.

Our tax system has become unstable and unpredictable. Frequent changes to the Tax Code have caused volatility that is harmful to the economy and creates additional compliance costs. The tax system was originally intended to be an efficient and simple system designed to raise revenues for our national defense, social programs, and vital Government services. However, the current tax system is now so complex that approximately $150 billion is spent each year by taxpayers and the Federal Government to make sure that taxes are tallied and paid correctly. This is an enormous expense and a waste of resources. At present, the United States has instituted a tax system that thwarts basic economic decisions, punishes wise and productive investments, and rewards those who work less and borrow more.

As it stands, the quagmire that is our existing Tax Code penalizes savings, contributes to the ever-increasing cost of health insurance, and undermines our global competitiveness. More disturbing is the fact that Americans spend more than 3.5 billion hours doing their taxes, which is the equivalent of hiring almost 2 million new IRS employees; more than 20 times the agency's current workforce, I might add.

On average, Americans spend the equivalent of more than half of one work week; that is, 26 hours, on their taxes each year, not to mention the amount of time they work to pay the taxes themselves. At the end of the day, despite our lengthy codified tax law, there is no evidence to suggest that Americans know how much they should be paying in taxes in any given year or why.

Our Tax Code should aspire to be clear and transparent, rather than multifarious and convoluted. Everyone should be able to have a basic understanding of the Tax Code, knowing how and why they are taxed. The Tax Code's constant phase-ins and phase-outs are a nuisance at best and a negative force, at worst, in the daily economic lives of American families and businesses.

Moreover, taxpayers with the same incomes, family situation, and other key characteristics often face different tax burdens. This differing treatment creates a perception of unfairness in the Tax Code and has left many Americans discouraged.

At present, how much or little taxpayers pay in taxes is sometimes dependent on where they happen to live and the choices made by their employers.

In 1986, President Ronald Reagan, a true visionary in this area, signed the Tax Reform Act of 1986 which reduced top marginal individual rates from 50 percent to 28 percent, increased the standard deduction, and reduced the top corporate tax from 50 percent to 34 percent. In doing so, this reform act simplified the Tax Code, broadening the income tax base, allowing for lower marginal rates, and curtailing the use of individual tax shelters.

While the 1986 act was a step in the right direction, unfortunately, it did not produce a long-lasting transformation of our tax system. Today, our tax system bears little resemblance to the simple low-rate system promised by the 1986 reform. This is due to constant tweaking over the years. More than 100 different acts of Congress have made nearly 15,000 changes to the Tax Code.

Public opinion polls indicate that Americans believe taxpayers should not have to pay more than one-fourth of their income to the Government. The current Tax Code hardly reflects this perspective. Depending on the level of income, the amount of deductions, and the type of family, one's income can be taxed at 25 percent, 28 percent, 33 percent, or 35 percent.

I support broad-based tax reform and a simplified tax system. It is my belief that any reform to the current tax system should benefit the middle class. The vast majority of taxpayers are the middle class, and they have borne the burden of the current system.

While I was a member of the Colorado Legislature, we implemented a 5-percent flat tax for Colorado. I believe we should take a similar approach on the Federal level. While I would be willing to consider a flat tax or a sales tax or other plans on the Federal level, it is important that any replacement

plan be simple and fair. The replacement system must provide tax relief for working Americans. It must protect the rights of taxpayers and reduce our collection abuse. But most importantly, a new system must eliminate the bias against savings and investment and against economic growth and job creation.

No one can deny that our Tax Code is in dire need of reform. Its complexity, lack of clarity, unfairness, and disproportionate influence on behavior has caused great frustration. Our current Tax Code has been shaped by goals other than simplicity, by intentions other than helping the taxpayer plan ahead, and by objectives other than expanding our economy. Not only has it failed to keep pace with our economy, frequent changes have made it unstable and unpredictable. Years of hodgepodge Government interference and ad hoc meddling have left our Tax Code in shambles. While we cannot change the past, we can learn valuable lessons from the same and remedy our mistakes.

If we do not take steps to immediately simplify and reform the Tax Code, it will become more complex, more unfair, and less conducive to our economy's future growth.

Small reforms are not enough. A total overhaul of the existing system is the only chance we have of righting this wrong and getting our economy and our deficit back on track.

Raising taxes is not an option. Our Democratic colleagues seem to believe that raising taxes or doing nothing about taxes is the best policy. Just last month, Democrats proposed raising taxes on the average American family by $2,300 per year. Earlier this year, Democrats passed a proposal calling for the largest tax hike in history. If Democrats continue down this path of tax increases and a do-nothing tax policy, more and more American families will suffer.

It is important to point out that to do nothing on the Tax Code means a tax increase is going to happen within the next several years. A do-nothing policy on taxes will allow for the expiration of several key tax provisions. It will further the reach of the AMT, the alternative minimum tax. We will see a tax increase of more than $1.2 trillion over the next 10 years.

At a time of economic uncertainty, raising taxes and taking money out of the pockets of the American people should not be the goal of the Congress. We must act now. We have a responsibility to our constituents and the Nation to resolve the predicament the current tax system has put us in. If we do not act sooner rather than later in reforming our tax system, it will continue to become more complex and cumbersome.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I want to take a few minutes to speak on the transportation technical corrections bill, which we will be discussing this week. Later on I will offer a motion to recommit, with some considerations I would like to address now.

A lot of us were part of moving this through Congress. It is an important transportation bill, when roads and bridges are in desperate need of funding for repairs and widening.

There were over 6000 politically directed earmarks in the original highway bill. Now, the corrections bill involves 500 of those earmarks. I thought we should talk about the bill and what this means, as far as transportation in the United States.

First, I want to thank Senators BOXER and INHOFE for all of the work they have done on transparency on this legislation. While I strongly believe we should put an end to the practice of earmarking, if the Senate is going to earmark, it must do it in a transparent manner. I believe the chairwoman and ranking member have set an example for all committees in providing information in a way that people can look at it and debate it. It is all right for us to disagree on whether we like earmarks. In this case, we can do it with full disclosure of what is actually in the bill.

The American people deserve to know how their elected representatives are spending their money, and the way this bill handles earmark disclosure helps us do just that. The Senators from California and Oklahoma have disclosed the sponsor, the recipient, and the purpose of the earmarks in this bill, in addition to letters disclosing that the sponsors have no financial interests in the particular earmark. I was also pleased to see that disclosures were made in a timely manner so we could review them before we began consideration of the legislation. They have gone beyond the requirements of the Senate rules, and I applaud them for their commitment to transparency. I hope the other committees are equally committed to transparency.

My colleagues have suggested on the floor that this bill is needed so States can move forward with planning and construction of authorized projects from the last highway reauthorization bill. As with all large bills, there were typos and other errors in this bill, and the technical corrections bill we are discussing this week was designed to correct those technical errors and problems. I think that is something, obviously, we need oftentimes to do with most of our legislation. But instead of correcting the errors from the last reauthorization bill, the committee decided to rewrite public law and add contract authority as well as add to spending levels for certain projects, essentially adding new earmarks to the bill.

The President's statement of administrative policy regarding this technical corrections bill contains strong language critical of this legislation, and let me quote some from that SAP.

> The administration notes with strong concern that the majority of the bill is devoted to earmarks. The bill modifies hundreds of earmarks from a bill that passed in 2005, effectively creating new earmarks, including a stand-alone section that would provide mandatory funding for magnetically levitating rail. The effort through H.R. 1195 to modify these earmarks from an authorization that passed only three years ago is a further reflection of those inefficiencies. Therefore, the Administration urges that these provisions be removed from the bill.

That is effectively what my motion will address when we offer it later in the week.

Again quoting from the administration's position on this bill:

> The administration urges Congress to restrict the bill to true technical changes. For example, in addition to those noted above, both the Senate-proposed substitute and the underlying bill contain substantive changes to statutory provisions regarding waiver procedures for Buy America requirements that should be removed from the bill because they are not technical corrections. In addition, section 104 of the substitute would repeal section 111(d) of title 23 of the U.S. Code, which allows idling reduction facilities at public rest areas in Interstate rights-of-way. This provision is a policy change, not a technical amendment. Repealing this section of the U.S. Code would eliminate a beneficial initiative first proposed by this administration.

We have heard for the past months, and will continue to hear today, that Members of Congress know what is best in their districts—know better than some unelected Federal bureaucrat. If a Member of Congress knows what is best for their district, then why are we debating a 138-page so-called technical corrections package? I suppose some of these are drafting errors, and I do not deny there should always be room for some error in the legislative process. But page after page of corrections does not speak well for our whole earmarking process.

The 1982 highway bill had only 10 earmarks. That number rose to 538 in 1991, and 1,800 in 1998. The SAFETEA-LU highway authorization bill we are talking about today contained an inexcusable 6,000 earmarks, at a cost of well over $20 billion and now nearly 500 changes in the technical corrections package. A 2007 report by the Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General, requested by Senator TOM COBURN, found that DOT earmarks have increased in number by 1,150 percent from 1996 to 2005—an incredible increase—and, as we can see, a number that has been very difficult for us to manage effectively here in the Congress.

This administration has projected that the highway trust fund will have a negative balance of $3.2 billion by 2009 if we continue on the path of outspending the receipts in this account.

So piling on the additional authorization levels to projects in this technical corrections bill will only further deplete the highway account and cause the highway trust fund to be bankrupt sooner than projected.

I know the case has been made that this technical corrections bill does not increase the overall amount, but as we went back through this and found numerous earmarks that were no longer needed or even wanted, instead of moving that money to savings, we moved it to earmarks, and new earmarks, and to add to additional earmarks at a time when we need to be trying to save money to overcome the projected deficit. Congress needs to take a timeout and examine the country's infrastructure priorities instead of relying solely on Members of Congress transportation earmarks.

Of most concern is that many of the earmarks requested and funded in highway authorization bills are neither the most effective nor efficient use of funds. Many of them, such as an earmark for renovating the Apollo Theater, have nothing to do with transportation. Senators and House Members have picked particular projects for funding that they know will result in their gaining political support. They will get more votes in their reelection campaigns for bringing home the bacon, but funding will be redirected from highway projects where it is most needed.

This is why I have proposed this motion to recommit, that will send this bill back to the committee and require that the bill be reported back to the Senate with an amendment that eliminates any provision in the bill that increases spending for earmarks that are contained in the SAFETEA bill. Increasing spending for existing earmarks is simply not a technical correction, and such provisions do not belong in this legislation, that is intended to only correct the technical aspects of the bill.

Here are a few examples of provisions in this bill that are not technical corrections but are actually inserting new earmarks into law or significantly increasing funding for existing earmarks.

Page 18 amends an earmark in current law that provides $800,000 for an intersection project in Pennsylvania by striking the $800,000 designation and increasing the earmark to $2.4 million. That is not a technical correction.

On page 19, we amend an earmark in current law that provides Federal funds for widening two blocks of Poplar Street from Park Avenue to 13th Street in Williamson County, IL, by striking that description and inserting the following new earmark, which is to construct a connector road from Rushing Drive north to Grand Avenue in Williamson County. It is not a technical correction. It is a new project and it is the elimination of another one.

Page 22 amends an earmark in current law that provides $800,000 to widen State Road 80 in Henderson County, FL, by striking the $800,000 figure and inserting $1.6 million. We double the earmark amount.

Page 29 amends an earmark in current law that provides $2.7 million for upgrades to an interchange in Pennsylvania by striking the $2.7 million amount and increasing the earmark to $3.2 million.

Page 35 amend a New York earmark in current law that provides $4 million for Miller Highway improvements by striking the existing earmark and inserting the following new earmark: pedestrian paths, stairs, seating, landscaping, lighting, and other transportation enhancement activities along Riverside Boulevard and at Riverside Park South. This is not a technical correction, and it is one of the reasons we are not rebuilding and improving and maintaining bridges in America, because we are focused on things that are not basic infrastructure.

Pages 63 and 64 amend a New York earmark in current law that provides $500,000 for design and construction of an access road to Plattsburgh International Airport by striking this description and inserting the following new earmark: preparation, demolition, disposal, and site restoration of Alert Facility on Access Road, Plattsburgh International Airport.

So we found we didn't need the money in one area, but we found a new area, instead of saving it, as we apparently need to do to keep the Highway Trust Fund on the path of solvency.

The most glaring example of a nontechnical correction made by this bill is the MAGLEV section, which provides $90 million over 2 years in mandatory spending for a MAGLEV rail project from Nevada to California. Under current law, this project was simply between two cities in Nevada, but this technical corrections bill paves the way for extending this project all the way to California and leaves the Federal Government on the hook for paying the price tag.

How will this project expand Federal spending? Well, first, it jams all the funding into the last 2 years, which increases the baseline from $30 million in 2009 to $45 million. The way we fund things here is based on year-to-year baselines. It turns the funding from an authorization to direct spending. In the original bill, it allows the funding of a project. Now it requires the funding of a project. It extends the Federal project from Primm, NV, to Anaheim, CA, and it involves the Federal Government in a dubious construction project that will create an unwanted transportation mode, the cost of which will likely expand considerably.

Along this same route, a private company has raised billions of dollars to build a high-speed rail corridor from Nevada to California without any taxpayer money. Our role in Government should be to make the private sector work, not to replace it and to compete with it with taxpayer dollars.

In addition to increasing Federal funding, this provision inserts the Government into a business that appears to need no propping up from taxpayers. Press reports indicate that the MAGLEV route is nearly identical, as I mentioned before, to a completely privately financed rail project, which is estimated to cost between $3 billion and $5 billion. This legislation would use taxpayer dollars to fund a government project that is in direct competition with an existing privately funded effort.

The Government does not need to be replacing private sector involvement. In 2005, the Los Angeles Times had this to say about MAGLEV:

> The long-running debate over MAGLEV trains is a battle between faith and reason. They have to rely on faith because there is very little evidence of the practicality of these systems. Only one commercial high-speed MAGLEV train exists, covering a 19-mile stretch from Shanghai to Pudong International Airport. Why spend so much money, especially if it's from taxpayers, when you might get more bang for the buck out of cheaper alternatives? That the Primm line has gotten this far is a tribute to the power and determination of the Senate Majority Leader, who undoubtedly sees MAGLEV as promising a new transportation system for pork.

The Associated Press also reported a few weeks ago that the country of Germany has canceled its initiative to build a MAGLEV link to the Munich airport, citing escalating costs. Germany's transportation minister told reporters that it was ''not possible to finance the project'' since the cost had more than doubled.

I guess anything is possible when it is taxpayer money, but, clearly, building an unproven experimental project, where private money is already accomplishing the same thing, does not make very much sense. In this transportation bill, not only will this experimental rail provision eventually cost billions in Federal funding and insert the Government into the private market, where it doesn't belong, it would most likely also be bad for consumers. According to my last check on the Internet, the nonstop flights from Los Angeles to Las Vegas are 1 hour 10 minutes and cost only $118 for a round trip. That is $59 each way.

I ask my colleagues how much these MAGLEV trips will cost. Are we absolutely certain it will cost less than $59 each way? If not, why would not consumers fly?

I would hazard a guess here that if we were asking Members of the Senate to invest their own personal money in this project, not one would reach for their wallet. But this is taxpayers' money we are spending on something none of us would do as individuals.

Even the administration has weighed in on this provision stating that the bill modifies hundreds of earmarks from a bill that passed in 2005, effectively creating new earmarks, including a stand-alone section that would provide mandatory funding for magnetic levitating rail. The administration urges these provisions be removed from the bill.

We are not talking about technical corrections. These provisions increase funding for existing earmarks and create new earmarks. Proponents of this legislation will argue that the bill spends no new Federal dollars and, in fact, even saves taxpayers a few million dollars. While that is true, the bill accomplishes this by rescinding funds left in the Treasury that were never used by a few earmarks previously authorized by Congress. However, it is clear to me that this bill is just another way for Congress to create new earmarks, increase spending for existing earmarks without actually appearing to be doing just that.

In addition, by shifting existing funding from one earmark to be used for a completely new earmark, this bill also creates new projects which now rely on the Federal Government to continue their funding in the future. In the long run, this legislation encourages wasteful Washington spending through the broken process of earmarking.

Here is an example of a true technical correction included in this legislation. On page 24 of the bill, there is a provision that would strike the word ''country'' and insert the word ''county'' in an earmark for ''New County road on Whidbey Island'' in Washington State. The current law refers to this road as ''New Country Road,'' which was a mistake, and this bill would correct that error by inserting the word ''county.'' Clearly, this is a true technical correction and represents the spirit of what this bill was intended to accomplish, which is to correct technical errors contained in current law.

Another argument we hear is that earmarking Federal tax dollars is our ''constitutional obligation.'' Our colleague, Dr. Coburn, wrote an excellent article entitled ''Founders vs. Pork'' addressing this bogus claim. I will not read the article in its entirety, but I commend it to all my colleagues. It contains some excellent quotations which I will share.

Thomas Jefferson, in a 1796 letter to James Madison regarding federally funded local projects, said that ''[O]ther revenues will soon be called into their aid, and it will be the source of eternal scramble among the members, who can get the most money wasted in their State; and they will always get the most who are the meanest.''

In a 1792 letter to Alexander Hamilton conveying what he believed to be the public's perception of government, George Washington cited worries about the ''increase in the mass of the debt,'' which had ''furnished effectual means of corrupting such a portion of the legislature, as turns the balance between the honest voters[.]'' Hamilton, who famously clashed with Jefferson and Madison on fiscal matters, responded that ''[e]very session the question whether the annual provision should be continued, would be an occasion of pernicious caballing and corrupt bargaining.''

The importance of transparency in Government operations was also recognized by Jefferson. In 1808, he wrote:

> The same prudence, which, in private life, would forbid our paying our money for unexplained projects, forbids it in the disposition of public moneys.

As I said before, I doubt very seriously any Member of this Senate would invest their own money in an unproven technology over a route where there is already going to be private competition.

Jefferson also astutely recognized that large amounts of spending would inevitably lead to outside efforts to redirect that money. He wrote in 1801 about the need ''to reform the waste of public money, and thus drive away the vultures who prey upon it[.]''

George Washington noted in 1792 that no mischief is ''so afflicting and fatal to every honest hope, as the corruption of the legislature.''

Congressional approval ratings, as we all know, are now at record lows because taxpayers do not believe we are being honest or open about how we spend their money.

One might argue that earmarking is a simpler system. There is really no meddling by bureaucrats, no cost-benefit analysis, no hearing just a big pie that is sliced up into pieces of varying sizes, with the senior Members getting the biggest slice. But this is no way to run a government or a country.

This bill proves that the so-called simplicity of the system is not all it is cracked up to be. One of the changes in this bill involves removing an earmark that was not even wanted but was secretly put into a bill after the bill had already passed. Now, that is the sort of technical correction we should be passing right now. Why did it take so long to identify an earmark that was not wanted or needed? Fortunately, in this bill, we could remove it. Senator COBURN has an amendment that will force an investigation of this bizarre process by which an earmark finds its way into a bill that already has passed. I look forward to the findings. I encourage my colleagues to support it.

I applaud the committee for providing earmark disclosure, more earmark disclosure than we have seen out of most committees. Senators BOXER and INHOFE are to be commended for their effort they have made to comply with the letter and the spirit of the law. As I said, I hope all the committees will follow example. However, this bill does not have a committee report. In that sense, Senators have been denied the tools we customarily rely on to decipher massive catchall bills such as this. For example, without the ''changes in existing Law'' document, which is contained in all committee reports, we are theoretically supposed to go through each earmark and try to figure out what it is amending. Since it is almost certain that few Members will actually do this beyond projects they inserted in the bill personally, the bill is largely a series of meaningless paragraphs. For example, section 105 of the bill is 63 pages containing 386 earmarks. These earmarks contain such illuminating descriptions as ''In item number 753 by striking $2,700,000 and inserting $3,200,000.'' That is all we know unless we go back to the original bill to figure it out. The earmark description for this one simply says it is from BILL SHUSTER and gives the SAFETEA–LU section it amends. Even with the list of earmark descriptions, one has no idea what this amendment does without going to the underlying bill. When you look at the law, you see that it has to do with ''Widening of Rt. 22 and SR 26 in Huntingdon. Upgrades to the interchange at U.S. Rt. 22 and SR 26.'' I still have no idea why this project needs a $500,000 plus-up, but at least I have a general idea what the project is. But, again, I do not expect that any of my colleagues actually looked up this earmark.

This bill highlights the fact that this is a terrible way to write legislation, where we all decide the different projects we want and force them in a single bill. This bill demonstrates to me and the American people that earmarking is out of control and that the process is inefficient.

We are spending time on the Senate floor to pass 138 pages of ''fixes'' to mistakes and errors relating to existing earmarks. I say to my colleagues, we have much more pressing needs that deserve our time and attention, such as providing health insurance to the millions of uninsured across this Nation, making health care more affordable, and passing the FISA reauthorization bill to protect our homeland. Instead, we are spending precious time fixing earmarks—hardly a high priority with taxpayers who are disgusted with the way their hard-earned tax dollars are being wasted now.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment. Again, it does not strike any earmarks that are in law. It allows all the technical corrections that are included in this bill, but it simply says we would eliminate any new earmarks in this bill and any increases in existing earmarks. I think that is what a technical corrections bill should be.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I intend to speak for a few minutes on behalf of the committee in response to the comments made by the Senator from South Carolina. I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Georgia then be recognized for up to 5 minutes to talk as in morning business and then followed by the Senator from North Dakota.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I first thank my colleague from South Carolina for acknowledging that the process that was used on this technical corrections bill was a very open process, one in which all the changes were open for

public review and scrutiny, well identified, and a process in which any Member or any person could evaluate the merits or demerits of what we were attempting to do.

Second, let me point out that this is a technical corrections bill—and I am going to respond to one of the projects specifically that the Senator from South Carolina has talked about—but that it is a normal process when we pass a large bill to go through a technical corrections process in order to correct mistakes that were made or clarify or, as priorities change, to deal with the regions to make sure the Federal programs are properly targeted to the needs. This is a technical corrections bill.

Third, let me point out that the regions have come to us to ask for clarifications or modifications of projects within the area, not increasing the costs. I thank the Senator from South Carolina for pointing out that this legislation does not increase costs; in fact, it will save some money. I appreciate him pointing that out.

So we are in agreement on all those points. We are going to save money. It corrects mistakes that were made, and it deals with regional priorities that have been requested of us, consistent with prior authorizations of Congress.

I point out one project, and that is the maglev project. I do not want to debate the merits or demerits of the maglev project because I do not think that would be appropriate on a technical corrections bill. But where the Senator from South Carolina is incorrect is that this is a technical correction of prior actions of Congress. It provides contract authority. That is what we intended to do in the SAFETEA–LU Act. So this is not anything new in maglev. The areas that are involved were the same areas that were previously identified. It does not expand the project and makes technical corrections as far as contract authority.

What the Senator from South Carolina is debating is the merits of maglev, and this is the wrong bill on which to debate that. By the Senator's own admission, this is a technical corrections bill, and we should just be talking about whether the language is what was intended by Congress in its previous actions, and clearly it was, to make sure we do it right based on previous actions.

I hope the Senator from South Carolina will heed his own advice; that is, let's make the technical corrections bill deal with those types of issues. And I am afraid his amendment would not. As now explained to us, he wants to eliminate some of these projects, and that is not the purpose of a technical corrections bill. I can understand Members being concerned about that approach. I am proud of the work of the committee. The committee did identify those—and it is relatively few when you consider how many authorizations are in the SAFETEA–LU Act—to clarify and, in some cases, to make typo corrections and things such as that.

It is vitally important to move this bill forward so we can move forward on vital transportation projects that affect every one of our States. I urge our colleagues to support the committee and support the process, the very open and fair and transparent process that was used by the committee in developing the changes that are in this legislation.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

JACKIE ROBINSON

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate a seminal moment in our Nation's history. On this day in 1947, Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier to Major League Baseball after years of segregation.

Jack Roosevelt Robinson was born in 1919 to a family of sharecroppers in Cairo, GA. Cairo, the home of the syrup makers, is a small town in south Georgia located about 35 miles from my hometown of Moultrie.

As you can imagine, Jackie was very talented and did extremely well at sports. At UCLA, Jackie became the first athlete to win varsity letters in four sports—football, basketball, baseball, and track. He was even named All-American in football.

Jackie enlisted in the U.S. Army in World War II, and following his discharge in 1944, he played the season in the Negro Baseball League and a couple of years in minor league ball.

In 1947, following Jackie's outstanding performance in the minor leagues, Brooklyn Dodgers vice president Branch Rickey decided it was time to integrate Major League Baseball, which had not had an African-American player since 1889. When Jackie first donned a Brooklyn Dodgers uniform, he led the way to the integration of professional athletics in America.

In his first year, he hit 12 home runs and helped the Dodgers win the National League pennant. That year, Robinson led the National League in stolen bases and was also selected Rookie of the Year. Robinson succeeded in putting racial conflict and prejudice aside to show the world what a talented individual he was. His success in the major leagues opened the door for other African-American players.

Jackie Robinson himself became a vocal champion for African-American athletes, civil rights and other social and political causes. After baseball, Robinson became active in business and continued working as an activist for social change. He was the first African-American inducted into the baseball Hall of Fame and, in 1997, his number was retired by Major League Baseball.

I can recall, as a small boy, being a Brooklyn Dodgers fan. The main reason was because my older brother was a New York Yankees fan and the perennial World Series game was between the Dodgers and the Yankees, so it was a natural rivalry that my brother and I have. I have very vivid memories of watching Jackie Robinson play ball on TV and having great admiration and respect for him as an athlete. It was Jackie Robinson who paved the way for so many great athletes today.

Little did he know, back then in 1947, that he would be followed by the likes of Larry Doby, Willie Mays, and my good friend, Hank Aaron. But what a great inspiration he has been for all of America. Today, I honor the man who stood boldly against those who resisted racial equality, and I acknowledge the profound influence of one man's life on the American culture. Jackie Robinson's life and legacy will be remembered as one of great importance in American history.

I will yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. MCCASKILL). The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, if people are by any chance watching the proceedings of the Senate this afternoon, they may wonder what on Earth is happening or more likely what is not happening. It has become customary, when we try to do business in the Senate in recent months, that we discover there is a filibuster that requires a cloture motion to be filed on almost anything. On the Senate floor today, as I understand it, we are on a 30-hour postcloture period on a motion to proceed to a technical corrections bill. That is almost unbelievable to me.

It is not unusual. We have had 65 filibusters in this Congress. Why would someone require a cloture motion to be filed in order to break a filibuster on a motion to proceed to a technical corrections bill? The only conceivable reason to do that is to stop the Senate from doing anything. I guess those who have been doing this in the minority party have been pretty successful.

Today is tax day, April 15. One might ask, if we were not doing this—standing around and gnashing our teeth and wiping our brow, wondering why we can't move this—what would we be doing? If we didn't have a minority that insists on a motion to proceed, a filibuster, a cloture motion and 30 hours postcloture, what would we be doing?

We would probably be doing some worthwhile things. It is not that the underlying bill is not worthwhile, it is. It should be done quickly and easily. It is a technical corrections bill. But what, for example, could we do?

I thought, because it is April 15, a day a lot of people recognize as a day of obligation to pay their taxes, I would mention perhaps a few of the things we could be doing on the floor of the Senate if we had a bit of cooperation and if we could get the minority party to agree—and in every one of these cases, certainly we could not. But let me describe what we might do, just on the Tax Code.

The Government Accountability Office found that 59 of the 100 largest

publicly-traded Federal contractors—that is companies that did work for the Federal Government in 2001—had established hundreds of subsidiaries located in offshore tax havens to avoid paying taxes to the United States of America. They want all the benefits you can get from being a contractor for the Government, but they do not want to pay taxes to this country.

I discovered this some long while ago. It actually comes from an enterprising reporter named Dave Evans with Bloomberg News. I mention that because it is important. He discovered that in this building in the Cayman Islands, a 5-story white building on Church Street, there are 12,748 corporations that call it home. They are not there. It is their post office mailing address for the purpose of saying they are in the Cayman Islands to avoid paying U.S. taxes.

If we were not spending our time at parade rest, or posing as potted plants because the minority doesn't want to move ahead on anything, not even a motion to proceed on a technical corrections bill, are there other things we can do? We could solve this, couldn't we? We could say: If you are going to run your income through a subsidiary in a tax-haven country to avoid your obligation to the United States, maybe you don't need to contract with the Federal Government. Maybe you don't need to get the Federal Government's business. Or perhaps on tax day, we might say we will close this tax loophole—just like that. If you are not doing substantive business in a tax-haven country, we will not recognize you as having gone to a tax-haven country, and you will pay taxes as if you never left our country.

If we were not seeing all these interminable delays, perhaps we would pass legislation that I have offered previously, and that is to say to American companies: If you shut your manufacturing plant, fire your workers and move your operations overseas, you are not going to get a tax break anymore. Someone might say: Do they get a tax break for that? They sure do. Let me give an example. I assume that almost everyone has ridden in a Radio Flyer Little Red Wagon. It was made for 110 years in Illinois, in Chicago, IL. Radio Flyer Little Red Wagon was created by an immigrant who came here and created a big business.

The thing is, after 110 years the Radio Flyer Little Red Wagons are not manufactured here. They are all gone. They are in China. Every Radio Flyer Little Red Wagon is now manufactured in China. By the way, the company got a tax break to move the jobs to China.

I have spoken often on the floor about Huffy bicycles—20 percent of the American bicycle market and made in Ohio by workers who were earning $11 an hour plus benefits. Not any more. They all got fired in Ohio and all these jobs were moved to Shenzhen, China. Huffy bicycles are made by people who work 12 to 14 hours a day, 7 days a week, for 30 cents an hour.

Do you know what the workers at Huffy bicycle did the last day of work, as their plants were closed down? As they pulled out of their parking spaces, the workers left a pair of empty shoes where their car used to park. It was their poignant way to say: You can move our jobs to China, but you are not going to fill our shoes. This company received a tax break for moving jobs to China.

Fruit of the Loom underwear—everybody knows about Fruit of the Loom underwear. You remember, they used to do commercials with the dancing grapes. I don't know who would dress up as a grape and dance, but I guess they got paid to do that, so you have commercials of dancing grapes advertising Fruit of the Loom underwear. The problem is, there is no Fruit of the Loom underwear made in America anymore because they all went offshore to be produced and the company got a tax break to do it. Why? Because this specific company did that? No, because companies that shut down their American manufacturing plants and move their jobs overseas get a tax break from this country. It is the most pernicious thing I have ever seen. I tried four times to correct it on the floor of the Senate. I ask people to look up the votes and see who is standing up for American jobs and American workers.

Perhaps we could do that on tax day, maybe fix that problem and say: At the very least, let's stop subsidizing, through the Tax Code, the shipping of American jobs overseas.

Here is another thing we could probably do if the minority weren't requiring cloture motions and engaging in 65 filibusters, which take up dead time.

I should point out for anybody watching or listening, nothing can be done during this period. We are in a 30-hour postcloture period on a motion to proceed—not even on the bill, on a motion to proceed to a technical corrections bill. So this 30 hours is dead time, designed by the minority because they do not want us to do anything we probably could do on this tax day.

We have a Tax Code that allows almost unbelievable tax breaks to some companies. This happens to be a streetcar in Germany owned by an American company. Why? Because they are experts in streetcars in Germany? No, because they get big tax breaks when they do this.

This is a sewer system in Germany. Wachovia Bank, a U.S. company, was buying sewer systems in Germany. Think of that—do you think it is because they are experts in sewer systems? No. Do you think they wanted to buy a sewer system and move it to America? No, not at all. They want to buy sewer systems in Europe so they can avoid taxes in the United States, because if you buy a sewer system from a European city and you now own it, you can actually depreciate it and then lease it back to the city and everybody makes money—except the American taxpayers and the Federal Government loses money. Maybe, since it is tax day, we could shut down this tax scam, although the President has threatened to veto legislation that shuts down these kind of tax scams, for reasons I don't understand.

But we could try. We could decide, you know, if working folks pay taxes, maybe everybody else can pay taxes. Perhaps we can pass a piece of legislation that says those on Wall Street who are getting what is called carried interest, some of the wealthiest people in the United States, should pay a higher income tax rate than 15 percent. Almost everybody pays a higher income tax rate than 15 percent, but those who are making the biggest money on Wall Street in the form of what is called carried interest, they are laughing all the way to the bank. They get a 15-percent tax rate. Perhaps we could change that.

Perhaps another thing we could do this afternoon, if we were not forced to 30 hours of dead time, is we could deal with what the Internal Revenue Service is doing by farming out tax collections that need to be made—these are people who owe taxes—to debt collection agencies in the private sector. This is going to be hard for anybody to believe or understand, but here is what they have done. This administration is so anxious to privatize and farm out everything, they have gone into the Internal Revenue Service and said let's farm out these collections of taxes owed, so they have contracted with a couple of companies. The problem is that this privatization program lost $50 million in its first year and is expected to lose more this year.

The IRS's private revenue collection target for the current fiscal year was $88 million. But they now project that the program will collect only $23 million. After excluding commissions, ongoing operational costs and capital investments, the IRS will still be $31 million in red this year.

It is unbelievable. How can the Internal Revenue Service contract with a company that is going to lose money collecting taxes? I have a piece of legislation that says stop it. Maybe we could work on that and pass that legislation today—see if we could find some deep reservoir of common sense. The National Taxpayer Advocate who works at the IRS has said: Had that money been spent for collectors at the IRS, they would have raised $1.4 billion. Instead, they invested $71 million to use private collectors and returned just $32 million in 2007. So they missed it by about $1.368 billion. Isn't that incredible?

Does anybody care? Apparently not. We are in 30 hours dead time on a motion to proceed to a technical corrections bill, guaranteeing nothing can be done on the floor of the Senate.

There are a couple of other things we might consider when we are thinking what could we do this afternoon in this dead time.

This is a photograph of Mr. Efriam Diveroli. He is the chief executive officer of a firm that received $300 million in U.S. Army contracts. He's 22 years old. His dad actually started a shell company back in the 1990s, and then he took it over. He said he was the only employee, except it lists a vice president. The vice president is a massage therapist. He is 25 years old.

So here we have a 22-year-old chief executive officer and a 25-year-old massage therapist running a company in Miami. They got $300 million from the U.S. Department of Defense to provide ammunition to the Afghan fighters.

Let me describe where they are. They are in this building. No, they do not own this building; they are in a little part of this building with an unmarked door. So you have a 22-year-old and a 25-year-old massage therapist working out of an unmarked office in Miami, FL; Miami Beach, FL, and they are supposed to, with $300 million, provide ammunition to the Afghan fighters on behalf of the U.S. Defense Department.

Here is a picture of the ammunition. Some of it is ammunition from China from the 1960s. You can see what it looks like. And the Afghan fighters were saying: Wait a second. What are you sending us? Bullets that do not fire? Now, I must say, the New York Times deserves some real credit. Three people wrote this story. The New York Times, I can tell from the story, they traveled around the world to get the details.

Now, we did not do it. We should have. We should have done it in something called a Truman committee. The bipartisan Truman committee was created in the Second World War, run by Harry Truman. By the way, it started with $15,000 and has saved the American taxpayer $15 billion going after waste, fraud, and abuse in defense contracting.

Three times we have voted on a Truman committee in the Congress, and three times it has been turned back by the minority.

Now, I will come later and give a longer presentation about defense contracting and the most unbelievable waste, fraud, and abuse in the history of this country. But we do not need more than the picture of the president of this company who got $300 million.

The question I started with today is, What could we be doing in 30 hours of dead time, if the minority had not required that there be a cloture petition and had not effectively filibustered on a motion to proceed to a bill that is going to get overwhelming support? I do not understand it.

Finally, we probably could do something about the price of oil or gasoline while we are on the Senate floor during this dead time if we were not prevented by the minority, prevented by a President's threatened veto pen.

Oil and gas. Well, look, today is Tuesday, and oil is at $113 a barrel. Some are going to the bank with a big smile on their face, particularly the large major integrated oil companies because they are making a massive amount of profit. Then other people are wondering: Do I have enough in my gas tank to be able to drive to work tomorrow? How am I going to do that?

So while all of this is going on today, the Federal Government is putting 70,000 barrels of sweet, light crude oil underground in the Strategic Reserve. And they are going to do it every single day all year long, 70,000 barrels a day, stuck underground.

Now, the Strategic Reserve is a decent idea. It is 97 percent filled. Why on Earth would we, when oil has hit $113 a barrel, continue, through this Bush and Cheney administration, to put oil underground and thereby put upward pressure on gasoline prices and oil prices? It makes no sense at all.

So, perhaps, were the dead time not required by the minority, we could work on that, or perhaps with respect to the price of gasoline and oil, we could work on increasing the margin requirements for those who are speculating in the futures markets.

The commodities futures market, especially for oil, is an unbelievable carnival of speculation. Do you know that when you buy stocks, there is a 50 percent margin requirement. But if you want to buy oil, God bless you, it is only 5 to 7 percent. You want to control 100,000 barrels of oil tomorrow, $7,000 will do that. That is the margin. So, as a result, you have unbelievable speculation in these markets driving up the price well above that which the fundamentals of oil supply and demand would justify.

Perhaps we can do something about saying to the exchanges: There must be increased margin requirements to stop this speculation hurting our country. It is driving up the price of oil, driving up the price of gasoline in a manner that is completely unjustified. Stop the speculation, stop putting 70,000 barrels of sweet light crude underground every day. Maybe those would be two things we could do when we are required to file cloture petitions to stop a filibuster on issues such as a motion to proceed.

I mean it is unbelievable to me that we find ourselves in this position. There is so much to do, and it is such important work. Yet here we find ourselves with the American people looking in on the Senate and wondering: What on Earth are they doing?

Well, what we are doing is what we are required to do by the rules when one side decides it wants the Senate to stand at parade rest almost all the time.

We have such big challenges in our country. I have mentioned energy. I have mentioned the fiscal policy. I have mentioned health care. We have such big challenges that ought to be our agenda. This country deserves better, and our agenda is, in my judgment, something on which the American people expect us to make progress. They do not expect us to see every single day, in every way, a filibuster on the floor of the Senate, even on motions to proceed. That is the last thing this American public should expect from a Congress that ought to come to work ready to go to work on issues that really matter in peoples' lives every single day.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

MIDDLE CLASS AMERICA

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I commend my friend from North Dakota. He is exactly right. The middle class in our country is in deep trouble. Some would argue the middle class is collapsing. And the people of our country are looking to Washington, to us, to get something done. What they are finding is a filibuster on a corrections bill and inaction in every single area that faces working people in our country.

A couple of weeks ago in Vermont we held several town meetings on the economy. I invited Vermonters to respond to our Web site about what the collapse of the middle class means to them personally. I think it is one thing for those of us to give a speech, to use huge numbers, to talk in an extravagant way; it is another thing to hear directly from people in terms of what is going on in their lives.

What I promised that I would do, and continue to do, is read some of these very poignant e-mails I received, mostly from Vermonters, some from other parts of the country, where people are simply saying: Look, this is what is going on in my life today. I thought I was in the middle class, but I no longer am.

So what I want to do is read a few of the e-mails that I received, to put what we are debating and discussing in a very personal tone, in the real words of real Americans. This is the collapse of the middle class as described by ordinary people.

We received an e-mail from an older couple in the State of Vermont. This is what they wrote. The woman writes:

> My husband and I are retired and 65. We would like to have worked longer, but because of injuries caused at work and the closing of our factory to go to Canada, we chose to retire early. Now with oil prices the way they are, we cannot afford to heat our home unless my husband cuts and splits wood, which is a real hardship as he has had his back fused and should not be working most of the day to keep up with the wood. Not only that, he has to get up two to three times each night to keep the fire going.
>
> We also have a 2003 car that we only get to drive to get groceries or go to the doctor or to visit my mother in the nursing home 3 miles away. It now costs us $80 a month to go nowhere. We have 42,000 miles on a 5-year-old car. I have Medicare but I cannot afford prescription coverage unless I take my money out of an annuity, which is supposed to cover the house payments when my husband's pension is gone. We also only eat two meals a day to conserve.

This is a 65-year-old couple in the State of Vermont in the year 2008, and I suspect this story is being told all over America.

Here is another story about a woman who lives in our largest county, Chittenden County. She writes:

First of all, I am a single mother of a 16-year-old daughter. I own a condominium. I have worked at the hospital for 16 years and make a very good salary, in the high $40,000 range. I own a 2005 Honda Civic. I filled up my gas tank yesterday, and it cost me almost $43. That was at $3.22 a gallon. If prices stay at that level, it will cost me $160 per month to fill up my gas tank. A year ago, it would cost me approximately $80 per month. I now have to decide what errands I really need to run and what things I can do over the phone or the Internet.

But the other issue is, if I use my cell phone too much during the month, my bill will increase and that will cost me more money. I feel as though I am between a rock and a hard place no matter how hard I try to adjust my budget for the month. I am watching my purchases in the grocery store and department stores more closely because of increased prices.

I am not sure that can I afford to take a summer vacation this year. I usually take a day off during my daughter's spring vacation so we can go shopping in New Hampshire somewhere. I have already cancelled those plans for this year.

I am hoping that I can take a few days off this summer to go to Maine. We will see how the gas prices are this summer, but I hear it is going to get worse. Not much hope for someone on a tight budget.

Here we have somebody who asks nothing more than to be able to take a few days off with her daughter to go shopping. Somebody who works very hard cannot even do that because the price of gas is soaring.

Here is another e-mail that comes from a woman living in a small town in Vermont. This is what she writes:

Yesterday I paid for our latest home heating fuel delivery, $1,100. I also paid my $2,000 plus credit card balance much of which bought gas and groceries for the month. My husband and I are very nervous about what will happen to us when we are old.

Although we have three jobs between us, and participate in a 403(B) retirement plan, we have not saved enough for a realistic post-work life if we survive to our life expectancy. As we approach the traditional retirement age, we are slowly paying off our daughter's college tuition loan and trying to keep our heads above water. We have always lived frugally. We buy used cars and store-brand groceries, recycle everything, walk or carpool when possible, and plastic our windows each fall. Even so, if and when our son decides to attend college, we will be in deep debt at age 65. P.S. Please do not use my name. I live in a small town and this is so embarrassing.

Well, it is not embarrassing. That is the story being told from one end of this country to the other. People who thought that after working their entire lives, they would be able to retire with a little bit of security and a little bit of dignity are now wondering, in fact, if they will be able to survive at all.

After working your whole life and being frugal, you should not have to retire in debt dependent upon a credit card.

The e-mails we receive from people who are young, middle age and old, each in its own way is a work of poetry because it comes from people's hearts. It is poignant. It is true. This is what a younger person from Vermont writes:

I am 23 years old. I have about $33K of education debt + $12K of credit card debt and only make about $26K a year + benefits. I barely make enough to support myself and whenever unexpected expenses come up I end up having to use credit to cover them. I feel like I will never catch up and now everything is getting even more expensive; it seems hopeless. Meanwhile I listen to the news and how the rich are getting richer and it is making me hate this country. I am not an economics expert but I know that things could be done differently to help people like me who work hard and get little in return instead of rewarding those who have the ability to use their money to make more money.

We heard Senator DORGAN talk about huge tax breaks that go to some of the wealthiest people, people who don't pay their taxes because they move to the Cayman Islands and set up phony front offices. This writer, who may not have a PhD. in economics, hit it right on the head. This young man and these old people are the people we should start worrying about, not the wealthiest people who are having it very good.

Let me talk briefly about a woman. This is another piece of reality. She writes:

As a couple with one child, earning about $55000/year, we have been able to eat out a bit, buy groceries and health insurance, contribute to our retirement funds and live a relatively comfortable life financially. We've never accumulated a lot of savings, but our bills were always paid on time and we never had any interest on our credit card.

Over the last year, even though we've tightened our belts (not eating out much, watching purchases at the grocery store, not buying ''extras'' like a new TV, repairing the washer instead of buying a new one . . .), and we find ourselves with over $7000 of credit card debt and trying to figure out how to pay for braces for our son!

I work 50 hours per week to help earn extra money to catch up, but that also takes a toll on the family life—not spending those 10 hours at home with my husband and son makes a big difference for all of us. My husband hasn't had a raise in 3 years, and his employer is looking to cut out any extra benefits they can to lower their expenses, which will increase ours!

Here is a woman who has to work longer hours in order to try to catch up, and she can't spend time with her husband and son, which is what her life is about. How many millions of people are in the same boat?

What is not usually talked about on the floor of the Senate is the fact that here in the United States, our people work longer hours than do the people of any other industrialized country. Not talked about terribly often is that to make ends meet now, in the vast majority of middle-class life, you need both the husband and the wife working long hours. Despite those two incomes, people have less disposable income today than 30 years ago in a one-income family. But when you talk about the collapse of the middle class, one of the manifestations of much of it is that people have to claw and scratch and work so hard that their family lives deteriorate. In this case, a woman cannot even spend the time she would like with her son and husband.

Here are a few more e-mails. This comes from a veteran from the State of Vermont:

The real killer is the price of heating fuel.

Up here in northern Vermont we need heat in the winter. With a Military Pension I make too much to get any assistance. We got a 2.8% pension increase in January, and the price of heating fuel has increased by about 50%. We have to cut back on food in order to stay warm. Thank you.

Somebody trying to live on a military pension that goes up 2.8 percent, the price of home heating fuel soars, not making it.

This is another short e-mail we received:

The company I work for has just announced a ''raise freeze'' which means not even a cost of living increase can be expected this year . . . this will be tough for us, as we were counting on at least a cost of living increase in a year where the cost of living has surely increased, be it groceries, fuel, wood, gasoline, etc!

Let me finish by reading an e-mail from another young Vermonter:

As a graduating law student I am particularly concerned with the potential reduction of jobs available to me. I am leaving school with a great amount of debt in student loans and credit cards and entering the uncertain job market.

I currently pay a tremendous amount of money in rent. I would like to work in poverty law but those jobs only pay about 36,000 so it is unlikely going to happen.

Here is an example of a young man who goes to law school, wants to work in poverty law, but because his debts are so high and the interest rate on that debt is so high, he no longer has a choice of careers. This is happening to young people all over the country.

The middle class in America is collapsing. Poverty is increasing. The gap between the very wealthy and everybody else is growing wider. Today we have by far the most unequal distribution of wealth and income of any major country on Earth. We are the only major country on this planet without a national health care program. The cost of college education is very high, while the oil companies make huge profits. Our people cannot afford to fill up their gas tanks.

As Senator DORGAN said, the time is long overdue for this Congress to start focusing on the real issues facing ordinary Americans. The time is now for us to develop the courage to stand up to the big money interests, the 35,000 lobbyists who surround us every day, the big campaign contributors who want benefits for the wealthy and the powerful. We have an obligation to stand up for the middle class. I hope we can begin doing that as soon as possible.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

TAX FILING DAY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, my colleagues on this side of the aisle have spoken today about tax issues because today is the day for filing income tax. I think it is appropriate that we remind each other about a lot of tax

issues that are very important that we have to decide this year, next year, and the following, or we are going to have the biggest tax increase in the history of the country. We are taking the opportunity on April 15 to talk about those.

When I was chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, I worked to get through a narrowly divided Senate the biggest tax cut in a generation. We reduced income tax rates for individual taxpayers. We created the first ever 10-percent bracket for lower income workers so they didn't have to pay as much tax as they would at the 15-percent bracket on their first dollars earned. We reduced the marriage penalty because we don't think one ought to pay more taxes because they are married. We created a deduction for college tuition. We also passed a deduction for schoolteachers buying supplies for their classrooms. I could go on with a lot of other provisions in those tax bills, but they have all had good economic consequences. We ought to consider that they should not sunset.

Now I and others are at work to make sure this tax relief is extended. If it is allowed to expire, Americans will be hit with the biggest tax increase in history. That is one thing. But it is quite another thing that this is going to happen without a vote of Congress. In other words, on that magic date of sunset, we go back to levels of taxation as they were before January 1, 2001, and we automatically, without a vote of Congress, end up with the biggest tax increase in the history of the country.

People say: Well, we are going to continue existing tax law. They need to be intellectually honest and tell people that when they are doing that, they are going to allow the biggest tax increase in the history of the country.

We can intervene. We need to intervene. It is my goal to intervene. The last thing families need, the last thing small businesses need, the last thing investors need is a tax increase. But that is what will happen this year and in 2010, if Congress doesn't act.

Last week the Senate demonstrated support for extending current law tax relief without offsets, when it voted on energy tax incentives, things that are meant to make the United States more energy efficient and less dependent upon foreign sources of energy. That same approach demonstrated last week, extending current tax law relief without offsets, should rightfully apply to other expiring tax provisions, including the research and development tax credit and the individual tax provisions I have already mentioned. I will be working hard to see that that does happen so taxpayers don't get hit with even higher taxes. I learned a long time ago that you can't raise taxes high enough to satisfy the appetite of Congress to spend money.

Stopping the tax increases that people say we are not voting for, we are only allowing present law, which means the biggest tax increase in the history of the country will happen without a vote of the people, we can do something about it. We ought to do something about it. Stopping these tax increases ought to be a major goal. Maybe taxes should not be lowered. Nobody is talking about lowering taxes. But we ought to keep the present level of taxation, because it has been good for the economy. It has been good for the taxpayers, because we do not see a revolt going on by taxpayers as we have seen in recent years in the Congress.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant majority leader.

Mr. DURBIN. What business is pending before the Senate?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is under cloture on the motion to proceed to H.R. 1195, surface transportation technical corrections.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, under cloture, what it means of course is we are doing nothing—good speeches on important topics, but we are not considering legislation. We are not debating a bill. We are killing time, which turns out to be the major occupation of the Senate for the last year and a half. Why? Because the minority party, the Republican Party, has a strategy. It is a strategy of using filibusters to slow down or stop any bill from passing in the Senate. Today we are seeing that strategy in the extreme.

The bill pending before the Senate is H.R. 1195. In the annals of legislative history in the Senate, this will not go down as a great piece of legislation. This is not a bill that was worked on for years by Senators and their staffs, conceived with grand ideas to change this great country. This is a bill which by and large changes punctuation in the Federal highway bill, a bill we passed several years ago. Then when we carefully read it afterwards, we said: We got some of this wrong. This should not have been ''trail.'' It should have read ''road.'' This section you referred to wasn't exactly accurate. It is another section.

So we created a technical corrections bill, a bill that cleaned up the Federal highway bill. This technical corrections bill is now being filibustered by the Republican side of the aisle. They want to stop us from voting on a technical corrections bill. They want to delay our consideration of even this housekeeping bill. You ask yourself why. Frankly, because they don't want us to take up legislation of even greater importance. This is an important bill. Don't get me wrong. By cleaning up the old Federal highway bill, we can move forward on highway projects. We can spend a billion dollars creating good-paying jobs right here in the United States, 4 to 500 different projects across our country, 40,000 new jobs. That is good. But these were all destined to occur. We are just making sure the language is clear enough to move forward.

We are really not generating a lot of controversy and debate, are we, about this bill? Two or three little amendments we could take care of in a matter of an hour, that is about it. But what has happened is that the Republican minority is trying to stop the majority party—the Democratic Party—from considering and passing important legislation.

In the history of the U.S. Senate—this grand body, this deliberative body—in the history of this institution, the record number of filibusters in any 2-year period of time was 57, until the Republican minority decided to take on this strategy. So far, last year and the first few months of this year, there have been 65 Republican filibusters this Congress, and still counting. They have broken a record. Who cares? Well, I think a lot of people should care.

We heard the Senator from Vermont a few minutes ago. He talked about his genuine concern about working people in his State. He talked about the impact of this economy on average working families. He talked about the impact of gasoline prices, $3.50 a gallon and higher. He talked about the impact of food costs going up on families all across America, the cost of health insurance, the cost of college education, the cost of daycare for kids. He talked about the fact that the majority of families have not seen an increase in real income over the last 7 years of this administration. He feels, as I do, that this Senate should be dealing with that issue. What is keeping us from doing so? The filibusters from the Republican side of the aisle: 65 and still counting, a record number of filibusters.

So Senator MCCONNELL, who is the Republican minority leader in the Senate, was asked a question at a press conference today. The reporter said to Senator MCCONNELL about his Republican caucus:

> Are you and the caucus prepared now to start slowing down work on the floor and legislation in response?

He answers:

> Well, we are on the highway technical corrections bill. It is open for amendments. We were discussing various amendments at our lunch earlier and I assume amendments are going to be offered and dealt with.

That was his answer, and unfortunately it is wrong. We are not considering amendments to this bill because we are still under cloture on the motion to proceed that doesn't expire until 11:30 p.m. tonight.

So if Senator MCCONNELL really wants us to consider amendments to this bill and get it finished, he needs to walk out on the floor and agree to a unanimous consent to move to this bill immediately and consider it. Then his statement to the press this afternoon will be accurate. But until he does, it is not accurate. We are stuck, stuck on cloture, stuck, as we have been time and again by this Republican minority. I, for one, believe they have pushed it to the extreme—a filibuster on a technical corrections bill.

Can you think of anything else, Madam President, we might be considering? Well, how about the policy on the war in Iraq, a war that claimed 2 American lives yesterday, a war that has taken over 4,025 of our best and bravest, that has injured more than 30,000, that has cost this country over $700 billion, that continues to cost us $10 billion to $15 billion a month; a war that claims the lives of our soldiers, ruins the morale of many troops who refuse to reenlist; a war that has stretched our military to a breaking point. Is that worth a few minutes of debate here on the floor of the Senate, the policy of this country toward the war in Iraq?

How about the war in Afghanistan? A war that was designed to go after those responsible for 9/11, to capture Osama bin Laden; a war which is stalled because we have dedicated so many resources to Iraq; a war which we must win so that al-Qaida and the Taliban do not resume their control over this poor country; a war which sadly has not resulted in the capture of Osama bin Laden more than 6 years after the terrible tragedies of 9/11. Is that worth a few hours on the floor, maybe a resolution, maybe a discussion about policy? I think it is, but we can't get to it because Republican filibusters are stopping us.

Maybe we should spend a few moments talking about our dependence on foreign oil and what we can do to bring down gasoline prices across America; how we can work on a bipartisan basis to find renewable, sustainable sources of energy that fuel our economy without killing our environment. Is that worth a little debate here on the floor of the Senate? Most Americans think it is an important issue but, sadly, we are stuck with a Republican filibuster again. Maybe we could spend some time bringing the bill out of the Committee on the Environment, the cap and trade bill, a bipartisan bill by Senator WARNER, a Republican of Virginia, Senator LIEBERMAN, an independent Democrat of Connecticut. Maybe we could bring that to the floor and talk about a way to clean up this world's environment so our kids have a fighting chance to have a planet they can live on, so that we can devise with American ingenuity a system using our free market to make this a cleaner planet. Is that worth a few hours of debate on the floor?

Debate on the Children's Health Insurance Program that the President has vetoed not once but twice, a program to extend health insurance coverage to some children in America who are not poor enough to qualify for Medicaid and not lucky enough to have parents with health insurance, is that worth a few hours of debate on the floor? I think it is.

Those issues and so many others are the ones the American people expect us to be talking about right here in Washington. But instead we have a bill, with grammar and punctuation, trying to clean up a Federal highway bill of several years ago, that is being filibustered by the Republican side of the aisle. This is shameful. It is such a waste of time in this great institution, but it is a specifically designed strategy by the Republicans to slow down the business of the Senate and to stop us from considering critically important legislation for America.

I would say to Senator MCCONNELL, who said that we are on the highway technical corrections bill and it is open for amendments, it will be open for amendments when Senator MCCONNELL comes to the floor and gives us his consent to stop the filibuster and to give us a chance to pass this bill, as we should have last week, and move on to more important legislation—legislation the American people ask us to consider. Sixty-five Republican filibusters this Congress and still counting. The Grand Old Party, the Republican Party, the GOP now has a new name. It is no longer the GOP, Grand Old Party. From the Republicans in the Senate, we have learned that it is the Graveyard of Progress. That is their idea of their role in the Senate. Any proposal for change, any proposal for progress, they want to kill. This graveyard is going to speak back to them in November.

I think the American people have had it with the obstructionism, the slowdowns, and the obstacles we are seeing here in Washington. The voters get their chance in November. I hope they will join us. I hope they will send more Senators to Washington who are prepared to not only debate but vote for change, Senators who are willing to say: Put an end to these mind-numbing filibusters and get down to work. Roll up your sleeves and do something to make life better for working families. Do something about this energy crisis. Make this planet a safer place for our kids to live on. Be responsible when it comes to spending, and start bringing the American soldiers home. That is what we should be doing. Instead, we are stuck in another Republican filibuster.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio is recognized.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, today is tax day. People all across America are heading to the post office to get that all-important ''April 15'' postmark. OK, not everybody waits until the last minute, but there are enough procrastinators among us that this is sort of a rite of spring. The first week in Washington brings the cherry blossoms. The 15th of the month brings long lines near midnight in front of the main post office just a few blocks from the floor of the Senate.

For some taxpayers, 2007 was a very good year. Huge fortunes were made on Wall Street by people who correctly bet against the housing market, and some of those of the very wealthiest people were given huge tax breaks that the middle class never saw. But for the people who live in all of those homes, those homes that Wall Street people were betting against in some sense, 2007 was a very tough year. The home ownership rate has actually fallen over the past 6 years, both nationally by a slight amount and close to 2 percent in the Midwest. What is extraordinary about this fact is that it came during a period of the lowest interest rates since the Eisenhower administration. With the economy expanding, with interest rates at record lows, home ownership should have expanded. Instead, it shrunk.

The reason is another trend that has received too little notice by the Nation's newspapers and the Nation's media: economic growth, simply put, has not benefited most Americans. Instead, income and wealth are more and more flowing to the most affluent in our country. The middle class, meanwhile, must work harder and longer to try to maintain its standard of living. Real wages have been in decline for the past several years. The only way a lot of families have kept up is, first, the entry of more women into the workplace—women in greater numbers; second, workers in this country working longer and longer hours, overtime if they can get it, two jobs, sometimes even three jobs; and third, the only way families have kept up is by taking on more and more debt. The third strategy can be a recipe for disaster; sooner or later, the bills come due. You can't borrow your way very long to a decent standard of living.

Economic security begins with economic opportunity. That means good-paying jobs. It means the kind of training that enables workers to diversify their skills and take on new challenges. It means high-quality primary, secondary, and, yes, higher education.

Our Nation is the wealthiest in the world. Overall economic growth has been strong. Working families should be thriving. By and large, they are not. Working families are struggling to find and maintain good-paying jobs to keep their health benefits, to keep their pension benefits if they have them, and those benefits, those health and pension benefits, are being scaled back. It costs more and more, as people painfully know every day, to fill the gas tank. People are borrowing in record amounts just to cover day-to-day costs. So many Ohioans from Galion to Gallipolis are struggling.

The Center for American Progress looked at some key statistics over the past 5 years and found that the average job growth is one-fifth the rate of previous business cycles. The average job growth is one-fifth—20 percent—the rate of previous business cycles. Wages have been flat. Only 28 percent of middle-class families have the financial resources to sustain themselves through a period of unemployment. The average family took on debt equal to 126 percent of disposable income just to manage its day-to-day expenses.

Having witnessed the weakest economic expansion in modern history—in

other words, the growth in our economy, the expansion in our economy was weaker than the expansion of the economy at any time in recent history—we now find ourselves in a recession once again. So we didn't have very strong growth when things were supposedly good—when profits were up, when there was economic growth—but it wasn't spread around very well. Now we find ourselves in a recession once again. We have had three straight months of job losses. Consumer confidence in Lima and in Zanesville and all over my State is understandably shaken.

Our Nation cannot afford to take these statistics in stride, just hoping that the precarious financial position of working families is a temporary phenomenon linked to the ebbs and flows of our economy, because it is not. Our economy as a whole is losing ground. As our trade deficit skyrockets, energy and health care costs spiral upward, good-paying jobs are too often shipped overseas, and our Federal deficit climbs higher and higher and higher. Yet, when Congress tries to address any of these problems, we find ourselves faced with filibusters, one after another after another, as well as veto threats. When we tried to react to the Housing crisis last fall, Republicans objected. When we tried to tackle the topic in February, the Republicans objected and we faced a filibuster. Even today, the President threatens to veto the bill passed by the Senate. Sixty-five filibusters, as Senator DURBIN and others have said, 65 filibusters—more filibusters already in the year and 3 months this Senate has been in session than in any 2-year period in the history of the U.S. Senate. Sixty-five filibusters. It means we haven't been able to do what we ought to do in education, on health care, on infrastructure, and, most importantly, on the war in Iraq.

Today, as an example, we are simply trying to pass a technical corrections bill to a highway bill. Yet our Republican colleagues are filibustering and slow walking the legislation once again. Sixty-five filibusters.

We spend $3 billion a week in Iraq, with no questions asked. Halliburton can rob us blind, but we avert our gaze. But to try to build a road, a bridge, or some other public works in the United States, and you will meet with filibusters, delays, and obstructionism by the Republicans. In other words, taxpayers are paying $3 billion and building hundreds of water systems in Iraq—spending that money with Halliburton and Bechtel—and the money goes to these contractors instead of that money coming back to local businesses and building water and sewer systems in Defiance, Findlay, Bryan, Napoleon, and Perrysburg, OH—places that are being squeezed and are not able to afford the reconstruction of the water and sewer systems they need.

We should be doing a lot more construction and a lot less obstruction. Our roads and bridges, in too many cases, are falling apart. If my colleagues don't like a project, they can make their case and offer an amendment instead of the obstructionism, instead of blocking these issues, instead of their 65 filibusters.

The American people are tired of this kind of delay. Their taxes should pay for a government that will work on their behalf, rather than only on behalf of the wealthiest and most powerful people in this country.

We cannot continue down a path that undermines the middle class. We cannot just hope for real economic recovery. You simply cannot get there from here.

Mrs. BOXER. Will the Senator yield to me for a question?

Mr. BROWN. Yes.

Mrs. BOXER. I thank my friend for that, because this bill before us is a job producer. There is tremendous support for it. I wanted to make sure my friend was aware—because I have to ask him a question—of the support we have. The thing is, when you unleash a billion dollars for 500 projects, which have been tied up for technical reasons, it is going to create jobs. I ask my friend if he was aware of the broad support we have. I will read the list of organizations supporting this technical corrections bill, which will free up some 500 highway projects: American Association of Highway and Transportation Officials, which is the departments of transportation for all 50 States; American Highway Users Alliance; American Public Transit Association, which is the transit systems; American Road and Transportation Builders Association, which is more than 5,000 members of the transportation construction industry; Associated General Contractors, which is more than 32,000 contractors, service providers, and suppliers; Council of University Transportation Centers, which is more than 30 university transportation centers from across the country; National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association, the companies producing more than 92 percent of crushed stone and 75 percent of the sand and gravel used in the United States annually; National Asphalt and Pavement Association, which is more than 1,100 companies that produce and pave with asphalt.

The point is, when we do this work, in many ways we are creating a bit of a stimulus. These are the companies and the workers who are suffering right now because of the economic downturn. Before my friend leaves, I wanted to thank him and also ask him if he was aware of the strong support for this bill.

Mr. BROWN. Yes, there is strong support. I appreciate the comments of the Senator from California. There is strong support for this bill, but not just in those groups. I had in my office building trades people from Mansfield, Lima, Cleveland, Dayton, and Columbus. They were talking about the kinds of jobs—good-paying jobs—in our State on road crews, such as the operating engineers and laborers and all kinds of workers that are paid decent wages. It is a stimulus, as the Senator says. It injects money into our economy immediately. These are ready-to-go projects. We need to fund them so we can work immediately to create these jobs, which will spin off and create other jobs.

But it is the same old story. We have had 65 filibusters from Republicans to stop us from moving forward on everything from health care, to education, to ending the war in Iraq, to jobs programs such as this. This is the best kind of jobs and economic development program. Not only will it create jobs immediately, but it makes it much easier for economic development and for people to bring new business into communities because the infrastructure is more modern.

Mrs. BOXER. I want to ask something else. The Senator is not on the committee of jurisdiction, but I know he is interested to hear this. We correct a real problem in this bill. The organization that does the evaluation of our Nation's bridges, highways, and all of our byways, has run out of funds. The funds they had have been oversubscribed. What we do, without adding any new funds, is enable them to get funding and to continue their work, as we get ready for the next highway bill, which is coming to us next year.

I wanted to make sure my friend was aware that, as we get ready for the new highway bill, we need to know the condition of our highways. We have seen collapsing bridges. That is another reason it is so important. I am very hopeful that by this evening we are going to see some relenting. I have been on the floor since Monday morning. I don't mind that, but it is wasting time, truth be known. We can have a few amendments and we can wrap this up. My colleagues can go back home and say we have done something.

I want to specifically know if my colleague was aware of this particular account that funds the investigation of the state of our infrastructure—that they have run out of money, and that we fix that in this bill?

Mr. BROWN. I thank the Senator for this information and for all she is doing.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SALAZAR). The Senator from Florida is recognized.

PAPAL VISIT

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I am delighted that the Senator from Colorado is in the chair.

I will begin by simply extending a word of welcome to the Holy Father, who, a few minutes ago, landed in our country for his historic visit. I feel tremendously honored that I will have the opportunity to see his arrival ceremony at the White House tomorrow and, of course, then to be with him and, I presume, with the President as we celebrate Mass with him at Nationals Park. It is a momentous and historic occasion.

I know I speak for many of us as I say the Holy Father is welcome to the United States. We are delighted he is here. We hope his message of spiritual renewal, hope, and peace is one that will resonate with the American people.

COLOMBIAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. President, the Colombian free trade agreement is of great importance to me personally. It is something that I believe requires the attention of this Congress, and it is something whose time has come for us to act and make a determination.

There has been a great deal of attention focused on the future prospects of this trade agreement with Colombia. The core question is whether we think people in the United States should be able to effectively compete in Colombia. What is at stake is whether we want to create jobs here in the United States, create additional wealth in the United States, and export more goods and services to Colombia.

The fact is that a free trade agreement with Colombia benefits all of the stakeholders involved. It is good for the United States, it is good for Colombia, but it also is good for the Western Hemisphere.

The United States would reap immediate benefits of a free trade agreement with Colombia in our level of exports—one of the strongest and more positive areas of our economy today.

I know the Senator from Ohio was just speaking about the economic hard times in our country. I know and respect him greatly. I am not sure he agrees this is a good agreement for us to sign. But what better way is there of improving economic circumstances than to export and sell more of our goods to a country that wants to be our friend and our partner.

By leveling the playing field and eliminating the tariffs on products we export to Colombia, this agreement would benefit those responsible for the $8.6 billion in merchandise the United States exported to Colombia last year.

Currently, more than 9,000 United States companies export products to Colombia. Of those, 8,000 are small and medium-sized firms. In the absence of a free trade agreement, these firms must pay up to 35 percent when sending their goods to Colombia. On the other side of the equation, more than 90 percent of imports from Colombia coming into the United States arrive here duty free.

This agreement will immediately eliminate tariffs on more than 80 percent of American exports of industrial and consumer goods, and then reaching up to 100 percent over time.

This is an agreement that will bring more business to American firms, and it will bring higher demand for products from farmers in Louisiana, machinery manufacturing workers in Alabama, transportation equipment providers in Illinois, and electronics makers in California.

My own State of Florida—home to what we think of as the ''gateway to the Americas'' in Miami—was responsible for $2.1 billion in exports to Colombia in 2007, the second largest export total in the Nation.

The free trade agreement would benefit the more than 28,500 companies in my State that provided products in areas such as computers and electronics, machinery manufacturing, and transportation equipment.

The trade agreement makes sense economically, but also from a national security standpoint, it strengthens our relationship with a key Latin American ally and demonstrates our commitment to supporting nations who choose their leaders through free and fair democratic elections and who support the rule of law.

In fact, the U.S. Southern Command, which oversees our forces in Central and South America, sees the Colombian free trade agreement as a critical component of our Nation's Latin American policy.

A few days ago, I saw Admiral Stavridis, head of the Southern Command, who was testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee. I asked Admiral Stavridis whether he felt the Colombian free trade agreement was an important component of our overall policy for the region and whether it would add to our ability to increase U.S. influence and security in the area. He wholeheartedly agreed.

Recently, a group of SouthCom military leaders, including GEN Peter Pace, expressed their support of the agreement in an open letter to Congress.

These officials know of the diplomatic opportunities this trade agreement represents, especially given their unique perspective on the current climate in Central and South America.

In their letter, they affirm that passing this agreement ''will build upon [Colombia's] recent advances to enhance the long-term prospects for peace, stability, and development in Colombia.''

They also argue that it is in our ''national interest to help Colombia along the road toward democratic consolidation and economic development.''

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have this letter printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

OPEN LETTER TO CONGRESS FROM FORMER COMMANDERS OF THE U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND SUPPORTING THE U.S.-COLOMBIA TRADE PROMOTION AGREEMENT

We are writing to urge your support for the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement. This vital agreement will advance U.S. interests in Colombia, a strategically located country that is arguably our closest ally in Latin America. It will also underscore our deep commitment to stability and growth in the strategically important Andean region, which depends on Colombia's continued progress as a resilient and democratic society.

Colombia's transformation over the past decade is a triumph of brave and principled Colombians. It is also a remarkable achievement of bipartisan U.S. foreign policy. Violence has fallen to its lowest level in a generation, and 45,000 fighters have been demobilized as the country's narco-guerrilla groups have lost legitimacy. While drug-trafficking poses a continuing threat, Colombia's leaders have eliminated two-thirds of its opium production, and more than 500 traffickers have been extradited during the Uribe administration—by far the most extraditions from any country to the United States.

Colombia's economic resurgence has been a critical factor in its recent progress, Robust investment has boosted economic growth and development. The creation of new jobs has provided tens of thousands of Colombians with long-term alternatives to narcotic trafficking or illegal emigration.

The US.-Columbia Trade Promotion Agreement will build upon these recent advances to enhance the long-term prospects for peace, stability, and development in Colombia. Providing new incentives for investment and job creation, this landmark accord will help ensure that Colombia stays on the path of economic openness, the rule of law, and transparency.

It is in our national interest to help Colombia progress along the road toward democratic consolidation and economic development. This trade agreement will advance U.S. security and economic interests by forging a deeper partnership.

Finally, approving this agreement will meet our duty to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Colombians as they have stood by the United States as friends and allies. For all of these reasons, we strongly urge Congress to approve the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement.

Sincerely,

GENERAL JAMES T. HILL,
Commander in Chief, United States Southern Command 2002–2004.

GENERAL BARRY MCCAFFREY,
Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command 1994–1996.

GENERAL PETER PACE,
Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command 2000–2001.

GENERAL CHARLES E. WILHELM,
Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command 1997–2000.

GENERAL GEORGE JOULWAN,
Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command 1990–1993.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, Colombia remains one of our strongest allies within the region. It is the strategic center of Latin America, of all of the Andean countries. Geographically, it is in a precise and important spot in the region. It is a country of 40 million people. It is a very significant country.

Fostering this important relationship holds strategic importance to advancing our security and economic interests in South America and also with the Colombian Government. Colombia's Congress voted twice in favor of passing this trade agreement.

It would honor the commitment we made when signing the agreement last year and would provide greater stability and security to the Colombian

people as their quality of life continues to improve. I know some critics of the trade agreement point to some of the violence against labor organizers that has occurred over the years as the reason not to ratify.

In doing so, I believe they fail to recognize the progress that has occurred in Colombia in recent years. Colombia has had a violent history. I can recall in younger days when I used to travel to Colombia frequently. It was not only a beautiful and wonderful country, but you were perfectly free to go throughout the country. Over the years, the violence brought upon the people of Colombia by FARC, or the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, has wreaked havoc on that country. It was to the point where the violence was incredible.

Six years ago, as President Alvaro Uribe delivered his inaugural address, mortar shells landed near the Presidential palace in Bogota and killed 14 people and wounded another 40. That was the level violence had reached in this country.

These events and crimes against labor organizers were common prior to when President Uribe came into office in 2002. Since that time, violence has dramatically decreased in Colombia, and the Colombian Government's presence is being felt in cities and towns across the nation.

Let me point out that one death of an innocent civilian or one death of a union leader or union organizer is one death too many. Colombia has seen more than its share of violence.

I point to this chart which I believe is accurate in pointing out the actual figures when it comes to union leader violence. Notice the high point in 2001. This is before President Uribe was President. Then he comes into the Presidency and look at the dramatic drop since his Presidency down to where it is today. This is not just violence against union leaders. President Uribe has been effective in pacifying the country.

The violence against unionists has declined 86 percent during his time in office from 2002 to 2007. The reason for this decline is President Uribe's attention and response to concerns over these attacks. The President established an independent prosecutor unit and created a special program to protect labor activists. They can actually seek protection from the Government and be provided with armored vehicles, with protection for union halls, and personal protection for them as they go about the country.

There has been significant progress in other areas of Colombia as well, which is improving the lives of the Colombian people.

It is astonishing to see homicides are down 40 percent, kidnappings are down 83 percent, and terrorist attacks are down 76 percent. This is as a result of what, in fact, has been a very successful partnership. One of those moments of bipartisan agreement that the President and I so often yearn for in this Congress started under President Clinton with support from the Republicans, continued under President Bush with support from Democrats.

We had Plan Colombia. This has been a way of helping the Colombian Government and the Colombian people to continue to strengthen their democracy. President Uribe was elected to office with over 60 percent of the Colombian vote, and he is a democratically elected leader who is fighting an insurgent group that seeks to destroy his Government and democracy in Colombia by means of violence.

When we stand with President Uribe, when we stand with the duly constituted Government elected by the people of Colombia, we are standing on the side of those who respect democracy, freedom, and human rights.

When we talk about the kidnappings, these kidnappings have now been limited to poor peasants, although that has been part of it, but it has also included Government officials. Miss Betancourt, who has gained international notoriety because of efforts by the French Government to free her, was a Presidential candidate in the midst of a Presidential campaign when she was kidnapped. Also, members of the Congress of Colombia, businesspeople—they have shown no mercy. Today it is rumored they maintain about 700 kidnapped victims with them in the jungles of Colombia. Colombia's Foreign Minister is someone who was a victim of kidnapping who escaped 5 years ago, maybe more, from the jungles of Colombia and has regained his freedom.

Public school enrollment in Colombia has increased 92 percent. The child mortality rate has decreased dramatically as the Government turned its focus to human rights and also living conditions. The number of tourists visiting Colombia has doubled in the last 5 years.

Colombia is on the rise. Colombians enjoy a better quality of life because they have been living in a country that is more peaceful. For that, I think the Colombian people are very grateful to the United States. There is no country in the region that is more pro-U.S, that is more pro-American, and so much wants to interact and work with us. Enhancing that relationship will continue to bring prosperity at a time when Colombians continue to face destabilizing forces of terrorism.

There is a second aspect of Plan Colombia. It is not just about building the Colombian military, as important as that is. There is a second phase. It is about people, it is about job generation, job creation. That is why it is important to enter into this free-trade agreement so that U.S. investment dollars might flow to Colombia and increase jobs in Colombia as we increase jobs in America as well.

One of the most prominent narcoterrorist organizations operating within their borders is the FARC. ELN is another one. FARC is an organization that supports a brand of terrorism much like al-Qaida.

FARC's greatest enemy is stability, the same sort of political and economic stability provided by trade agreements such as these.

They oppose the democratically elected Government, and they would love nothing more than to return Colombia to the days of corruption, chaos, murder, and mayhem. It would be unwise to abandon this vital alliance in the face of a difficult time for them.

A trade agreement with the United States would deal a blow to those attempting to hinder Colombia's growth, to those who offer a misguided vision of the future of the region to those who hear their cry.

The fact is, there is a battle of ideas going on in the hemisphere, and this battle of ideas is one we cannot shrink from but must engage. By entering into this agreement, we would join a growing list of partners in the region that have demonstrated commitment to human rights, free and fair elections, and strengthening trade relations with us.

We have a very strong partnership. NAFTA, I must confess I find it a little difficult to understand how NAFTA, which has created jobs all over America, could be faulted for jobs going to China. And I cannot believe, on a serious note, those who seek to be the President of our country would walk away from that trade agreement. The fact is, this trade agreement is one that would enhance and advance the interests of the United States.

I do not believe in a country that would be afraid to compete with those abroad. I believe in the America that is proud and strong and can compete with anyone in the world. We cannot just shelter within our shores. We cannot just retreat to fortress America. Those days are gone. We created the global trade we live in today and to retreat from that would be a misguided mistake.

Over the weekend, both the New York Times and the L.A. Times ran pieces urging Congress to ratify this important and historic trade agreement. According to the New York Times, ''rejecting or putting on ice the trade agreement would reduce the United States' credibility and leverage in Colombia and beyond.''

And the L.A. Times characterized the House's decision to halt the vote by stating ''it wasn't about the U.S. economy and it wasn't about Colombia. It was politics.''

I don't want to dwell on that issue because I believe the best way for this to take place is for us to continue to work together in a bipartisan fashion to try to bring about an agreement that would be good for America, good for the region, good for Colombia, good for the United States, good for our people, good for their people. This is the kind of trade agreement that is a win-win.

I was talking about NAFTA. We then moved to Central America and the Dominican Republic, and we have CAFTA. That trade agreement is creating and generating jobs in that region. We have a free-trade agreement with Peru and Panama, and if Colombia joins in, that would create a powerful, mighty trade alliance creating and generating jobs and exports from the United States to this region.

I was meeting this morning with a gentleman who is hoping to be the next Ambassador of the United States to Honduras. I asked him how has CAFTA impacted our relationship with Honduras. He said there has been several billion dollars a year of trade between us and Honduras, and it had increased U.S. exports to Honduras by 18 percent. That is good for America. That is good for American jobs.

So I hope calmer voices will prevail. It would give us a chance to vote on this important trade agreement. It was signed by Colombia and the United States well over a year ago. There is never a perfect time for these agreements. I believe the votes are there. I believe it is time to allow the votes to take place instead of utilizing procedural maneuvers that, at the end of the day, are not particularly democratic.

Mr. President, I hope we can move forward to consider this agreement, to study the elements of it, to see the merits of it. It goes beyond stating the obvious: that this is something that not only would help economically, but it would also be a tremendous boost to our relationship in this region of the world that all too often feels forgotten, that all too often feels our eyes are focused elsewhere in the world, but are always our closest neighbors, are always our people who each and every day signify more and more to us.

A great many people of Colombian heritage live in the State of Florida and in other States of our country. They are great contributors to the American experiment. I am proud to have them among my constituents. I know in the southern part of my State, this is a big, important issue. It is one whose time has come. I hope the Speaker will reconsider. I hope we will move forward with this important trade agreement.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise in support of passing the bill that is on the Senate floor; that is, the SAFETEA–LU technical corrections bill. When we look at the bill that is of the magnitude of the SAFETEA–LU bill and its extraordinary importance in our economy, there are bound to be some drafting errors and issues. I am glad we are taking the time to correct these errors so we can continue to strengthen our national infrastructure and our economy.

As a member of the Environment and Public Works Committee, I applaud Senator BOXER's leadership in getting this bill to the floor. This bill is a step in the right direction as this Congress focuses more and more attention on our national infrastructure.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this bill, as well as future efforts, to strengthen our national infrastructure.

The Presiding Officer, being a Senator from Colorado, knows and I know there is a new economy in the future. It is the energy economy. But if we are going to move forward the next century's economy, we cannot be stuck in the last century's transportation system.

I believe when you invest in infrastructure, you invest in the American economy. Rebuilding Main Street means revitalizing Main Street. The Federal Highway Administration estimates that for every $1 billion of Federal highway investment, it creates over 30,000 jobs. So when we rebuild our roads, we strengthen our economy.

As you know, a bridge collapsed one day in the middle of Minnesota. It was something no one could ever believe would happen in the middle of our major Interstate Highway System.

As I said that day, a bridge should not fall down in the middle of America, especially not an eight-lane interstate highway, especially not one of the most heavily traveled bridges in our State, and especially not at rush hour in the heart of a major metropolitan area, and especially not in my front yard. As you know, Mr. President, as you have seen, the area of that bridge was only 8 blocks from my house.

Unfortunately, it has taken a disaster of this magnitude to put the issue of infrastructure investment squarely on the national agenda, and it is long overdue.

The sudden failure and collapse of the I–35W bridge has raised many questions about the condition and safety of our roads and bridges. In fact, we just had a bridge that was similarly designed shut down in St. Cloud, MN, about an hour and a half away from the bridge that collapsed. It was designed by the same designer, with the same problem with the bent gussets. The investigation is still going on into the exact cause and triggering events that led to the collapse of the I–35W bridge.

The fact a bridge closed down so near, and the State of Minnesota decided to replace that bridge rather than repair it, shows this is not an isolated incident. Critical investment in the maintenance and construction of our Nation's transportation is imperative. Strengthening and maintaining our national infrastructure must be a national priority.

At the moment, our priorities are not in the right place. We spend $12 billion a month in Iraq, with no end in sight, but our bridges fall down in the middle of America. We have tax cuts for the top 1 percent, but it is getting harder and harder for the middle class to get by. We need to better prioritize our national spending.

Our robust, well-maintained, up-to-date highway system is vital to the continued expansion of our economy. It is, in fact, an essential driver of our economic prosperity. As President Kennedy once said:

> Building a road or highway isn't pretty. But it's something that our economy needs to have.

And nowhere is this truer than in rural America.

In Minnesota, the relationship between highways and the economy is most obvious in our rural areas. Transportation is absolutely essential to their viability and to their vitality. Rural Minnesota is now in the midst of an economic revival that promises to grow even stronger. We are seeing this all over America with the energy revolution, whether it is wind or solar or geothermal or whether it is ethanol or biodiesel.

As our Nation demands greater energy independence and security, the rural parts of our country are poised to benefit enormously with the further development of home-grown energy. I believe we need to be prepared to maximize the opportunities offered by this renewable energy revolution. It is only beginning to emerge, but it promises major economic and technological changes for our country.

Already the development of wind farms and ethanol plants has rejuvenated many rural areas in our State. We are third in the country when it comes to wind energy. But at the same time, these wonderful new energies are placing new demands on our transportation infrastructure. Here is one example: Demand for ethanol has increased dramatically. This Congress has pushed it. We are now with corn ethanol, but we know we will also expand into cellulosic, switchgrass, prairie grass, and other forms of biomass. For the first 6 months of 2007, ethanol production in the United States totaled nearly 3 billion gallons—32 percent higher than the same period last year.

Currently, there are 128 ethanol plants nationwide, with total annual production capacity nearing close to 7 billion gallons. An additional 85 plants are under construction. As we know, this is just the beginning. We look at places such as Brazil, which are completely energy independent because of what they have done with sugarcane. We know corn isn't the only answer. We will expand into other kinds of ethanol. But we do know this is going to place demands—demands we want to have—on our Nation's transportation infrastructure.

Total ethanol production in the United States is projected to exceed 13 billion gallons per year by early 2009, if not sooner. What does that mean in terms of transportation? Well, this means an average square mile of land in southern Minnesota, which now generates the equivalent of 80 loaded semitrucks per year, could soon produce double that—160 loads of grain per year. As more homegrown energy is produced, rural roads and bridges will have greater demands placed on them, as will rural rail.

I have had members of my own State of Minnesota—constituents—come up and show me these old rail ties that are breaking down. I have seen myself the bridges that are in need of shoulders. I have seen the highways that are in need of repair. Some of our roads in Minnesota are in such disrepair they have actually been letting them go to dirt. We are going the opposite because they do not have the money to repair them.

The ethanol plant in Benson, MN, now has over 525 fully loaded semis hauling either corn, ethanol or other forms of biodiesel from their plant every week. This is a 45-million gallon ethanol facility. Their production falls around the middle of Minnesota's 16 ethanol plants.

SMI Hydraulics is a company in rural southwestern Minnesota that manufactures the bases for the wind towers you see all across southern Minnesota. I have visited the company. They basically started in a barn, and they are building these huge wind towers. The heavy trucks that bring the steel to the company put an understandable heavy burden on the roads they travel and are putting their durability to the test.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates truck freight in rural America is going to double—double—by the year 2020. The continuing trend toward greater reliance on trucking to support these industries raises concern about the wear and tear on rural roads and bridges. Many of these roads and bridges were built before this trend was evident. Whoever thought they would be carrying this huge wind tunnel? No one ever thought it would happen, but it does. They were not designed for this type of traffic.

Much of the rural road network in the United States was constructed during an era of slower travel and lighter vehicles. Current traffic, which is heavier and wider, has accelerated the rate of deterioration and made these types of roads less serviceable. In many important grain-producing States, such as Minnesota, more than 40 percent of the major highway system is rated as being in less than fair condition. Our transportation systems need to support the development of these industries, so we need to look at the full spectrum of transportation options.

I truly appreciate Senator BOXER's leadership, looking not just at truck travel, not just at roads but also at mass transportation and other ways we can transport our goods to market. With more than half our State of Minnesota's total population now living in the seven-county Twin Cities metro area, the need for more transportation options has become very clear to all of us.

It is not just about the rural areas in our State. Increasing traffic congestion has become a major threat to Minnesota's quality of life and our prosperity, costing precious time and money for both commuters and businesses. There is enormous support in our State for something called Northstar rail, which would bring people basically from the Twin Cities to the area of St. Cloud—Big Lake, to be exact. St. Cloud is the area I explained where the bridge had been closed because of safety concerns. And if you drive that 94 Interstate right now, I can tell you, you waste so much time sitting in traffic you practically feel sick to your stomach if you are there in rush hour.

We need that mass transit, and legislators and people who were originally completely opposed to this project are now standing up in front of the line because they know how important it is for their constituents. This is a case where I have to tell you the constituents were there before the elected officials and led the way to try to get this Northstar rail in. And because of the Federal help, it is now getting built.

The bottom line for any business is you lose money when your people and your products get stuck in traffic, and you also lose the ability to attract top-notch, talented workers if they must contend with aggravating and time-consuming traffic jams. To combat this threat, we must commit to broadening our transportation options, developing the right mix of multimodal solutions to serve our emerging needs, while maintaining our existing systems and highways. This mix, of course, includes not just rail but rapid bus transit, high-occupancy toll lanes, and anything we can do to try to move the people to the places they need to go.

Our Nation has faced this challenge before, a half century ago, and we succeeded in building a new modern transportation system for a new modern economy. At the heart of it all was the interstate highway system. In his 1963 memoir, ''Mandate for Change 1953–1956,'' President Eisenhower famously said this of transportation:

> More than any single action by the government since the end of the war, this one would change the face of America. Its impact on the American economy—the jobs it would produce in manufacturing and construction, the rural areas it would open up—was beyond calculation.

He was right. It is our responsibility to restore Eisenhower's vision of a transportation infrastructure that works for all of America. I can tell you this firsthand, from my heart, having seen what happens when you don't invest as you are supposed to; having seen a major bridge fall down one day in the middle of America; having seen the promise in the rural parts of our State of the new energy revolution but then hearing how they can't get their goods to market because they have a bunch of single-road highways, when they have trucks that are trying to bring wind towers in, when they are trying to be part of the solution to this energy crisis.

It is our responsibility to restore that vision that Eisenhower had—to build this transportation infrastructure in our country. That is why I am so proud to support Senator BOXER and her work on this bill, and I hope our colleagues will support this bill and that we get this bill passed for the good of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am sitting here and listening to Senator KLOBUCHAR, and I am so proud of her work on the committee that I am fortunate enough to chair, the Environment and Public Works Committee. This committee is so interesting because we do everything from global warming legislation, protecting endangered species, to rebuilding the infrastructure of our Nation on the public works side.

It is kind of an interesting divide, because when it comes to rebuilding the infrastructure, we have more bipartisan support right now than for protecting the environment; where Senator WARNER, on global warming, has frankly been our hero on the other side of the aisle, joining with us. But on the infrastructure, Senator INHOFE and I have worked very closely together, and with the help of members of the committee, such as Senator KLOBUCHAR, we are making progress.

Before the good Senator leaves the floor, I wanted to make sure she was aware of something in this bill that is so crucial and is very much apropos to her reminding us about the bridge collapse in Minnesota. We fix an oversight in SAFETEA–LU that resulted in a particular account being oversubscribed. That account was the surface transportation research development and deployment account.

Now, what does that do? It is a very fancy name. Basically, that particular account funds research into the status of our infrastructure. It takes a look at our infrastructure, and it tells us what we need to do to keep up. Do we need to reinforce our bridges, for example. That is one of the aspects they look at. The appraisal of our highways. How do we fund transit? What is the physical condition of our roads? How do they operate? What is their performance level? It is so crucial that we have the information.

My colleague from Minnesota wrote the carbon registry bill that is part of our global warming bill because she knows that before you can solve global warming, you need to know how much carbon and other greenhouse gases are in the atmosphere. We can't write a new bill in 2009 unless we know the status of our roads, our freeways, our bridges, and our highways. So that is why this bill is so important.

We have been here for 2 full days now. I have been ready, willing, and able to take any and all amendments. We have said the bill is closed. We are not adding anything new because we want to keep this bill the exact same cost as the SAFETEA–LU bill. We are not adding anything. We are, in essence, making technical corrections to

make sure we don't stymie a billion dollars' worth of projects, which is going to create tens of thousands of new jobs, and we are going to free up the frozen level of this research because they can't research anymore. They can't do any more research on the state of our infrastructure. We want to unfreeze that.

So here we are for 2 days, standing on our feet begging our Republican friends not to filibuster this bill. What is the point? Everybody wants this bill, except maybe one Senator who doesn't like one provision in it. We had the vote to proceed. I think it was 93 to 1. So everyone wants this bill. This bill doesn't add any new spending, it unleashes a billion dollars of important projects. That is why we have extraordinary support—and I don't have the chart here—from all our construction trades people, the management side, the labor union side, the worker side. We have it all. We have the heads of all the transit agencies across the country. They all want this bill. It is very impressive.

Oh, good, we have it back. I will show it one more time, because when you hear who is backing us—and they are not backing us quietly, they are on the phones, they are calling Members and saying: Let this bill go.

When my kids were young, they would call something a no-brainer. That is what this bill is, a no-brainer. This bill makes eminent sense.

Here is the list: The American Association of Highway and Transportation Officials—from all 50 States—support us; the American Highway Users Alliance—millions of highway users; the American Public Transit Association—transit systems from across the country; American Road and Transportation Builders—that is more than 5,000 members of the transportation construction industry; Associated General Contractors—that is 32,000 contractors; Council of University Transportation Centers—more than 30 university transportation centers from across the country; The National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association—these are the companies that produce more than 92 percent of crushed stone and 75 percent of sand and gravel used in the United States annually; and the National Asphalt and Pavement Association—more than 1,100 companies.

These are the folks who are suffering right now. These are the folks who have gotten caught in this recession we are in. These are the folks who are calling Senators and saying: Please, let this bill go.

Senator BOXER supports it, Senator INHOFE supports it, Senator KLOBUCHAR supports it, Senator BAUCUS supports it, Senator ISAKSON supports it. I could list members from our committee—almost all. As I said, we had a vote of 93 to 1 to proceed to this bill.

Calling all Republican friends: Please, please, please, relent. Please, let's get going. People are counting on you. They need the work. They need the jobs. Our country needs the infrastructure built. This doesn't cost a penny more. These are funds that are sitting in the trust fund.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mrs. BOXER. Yes, I will be glad to yield to my colleague.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I ask the Senator, how long has she been trying to get this bill through? I know she has been waiting. I know it has been months.

Mrs. BOXER. The House passed it 1 year ago, and we passed it in the committee in June 2007. This is not something that—this has been around. We have been asking Senator REID. He wanted to bring it up, but it is getting caught up in other matters. It has been a long time.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. It seems to me, when there is so much bipartisan support, the other side of the aisle would try to advance this bill. I know in our State we have had this tragedy. They see this not only as you talk about it—as a way to figure out, do an analysis of what we really need to meet our transportation needs but they also need it as investment. As you know, we were unable, on the stimulus package, to get some of the things we wanted on the Democratic side, so we did get the check in the mail to people. But long after those rebate checks are cashed, we need a long-term investment strategy in this country that invests in jobs.

I thank Senator BOXER for bringing up that piece of the bill. I was very focused on the nuts and bolts on the roads, the wear and tear on the roads that we all think about when driving on the highway, but we also have to think about this as an investment strategy. I thank her for bringing out that important point.

Mrs. BOXER. I am happy to do it, I say to my friend, and I am glad she asked me when we passed this bill out of committee—June 2007. June 2008 is fast upon us. The House also passed it a year ago.

This is a long time in coming. You are so right, we all talk about the need to make sure there are good jobs for people. This is a ministimulus package right here. There are 500 important projects that will move forward. This means real jobs, real jobs in the U.S. of A. When you are building a road here, you are building a road here. This is important.

It is unusual to see all of these folks team up together. We had a press conference this morning, management and labor together saying: Please, here is an opportunity.

There is nothing negative to say about this bill, as far as I am concerned. You may have one or two projects you wouldn't vote for, but the fact is they have come from the Members of Congress who know their districts and know their States.

I was very glad Senator DEMINT called and said he was pleased with the way we did our disclosure under the new ethics rule, that our committee had set the standard. I was very happy to hear from him about that. He said we did it right, we made it public. Everybody signed on to whatever project they requested—very open, very transparent, very necessary. This is a very necessary bill.

I guess I am talking to colleagues who may be in their offices and I am saying, especially to my Republican friends, come join us. Let's do something good for the people. This is very important for your States. You have the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials—that's the department of transportation for all 50 States—calling on us to act. There is no reason to hold this up. We are wasting precious minutes. We are wasting precious hours. We are wasting precious days. We have a lot of other work to get done.

My goodness, I don't understand filibustering this bill which, again, is within the budget. It doesn't add a penny more than we were supposed to spend. I am a little perplexed as to why we are sitting here at 10 to 6 at night and we can't get anybody to come here to offer an amendment. But I am ever hopeful, because it is my nature, that people will realize, as they go back to their offices and see their phone messages from all these people, that this is real. This is real. We need to get it done.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum. I will be back as soon as I have some news to share with colleagues.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MENENDEZ). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, the matter before the Senate now that is currently being blocked by the minority is a bill that would permit work to proceed on hundreds of highway and transportation infrastructure projects, creating tens of thousands of construction jobs, and pouring $1 billion into our economy. This is timely legislation to repair our roads and bridges now, while our economy needs the work. Yet this bill is stalled in this body because Republicans in the Senate will not allow it to move forward.

Unfortunately, we have seen this movie too many times. The minority has engaged in no less than 65 filibusters in this Congress—an astounding number that lays bare the minority's lack of interest in solving the real problems America faces. What a record—65 filibusters, the most ever. That is what the minority has to contribute to the problems America is facing.

A number of our Republican colleagues have come to the floor of the Senate to speak today, but we have

heard very little in the way of substantive or reasonable objections to the highway bill. Instead, what we have heard is a lot of talk about taxes. Of course taxes are on the minds of many Americans today. It is, after all, April 15, filing day, the deadline for Federal and State tax returns to be filed. Today, we should remember that the work of Government does not just cost money, it costs our money. For that reason, we should ask how this Government is spending our hard-earned money and whether the priorities reflected in the Federal Government's spending are truly the right priorities for our people and for our time.

These are difficult days. Today, families throughout my State of Rhode Island and all across this country are reading their bank statements, opening their bills, reading their local newspapers, and finding that the looming downturn in the economy leaves them struggling to make ends meet. Everywhere we look, prices are rising, from the groceries that feed our families to the gasoline that fuels our cars. Every day, more Americans face the disaster of foreclosure. Every day, more Americans face the nightmare of catastrophic health care bills.

In these days of insecurity, the people of this country are looking for answers, for solutions, for a new direction. Democrats in the Senate are working overtime to provide that new direction. We passed an economic stimulus package, legislation to address the housing crisis, and a budget plan to put our Government back on the path to surplus and cut taxes for middle-class families. We know we need a change of course and, most particularly, a change of leadership in the White House to get our country back on track.

But Senate Republicans today are making it clear that they do not agree. Instead of putting working families first, instead of getting our infrastructure repaired, they want to protect the massive Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, a fiscally irresponsible policy that has left our country trillions of dollars in debt. Instead of a budget that focuses Federal Government spending on our children and our veterans, Republicans want to stick us with the status quo, pouring hundreds of billions of dollars into an endless war in Iraq without spending a dime here at home to fix the problems that face American families.

Senate Democrats support tax cuts for middle-class families, including targeted help for families with children or seeking to adopt a child. Indeed, the budget resolution this year would provide those tax cuts in a fiscally responsible way, without digging our country deeper into debt. But President Bush and his Republican allies in the Senate want to extend the extravagant portions of the 2001 to 2003 Bush tax breaks that are weighted heavily toward the wealthiest Americans.

Mr. President, 71 percent of the value of the tax cuts in 2009 will go to the wealthiest fifth of Americans, and 28 percent of the value of the tax cuts goes to the top 1 percent, a group whose incomes average around $1.5 million a year—clearly people who are hurting and need a lot of help from our Government right now. Almost nothing at all goes to the lowest earning fifth, families who earn $15,000 a year or less. This is the George Bush idea of fair tax policy.

The President's insistence on forcing through these cuts without making up for the lost revenue, to defer that pain to later generations—to our children, to our grandchildren—was not only cowardly leadership, it left our budget in precarious straits. The Bush tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 cost a staggering $1.9 trillion, and they account for 25 percent of the $7.7 trillion Bush Debt. The $7.7 trillion Bush Debt is the difference between the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office projections as President Clinton left office compared to the budgetary nightmare George Bush created—$7.7 trillion.

I am from Rhode Island. One trillion dollars is an unthinkable amount of money in a small State such as Rhode Island. I do not know what $7.7 trillion is. So I have tried to scale it for myself. I have here in my hand a simple penny. A simple penny. If this simple penny were $1 billion—now, even in Rhode Island $1 billion is big money—if this simple penny were $1 billion, $7.7 trillion is a stack of these simple billion-dollar pennies that is 39 feet high, takes us right to the top of this room with a simple penny being a full billion dollars.

It is an astonishing burden for this country to have to bear. It is the responsibility of George Bush and the Republicans, and we have to get serious about it. But are the Senate Republicans willing to get serious about it? No. If they have their way, the wealthiest Americans will continue to profit to the tune of trillions of borrowed dollars while those most in need receive virtually nothing. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the poorest Americans—the lowest 20 percent of income earners would receive less than 0.5 percent of the value of extending Bush tax cuts between 2009 and 2018. The top 20 percent, on the other hand, would receive a staggering 74 percent of the value, a total of nearly $4 trillion over that 10-year period.

And, of course, this is Bush tax policy, so the higher the income, the greater the benefit. Close to $1.2 trillion in Bush tax cuts would accrue to the top 1 percent of American households. Households with annual incomes of more than $1 million a year, those alone receive $834 billion, $834 billion in extended Bush tax cuts.

The reckless fixation on tax cuts for our wealthiest folks that the Bush administration has pursued is driving us to a bad place, to a divided America with two economies, a gilded economy for the wealthy, and a worried struggle for everyone else. That is not good for America. In fact, that is not America. But this does not seem to bother our Republican friends. They have hitched their wagons to the big winners in the gilded economy: the oil companies, the pharmaceutical companies, the billionaires. The two economies, well, that is fine with them so long as their friends are winning. But that is not good for America.

In fact, that is not America, not the one we know. The tool they have used over and over and over is the filibuster. With a $7.7 trillion Bush Debt foundering us, with families across the country in their home States, everyone struggling, you would think they would want their role to be more productive than being the biggest filibusters in American history. You would think they would want a more productive record and legacy than that. But, no, they want to dig a $7.7 trillion hole and then filibuster the folks who are trying to get America out of it. It is so clear that Senate Republicans would prefer to engage in overheated and overhyped tax rhetoric than they would roll up their sleeves, sit down, and get to work on legislation solving the real problems working Americans are facing across our country each day.

I will tell you, it is clear and it is disappointing.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the record has been made clear today. We wish we had been doing some legislating. We have not been. I have had a number of conversations with my distinguished counterpart, Senator MCCONNELL.

Senator MCCONNELL, following the caucus he had with his Senators, as I have with mine every Tuesday, my understanding is a concern was raised in the caucus about the number of judges who have been or not been approved by the Senate in these last few months.

As you know, one day last week we approved five judges, one circuit court judge and four district court judges. We thought that was a step in the right direction. What are we going to do the rest of this year? You know, there is a Thurmond doctrine that says: After June, we will have to take a real close look at judges in a Presidential election year.

June is fast approaching. I believe that is the time set forth in the Thurmond doctrine. So today Senator MCCONNELL and I in our conversations talked about all of the various judges who could be brought up, should be brought up, may be brought up, and we went over the different circuits and talked in some detail.

Following my first conversation with Senator MCCONNELL, I called the Judiciary Chairman, Senator LEAHY. He

and I have a wonderful relationship. He defends me on the floor, I defend him on the floor. Our wives are friends. He is a good person. I think the world of him. So I called him so there would be no misunderstanding. He came over to my office following the telephone conversation. And after the telephone conversation I called Senator MCCONNELL. Senator LEAHY came to my office and we visited again about the judges. We believe we need to make more progress on judges.

As we have said before, we do not want the minority to be treated the way we were treated during the Clinton years. We have done a pretty good job. At this time we have probably approved 90 percent of President Bush's judges, lots and lots of judges, well over 100 judges we have approved.

The Republican leader asked me: What can you do before our Memorial Day recess? What I have told him is we are going to do our utmost, we are not going to talk about district court judges, we are going to approve district court judges, the exact number of which I do not know, and Senator LEAHY and I are going to do everything we can to approve three circuit court judges by Memorial Day.

I would like to be able to guarantee that. I cannot guarantee it. A lot of things happen in the Senate. But I am going to do my very best. I want to live up to what I am saying here on the floor right now. Senator LEAHY knows I am here speaking before the American people today and to Senator MCCONNELL. So we are going to do our very best to approve three circuit court judges by Memorial Day. That is about the best I can do. Which ones, I have told Senator MCCONNELL. There are a number of alternatives we can have. He knows some by name, I know them by name. I do not want and I do not choose to go over them name by name at this time. But we have a number to choose from to get to those three. I will do the best I can, working with Senator LEAHY and the Judiciary Committee. And when I say ''bring to the floor,'' that means confirm the judges.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, my good friend, the majority leader, and I, I think at the beginning of this conference—and I believe this is a correct characterization of where we were; I am sure he can disabuse me of the notion if it is not a direct characterization of where we were—we felt at the very least, President Bush, with regard to circuit court nominees, should be treated as well as President Reagan, President Bush 41, and President Clinton were treated in the last 2 years of their Presidencies.

Each of those Presidents found themselves with the following dilemma: The Senate was in the control of the opposing party, so there was a certain symmetry to this President. George W. Bush ends up the last 2 years of his Presidency similarly situated to President Reagan, President Bush 41, and President Clinton. The average number of circuit court judges approved for all of those Presidents was 17. President Clinton was on the low end of that at 15.

As of today, April 15, we have approved in this Congress seven circuit judges. Except for last week, there had not been one since last September. I am sure the majority leader would agree with me that we are running dramatically behind. We know there is an election coming up in the fall.

The majority leader mentioned the so-called Thurmond rule which at some point here will probably be implemented, indicating there will not be any circuit judges approved.

We currently have before the committee two judges, one from North Carolina and one from South Carolina. The one from North Carolina has a unanimously well qualified from the American Bar Association and has previously been confirmed to his current position as a district court judge by the Senate. The blue slips are back on both of these judges. We anticipate there will be a nominee from Virginia who will have blue slips returned and, in the near future, two nominees from the State of Michigan whose blue slips will be returned. As we all know, in Michigan there are two Democratic Senators and in Virginia there is one Democratic Senator and one Republican. In South Carolina and North Carolina, there are two Republican Senators. The chairman of the Judiciary Committee has made it clear he is not likely, almost certainly not likely, to move a nominee from a State for which there are no blue slips. So we have blue slips in on North and South Carolina, and both nominees have been waiting for quite some time. So there are nominations ready to go.

What I have said is there is a great interest on my side in seeing three circuit court nominees confirmed by the Senate before the Memorial Day recess. The majority leader has indicated he is comfortable with that. We have not picked the candidates, but let me suggest it would be unfair to discriminate against a State which has two Republican Senators with blue slips in and has had nominees pending for quite some time in favor of nominees only recently with blue slips in or only recently nominated. The principle should be the same regardless of whether a State is represented by two Republicans, two Democrats or one Republican and one Democrat. If the blue slips are in, the blue slips are in. If the nominee is otherwise qualified and noncontroversial, I would hope, I say to my good friend, the majority leader, he would share my view that we should not discriminate against a nominee from a State with two Republican Senators, the nominees having been pending for quite some time, in favor of recent nominees who happen to be from States with two Democratic Senators or one Democratic and one Republican Senator. I wonder if my friend, the majority leader, has any observation about that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we have a number of places from which the Judiciary Committee can move matters to the floor. We have North Carolina, South Carolina, Rhode Island, Maryland. We have Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania situation, we have a Democrat and a Republican there. As I recall the judge's name, the nominee there is a man by the name of Pratter. We have someone from Virginia. We have, as of today, two from Maryland. We have a wide range to choose from. I say to my friend from Kentucky, no, it should not be because you have two from the same party from one State and they are not our party, that should not cause them not to have their nominee approved. As I indicated last week when we got into a discussion about this, we should measure the quality of the nominees, not the quantity. We are today talking about the quantity of nominees. But we also have to be concerned about the quality of these nominees. We should confirm capable, mainstream nominees who are the product of bipartisan cooperation. With this committee, to get something out of the committee, it has to be bipartisan. I guess it doesn't have to be, but that is the way we would like it.

So we have done a pretty good job. Last year, we had a very controversial judge. One of the Senators on the Judiciary Committee decided she would vote with the minority. As a result of that, a controversial judge was reported to the floor and ultimately approved. So we are working very hard to arrive at three judges by the time of our break, which is 5 weeks from now, I believe. I said when I got this job, that if the nominations of judges are important to my friend, the Republican leader, they are important to me. I have some knowledge of difficulties with judges on the floor, having survived, as the Democratic leader, the so-called nuclear option. So I understand how people feel strongly about judges. Democrats feel strongly about them. Republicans feel strongly about them. When Senator Lott was majority leader, he said words to the effect: Why should we worry about them in the Senate? People don't care about judges. This is something that is just within the Senate.

I, personally, don't feel that way. I feel these men and women who have lifetime appointments are extremely important and that we should—even though Senator Lott might be right, maybe people outside Washington don't care about judges, I care about judges. The Republican leader cares about judges. I will try my best to get three judges approved by the Senate before the Memorial Day recess.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the only thing I would add with regard to my earlier comments, just picking, for

example, the North Carolina judge, the Fourth Circuit is a judicial emergency. The chairman of the Judiciary Committee has set forward some standards. His first standard: If a vacancy is deemed to be a judicial emergency, it should be addressed quickly. That is the chairman of the Judiciary Committee. In the case of the Fourth Circuit, it has been declared a judicial emergency. It is one-third vacant. The nominee from North Carolina, to pick an example, is not controversial, has a unanimously well qualified from the ABA. The blue slips are back from both North Carolina Senators. My only point to my good friend, the majority leader, was it would seem not to be fair, when you have a nominee pending for a long time who is not controversial, upon which the blue slips have been returned, where there are two Republican Senators, for that nominee to be in effect moved to the back of the bus while you handle nominees nominated more recently from a State with two Democratic Senators or a State with one Democrat and one Republican Senator.

What I am pleading for is a sense of fairness. I believe in the case of both North Carolina and South Carolina, with the judicial emergency existing on the Fourth Circuit, you could make a strong case that they should be dealt with first under the standards of the chairman of the Judiciary Committee. But in particular I cite the nominee from North Carolina because he has been declared noncontroversial, had the unanimous ABA approval rating, and has been pending for hundreds of days. I don't know why we couldn't meet the goal the majority leader has set out of doing three circuit court nominees before Memorial Day. There is no reason not to. There are enough ready to be dealt with who don't require additional paperwork.

So I guess my question of the majority leader is, What is his view as to the likelihood that we would get three circuit judges confirmed before the Memorial Day recess?

Mr. REID. Mr. President, first of all, Chairman LEAHY understands. If there is an emergency in a circuit, he understands the importance of doing something about that. He has expressed that publicly and privately. Also, in this overall process, let's make sure we understand, there are vacancies out there in the circuit courts that we have no nominees for. We are waiting for them. I say to my friend, as I have said before, I am going to do everything to work with the Judiciary Committee. Senator LEAHY said he would do that too. I think we can say we would work very hard to make sure there are no holdovers. That is, if somebody is reported out, we will do our very best to make sure they don't waste that week on that. I am going to do what I can to fulfill what I have said. I will do everything within my power to get three judges approved to our circuits before the Memorial Day recess.

Who knows, we may even get lucky and get more than that. We have a number of people from whom to choose. Maybe the President can send us down a few more names on some of those vacancies that are there now. I don't know what more I can say than to say what I have said. I have to work with the committee, within the rules they have, and do the best I can.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I guess the only thing I would add, would the majority leader agree with me on the following principle: That a circuit judge from a State with two Republican Senators, who is completely qualified and upon which two blue slips have already been returned and have been pending for a long time, does the majority leader share my view that those type nominees from States with two Republican Senators should not be discriminated against in trying to meet our responsibility? We have only confirmed seven circuit judges throughout this Congress. We are a long way from coming anywhere close to what President Clinton got at 15.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I hope the record will reflect the smile on my face because the fact is, we had, for years, two Democratic Senators from a State and those nominees of President Clinton weren't even given a hearing. More than 60 weren't even given a hearing. They were pocket vetoed, for lack of a better description. So, yes, I think if you have two Senators from the same party, they should not be discriminated against. I mentioned their names. Their names are Matthews and Conrad. I have spoken to Senator LEAHY. The first time I talked to him was today. Of course, we will take a look at those.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Well, I certainly understand what the intention of the majority leader is. We will need to discuss this further, I guess privately. I certainly understand his intention. I know he is a person who operates in good faith. I trust him. We have had a good relationship over the last period during which we have been in our respective positions. I guess the calculation I have to make, at some point, is what is the likelihood of this occurring, because there is a deep-seated unrest on our side related to this low number of circuit court judges. I think that is understandable. It is a paltry number in comparison to how President Reagan, President Bush, and President Clinton were handled in a similar situation. But I understand the representations my good friend, the majority leader, has made as far as he is prepared to go today. We will continue to discuss the matter.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the only thing I would say, my good friend asked the odds. I am from Las Vegas. I don't bet. I hope they are good odds. I am going to do everything I can to live up to what I have said this last 5 or 10 minutes.

Mrs. BOXER. Will the Senator yield, my leader yield to me for a question?

Mr. REID. Surely.

Mrs. BOXER. I was pleased to see this dialog back and forth. Because, frankly, I have been wondering, as chairman of the Environment Committee, what was going on. We have a very straightforward bill on the floor. I didn't understand. We have a few amendments. We are very happy to deal with them. We have every group in the country, every construction group, management, labor, everyone, we have every State asking us to do this bill. I didn't understand, frankly, why we were waiting around. I wonder, I ask my leader—and I would be delighted to hear from the Republican leader as well, given this colloquy you had back and forth—and I know the Senator from Nevada as well as anyone here. When he gives his word like this and says: I am going to do everything I can, listen, I think that is as good as it gets around here. I am hopeful, and I would ask my leader to tell me and the Republican leader as well, Senator INHOFE is here, I am here, we are very anxious to move our bill forward, 500 transportation projects, not one penny of added spending; it will unleash a billion dollars' worth of jobs, I am wondering whether you could let us know tonight what are the chances that we are going to be able to move forward.

Mr. REID. I say to my friend, I wish we had moved to this bill Thursday night, legislated yesterday and today. We haven't done that.

HIGHWAY TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS ACT OF 2007

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent that all postcloture time be yielded back, the motion to proceed be agreed to, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of H.R. 1195.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1195) to amend the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, to make technical corrections, and for other purposes.

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Environment and Public Works, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Highway Technical Corrections Act of 2007''.

SEC. 2. SURFACE TRANSPORTATION TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS.

(a) CORRECTION OF INTERNAL REFERENCES IN DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS ENTERPRISES.—Paragraphs (3)(A) and (5) of section 1101(b) of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1156) are amended by striking ''paragraph (1)'' each place it appears and inserting ''paragraph (2)''.

(b) CORRECTION OF DISTRIBUTION OF OBLIGATION AUTHORITY.—Section 1102(c)(5) of the Safe,

Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1158) is amended by striking ''among the States''.

(c) CORRECTION OF FEDERAL LANDS HIGHWAYS.—Section 1119 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1190) is amended by striking subsection (m) and inserting the following:

''(m) FOREST HIGHWAYS.—Of the amounts made available for public lands highways under section 1101—

''(1) not more than $20,000,000 for each fiscal year may be used for the maintenance of forest highways;

''(2) not more than $1,000,000 for each fiscal year may be used for signage identifying public hunting and fishing access; and

''(3) not more than $10,000,000 for each fiscal year shall be used by the Secretary of Agriculture to pay the costs of facilitating the passage of aquatic species beneath forest roads (as defined in section 101(a) of title 23, United States Code), including the costs of constructing, maintaining, replacing, and removing culverts and bridges, as appropriate.''.

(d) CORRECTION OF DESCRIPTION OF NATIONAL CORRIDOR INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT.—Item number 1 of the table contained in section 1302(e) of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1205) is amended in the State column by inserting ''LA,'' after ''TX,''.

(e) CORRECTION OF INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCE SECTION.—Section 1602(d)(1) of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1247) is amended by striking ''through 189 as sections 601 through 609, respectively'' and inserting ''through 190 as sections 601 through 610, respectively''.

(f) CORRECTION OF PROJECT FEDERAL SHARE.—Section 1964(a) of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1519) is amended—

(1) by striking ''only for the States of Alaska, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, and South Dakota,''; and

(2) by striking ''section 120(b)'' and inserting ''section 120''.

(g) TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS DEFINED.—Section 101(a) of title 23, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(39) TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The term 'transportation systems management and operations' means an integrated program to optimize the performance of existing infrastructure through the implementation of multimodal and intermodal, cross-jurisdictional systems, services, and projects designed to preserve capacity and improve security, safety, and reliability of the transportation system.

''(B) INCLUSIONS.—The term 'transportation systems management and operations' includes—

''(i) regional operations collaboration and coordination activities between transportation and public safety agencies; and

''(ii) improvements to the transportation system, such as traffic detection and surveillance, arterial management, freeway management, demand management, work zone management, emergency management, electronic toll collection, automated enforcement, traffic incident management, roadway weather management, traveler information services, commercial vehicle operations, traffic control, freight management, and coordination of highway, rail, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian operations.''.

(h) CORRECTION OF REFERENCE IN APPORTIONMENT OF HIGHWAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM FUNDS.—Effective October 1, 2006, section 104(b)(5)(A)(iii) of title 23, United States Code, is amended by striking ''the Federal-aid system'' each place it appears and inserting ''Federal-aid highways''.

(i) CORRECTION OF AMENDMENT TO ADVANCE CONSTRUCTION.—Section 115 of title 23, United States Code, is amended by redesignating subsection (d) as subsection (c).

(j) CORRECTION OF HIGH PRIORITY PROJECTS.—Section 117 of title 23, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (d) through (h) as subsections (e) through (i), respectively;

(2) by redesignating the second subsection (c) (relating to Federal share) as subsection (d);

(3) in subsection (a)(2)(A) by inserting ''(112 Stat. 257)'' after ''21st Century''; and

(4) in subsection (a)(2)(B)—

(A) by striking ''subsection (b)'' and inserting ''subsection (c)''; and

(B) by striking ''SAFETEA–LU'' and inserting ''Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1256)''.

(k) CORRECTION OF TRANSFER OF UNUSED PROTECTIVE-DEVICE FUNDS TO OTHER HIGHWAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM PROJECTS.—Section 130(e)(2) of title 23, United States Code, is amended by striking ''purposes under this subsection'' and inserting ''highway safety improvement program purposes''.

(l) METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING.—Section 134 of title 23, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (f)(3)(C)(ii) by striking subclause (II) and inserting the following:

''(II) FUNDING.—In addition to funds made available to the metropolitan planning organization for the Lake Tahoe region under other provisions of this title and chapter 53 of title 49, prior to an allocation under section 202 of this title, the Secretary shall set aside ½ of 1 percent of funds authorized to be appropriated to carry out that section, which shall be provided to the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization to carry out the transportation planning process, including the environmental review of transportation projects to complete environmental documentation for the Lake Tahoe region under the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact as consented to in Public Law 96–551 (94 Stat. 3233) and this subparagraph.'';

(2) in subsection (j)(3)(D) by inserting ''or the identified phase'' after ''the project'' each place it appears; and

(3) in subsection (k)(2) by striking ''a metropolitan planning area serving''.

(m) CORRECTION OF HIGHWAY BRIDGE PROGRAM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 144 of title 23, United States Code, is amended—

*(A) in the section heading by striking ''**replacement and rehabilitation**'';*

(B) in subsections (b), (c)(1), and (e) by striking ''Federal-aid system'' each place it appears and inserting ''Federal-aid highway'';

(C) in subsections (c)(2) and (o) by striking ''the Federal-aid system'' each place it appears and inserting ''Federal-aid highways'';

(D) in the heading to paragraph (4) of subsection (d) by inserting ''SYSTEMATIC'' before ''PREVENTIVE'';

(E) in subsection (e) by striking ''off-system bridges'' each place it appears and inserting ''bridges not on Federal-aid highways'';

(F) by striking subsection (f);

(G) by redesignating subsections (g) through (s) as subsections (f) through (r), respectively;

(H) in subsection (f) (as redesignated by subparagraph (G))—

(i) in paragraph (1)(A)—

(I) in clause (vi), by inserting '', except that any unobligated or unexpended funds remaining upon completion of the project under this clause shall be transferred to and used to carry out the project described in clause (vii)'' after ''Vermont''; and

(II) in clause (viii), by inserting ''and corridor'' after ''bridge''; and

(ii) in paragraph (2), by striking the paragraph heading and inserting ''BRIDGES NOT ON FEDERAL-AID HIGHWAYS'';

(I) in subsection (m) (as redesignated by subparagraph (G)) by striking the subsection heading and inserting ''PROGRAM FOR BRIDGES NOT ON FEDERAL-AID HIGHWAYS''; and

(J) in subsection (n)(4)(B) (as redesignated by subparagraph (G)) by striking ''State highway agency'' and inserting ''State transportation department''.

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(A) METROPOLITAN PLANNING.—Section 104(f)(1) of title 23, United States Code, is amended by striking ''replacement and rehabilitation''.

(B) EQUITY BONUS PROGRAM.—Subsections (a)(2)(C) and (b)(2)(C) of section 105 of title 23, United States Code, are amended by striking ''replacement and rehabilitation'' each place it appears.

(C) ANALYSIS.—The analysis for chapter 1 of title 23, United States Code, is amended in the item relating to section 144 by striking ''replacement and rehabilitation''.

(n) CORRECTION OF NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS PROGRAM COVERAGE.—Section 162 of title 23, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(3)(B) by striking ''a National Scenic Byway under subparagraph (A)'' and inserting ''a National Scenic Byway, an All-American Road, or one of America's Byways under paragraph (1)''; and

(2) in subsection (c)(3) by striking ''or All-American Road'' each place it appears and inserting ''All-American Road, or one of America's Byways''.

(o) CORRECTION OF REFERENCE IN TOLL PROVISION.—Section 166(b)(5)(C) of title 23, United States Code, is amended by striking ''paragraph (3)'' and inserting ''paragraph (4)''.

(p) CORRECTION OF RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM APPORTIONMENT EXCEPTIONS.—Section 206(d)(3)(A) of title 23, United States Code, is amended by striking ''(B), (C), and (D)'' and inserting ''(B) and (C)''.

(q) CORRECTION OF INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCE.—Section 601(a)(3) of title 23, United States Code, is amended by inserting ''bbb minus, BBB (low),'' after ''Baa3,''.

(r) CORRECTION OF MISCELLANEOUS TYPOGRAPHICAL ERRORS.—

(1) Section 1401 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1226) is amended by redesignating subsections (d) and (e) as subsections (c) and (d), respectively.

(2) Section 1404(e) of such Act (119 Stat. 1229) is amended by inserting ''tribal,'' after ''local,''.

(3) Section 10211(b)(2) of such Act (119 Stat. 1937) is amended by striking ''plan administer'' and inserting ''plan and administer''.

(4) Section 10212(a) of such Act (119 Stat. 1937) is amended—

(A) by inserting ''equity bonus,'' after ''minimum guarantee,'';

(B) by striking ''freight intermodal connectors'' and inserting ''railway-highway crossings'';

(C) by striking ''high risk rural road,''; and

(D) by inserting after ''highway safety improvement programs'' the following: ''(and separately the set aside for the high risk rural road program)''.

SEC. 3. MAGLEV.

(a) FUNDING.—Section 1101(a)(18) of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1155) is amended by striking subparagraphs (A) and (B) and inserting the following:

''(A) $20,000,000 for fiscal year 2007; and

''(B) $35,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2008 and 2009.''.

(b) CONTRACT AUTHORITY.—Section 1307 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1217) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(e) CONTRACT AUTHORITY.—Funds authorized under section 1101(a)(18) shall be available

for obligation in the same manner as if the funds were apportioned under chapter 1 of title 23, United States Code; except that the funds shall not be transferable and shall remain available until expended, and the Federal share of the cost of a project to be carried out with such funds shall be 80 percent.''.

SEC. 4. PROJECTS OF NATIONAL AND REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE.

The table contained in section 1301(m) of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1203) is amended—

(1) in item number 19 by striking the project description and inserting ''Regional rail expansion and transportation infrastructure in the vicinity of Santa Teresa, New Mexico''; and

(2) in item number 22 by striking the project description and inserting ''Redesign and reconstruction of interchanges 298 and 299 of I–80 and accompanying improvements to any other public roads in the vicinity, Monroe County''.

SEC. 5. IDLING REDUCTION FACILITIES.

Section 111 of title 23, United States Code, is amended by striking subsection (d).

SEC. 6. PROJECT AUTHORIZATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The table contained in section 1702 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1256) is amended—

(1) in item number 3688 by striking ''road'' and inserting ''trail'';

(2) in item number 3691 by striking the project description and inserting ''Hoonah roads'';

(3) in item number 3695 by striking ''in Soldotna'' and inserting ''in the Kenai River corridor'';

(4) in item number 3699 by striking ''to improve fish habitat'';

(5) in item number 3700 by inserting ''and ferry facilities'' after ''a ferry'';

(6) in item number 3703 by inserting ''or other roads'' after ''Cape Blossom Road'';

(7) in item number 3704 by striking ''Fairbanks'' and inserting ''Alaska Highway'';

(8) in item number 3705 by striking ''in Cook Inlet for the Westside development/Williamsport-Pile Bay Road'' and inserting ''for development of the Williamsport-Pile Bay Road corridor'';

(9) in item number 3828 by striking ''$2,000,000'' and inserting ''$11,000,000'';

(10) by striking item number 3829;

(11) by striking item number 3832;

(12) in item number 3861 by striking the project description and inserting ''Creation of a greenway path along the Naugatuck River in Waterbury'';

(13) in item number 3883 by striking the project description and inserting ''Wilmington Riverfront Access and Street Grid Redesign'';

(14) in item number 3892 by striking ''$5,000,000'' and inserting ''$8,800,000'';

(15) in item number 3894 by striking ''$5,000,000'' and inserting ''$1,200,000'';

(16) in item number 3909 by striking the project description and inserting ''S.R. 281, the Avalon Boulevard Expansion Project from Interstate 10 to U.S. Highway 91'';

(17) in item number 3911 by striking the project description and inserting ''Construct a new bridge at Indian Street, Martin County'';

(18) in item number 3916 by striking the project description and inserting ''City of Hollywood for U.S. 1/Federal Highway, north of Young Circle'';

(19) in item number 3937 by striking the project description and inserting ''Kingsland bypass from CR 61 to I–95, Camden County'';

(20) in item number 3945 by striking ''CR 293 to CS 5231'' and inserting ''SR 371 to SR 400'';

(21) in item number 3965 by striking ''transportation projects'' and inserting ''and air quality projects'';

(22) in item number 3986 by striking the project description and inserting ''Extension of Sugarloaf Parkway, Gwinnett County'';

(23) in item number 3999 by striking ''Bridges'' and inserting ''Bridge and Corridor'';

(24) in item number 4003 by striking the project description and inserting ''City of Council Bluffs and Pottawattamie County East Beltway Roadway and Connectors Project'';

(25) in item number 4043 by striking ''MP 9.3, Segment I, II, and III'' and inserting ''Milepost 24.3'';

(26) in item number 4050 by striking the project description and inserting ''Preconstruction and construction activities of U.S. 51 between the Assumption Bypass and Vandalia'';

(27) in item number 4058 by striking the project description and inserting ''For improvements to the road between Brighton and Bunker Hill in Macoupin County'';

(28) in item numbers 4062 and 4084 by striking the project descriptions and inserting ''Preconstruction, construction, and related research and studies of I–290 Cap the Ike project in the village of Oak Park'';

(29) in item number 4089 by inserting ''and parking facility/entrance improvements serving the Museum of Science and Industry'' after ''Lakeshore Drive'';

(30) in item number 4103 by inserting ''and adjacent to the'' before ''Shawnee'';

(31) in item number 4110 by striking the project description and inserting ''For improvements to the road between Brighton and Bunker Hill in Macoupin County'';

(32) in item number 4120 by striking the project description and amount and inserting ''Upgrade 146th Street to Improve I–69 Access'' and ''$800,000'', respectively;

(33) in item number 4125 by striking ''$250,000'' and inserting ''$1,650,000'';

(34) by striking item number 4170;

(35) by striking item number 4179;

(36) in item number 4185 by striking the project description and inserting ''Replace the Clinton Street Bridge spanning St. Mary's River in downtown Fort Wayne'';

(37) in item number 4299 by striking the project description and inserting ''Improve U.S. 40, MD 715 interchange and other roadways in the vicinity of Aberdeen Proving Ground to support BRAC-related growth'';

(38) in item number 4313 by striking ''Maryland Avenue'' and all that follows through ''Rd. corridor'' and inserting ''intermodal access and pedestrian safety improvements'';

(39) in item number 4315 by striking ''stormwater mitigation project'' and inserting ''environmental preservation project'';

(40) in item number 4318 by striking the project description and inserting ''Planning, design, and construction of improvements to the highway systems connecting to Lewiston and Auburn downtowns'';

(41) in item number 4323 by striking the project description and inserting ''MaineDOT Acadia intermodal passenger and maintenance facility'';

(42) in item number 4338 by striking the project description and inserting ''Construct 1 or more grade-separated crossings of I–75, and make associated improvements to improve local and regional east-west mobility between Mileposts 279 and 282'';

(43) in item number 4355 by striking the project description and inserting ''Design, engineering, ROW acquisition, construction, and construction engineering for the reconstruction of TH 95, from 12th Avenue to CSAH 13, including bridge and approaches, ramps, intersecting roadways, signals, turn lanes, and multiuse trail, North Branch'';

(44) in item number 4357 by striking the project description and inserting ''Design, construct, ROW, and expand TH 241 and CSAH 35 and associated streets in the City of St. Michael'';

(45) in item number 4360 by striking the project description and inserting ''Planning, design, and construction for Twin Cities Bioscience Corridor in St. Paul'';

(46) in item number 4362 by striking the project description and inserting ''I–494/U.S. 169 interchange reconstruction including U.S. 169/Valley View Road interchange, Twin Cities Metropolitan Area'';

(47) in item number 4365 by striking the project description and inserting ''34th Street realignment and 34th Street and I–94 interchange, including retention and reconstruction of the SE Main Avenue/CSAH 52 interchange ramps at I–94, and other transportation improvements for the city of Moorhead, including the SE Main Avenue GSI and Moorhead Comprehensive Rail Safety Program'';

(48) in item number 4369 by striking the project description and inserting ''Construction of 8th Street North, Stearns C.R. 120 to TH 15 in St. Cloud'';

(49) in item number 4371 by striking the project description and inserting ''Construction and ROW of TH 241, CSAH 35 and associated streets in the City of St. Michael'';

(50) in item number 4411 by striking ''Southaven'' and inserting ''DeSoto County'';

(51) in item number 4424 by striking the project description and inserting ''U.S. 93 Evaro to Polson transportation improvement projects'';

(52) in item number 4428 by striking the project description and inserting ''U.S. 76 improvements'';

(53) in item number 4457 by striking the project description and inserting ''Construct an interchange at an existing grade separation at SR 1602 (Old Stantonsburg Rd.) and U.S. 264 Bypass in Wilson County'';

(54) in item number 4461 by striking the project description and inserting ''Transportation and related improvements at Queens University of Charlotte, including the Queens Science Center and the Marion Diehl Center, Charlotte'';

(55) in item number 4507 by striking the project description and inserting ''Design, right-of-way and construction of Highway 35 between Norfolk and South Sioux City, including an interchange at milepost 1 on U.S. I–129'';

(56) in item number 4555 by inserting ''Canal Street and'' after ''Reconstruction of'';

(57) in item number 4565 by striking the project description and inserting ''Railroad Construction and Acquisition, Ely and White Pine County'';

(58) in item number 4588 by inserting ''Private Parking and'' before ''Transportation'';

(59) in item number 4596 by striking the project description and inserting ''Transportation center, Corning'';

(60) in item number 4610, by striking the project description and inserting ''Demolition, site restoration, and hazardous material abatement of Alert Facility at Plattsburgh International Airport'';

(61) in item number 4649 by striking the project description and inserting ''Fairfield County, OH U.S. 33 and old U.S. 33 safety improvements and related construction, city of Lancaster and surrounding areas'';

(62) in item number 4651 by striking ''for the transfer of rail to truck for the intermodal'' and inserting '', and construction of an intermodal freight'';

(63) in item number 4691 by striking the project description and inserting ''Transportation improvements to Idabel Industrial Park Rail Spur, Idabel'';

(64) in item number 4722 by striking the project description and inserting ''Highway, traffic, pedestrian, and riverfront improvements, Pittsburgh'';

(65) in item number 4749 by striking ''study'' and inserting ''improvements'';

(66) in item number 4821 by striking ''highway grade crossing project, Clearfield and Clinton Counties'' and inserting ''Project for highway grade crossings and other purposes relating to the Project in Cambria, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Indiana, and Jefferson Counties'';

(67) in item number 4838 by striking ''study'' and inserting ''improvements'';

(68) in item number 4839 by striking ''fuel-celled'' and inserting ''fueled'';

(69) in item number 4866 by striking ''$11,000,000'' and inserting ''$9,400,000'';

(70) by inserting after item number 4866 the following:

''4866A	RI	Repair and restore railroad bridge in Westerly	$1,600,000'';

(71) in item number 4892 by striking the project description and inserting ''Construct a 4-lane highway between maverick Junction and the Nebraska border'';

(72) in item number 4915 by striking the project description and inserting ''For projects of highest priority, as determined by the South Dakota DOT'';

(73) in item number 4916 by striking ''$1,000,000'' and inserting ''$328,000'';

(74) in item number 4924 by striking ''$3,450,000'' and inserting ''$4,122,000'';

(75) in item number 4927 by striking the project description and inserting ''Construction and Improvements to the College Street Corridor, Great Smoky Mountain Heritage Highway Cultural and Visitors Center in Maryville'';

(76) in item number 4960 by inserting ''of which $50,000 shall be used for a street paving project, Calhoun'' after ''County'';

(77) in item number 4974 by striking '', Sevier County'';

(78) in item number 5008 by inserting ''/Kane Creek Boulevard'' after ''500 West'';

(79) in item numbers 5011 and 5033 by striking ''200 South Interchange'' each place it appears and inserting ''400 South Interchange'';

(80) in item number 5021, by striking ''Pine View Dam,'';

(81) in item number 5026 by striking the project description and inserting ''Roadway improvements on Washington Fields Road/300 East, Washington'';

(82) in item number 5027 by inserting ''and roadway improvements'' after ''safety project'';

(83) in item number 5028 by inserting ''and roadway improvements'' after ''lighting'';

(84) in item number 5029 by inserting ''and roadway improvements'' after ''lights'';

(85) in number 5032 by striking the project description and inserting ''Expand Redhills Parkway, St. George'';

(86) in item number 5132 by striking the project description and inserting ''St. Croix River crossing project, Wisconsin State Highway 64, St. Croix County, Wisconsin, to Minnesota State Highway 36, Washington County''; and

(87) in item number 5161 by striking the project description and inserting ''Raleigh Street Extension Project in Martinsburg''.

(b) TRANSFER OF PROJECT FUNDS.—The Secretary of Transportation shall transfer to the Commandant of the Coast Guard amounts made available to carry out the project described in item number 4985 of the table contained in section 1702 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1447) to carry out that project, in accordance with the Act of June 21, 1940 (commonly known as the ''Truman-Hobbs Act'') (33 U.S.C. 511 et seq.).

(c) UNUSED OBLIGATION AUTHORITY.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, unused obligation authority made available for an item in section 1702 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1256) that is repealed, or authorized funding for such an item that is reduced, by this section shall be made available—

(1) for an item in section 1702 of that Act that is added or increased by this section and that is in the same State as the item for which obligation authority or funding is repealed or reduced;

(2) in an amount proportional to the amount of obligation authority or funding that is so repealed or reduced; and

(3) individually for projects numbered 1 through 3676 pursuant to section 1102(c)(4)(A) of that Act (119 Stat. 1158).

(d) ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY USE OF SURFACE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM FUNDS.—Of the funds apportioned to each State under section 104(b)(3) of title 23, United States Code, a State may expend for each of fiscal years 2007 through 2009 not more than $1,000,000 for the following activities:

(1) Participation in the Joint Operation Center for Fuel Compliance established under section 143(b)(4)(H) of title 23, United States Code, within the Department of the Treasury, including the funding of additional positions for motor fuel tax enforcement officers and other staff dedicated on a full-time basis to participation in the activities of the Center.

(2) Development, operation, and maintenance of electronic filing systems to coordinate data exchange with the Internal Revenue Service by States that impose a tax on the removal of taxable fuel from any refinery and on the removal of taxable fuel from any terminal.

(3) Development, operation, and maintenance of electronic single point of filing in conjunction with the Internal Revenue Service by States that impose a tax on the removal of taxable fuel from any refinery and on the removal of taxable fuel from any terminal.

(4) Development, operation, and maintenance of a certification system by a State of any fuel sold to a State or local government (as defined in section 4221(d)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986) for the exclusive use of the State or local government or sold to a qualified volunteer fire department (as defined in section 150(e)(2) of such Code) for its exclusive use.

(5) Development, operation, and maintenance of a certification system by a State of any fuel sold to a nonprofit educational organization (as defined in section 4221(d)(5) of such Code) that includes verification of the good standing of the organization in the State in which the organization is providing educational services.

SEC. 7. CORRECTION OF INTERSTATE DESIGNATION.

(a) TREATMENT.—Section 1908(a) of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1469) is amended by striking paragraph (3).

(b) NATIONAL HIGHWAY SYSTEM.—Section 1908(b) of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1470) is amended by striking ''from the Arkansas State line'' and inserting ''from Interstate Route 540''.

SEC. 8. FUTURE OF SURFACE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM.

Section 1909(b) of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1471) is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A) of paragraph (9) by striking ''July 1, 2007'' and inserting ''December 31, 2007'';

(2) in paragraph (11)(C) by striking ''the Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration'' and inserting ''the Secretary'';

(3) in paragraph (11)(D)(i) by striking '', on a reimbursable basis,'';

(4) in paragraph (15) by striking ''$1,400,000 for each of fiscal years 2006 and 2007'' and inserting ''$1,400,000 for fiscal year 2006 and $3,400,000 for fiscal year 2007'';

(5) by redesignating paragraphs (14), (15), (16), and (17) as paragraphs (15), (16), (17), and (18), respectively; and

(6) by inserting after paragraph (13) the following:

''(14) LIMITATIONS.—

''(A) FUNDS.—Funds made available to carry out this section may be expended only to support the activities of the Commission.

''(B) DATA, ANALYSES, AND REPORTS.—No data, analysis, report, or other document prepared for the Commission to fulfill the duties of the Commission may be provided to, or shared with, any other commission or task force until the data, analysis, report, or document has been made available to the public.''.

SEC. 9. BUDGET JUSTIFICATION.

Section 1926 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (49 U.S.C. 301 note; 119 Stat. 1483) is amended by striking ''The Department'' and inserting ''Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Department''.

SEC. 10. BUY AMERICA.

Section 1928 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1484) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (2) through (5) as paragraphs (3) through (6), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following:

''(2) the current application by the Federal Highway Administration of the Buy America test as applied only to components or parts of a bridge project and not the entire bridge project is inconsistent with this sense of Congress;''.

SEC. 11. TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS.

The table contained in section 1934(c) of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1486) is amended—

(1) in item number 12 by striking ''Yukon River'' and inserting ''Kuskokwim River'';

(2) in item number 18 by striking ''Engineering and Construction in Merced County'' and inserting ''and safety improvements/realignment of SR 165 project study report and environmental studies in Merced and Stanislaus Counties'';

(3) in item number 38 by striking the project description and inserting ''Relocation of the Newark Train Station'';

(4) in item number 57 by striking the project description and inserting ''Kingsland bypass from CR 61 to I–95, Camden County'';

(5) in item number 114—

(A) by striking ''IA–32''; and

(B) by inserting ''SW'' after ''Construct'';

(6) in item number 122 by striking the project description and inserting ''Design, right-of-way, and construction of the SW Arterial and connections to U.S. 20, Dubuque County'';

(7) in item number 130 by striking the project description and inserting ''Improvements and rehabilitation to rail and bridges on the Appanoose County Community Railroad'';

(8) in item number 133 by striking ''IA–32'';

(9) in item number 138 by striking the project description and inserting ''West Spencer Beltway Project'';

(10) in item number 142 by striking ''MP 9.3, Segment I, II, and III'' and inserting ''Milepost 24.3'';

(11) in item number 161 by striking ''Bridge replacement on Johnson Drive and Nall Ave.'' and inserting ''Construction improvements'';

(12) in item number 182 by striking the project description and inserting ''Improve U.S. 40, M.D. 715 interchange, and other roadways in the vicinity of Aberdeen Proving Ground to support BRAC-related growth'';

(13) in item number 198 by striking the project description and inserting ''Construct 1 or more grade separated crossings of I–75 and make associated improvements to improve local and regional east-west mobility between Mileposts 279 and 282'';

(14) in item number 201 by striking the project description and inserting ''Alger County, paving a portion of H–58 from Buck Hill to a point located 4,000 feet east of the Hurricane River'';

(15) in item number 238 by striking the project description and inserting ''Develop and construct the St. Mary water project road and bridge infrastructure, including a new bridge and approaches across St. Mary River, stabilization and improvements to United States Route 89, and road/canal from Siphon Bridge to Spider Lake, on the condition that $2,500,000 of the amount made available to carry out this item may be made available to the Bureau of Reclamation for use for the Swift Current Creek and Boulder Creek bank and bed stabilization project in the Lower St. Mary Lake drainage'';

(16) in item number 329 by inserting '', Tulsa'' after ''technology'';

(17) in item number 358 by striking ''fuel-celled'' and inserting ''fueled'';

(18) in item number 374 by striking the project description and inserting ''Construct a 4-lane highway between Maverick Junction and the Nebraska border''; and

(19) in item number 402 by striking ''from 2 to 5 lanes and improve alignment within rights-of-way in St. George'' and inserting '', St. George''.

SEC. 12. HIGHWAY RESEARCH FUNDING.

(a) F–SHRP FUNDING.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, for each of fiscal years 2007 through 2009, at any time at which an apportionment is made of the sums authorized to be appropriated for the surface transportation program, the congestion mitigation and air quality improvement program, the National Highway System, the Interstate maintenance program, the bridge program, or the highway safety improvement program, the Secretary of Transportation shall—

(1) deduct from each apportionment an amount not to exceed 0.205 percent of the apportionment; and

(2) transfer or otherwise make that amount available to carry out section 510 of title 23, United States Code.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(1) FUNDING.—Section 5101 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1779) is amended—

(A) in subsection (a)(1) by striking ''509, and 510'' and inserting ''and 509'';

(B) in subsection (a)(4) by striking ''$69,700,000'' and all that follows through ''2009'' and inserting ''$40,400,000 for fiscal year 2005, $69,700,000 for fiscal year 2006, $76,400,000 for each of fiscal years 2007 and 2008, and $78,900,000 for fiscal year 2009''; and

(C) in subsection (b) by inserting ''or, in the case of funds appropriated by subsection (a) to carry out section 5201, 5202, or 5203, 80 percent'' after ''50 percent''.

(2) FUTURE STRATEGIC HIGHWAY RESEARCH PROGRAM.—Section 5210 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1804) is amended—

(A) by striking subsection (c); and

(B) by redesignating subsection (d) as subsection (c).

(c) CONTRACT AUTHORITY.—Funds made available under this section shall be available for obligation in the same manner as if the funds were apportioned under chapter 1 of title 23, United States Code, except that the Federal share shall be determined under section 510(f) of that title.

(d) APPLICABILITY OF OBLIGATION LIMITATION.—Funds made available under this section shall be subject to any limitation on obligations for Federal-aid highways and highway safety construction programs under section 1102 the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (23 U.S.C. 104 note; 119 Stat. 1157) or any other Act.

(e) EQUITY BONUS FORMULA.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, in allocating funds for the equity bonus program under section 105 of title 23, United States Code, for each of fiscal years 2007 through 2009, the Secretary of Transportation shall make the required calculations under that section as if this section had not been enacted.

(f) FUNDING FOR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES.—Of the amount made available by section 5101(a)(1) of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1779)—

(1) at least $1,000,000 shall be made available for each of fiscal years 2007 through 2009 to carry out section 502(h) of title 23, United States Code; and

(2) at least $4,900,000 shall be made available for each of fiscal years 2007 through 2009 to carry out section 502(i) of that title.

(g) TECHNICAL AMENDMENTS.—

(1) SURFACE TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH.—Section 502 of title 23, United States Code, is amended by striking the first subsection (h), relating to infrastructure investment needs reports beginning with the report for January 31, 1999.

(2) ADVANCED TRAVEL FORECASTING PROCEDURES PROGRAM.—Section 5512(a)(2) of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (119 Stat. 1829) is amended by striking ''PROGRAM APPRECIATION.—'' and inserting ''PROGRAM APPLICATION.—''.

(3) UNIVERSITY TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH.—Section 5506 of title 49, United States Code, is amended—

(A) in subsection (i)—

(i) by striking ''In order to'' and inserting the following:

''(1) IN GENERAL.—In order to''; and

(ii) by adding at the end the following:

''(2) SPECIAL RULE.—Nothing in paragraph (1) requires a nonprofit institution of higher learning designated as a Tier II university transportation center to maintain total expenditures as described in paragraph (1) in excess of the amount of the grant awarded to the institution.''; and

(B) in subsection (k)(3) by striking ''The Secretary'' and all that follows through ''to carry out this section'' and inserting ''For each of fiscal years 2007 through 2009, the Secretary shall expend not more than 1.5 percent of amounts made available to carry out this section''.

SEC. 13. RESCISSION.

Section 10212 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (as amended by section 1302 of the Pension Protection Act of 2006 (Public Law 109–280)) (119 Stat. 1937; 120 Stat. 780) is amended by striking ''$8,593,000,000'' each place it appears and inserting ''$8,710,000,000''.

SEC. 14. TEA–21 TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1108(f)(1) of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (23 U.S.C. 133 note; 112 Stat. 141) is amended by striking ''2003'' and inserting ''2009''.

(b) BEARTOOTH HIGHWAY, WYOMING AND MONTANA.—Item number 1646 of the table contained in section 1602 of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (112 Stat. 317) is amended in the project description by striking ''and construction'' and inserting ''reconstruction, maintenance (including routine and preventive maintenance), snow removal, and pavement preservation''.

SEC. 15. HIGH PRIORITY CORRIDOR AND INNOVATIVE PROJECT TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS.

(a) HIGH PRIORITY CORRIDORS.—Section 1105(c) of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (105 Stat. 2032; 119 Stat. 1212) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (63) by striking ''and United States Routes 1, 3, 9, 17, and 46,'' and inserting ''United States Routes 1, 9, and 46, and State Routes 3 and 17,''; and

(2) in paragraph (64)—

(A) by striking ''United States Route 42'' and inserting ''State Route 42''; and

(B) by striking ''Interstate Route 676'' and inserting ''Interstate Routes 76 and 676''.

(b) INNOVATIVE PROJECTS.—The table contained in section 1107(b) of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (105 Stat. 2048(b)) is amended in item number 89, in the matter under the column with the heading ''INNOVATIVE PROJECTS'', by inserting ''and contiguous counties'' after ''Michigan''.

SEC. 16. DEFINITION OF REPEAT INTOXICATED DRIVER LAW.

Section 164(a)(5) of title 23, United States Code, is amended by striking subparagraphs (A) and (B) and inserting the following:

''(A) receive—

''(i) a driver's license suspension for not less than 1 year; or

''(ii) a combination of suspension of all driving privileges for the first 45 days of the suspension period followed by a reinstatement of limited driving privileges for the purpose of getting to and from work, school, or an alcohol treatment program if an ignition interlock device is installed on each of the motor vehicles owned or operated, or both, by the individual;

''(B) be subject to the impoundment or immobilization of, or the installation of an ignition interlock system on, each motor vehicle owned or operated (or both) by the individual;''.

SEC. 17. RESEARCH TECHNICAL CORRECTION.

Section 5506(e)(5)(C) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by striking ''$2,225,000''and inserting ''$2,250,000''.

SEC. 18. EFFECTIVE DATE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Except as otherwise provided in this Act (including subsection (b)), this Act and the amendments made by this Act take effect on the date of enactment of this Act.

(b) EXCEPTION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The amendments made by this Act (other than the amendments made by sections 4, 6, and 11) to the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (Public Law 109–59; 119 Stat. 1144) shall—

(A) take effect as of the date of enactment of that Act; and

(B) be treated as being included in that Act as of that date.

(2) EFFECT OF AMENDMENTS.—Each provision of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (Public Law 109–59; 119 Stat. 1144) (including the amendments made by that Act) (as in effect on the day before the date of enactment of this Act) that is amended by this Act (other than sections 4, 6, and 11) shall be treated as not being enacted.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California is recognized.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am very pleased we are on this bill. Senator INHOFE and I haven't wasted the time. We have been talking with our colleagues. I think for the interest of all Members, at this point we don't expect any votes tonight, but we certainly do hope in every way possible that we will start disposing of the amendments in the morning. We will be here about 10:30. We urge our colleagues to come down and offer their amendments. We will debate them, we will have our votes on them, and we will get something done for the American people.

I yield the floor at this time.

I see my ranking member and I am delighted he is here.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I thank the chairman of the committee. This is something we have spent a long time on. I think it is very important for all of us on both sides of the aisle to understand that what we are considering here is not the transportation reauthorization bill of 2005. That was done. That is history. That is behind us. A technical corrections bill is common with every bill, every major piece of legislation that comes along. Sometimes in the case—I will go ahead and say in my case of Oklahoma, we had a major project that was about a $200,000 project in Durant, OK in which, according to our transportation commissioner and the Transportation Department of Oklahoma, that same amount

of money could be better spent doing the same project but at another location. Well, that takes a technical change. There is no difference.

I say to all of my good friends, there is no one who is more conservative than I am by all ratings in my last 22 years in both the House and the Senate. There are no new projects. There is no new spending. The amount of money that was authorized is the same amount of money that is authorized at the present time in the technical corrections bill. So it is not somehow getting some kind of an earmark or something else in it.

I have often said that of all of the systems we use in Washington to accomplish things, probably the transportation system is the best. I don't know of anyone who complains about paying into the highway trust fund when they get gasoline. They want to be sure it is going to go to building highways, repairing bridges. But what we do in the State of Oklahoma is we have eight transportation districts, eight transportation commissioners, all geographically located. They make recommendations. What I do with a transportation bill is I leave it up to them to make the determination as to where that goes. The States are making those decisions. The highway trust fund—there are some States where the money doesn't go straight into transportation. They have been robbing balances of the highway trust fund for as long as I know. We have corrected that problem in the State of Oklahoma. Instead of having it go to other causes, it goes to correcting the crisis we are in right now.

I wish to say that for those of us who are conservatives, this is something that works well. If there is any function of government that needs to be addressed and has to be addressed at the Federal level, it is our roads and highways. We have States such as Montana, big States that have very few people. You still have to get across them. You have the congested eastern States that have the opposite situation. That is why way back in the Eisenhower administration they decided to go in together and create this system we still have today. It is one that has worked fairly well. I don't want people out there to think this is something that has a bunch of projects and a bunch of earmarks in it. It doesn't. This is something we spent 2 or 3 years intensively working on prior to its passage in 2005. Now we want to make these corrections to make sure the rest of the projects get done.

Here is the dilemma we have right now. We have a lot of projects—not nearly enough but a lot of projects—that we authorized in 2005. If we don't have technical corrections, we are up against the wall now where we can't get anything more done, and we have given our word to people all throughout the country that we are going to improve bridges, we are going to try to save lives, and it has virtually stopped because we have certain corrections that need to be made.

What we dealt with on that very large, what was it, $286 billion over the period of 2005 through 2009, which is a lot of money, that doesn't do anything more—it doesn't even maintain what we already have. We don't even have a lot of new stuff in there. There is not a person in America who doesn't know we have a crisis. Some of these Members of this committee or this body, if you don't think it is a crisis, call your wife at home, or your husband, and they will tell you it is a crisis. It is worse every year. It is not something that we can make a decision today and all come to our good senses and get it done and it will be done tomorrow. It is a long lead time. It is a complicated process. But it is one of the things that has worked well.

I know there are a lot of people who want to satisfy some constituency that says you are spending too much money. You tell that constituency to go out and drive in the traffic for a while and see what kind of serious problems we have.

I have often said—and I have followed this myself—we all in this body have different priorities. That is what makes it a representative body. I have often said we need to, No. 1, take care of our Nation's security, have a military that can defend our country; No. 2, take care of the infrastructure we have and move forward with that; and No. 3, which is kind of a pet thing with me, and I think everyone who has previously been a mayor of a major city—unfunded mandates is another area that I feel this governing body should be paying attention to. But we have a bill. We have a bill that is working now. We are improving highways. We are adding lanes. But we have come to a stop. I think anyone who tries to keep this from becoming a reality doesn't want to address a serious problem we are faced with.

No one else is going to do it for us. The States can't do it. It has to be done by the Federal Government. We passed a bill. We are going to be coming up against another bill next year when this runs out in 2009. We are going to be reauthorizing for the next 5 years or 7 years or maybe even longer. But this has to be done and we need to get it done now.

We do have several amendments. I understand the concern of the Senator from South Carolina who has made his statements, and he has done so very eloquently. Frankly, I agree with almost everything he says. The only thing I disagree with is that this bill isn't creating new projects, isn't spending new money. We need, in his State as well as my State and in all 50 States, to get on with this. I hope people realize these are not new projects; it is not an increase in spending. It doesn't spend at all; it is an authorization bill.

Another amendment that is going to be pending is that of my good friend Senator BOND from Missouri. He has a special concern, and I encourage him to come down to the floor to bring it up, debate it, and let's vote on it and get that done. Then my junior Senator has a concern over something that is a process that happened—it didn't even happen here, but it happened in the other body. Now, I agree with him, it is something that was egregious and needs to be investigated. I think it should be. I think there are a lot of different ways of doing it. I want to join hands with him and get this done.

So we, to my knowledge, only have those three things that are out there that are holding this up. I would invite those three authors to come down. I think while we are not going to be having votes tonight, we can start debating these tonight, and tomorrow morning we could actually vote on some of these. But I agree with the chairman of the committee, Senator BOXER, and the majority and the minority leaders in this body that we need to get it done. We are not going to get it done until we get the amendments down here, debate them, and decide what is the will of this body. That is what we are supposed to be doing for a living around here. That is what happens.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, earlier this month, President Bush sent up another trade agreement to the House of Representatives. This agreement is a bilateral trade agreement with Colombia. He calls it a ''free trade agreement,'' a term we use around here—I am not sure why, except that it sounds good, because these trade agreements generally are—I don't have it in front of me, but it was too thick to bind in its original printing. It is about seven or eight hundred pages.

NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement—which the Presiding Officer opposed 15 years ago, as I did—was even longer than that. The way they sell these agreements is they say we are eliminating the tariffs on the trade relationship between—in this case it is Colombia, and Colombia still

has tariffs on American goods. We have eliminated tariffs on Colombian goods. If we were to pass a real free trade agreement, it would be three, four, five, six pages long and eliminate the tariff schedule, making a real free trade agreement.

These are not free trade agreements the President sends us, nor are they free trade agreements that Presidents in the past sent. They are hundreds and hundreds of pages of protectionism, pages outlining protections for the drug companies, protections for the energy companies, for financial services companies, banks and others, and protections for the pharmaceutical industry. That is what these supposed free trade agreements are.

It is interesting that those of us who oppose these ''free trade agreements'' because they don't protect our communities, frankly, are called ''protectionists.'' If we are going to write these agreements and build in protections for the drug companies, the oil industry, and the other energy companies, the financial services companies, the banks, and the insurance companies, we also should build in protections for our workers in New Jersey and in Ohio, protections for our communities in Lima, and Mansfield, and Tiffin, OH, protections for food safety, and build in protections for consumer product safety.

But that is not what they do. What is most curious about these agreements that the President has sent up—in this case the most recent is Colombia—it reminds me of the old Einstein saying that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and over again and expecting a different outcome.

We have seen, in almost 15-plus years in the House of Representatives, and now in the Senate—and it is roughly the same period of the Presiding Officer—we have seen our trade deficit go from $38 billion in 1992, to in excess of $800 billion last year. It is hard to know exactly what that means. A $38 billion deficit—that means we buy $38 billion more in this country than we sell to other countries. It is $800 billion more that we buy in this country than we sell to other countries. That is a huge amount of dollars, obviously.

That $800 billion—it was boiled down by the first President Bush, who said that a billion dollar trade surplus, or deficit, translated into 13,000 jobs. So if you have a trade surplus—in other words, if you are selling more than you are buying as a nation, a billion dollars, according to President Bush the first, would add up to about 13,000 new jobs—net gain of jobs in your country. But if you have $1 billion deficit, it means it is a 13,000 net job loss in your country. We have not a billion dollar trade deficit but an $800 billion one. Do the math. What does that mean in lost jobs? It means an awful lot of lost manufacturing jobs in my State, from Cleveland, to Dayton, to Lima, to Canton, to Kent, to Ravenna, to all over our State. It means a lot of other lost jobs, not just manufacturing jobs. When American Standard shuts down in Tiffin, and when a company shuts down in Bucyrus, or in Ashland, it means fewer firefighters, fewer schoolteachers, fewer restaurant workers, fewer realtors, and fewer people who serve those jobs—those people who had the manufacturing jobs.

So it is pretty clear that the trade agreements, in addition to other damage they have done, clearly—when you have a trade deficit that goes from $38 billion to $800 billion in a decade and a half, they have done significant damage to our country and, most importantly, to our communities and our families.

I will close on something specifically unique to the Colombia trade agreement. We know that in Colombia they have had a significant number of murders committed against union activists. I heard a Member of the House say today there were more union activists—organizing union leaders—murdered in Colombia than anywhere in the rest of the world combined.

Although President Uribe of Colombia says union violence has come down and his spokespeople in this body say the same, the fact is that union murders, deaths of union activists in the first 3 months of 2008 are almost twice what they were in 2007. Adding insult to injury, we have seen fewer and fewer convictions. Only about 3 percent of these murders have resulted in convictions of the people who have been guilty of the murders. To add even further insult to this whole issue, the American Government, the State Department has said the paramilitary vigilantes who are allied often with the Uribe Government who have killed the union activists are classified by our State Department as terrorists. We, in essence, are supporting the Uribe Government that is allied with paramilitary vigilantes who are called terrorists by our own Government.

I don't quite see why we would want to reward that Government. I want President Uribe to succeed. I think he has done decent works. But I don't think we should reward him with a trade agreement and lose the leverage we have to try to get the activist murder rate down and also so that the people have the opportunity to join unions in Colombia. Fewer than 5 percent of the Colombian workforce is unionized. That is the lowest or second lowest in the Western Hemisphere.

They are not doing what they need to do to bring working families into the middle class, as we have seen in our country. The reason we have a prosperous Zanesville and a prosperous Springfield, OH, in part is because of people's ability to join a union and bargain collectively for better wages, health care, and pensions.

In the country of Colombia, they do not have those opportunities. For us to put the imprimatur of the U.S. on a free-trade agreement for that social structure and government to me makes little sense.

The House of Representatives delayed the bill for several months. If it gets to this body, I am hopeful Members will do the right thing and say to President Bush: It is not time to do a trade agreement. This trade policy in our country has failed. It is not working for our country, it is not working for our national security, it is not working for our communities, it is not working for our families, and it is not working to build the middle class in this society the way we should.

I yield the floor.

TRIBUTE TO CLARENCE W. DUPNIK

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to one of America's finest, Clarence W. Dupnik, Sheriff of Pima County, AZ, who celebrates 50 years of law enforcement service to his community this year.

Clarence Dupnik is known as a man of action, integrity, and innovation. These skills have been invaluable to his 50 years of service to Arizona, and the Nation.

Sheriff Dupnik began his career in law enforcement in 1958 as a patrol officer with the city of Tucson Police Department, TPD. He held various positions within the Tucson Police Department, rising to major in charge of field operations by the time he retired from the TPD in January 1977. From there, he was appointed chief deputy sheriff of Pima County Sheriff's Department, and later appointed Pima County Sheriff in 1980.

Since 1980, Clarence Dupnik has been elected to seven consecutive terms of office as Pima County Sheriff, a position in which he remains today. Clarence Dupnik's many years of service to Pima County represent a remarkable achievement and a great responsibility.

During his tenure as sheriff, the population of Pima County has nearly doubled in size. Today it claims almost 400,000 residents, making it the second-highest populated county in Arizona. In addition, Pima County shares 123 miles of border with the nation of Mexico. These characteristics have brought on special challenges, which Sheriff Dupnik met head on, with an admirable commitment to crime reduction.

Over the last three decades, Sheriff Dupnik has been instrumental to the reduction of the per capita crime rate in Pima County. He has fought criminal enterprises, drug trafficking organizations, and gangs. He also worked with former U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona to improve law enforcement capabilities by integrating special weapons and tactics with emergency medical assistance. Additionally, he had the foresight to deploy 350 new mobile data computers in all Sheriff's patrol vehicles—both patrol and unmarked—before most other departments in Arizona. Sheriff Dupnik also participated in the Joint Terrorism Task Force and served on the Executive Committee of the FBI.

Using his many years of law enforcement experience and leadership skills, Clarence Dupnik has worked hard to improve and give back to his community in any way he can. He introduced Drug Abuse Resistance Education, DARE, and School Resource Officer programs in Pima County schools. In addition, Sheriff Dupnik instituted a countywide community policing program, created the Multi-agency Narcotic Investigations Unit, and established the Command Group of the Arizona Alliance Planning Committee. In addition, he founded and chairs a drug-prevention group called Arizona for a Drug-Free Workplace.

The dedication and service of Clarence Dupnik during his 50-year law enforcement career is truly commendable. I thank Sheriff Dupnik for his many years of service and wish him further success in the years to come. I know that these years of public service have sacrificed time from his family and I would like to take this moment to also thank and acknowledge his wife Susie and their family. With Sheriff Dupnik's great example in mind, I hope that we can all work together to reduce crime in our Nation.

HONORING DR. JAMES HANSEN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Dr. James Hansen upon receiving the Desert Research Institute's Nevada Medal for 2008.

This award, which will be formally presented to Dr. Hansen in Reno tonight and in Las Vegas on April 17, was established 20 years ago by the Desert Research Institute, DRI, to recognize outstanding achievements in science and engineering. DRI is a world leader in the study of environmental sciences, and Dr. Hansen should be proud to receive such an honor.

Dr. Hansen directs the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, and is an adjunct professor of Earth sciences at Columbia University's Earth Institute. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Iowa in 1963, followed by his master's in 1965, and his Ph.D. in 1967. He was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1995, and has received numerous awards throughout his illustrious career.

Dr. Hansen has spent decades researching climate change, and his work has broadened public knowledge about accelerating changes in the climate due to global warming. He has linked human-produced emissions to an overall increase in global temperature and called for international cooperation to address the issue. Dr. Hansen highlights the dangerous path we tread if we fail to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. At the same time, he has outlined the steps that need to be taken in order to reverse the course of global warming and stabilize our climate.

I am proud to honor Dr. James Hansen and his many achievements. The contributions that he has made to the scientific community are truly invaluable. I applaud his efforts and wish him the best in his future endeavors.

TREATING VICTIMS OF STROKE MORE EFFECTIVELY

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, a recent article in the Washington Post highlights the serious additional harm that is being done to victims of stroke each and every day by our failure to get them as quickly as possible to hospitals or other treatment centers qualified to provide the timely, appropriate care that can make all the difference between recovery and permanent disability or death.

Not all hospitals have this capability, and Massachusetts and a handful of other States have begun implementing systems to make better quality care available and to inform the public and emergency medical services of the location of the nearest facility capable of providing such care. What is needed most, however, is national leadership to make prompt and quality care for stroke victims a reality throughout this country.

I believe our colleagues in the Senate and House will be interested in this important article, and I ask unanimous consent to have it printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Washington Post, Apr. 1, 2008]

NEW RULES ON STROKE

CARE CENTER NETWORKS MAY SAVE LIVES

(By Alicia Ault)

In the event of a stroke, time is brain—meaning the more quickly you recognize the problem and get proper medical treatment, the more likely you are to survive and minimize neurological damage. Increasingly, experts are concluding that means getting to the right hospital, and fast.

According to the American Stroke Association and many neurologists, the right facility is one that has been designated by a state agency or the Joint Commission (which accredits hospitals for quality and safety) as having the appropriate medical staff, the ability to quickly administer such diagnostic tests as computed tomography, and a potentially lifesaving drug, tissue plasminogen activator (TPA), which dissolves clots.

In some states, including Maryland, you don't have to worry about which hospital might be best. Ambulance crews who suspect a stroke are required to seek out a designated stroke center, unless the nearest one is an unreasonable distance away.

Now health officials in Virginia and the District say they are considering similar plans.

In March, Virginia Gov. Timothy M. Kaine signed a bill requiring local health officials to rush stroke patients to Joint Commission-certified primary stroke centers. Even though that law has not yet taken effect, emergency medical technicians typically route patients to stroke centers, said Paul Sharpe, trauma and critical care coordinator for Virginia's Office of Emergency Medical Services.

In Washington, Michael Williams, medical director of Fire and Emergency Medical Services, said he soon will issue a protocol requiring transport of suspected stroke patients to Joint Commission-certified stroke centers. That rule should take effect within a month or so.

Until those changes take place, Virginia and District residents might be wise to know the signs of stroke. If they suspect they're having a stroke, they then, directly or through a family member acting on their behalf, might ask to be taken to a specialized stroke center.

About 780,000 Americans have a stroke each year. The vast majority of strokes, 87 percent, are ischemic, caused by a clot that cuts off blood supply to the brain, according to the American Heart Association.

TPA, when given within three hours of the onset of a stroke, can increase the chances of a full neurologic recovery by at least 25 percent, said Robert Bass, executive director of the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems, or MIEMSS. But the drug's associated risks, which include major bleeding in the brain, make it even more crucial to get care at the right facility, Bass said.

Finding a hospital that specializes in stroke care is even more important at a time when most are having trouble finding specialists to ''take call''—that is, to see patients at the hospital.

There are no hard numbers on the shortage, but the American College of Emergency Physicians reported in 2006 that three-quarters of emergency departments nationwide had problems finding specialists such as neurosurgeons to take call. The shortage was especially acute in orthopedics, plastic surgery and neurosurgery.

Being seen by a neurology specialist doesn't guarantee a good stroke outcome. But it is crucial to have a physician trained in stroke care, said Lee Schwamm, vice chairman of the neurology department and director of acute stroke services at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

''Many people assume that stroke can be and is treated by anyone,'' he said, which simply isn't true.

Massachusetts was the first state to create a stroke care system, in 2004, partly because of the problem of getting on-call specialists. Under the plan, designated hospitals agree to have the appropriate diagnostics and staff (including neurologists on duty or available through telemedicine) and the ability to give TPA within three hours. They also agree to report on the quality of care.

In mid-2005, the state began requiring ambulances to take patients to stroke centers. Within a year, the number of stroke patients receiving TPA increased by 20 percent, Schwamm said. Now the goal is to increase the number of patients who get to the hospital in time, he added. Sixty-eight of the state's 72 hospitals have been designated as stroke centers by the Massachusetts health department.

Several states have followed Massachusetts's lead, including Maryland (in 2007), New York, New Jersey and Florida.

Maryland hospitals that apply for the stroke center designation are evaluated by a state inspection team. Hospitals can also be certified by the Joint Commission.

The nonprofit commission began certifying stroke centers in 2003. So far, 455 hospitals nationwide have received that designation.

Twenty-eight hospitals have received Maryland's five-year stroke center certification. These hospitals can evaluate stroke patients, give the initial treatment and, in most cases, admit patients directly to a special stroke unit in the hospital, Bass said. Since the program's establishment, the number of patients receiving clot-busting therapy has increased 20-fold, said John Young, stroke system coordinator for MIEMSS.

Like the District, Virginia does not have its own stroke center certification process.

Certification isn't a guarantee of superior care, said Ralph Sacco, chairman of the American Stroke Association's Stroke Advisory Committee and chairman of neurology at the Miller School of Medicine at the University of Miami. But it's an indicator that the hospital has the infrastructure in place—and the commitment—to deliver high-quality treatment, he and Schwamm agreed.

What should you do if you think you or a loved one are having a stroke?

The keys to a good outcome, Schwamm said, are knowing the warning signs, calling 911 immediately and getting to a primary stroke center.

He and others say they hope that every state adopts a system to require transport to those centers. It could be a lifesaving trip.

FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE VIRGINIA TECH TRAGEDY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, tomorrow, April 16, 2008, marks the first anniversary of the horrific incident at Virginia Tech that resulted in the tragic deaths of 32 students and faculty members and serious injuries to many other innocent victims. Our hearts go out to the victims' families as they mourn their loved ones who tragically lost their lives before their time. Our sympathies also go out to the survivors of this terrible incident, as well as the entire Virginia Tech community, whose resilient spirit and courage in the face of tragedy over the past year have been truly remarkable.

We cannot reverse the senseless violence of one year ago, nor can we repair all of the damage that the heinous acts of one very disturbed young man caused for an entire community. But one thing we can do to honor the victims and their families is ensure that our schools, colleges, and universities have the support and resources they need to protect our children.

Regrettably, 1 year after the tragic events at Virginia Tech, little has been done at the national level to address the dangers our students continue to face. Over the past 12 months, we have continued to see threatening conduct and, too often, deadly acts of violence involving students of all ages. Only yesterday we learned that several colleges were shut down as officials assessed graffiti messages threatening violence on campus. School lockdowns are becoming all too common in our communities.

A string of tragedies in just 1 week's time this past February reminded us once again that our students face more than merely threatening violent conduct. Between February 8 and February 14, at least four incidents at schools and colleges resulted in death or serious injury to students of all ages.

On February 8, a female student killed two other students, and then herself, inside a classroom on the campus of Louisiana Technical College in Baton Rouge. Three days later, a student at Mitchell High School in Memphis, TN, was left in critical condition after a violent incident in the school's cafeteria. A day later, a 15-year-old boy at E.O. Green Junior High in Oxnard, CA, was critically wounded by a classmate. He was later declared brain dead.

Then, on February 14, tragedy struck at Northern Illinois University. A former student opened fire in a geology class, killing 5 students and wounding 16, before killing himself. As hundreds of mourners remembered one of the Northern Illinois University victims at a funeral service, more than 1,000 Virginia Tech students—many of the same students who will grieve tomorrow for their lost friends, classmates, and professors—gathered in solidarity for a candlelight vigil in Blacksburg, VA.

Eight months ago, the Senate Judiciary Committee took a step to make our schools and college campuses safer when it reported the School Safety and Law Enforcement Improvement Act of 2007, S. 2084. Regrettably, the Senate has failed to take up and pass that bill to improve school safety. The 1-year anniversary of the Virginia Tech incident reminds us why this comprehensive legislation should be considered and passed without further delay.

In originating the bill more than 8 months ago, the Judiciary Committee showed deference to Gov. Tim Kaine and the task forces at work in Virginia and sought to complement their work and recommendations. Working with several Senators, including Senators BOXER, REED, SPECTER, FEINGOLD, SCHUMER, and DURBIN, the committee originated this bill and reported it at the start of the 2007 academic year in the hope that Congress would adopt these critical school safety improvements last fall. We worked hard to get it done.

The incidents at E.O. Green Junior High, Mitchell High School, Louisiana Technical College, and Northern Illinois University are just a few of the tragic events that have claimed lives or resulted in serious injuries to students since the Virginia Tech tragedy. In the time since this bill was reported out of the Judiciary Committee, we have seen tragic deaths at Delaware State University and the University of Memphis and grievous injuries sustained by students and teachers at SuccessTech Academy in Cleveland, OH. And there have been numerous lockdowns nationwide as a result of threatening conduct in our schools, including recent lockdowns at Fern Creek High School in Louisville, KY, and St. Peter's College in Jersey City, NY.

The School Safety and Law Enforcement Improvement Act would address the problem of violence in our schools in several ways. The bill authorizes Federal assistance for programs to improve the safety and security of our schools and institutions of higher education, provides equitable benefits to law enforcement serving those institutions, including bulletproof vests, and funds pilot programs to develop cutting-edge prevention and intervention programs for our schools. The bill also clarifies and strengthens two existing statutes—the Terrorist Hoax Improvements Act and the Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act—which are designed to improve public safety.

Specifically, the bill would improve the safety and security of students both at the elementary and secondary school level and on college and university campuses. The K–12 improvements are drawn from a bill that Senator BOXER introduced right after the Virginia Tech tragedy, and I want to thank Senator BOXER for her hard work on this issue. The improvements include increased funding for much needed infrastructure changes to improve security as well as the establishment of hotlines and tip-lines, which will enable students to report potentially dangerous situations to school administrators before they occur.

To address the new realities of campus safety in the wake of Virginia Tech and more recent college incidents, the bill also creates a matching grant program for campus safety and security to be administered out of the COPS Office of the Department of Justice.

The grant program would allow institutions of higher education to apply, for the first time, directly for Federal funds to make school safety and security improvements. The program is authorized to be appropriated at $50 million for the next 2 fiscal years. While this amounts to just $3 per student each year, it will enable schools to more effectively respond to dangerous situations on campus.

The bill would also make sworn law enforcement officers who work for private institutions of higher education and rail carriers eligible for death and disability benefits and for funds administered under the Byrne Grant Program and the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program. Providing this equitable treatment is in the best interest of our Nation's educators and students and will serve to place the support of the Federal Government behind the dedicated law enforcement officers who serve and protect private colleges and universities nationwide. The leadership of Senator JACK REED has been vital in this area.

The bill also helps law enforcement by making improvements to the Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act of 2003, LEOSA. These amendments to existing law will streamline the system by which qualified retired and active officers can be certified under LEOSA. It serves us all when we permit qualified officers, with a demonstrated commitment to law enforcement and no adverse employment history, to protect themselves, their families, and their fellow citizens wherever those officers may be.

The bill focuses on prevention as well, by incorporating the PRECAUTION Act at the request of Senators FEINGOLD and SPECTER. This provision authorizes grants to develop prevention and intervention programs for our schools.

Finally, the bill incorporates the Terrorist Hoax Improvements Act of

2007, at the request of Senator KENNEDY.

The Virginia Tech Review Panel—a body commissioned by Governor Kaine to study the Virginia Tech tragedy—has issued its findings based on a 4-month investigation of the incident and its aftermath. This bill would adopt a number of recommendations from the Review Panel aimed at improving school safety.

We must not miss this opportunity to implement these initiatives nationwide and to take concrete steps to ensure the safety of our kids. The Senate should move forward and act. I hope those who are holding up this legislation will reconsider their position today as we prepare to remember and to honor those who so tragically lost their lives, and those who had their lives changed forever, in the most deadly incident on a college campus in our Nation's history.

The Senate should move forward to invest in the safety of our students and to better support law enforcement officers across the country by considering and passing the School Safety and Law Enforcement Improvement Act of 2007.

CAPITAL AREA DISTRICT LIBRARY 10TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, since the first library society was formed in Detroit in 1817, libraries have played a central role in the cultural and economic development of the people of Michigan. Nearly 200 years after that first foray into book-sharing, libraries have spread across our State. Today I would like to take a moment to recognize the Capital Area District Library in Ingham County, which is celebrating a decade of enriching the Lansing area, and in doing so has continued the long history of libraries making important contributions to our State.

The Capital Area District Library system plays a significant role in the early stages of learning for children in Lansing, and provides important resources for continuing education for adults. The 13 libraries and the book mobile are places where all are welcome to access and pursue a wealth of information. Patrons can work on their own, in organized programs, or with the assistance of the highly effective library staff, who are focused on promoting learning and enjoyment.

The resources available through the Capital Area District Library also play a critical role in economic development. Considering that more than half of all American households do not have computers or Internet access, the Capital Area District Library resources are more important than ever to connect our citizens to technology and information in this rapidly changing world.

Thomas Jefferson once wrote to John Adams, ''I cannot live without books.'' Books and education were a bedrock of life for our Nation's Founding Fathers and of our democracy; books and education and new learning resources that the Founding Fathers could not have imagined must be readily available to citizens across the country. The Capital Area District Library continues to fulfill this need in Lansing and Ingham County, and has done so for 10 years with remarkable effectiveness. I congratulate all who have worked so hard on this venture, and extend my deepest appreciation for their service to the citizens of our State.

IRS PRIVATE DEBT COLLECTION ACTIVITIES

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today is April 15, the day when millions of Americans are hurrying to file their income tax forms to meet the midnight deadline. Many of my colleagues have spoken today about the need to make more effective and responsible use of Federal tax dollars, and I agree that we must do so. One place to start is with the IRS's own private debt collection program.

Today, the Washington Post reported that the Internal Revenue Service's use of private debt collection agencies is expected to cost taxpayers more than $37 million this year. Throughout our Nation's history, the Federal Government had always assumed responsibility for tax collection. But in 2004, through legislation that I opposed, Congress gave the IRS authority to use private debt collection companies to collect undisputed tax debts of less than $25,000. The companies also would receive a 25-percent commission on all receipts. Although the stated goal was to improve the efficiency of tax collections, it is clear that this plan is not working.

In fact, even before Congress adopted this approach, former IRS Commissioner Charles Rossotti estimated, in a 2002 report to the IRS Oversight Board, that if Congress were to appropriate an additional $296 million to hire more compliance employees, the agency could collect an additional $9.47 billion. In other words, every dollar spent on collection would net $31. But rather than increase the number of IRS employees, Congress ignored Commissioner Rossotti's advice and instead spent scarce taxpayer funds to privatize IRS functions, with dismal results.

In March 2008, Nina Olson, the National Taxpayer Advocate, reported to Congress that the program actually is losing money. Testifying before the House Ways and Means Committee, Ms. Olson said that the IRS is losing at least $81 million a year by using private debt collection companies. The IRS spent $71 million to start the program and it spends $7.65 million annually to operate it, plus on average $4.6 million in commissions that are paid to the private collectors. Despite using aggressive tactics, the companies have collected only $49 million, little more than half of what it has cost the IRS to implement the program. By contrast, Ms. Olson testified, and I quote, ''if the program did not exist and the IRS instead allocated $7.65 million in appropriated funds to its automated collection system, ACS, function, the return on investment would be vastly greater. IRS data shows that the average return on investment for the ACS program is about 20:1, which would mean that an expenditure of $7.65 million would generate annual revenue of $153 million.'' Ms. Olson then recommended that the private debt collection initiative be terminated. I concur.

The privatization initiative is also putting millions of Americans' personal information at risk. I do not believe that Americans want private collection agencies tio have access to their sensitive, personal information that should only be reserved for the Federal Government and the qualified, trained, accountable personnel who work at the IRS.

The Ways and Means Committee recently considered legislation that would repeal the IRS's authority to use private debt collection agencies. The Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act was reported out of committee in a bipartisan vote. My distinguished colleague from North Dakota has introduced similar legislation that would prohibit the IRS from using private debt collection companies, and I am pleased to be an original cosponsor of that bill.

The private debt collection program also has generated considerable confusion among taxpayers. Under the rules of the program, collectors cannot say they are working for the IRS or that they are calling about a tax matter without first receiving proof of a taxpayer's identity. This has led to numerous complaints from consumers who have received calls from collectors, pressing them to provide Social Security numbers and other personal information without first identifying the purpose of the call. Citizens are justifiably fearful of being scammed, and so they refuse to provide the companies with any information. By any measure, this program is not working.

Mr. President, the private debt collection experiment has failed. Tax collection is a fundamental responsibility of Government, and Congress should provide the IRS with the staff and other resources needed to fulfill this responsibility, not enrich private companies at the expense of American taxpayers. Today on April 15—Tax Day—millions of Americans are rushing to file their taxes before the midnight deadline. Many are writing checks to the IRS, and so it is an appropriate time to reconsider the millions of dollars they are spending on the private debt collection program. It is time for this body to pass Senator DORGAN's bill and end this inefficient use of taxpayer dollars.

HONORING OUR MILITARY

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the courage

and selflessness of the men and women serving so bravely in America's military and, in particular, to acknowledge those from my home State of Nebraska. Last week, the testimony of GEN David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker before the Senate on the situation in Iraq reminded everyone of the personal sacrifices of the men and women and their families who are serving their country in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

The United States is engaged in a protracted war for the first time since the end of the military draft 35 years ago. The strains of this prolonged engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan are underscored by the burdens placed on our service members and their families. The voluntary nature of our military accentuates these burdens, being borne by a relative few. This present situation is unique compared to America's past military engagements. World Wars I and II and the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam relied on conscription; consequently, the effects of these wars were felt by a broad number of ordinary Americans. Today, the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have placed our soldiers and military families in an extraordinary situation.

I have visited Iraq four times and Afghanistan twice since the commencement of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom and have met with countless soldiers and their families. Each of these visits and meetings has further elevated my personal gratitude and appreciation of these men and women, and consequently, these soldiers and their families are constantly at the forefront of my thoughts. Last week, a news story described the battle of Sadr City, a district in Baghdad, Iraq, and featured a young man whom I had watched grow up in Nebraska. This news story evoked those same feelings of deep gratitude and immense pride.

The soldier featured in the story was Army CPT Logan Veath, of Chadron, NE. I had last seen Captain Veath 5 months ago at a reunion of the Big Red Battalion, the University of Nebraska's Reserve Officers' Training Corps, ROTC, unit, of which he was a member while attending our shared alma mater. I had first met Captain Veath when he was 16 years old, and we reminisced at that reunion of our past experiences together. Captain Veath was dressed in cowboy attire—because that is exactly what he is in Nebraska. In fact, I almost didn't recognize him in the news story from Iraq, as he had a Kevlar helmet on his head instead of his usual cowboy hat.

Captain Veath's entire family was also at the reunion, and they provided a brief glimpse into how a family copes with a loved one who is called upon to serve tours of duty lasting from 12 to 15 months. Captain Veath is unique in that this is his sixth tour of duty serving in Iraq or Afghanistan. Less than 1 percent of Army service members have been deployed six times; this speaks to Captain Veath's remarkable dedication and selflessness.

That day was a vivid reminder of our American soldiers, who must leave their loved ones in order to serve in battles nearly 7,000 miles away from their homes. Today, I offer my most sincere appreciation and gratitude to soldiers such as Army CPT Logan Veath. We must never forget these brave men and women, who have valiantly and selflessly served their country, together with their families, who provide them with immeasurable support. Their honor in service must remain a source of inspiration for us all.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORING JENNIFER JOY WILSON

• Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, today I wish to honor Jennifer Joy Wilson. For the past decade, Ms. Wilson has served first as the head of the National Stone Association, and then after the merger of two similar groups, as the president and CEO of the National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association, NSSGA. Based in Alexandria, VA, NSSGA is the world's largest mining association by product volume. Its member companies represent more than 90 percent of the crushed stone and 70 percent of the sand and gravel produced annually in the United States and approximately 118,000 working men and women in the aggregates industry. During 2006, a total of about 2.95 billion metric tons of crushed stone, sand and gravel, valued at $21 billion, were produced and sold in the United States.

This year Ms. Wilson has been given the distinguished honor of being selected as AggMan of the Year by Aggregates Manager magazine, one of the construction aggregates industry's leading trade publications.

During her tenure, the NSSGA led an effort to improve employee safety in the aggregate industry by developing new safety procedures, called Part 46, for the U.S. Mine Safety & Health Administration, MSHA. The joint industry-labor effort produced a proposal ''that would apply better to our industry and provide managers and workers with effective means to prevent accidents and fatalities.'' By all accounts, Part 46 has shown remarkable success in reducing employee injuries.

On February 11, 2003, an alliance between NSSGA and MSHA was announced. Signed at the NSSGA's Centennial Convention in Orlando, FL, the agreement calls for the two bodies to work closely together on the promotion of safe working conditions, the development of effective miner training programs, and the expansion of the mine safety and health outreach and communication. ''For the first time ever, MSHA and an industry association have jointly agreed to adopt safety and health performance goals with objective measures,'' then MSHA Administrator Dave Lauriski said during that meeting. ''This alone is unprecedented . . . NSSGA is again showing its leadership.''

On the environmental front, Ms. Wilson led the industry in investing in a study ''righting an assumption we just didn't believe was right.'' Through the efforts of the association and its members, it was determined that the aggregates industry is not a major emitter of PM–10—a particular type of air pollutant. The final regulations reflected the investment by the industry in recognizing that aggregate operations are not a major source of coarse particulate matter.

Considering almost half of all crushed stone, sand and gravel produced in the United States is used for building the Nation's transportation infrastructure, Ms. Wilson has led her members in establishing a strong grassroots presence connecting the industry's workforce with their elected officials while increasing their activity on Capitol Hill. Leveraging the association's resources, Ms. Wilson has also worked closely with industry coalitions to advocate for sound and sensible transportation policies.

Ms. Wilson has also worked to raise awareness of the public, legislators, and of regulators at all levels to the immeasurably important role aggregates play in maintaining America's high quality of life. She calls this effort ''romancing the stone'' which includes her leadership in establishing The Rocks gallery at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History and creating a permanent endowment to support the gallery, all totaling more than $3.1 million.

Many people have been able to take credit for industry accomplishments, but selection as AggMan of the Year denotes something not everyone can lay claim to—respect of one's peers. For this reason I stand here today to take a moment and congratulate a woman who has done so much for America and the good people in the aggregates industry all the while earning their respect.•

RECOGNIZING NORTH SEATTLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

• Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I wish today to recognize the North Seattle Community College, in my home State of Washington, as a local leader in sustainability practices. The work of North Seattle Community College, and especially of the North Seattle Community College Sustainability Committee, has made significant contributions to raising awareness of sustainability issues in everyday life on the campus.

Created in 2005, the North Seattle Community College Sustainability Committee holds regular meetings to coordinate sustainability practices with faculty, staff, administrators, students, and interested local residents.

This committee has helped to create and implement an impressive list of community-wide activities including: sustainability curriculum, courses, and service learning opportunities; a Web site with useful resources; and an annual Earth Day celebration.

The North Seattle Community College Sustainability Committee also helped incorporate new resource management practices into campus operations and expanded the campus trail system. By providing these services, the North Seattle Community College Sustainability Committee has done a wonderful job of engaging students, teachers, and local citizens.

I believe that in order to truly embrace the opportunities and challenges of tomorrow, the youth of our Nation must have access to programs that foster stewardship and long-term commitment to community awareness. Washington State is fortunate to have schools like North Seattle Community College, which is a natural arena for the kind of innovation our Nation needs in order to embrace new environmentally friendly practices. Green programs and activities are critical to the development of environmentally aware citizens. I was proud to introduce the Higher Education Sustainability Act to help provide resources for college and universities to implement sustainability programs, and my hope is that schools like North Seattle Community College will continue to serve as great role models for other colleges around the Nation as they work on sustainability issues.

It is inspiring to see that the issue of sustainability is bringing people together, and I am proud North Seattle Community College is empowering the entire campus to work on positive solutions. I am sure North Seattle Community College will continue to be successful in inspiring change and providing continued leadership on this important issue.●

● Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, with Earth Day just a week away, I wish to recognize the steps colleges and universities in my State are taking to increase public awareness about the effect our daily actions have on the environment. Specifically, I would like to applaud the commitment North Seattle Community College has made to incorporate sustainable practices into everyday life at the college and local level.

Sustainability, the simple idea that we can meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs is a concept that is relevant to our lives now more than ever. Today, our reliance on fossil fuels is not only exacerbating economic woes, it is driving too many of our foreign policy decisions and fueling the detrimental forces of climate change. It is time we shift our focus to sustainable practices that encourage a cleaner environment, healthier communities, a stronger economy, and most importantly, national security.

My home State of Washington has always been a leader when it comes to environmental sustainability. For 75 years we have been on the cutting edge of utilizing natural resources to create sustainable, clean emissions power. I think that Washingtonians, living next door to some of the most pristine river valleys and snowcapped peaks in the world, realize how unfair it would be if our great-grandchildren couldn't do the same.

Furthering our State's environmentally conscious tradition, in the spring of 2005, North Seattle Community College president Dr. Ron LaFayette put NSCC on track to be a leader in the sustainability movement by creating a standing advisory Sustainable Committee to address issues of sustainability at the school.

The committee, made up of faculty, staff, administrators, students, and interested citizenry, began meeting regularly in 2006. Since then, it has spearheaded NSCC's efforts to become a local and national model for sustainability practices.

The Sustainability Committee created and has begun to implement goals that include creating and developing a fact sheet, Web site, and other information-sharing methodology; creating and coordinating curriculum around sustainability issues. This includes developing new stand-alone courses, integrated studies programs, service learning and distance learning opportunities; furthering the development of a campus trail system, including a walking trail and an interpretive nature trail; incorporating sustainable practices into campus operations—including food service, waste management, and resource usage; and sponsoring the annual Earth Week celebration. In 2007, this festival included guest speakers and over 35 vendors including educational institutions, environmental nonprofits, and neighborhood businesses.

I am personally encouraged by the attention North Seattle Community College and other Washington State schools have given to advancing sustainable practices in our schools and communities. I hope more institutions of higher education will follow suit in years to come.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations and a withdrawal which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 4:53 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Niland, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 3548. An act to enhance citizen access to Government information and services by establishing plain language as the standard style for Government documents issued to the public, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4881. An act to prohibit the awarding of a contract or grant in excess of the simplified acquisition threshold unless the prospective contractor or grantee certifies in writing to the agency awarding the contract or grant that the contractor or grantee has no seriously delinquent tax debts, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 4881. An act to prohibit the awarding of a contract or grant in excess of the simplified acquisition threshold unless the prospective contractor or grantee certifies in writing to the agency awarding the contractor grant that the contractor or grantee has no seriously delinquent tax debts, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. BIDEN, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 2731. A bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal years 2009 through 2013 to provide assistance to foreign countries to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 110-325).

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. BINGAMAN (for himself and Mr. SMITH):

S. 2855. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to adjust the dollar amounts used to calculate the credit for the elderly and the permanently disabled for inflation since 1985; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. ALEXANDER:

S. 2856. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide taxpayers a flat tax alternative to the current income tax system; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. SALAZAR (for himself and Mr. ALLARD):

S. 2857. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for the distribution of a share of certain mineral revenues, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Ms. MIKULSKI (for herself, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. SMITH, and Mr. INOUYE):

S. 2858. A bill to establish the Social Work Reinvestment Commission to provide independent counsel to Congress and the Secretary of Health and Human Services on policy issues associated with recruitment, retention, research, and reinvestment in the profession of social work, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. WEBB (for himself and Mr. WARNER):

S. 2859. A bill to amend the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 to clarify limits on disclosure of student health records, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. CASEY (for himself and Mr. MARTINEZ):

S. 2860. A bill to diminish predatory lending by enhancing appraisal quality and standards, to improve appraisal oversight, to ensure mortgage appraiser independence, to provide for enhanced remedies and enforcement, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. SCHUMER (for himself and Mr. AKAKA):

S. 2861. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to prohibit the imposition of a separate fee for electronic filing of returns and statements for individuals, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. REID (for Mrs. CLINTON):

S. 2862. A bill to provide for National Science Foundation and National Aeronautics and Space Administration utilization of the Arecibo Observatory; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. VITTER:

S. 2863. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide a Federal income tax credit for certain stem cell research expenditures; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. AKAKA:

S. 2864. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to include improvement in quality of life in the objectives of training and rehabilitation for veterans with service-connected disabilities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Ms. SNOWE (for herself, Mr. REED, Mr. KERRY, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. KENNEDY):

S. 2865. A bill to permit qualified withdrawals from a capital construction fund account under chapter 535 of title 46, United States Code, for gear or equipment required for fishery conservation or safety of life at sea without regard to the minimum cost requirement established by regulation; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. REID (for Mrs. CLINTON):

S. 2866. A bill to require greater disclosure of senior corporate officer compensation, to empower shareholders and investors to protect themselves from fraud, to limit conflicts of interest in determining senior corporate officer compensation, to ensure integrity in Federal contracting, to close corporate tax loopholes utilized to subsidize senior corporate officer compensation, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. BINGAMAN (for himself and Mrs. HUTCHISON):

S. 2867. A bill to authorize additional resources to identify and eliminate illicit sources of firearms smuggled into Mexico for use by violent drug trafficking organizations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. KENNEDY (for himself and Mr. KERRY):

S. Res. 514. A resolution congratulating the Boston College men's ice hockey team on winning the 2008 National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I National Ice Hockey Championship; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself, Mr. REED, Mr. BIDEN, and Mr. CORNYN):

S. Res. 515. A resolution commemorating the life and work of Dith Pran; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. LUGAR (for himself, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. KERRY, Mr. FEINGOLD, and Mr. CASEY):

S. Res. 516. A resolution solemnly commemorating the 25th anniversary of the tragic April 1983 bombing of the United States Embassy in Beirut and remembering those who lost their lives and those who where injured; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 186

At the request of Mr. SPECTER, the name of the Senator from North Carolina (Mrs. DOLE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 186, a bill to provide appropriate protection to attorney-client privileged communications and attorney work product.

S. 267

At the request of Mr. BINGAMAN, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 267, a bill to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to clarify that territories and Indian tribes are eligible to receive grants for confronting the use of methamphetamine.

S. 268

At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 268, a bill to designate the Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail, and for other purposes.

S. 358

At the request of Ms. SNOWE, the names of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) and the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) were added as cosponsors of S. 358, a bill to prohibit discrimination on the basis of genetic information with respect to health insurance and employment.

S. 582

At the request of Mr. SMITH, the name of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 582, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to classify automatic fire sprinkler systems as 5-year property for purposes of depreciation.

S. 638

At the request of Mr. ROBERTS, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 638, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for collegiate housing and infrastructure grants.

S. 678

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 678, a bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to ensure air passengers have access to necessary services while on a grounded air carrier and are not unnecessarily held on a grounded air carrier before or after a flight, and for other purposes.

S. 777

At the request of Mr. CRAIG, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 777, a bill to repeal the imposition of withholding on certain payments made to vendors by government entities.

S. 970

At the request of Mr. SMITH, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 970, a bill to impose sanctions on Iran and on other countries for assisting Iran in developing a nuclear program, and for other purposes.

S. 1010

At the request of Mr. SMITH, the name of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1010, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to encourage guaranteed lifetime income payments from annuities and similar payments of life insurance proceeds at dates later than death by excluding from income a portion of such payments.

S. 1120

At the request of Mr. HARKIN, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1120, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide grants for the training of graduate medical residents in preventive medicine and public health.

S. 1390

At the request of Mr. THUNE, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 1390, a bill to provide for the issuance of a ''forever stamp'' to honor the sacrifices of the brave men and women of the armed forces who have been awarded the Purple Heart.

S. 1483

At the request of Mr. ROCKEFELLER, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1483, a bill to create a new incentive fund that will encourage States to adopt the 21st Century Skills Framework.

S. 1512

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1512, a bill to amend part E of title IV of the Social Security Act to expand Federal eligibility for children in foster care who have attained age 18.

S. 1638

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr.

ISAKSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1638, a bill to adjust the salaries of Federal justices and judges, and for other purposes.

S. 1711

At the request of Mr. BIDEN, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1711, a bill to target cocaine kingpins and address sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine.

S. 1926

At the request of Mr. DODD, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. SNOWE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1926, a bill to establish the National Infrastructure Bank to provide funding for qualified infrastructure projects, and for other purposes.

S. 2021

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2021, a bill to provide $50,000,000,000 in new transportation infrastructure funding through bonding to empower States and local governments to complete significant infrastructure projects across all modes of transportation, including roads, bridges, rail and transit systems, ports, and inland waterways, and for other purposes.

S. 2035

At the request of Mr. SPECTER, the name of the Senator from North Carolina (Mrs. DOLE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2035, a bill to maintain the free flow of information to the public by providing conditions for the federally compelled disclosure of information by certain persons connected with the news media.

S. 2310

At the request of Mr. MARTINEZ, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 2310, a bill to establish a National Catastrophic Risks Consortium and a National Homeowners' Insurance Stabilization Program, and for other purposes.

S. 2368

At the request of Mr. PRYOR, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2368, a bill to provide immigration reform by securing America's borders, clarifying and enforcing existing laws, and enabling a practical employer verification program.

S. 2399

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the names of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) and the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON) were added as cosponsors of S. 2399, a bill to expand and improve housing counseling services by increasing financial education and counseling services available to homeowners and prospective homebuyers in financial turmoil or who seek credit or other personal financial assistance, and for other purposes.

S. 2485

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2485, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for the participation of physical therapists in the National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program, and for other purposes.

S. 2498

At the request of Mr. BINGAMAN, the names of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CONRAD), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. REID), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. NELSON), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI), the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY), the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW), the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. PRYOR), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. KOHL), the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. AKAKA), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG), the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUYE), the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. DORGAN), the Senator from Arkansas (Mrs. LINCOLN), the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED), the Senator from Iowa (Mr. HARKIN), the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN), the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER), the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BAYH), the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) and the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. FEINGOLD) were added as cosponsors of S. 2498, a bill to authorize the minting of a coin to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the founding of Santa Fe, New Mexico, to occur in 2010.

S. 2505

At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the names of the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mr. GREGG) were added as cosponsors of S. 2505, a bill to allow employees of a commercial passenger airline carrier who receive payments in a bankruptcy proceeding to roll over such payments into an individual retirement plan, and for other purposes.

S. 2510

At the request of Ms. LANDRIEU, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2510, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide revised standards for quality assurance in screening and evaluation of gynecologic cytology preparations, and for other purposes.

S. 2598

At the request of Mr. DORGAN, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. SALAZAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2598, a bill to increase the supply and lower the cost of petroleum by temporarily suspending the acquisition of petroleum for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

S. 2631

At the request of Mr. MCCONNELL, the name of the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2631, a bill to award a congressional gold medal to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in recognition of her courageous and unwavering commitment to peace, nonviolence, human rights, and democracy in Burma.

S. 2668

At the request of Mr. KERRY, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mr. SUNUNU) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2668, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to remove cell phones from listed property under section 280F.

S. 2674

At the request of Mr. BURR, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. DOMENICI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2674, a bill to amend titles 10 and 38, United States Code, to improve and enhance procedures for the retirement of members of the Armed Forces for disability and to improve and enhance authorities for the rating and compensation of service-connected disabilities in veterans, and for other purposes.

S. 2681

At the request of Mr. INHOFE, the names of the Senator from Utah (Mr. BENNETT), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. FEINGOLD), the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN) and the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. BUNNING) were added as cosponsors of S. 2681, a bill to require the issuance of medals to recognize the dedication and valor of Native American code talkers.

S. 2747

At the request of Mr. JOHNSON, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2747, a bill to grant a Federal charter to the National American Indian Veterans, Incorporated.

S. 2756

At the request of Mr. BIDEN, the names of the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) were added as cosponsors of S. 2756, a bill to amend the National Child Protection Act of 1993 to establish a permanent background check system.

S. 2758

At the request of Ms. MURKOWSKI, the names of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUYE), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAIG) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) were added as cosponsors of S. 2758, a bill to authorize the exploration, leasing, development, production, and economically feasible and prudent transportation of oil and gas in and from the Coastal Plain in Alaska.

S. 2760

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2760, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to enhance the national defense through empowerment of the National Guard, enhancement of the functions of the National Guard Bureau, and improvement of Federal-State military coordination in domestic emergency response, and for other purposes.

S. 2771

At the request of Ms. LANDRIEU, the names of the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON) and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) were added as cosponsors of S. 2771, a bill to require the president to call a White House Conference on Children and Youth in 2010.

S. 2775

At the request of Mr. KERRY, the names of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) were added as cosponsors of S. 2775, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and the Social Security Act to treat certain domestically controlled foreign persons performing services under contract with the United States Government as American employers for purposes of certain employment taxes and benefits.

S. 2785

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the names of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) were added as cosponsors of S. 2785, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Security Act to preserve access to physicians' services under the Medicare program.

S. 2819

At the request of Mr. ROCKEFELLER, the names of the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI) and the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) were added as cosponsors of S. 2819, a bill to preserve access to Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program during an economic downturn, and for other purposes.

S. 2839

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the names of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mr. SUNUNU) were added as cosponsors of S. 2839, a bill to provide emergency relief for United States businesses and industries currently employing temporary foreign workers and for other purposes.

S. 2840

At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2840, a bill to establish a liaison with the Federal Bureau of Investigation in United States Citizenship and Immigration Services to expedite naturalization applications filed by members of the Armed Forces and to establish a deadline for processing such applications.

S. 2844

At the request of Mr. LAUTENBERG, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2844, a bill to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to modify provisions relating to beach monitoring, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 500

At the request of Mr. KENNEDY, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 500, a resolution honoring military children during ''National Month of the Military Child''.

S. RES. 506

At the request of Mr. NELSON of Nebraska, the names of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) and the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. COLEMAN) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 506, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that funding provided by the United States to the Government of Iraq in the future for reconstruction and training for security forces be provided as a loan to the Government of Iraq.

S. RES. 513

At the request of Mrs. DOLE, her name was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 513, a resolution congratulating the Army Reserve on its centennial, which will be formally celebrated on April 23, 2008, and commemorating the historic contributions of its veterans and continuing contributions of its soldiers to the vital national security interests and homeland defense missions of the United States.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Ms. MIKULSKI (for herself, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. SMITH, and Mr. INOUYE):

S. 2858. A bill to establish the Social Work Reinvestment Commission to provide independent counsel to Congress and the Secretary of Health and Human Services on policy issues associated with recruitment, retention, research, and reinvestment in the profession of social work, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, in honor of World Social Work Day, I rise today to introduce the Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act. I am proud to sponsor this legislation that will improve the shortage of social workers as we move into an era of unprecedented healthcare and social service needs. Social workers play a critical role combating the social problems facing our Nation. We must have the workforce in place to make sure that our returning soldiers have access to mental health services, our elderly maintain their independence in the communities they live in, and abused children are placed in safe homes. This bill reinvests in social workers by providing grants to social workers, reviewing the current social workforce challenges, and determining how this shortage will affect the communities social workers serve. I am honored to introduce this bill named after two social visionaries, Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young. Dorothy Height, a pioneer of the civil rights movement, like me began her career as a case worker and continued to fight for social justice. Whitney Young, another trailblazer of the civil rights movement, also began his career transforming our social landscape as a social worker. He helped create President Johnson's War on Poverty and has served as President of the National Association of Social Workers. Congressman TOWNS introduced the companion bill in the House of Representatives last month.

As a social worker, I understand the critical role social workers place in the overall care of our populations. Social workers can be found in every facet of community life—in hospitals, mental health clinics, senior centers, and private agencies that serve individuals and families in need. Social workers are there to help struggling students, returning soldiers, and chronically ill. Oftentimes, social workers are the only available option for mental health care in rural and underserved urban areas. The number of adults over the age of 65 will double by the year 2030 and social workers will be at the forefront of providing compassionate care to this burgeoning community. Yet there will not be enough social workers to meet these needs. Today 30,000 social workers specialize in gerontology, but we will need 70,000 of these social workers by 2010. I want to make sure that when the aging tsunami hits us, we have the workforce in place to care for our aging family members, the Alzheimer patients, the disabled.

This bill is about reinvesting in social work. It provides grants that invest in social work education, research, and training. These grants will fund community based programs of excellence and provide scholarships to train the next generation of social workers. The bill also addresses how to recruit and retain new social workers, research the impact of social services, and foster ways to improve social workplace safety. This bill establishes a national coordination center that will allow social education, advocacy and research institutions to collaborate and work together. It will facilitate gathering and distributing social work research to make the most effective use of the information we have on how social work service can improve our social fabric. This bill also gives social work the attention is deserves. It creates a media campaign that will promote social work, and recognizes March as Social Work Awareness Month.

As a social worker, I have been on the frontlines of helping people cope with issues in their everyday lives. I started off fighting for abused children, making sure they were placed in safe homes. Today I am a social worker with power. I am proud to continue to fight every day for the long range

needs of the Nation, on the floor of the United States Senate and as the Chairwoman of the Aging Subcommittee of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.

I believe that social work is full of great opportunities, both to serve and to lead. Social work is about putting our values into action. Social workers are our best and brightest, our most committed and compassionate. They are at the frontlines of providing care, often putting themselves in dangerous and violent situations. Social workers have the ability to provide psychological, emotional, and social support—quite simply, the ability to change lives. That is why we must reinvest in social work—we must recruit, retain and research. I think we can do better by our Nation's troops, seniors, and children, by making sure we have the social workforce in place to meet their needs. I'm fighting to make sure we do.

The Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act is strongly supported by the National Association of Social Workers and the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research. I want to thank Senators STABENOW, SMITH, and INOUYE for their cosponsorship of this bill.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to enact this important piece of legislation.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that letters of support be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be placed in the RECORD, as follows:

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS,
Washington, DC.

We, the undersigned professional social work organizations, join with the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) in showing our full support for the Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act. Social workers provide indispensible services in nearly every community nationwide and to millions of Americans including aging baby boomers, wounded veterans, former prisoners, at-risk students, abused and neglected children, and those diagnosed with cancer, serious mental illness, and those with HIV and AIDS. These essential services have a positive impact on the mental, social, and psychosocial functioning of clients across the country. While professional social workers are more necessary today than at any other time in our history, they are also facing barriers that challenge the profession including insurmountable education debt, insufficient salaries, and serious safety concerns.

The Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act takes important steps to ensure the future viability of the social work profession. The legislation explores the many successful efforts already undertaken by our nation's social workers, while examining the persistent challenges to these efforts. A Social Work Reinvestment Commission will provide a comprehensive analysis of current workforce trends and develop long-term recommendations and strategies to maximize the ability of America's social workers to serve their clients with expertise and care. Demonstration programs will be funded in the areas of workplace improvements, research, education and training, and community-based programs of excellence. This investment will be returned many times over both in support for effective social service solutions and in direct services to client populations.

The Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act is a commitment to ensure that social workers can provide indispensable services for years to come. The future of the profession depends on the measures that are taken toward reinvestment today. We thank Senator Mikulski for her dedication to and leadership of the social work profession and urge every member of the Senate to show their support for professional social workers as well as the individuals, groups, and communities they serve.

Sincerely,

Action Network for Social Work Education and Research, Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors, Association of Oncology Social Work, Clinical Social Work Association, Council on Social Work Education, Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work, Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research, National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work, Social Welfare Action Alliance, Society for Social Work and Research.

INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH,
Washington, DC, April 12, 2008.

Hon. BARBARA MIKULSKI,
U.S. Senate, Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR MIKULSKI: As the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research (IASWR) celebrates its 15th anniversary, this is an important opportunity to recognize the strides that have been made in knowledge development and research infrastructure development in social work over the past decade and one half. However, the growing demands for social work services, the focus on implementation of evidence-based practices, and the need to address both recruitment and retention of professional social workers, requires that there be enhanced federal investments in the social work profession. As the number of children in foster care rises, as our population ages, as school drop-out rates increase, and as deployed soldiers and returning veterans require expanded access to health, mental health and social services, the need for professional social workers at all levels of practice and in all fields of practice has never been greater.

IASWR would like to thank you for standing with your profession in introducing the Dorothy I. Height/Whitney M. Young Social Work Reinvestment Act in the Senate. This Act is one important step in addressing workplace and workforce issues faced by social workers. It will also provide discretionary grants to implement best practice models in social agencies and it provides incentive programs to attract the next generation of social work practitioners and social work researchers. Of particular importance will be the Social Work Reinvestment Commission that will examine critical issues and potential solutions facing the profession today.

As a social worker, I know that you recognize the challenges faced by the social work profession, including low salaries, high caseloads, lack of access to the latest technology to facilitate service delivery, shrinking availability of services, and concerns about safety. The Social Work Reinvestment Act begins to address these concerns.

Thank you for all of your leadership and commitment to social work and to the millions of vulnerable individuals, families and communities that we work with daily. IASWR and the social work research community stands ready to work with you. If you have questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

JOAN LEVY ZLOTNIK,
Executive Director.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today, on World Social Work Day, to introduce the Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act. I am pleased to be joined by my colleagues Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI and Senator DEBBIE STABENOW in supporting this important legislation to help ensure the sustainability of the social work field. I look forward to continuing our collaboration on this bill and other efforts to support the tremendous work of our nation's social workers as they ensure the safety and welfare of our citizens in need of guidance and protection.

Social workers in America face an array of issues that impact their ability to stay in the profession. We know that as the U.S. population increases and ages, caseworkers' caseloads continue to increase, causing greater pressure to perform with ever decreasing resources. Further, relatively low wages make it difficult for social workers to stay in their profession long-term. These are just a few of the many challenges they face. Those in the social work field need our support in creating innovative ways to keep them in the profession they love and therefore help the people in our communities who need their expertise and compassion.

Unfortunately, my home State of Oregon is not immune to these problems. We all know of the wonderful work that social workers do to protect children from abuse and neglect. Particularly in parts of Oregon where Methamphetamine abuse has caused widespread suffering, social workers have risen to the occasion to ensure children get the help that they need. However, less recognized is the work that they do on behalf of our elderly. About 13 percent of Oregon's population is persons over the age of 65, which is above the national average of about 12.4 percent. This number is expected to increase dramatically in coming years as our population continues to age, our seniors live longer and we see more of our elderly with multiple chronic conditions. Many of these elderly will depend on the help and guidance of social workers to ensure their well being.

I encourage all of my colleagues to join me, Senator MIKULSKI and Senator STABENOW in championing this legislation to support the needs of our social workers. I look forward to its swift passage.

By Mr. WEBB (for himself and Mr. WARNER):

S. 2859. A bill to amend the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 to clarify limits on disclosure of student health records, and for other

purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. WEBB. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 2859

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Amendments of 2008''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Federal authorities charged with examining the tragic shootings at Virginia Tech in April 2007 found that confusion and overly-restrictive interpretations of Federal privacy laws, State medical confidentiality laws, and regulations unnecessarily impede the effective transfer of information that could prove useful in averting tragedies. Some school administrators are unaware of exceptions to Federal privacy laws that could allow relevant information about a student's mental health to be appropriately shared.

(2) The purpose of this Act is to eliminate ambiguity in Federal education privacy law to ensure that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) is not interpreted as prohibiting information sharing between on-campus and off-campus health care providers when both are involved in treating a student. Such ''consults'' are generally permitted by State medical confidentiality law, and FERPA should not be interpreted as posing an additional obstacle. The Virginia Tech Review Panel recommended that changes to ''FERPA should explicitly explain how it applies to medical records held for treatment purposes''. The panel reported that misinterpretation of how student treatment records are handled under FERPA as the main source of confusion. FERPA protects the privacy of both student education records and student treatment records from being disclosed generally.

(3) The Virginia Tech Review Panel recommended that Federal privacy laws should be amended to include ''safe harbor'' provisions that would insulate a person or organization from the loss of Federal education funding for making a disclosure with a good faith belief that the disclosure was necessary to protect the health or safety of a student or member of the public at large. The Commission further recommended that the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) be amended to clarify the ability of educational institutions to disclose information in emergency situations and to facilitate treatment of students at off-campus facilities.

(4) Mental disorders frequently begin during youth. Research supported by the National Institute of Mental Health found that half of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14; three quarters have begun by age 24.

(5) In 2004, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 4,316 suicides among young adults aged 15-24, making it the third leading cause of death in this age group. There were an additional 5,074 suicides among those aged 25-34, making it the second leading cause of death in this age group.

(6) Depression, mental illness, and suicide are problems on college campuses. In 2006, 44 percent of college students reported feeling so depressed it was difficult to function and 9 percent seriously considered suicide, according to a 2006 national survey conducted by the American College Health Association.

(7) While most people in the United States with a mental disorder eventually seek treatment, a National Institute of Mental Health study found pervasive and lengthy delays in getting treatment, with the median delay across disorders being nearly a decade. Over a 12-month period, 60 percent of those with a mental disorder got no treatment at all.

(8) A 2006 survey sponsored by the American College Counseling Association found that 9 percent of enrolled students sought counseling last year and 92 percent of counseling center directors reported an increase in the number of students with severe psychological disorders.

(9) Recent events, including the campus shootings at the Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois universities, have further highlighted the deadly problems of mental illness and violence in American schools. The Northern Illinois shooting resulted in 6 deaths while the Virginia Tech killings left 32 people dead, making it the most lethal school shooting in United States history.

SEC. 3. STUDENT HEALTH RECORDS.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (20 U.S.C. 1232g) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(k) CONSULTATION WITH OFF CAMPUS MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS.—Nothing in this section shall prohibit a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, or other recognized healthcare professional or paraprofessional acting in the individual's professional or paraprofessional capacity, or assisting in that capacity, from consulting with or disclosing records described in subsection (a)(4)(B)(iv) with respect to a student, to a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, or other recognized healthcare professional or paraprofessional acting in the individual's professional or paraprofessional capacity, or assisting in that capacity, outside the educational agency or institution in connection with the provision of treatment to the student.''.

SEC. 4. SAFE HARBOR PROVISION.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (20 U.S.C. 1232g) is amended in subsection (f) by adding at the end the following: ''The release by an educational agency or institution of education records or personally identifiable information contained in such records in the good faith belief that such release is necessary to protect against a potential threat to the health or safety of the student or other persons, shall not be deemed a failure to comply with this section regardless of whether it is subsequently determined that the specified conditions for such release did not exist.''.

SEC. 5. EMERGENCY EXCEPTION AMENDMENT.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (20 U.S.C. 1232g) is amended in subsection (b)(1)(I) by striking ''is necessary'' and all that follows and inserting ''is necessary, according to the good faith belief of the educational agency or institution or persons to whom such disclosure is made, to protect against a potential threat to the health or safety of the student or other persons; and''.

By Mr. AKAKA:

S. 2864. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to include improvement in quality of life in the objectives of training and rehabilitation for veterans with service-connected disabilities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I am introducing today the proposed Training and Rehabilitation for Disabled Veterans Enhancement Act of 2008. This measure would make two small but, I believe, necessary changes in the Department of Veterans' Affairs program of Independent Living services conducted under the authority of chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code.

VA's IL Program was first established in 1980 by Public Law 96–466, the Veterans Rehabilitation and Education Amendments of 1980. Initially, that law provided for the establishment of a 4-year pilot program designed to provide independent living services for severely disabled veterans for whom the achievement of a vocational goal was not reasonably feasible. The number of veterans who could be accepted annually into the pilot program was capped at 500. In 1986, the program was extended through 1989 and then, in 1989, it was made in Public Law 101–237, the Veterans' Benefits Amendments of 1989. In 2001, the 500 annual cap on enrollees was increased to 2,500.

The measure I am introducing would remove any cap on the number of enrollees in any year. In earlier years, as a pilot project, the cap may have been appropriate in order to give VA an opportunity to manage the program in the most effective manner possible and in 2001, it made sense to increase that cap in light of the increased demand and need for the program.

Now, however, it makes sense to lift the cap altogether. This is especially so since this important program is designed to meet the needs of the most severely service-connected disabled veterans and more and more of those returning from combat have suffered the kind of devastating injuries that may make employment not reasonably feasible for extended periods of time.

The VA's Inspector General found, in a report issued in December of last year, that ''the effect of the statutory cap has been to delay IL services to severely disabled veterans.'' This delay happens because VA has developed a procedure that holds veterans in a planning and evaluation stage when the statutory cap may be in danger of being exceeded.

The bill I am introducing today would eliminate the cap entirely as recommended by VA's IG. It would also make the program mandatory rather than a discretionary pilot effort and would include improvement in quality of life an objective of training and rehabilitation for veterans with service-connected disability who are participating in programs of IL services. For these veterans—with respect to whom it has been determined that employment is not a present, reasonably feasible option but one that may be feasible in the future—it seems appropriate to look not only at future employment prospects but also toward improving the individual's quality of

life. Such an approach may very well lead to bettering an individual's chances of rehabilitation and future employment.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be placed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 2864

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Training and Rehabilitation for Disabled Veterans Enhancement Act of 2008''.

SEC. 2. INCLUSION OF IMPROVEMENT IN QUALITY OF LIFE AS OBJECTIVE OF TRAINING AND REHABILITATION FOR VETERANS WITH SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITIES.

(a) INCLUSION IN SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE UNDER TRAINING AND REHABILITATION.—Section 3104(a)(15) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting before the period at the end the following: ''and to improve a veteran's quality of life''.

(b) INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE.—

(1) ENTITLEMENT OF CERTAIN VETERANS.—Section 3109 of such title is amended by inserting before the period at the end the following: ''and to improve such veteran's quality of life''.

(2) PROGRAM OF SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE.—Section 3120 of such title is amended—

(A) in subsection (a), by striking ''may'' and inserting ''shall''; and

(B) in subsection (d), by inserting before the period at the end of the first sentence the following: ''and to improve such veteran's quality of life''.

SEC. 3. REPEAL OF LIMITATION ON NUMBER OF VETERANS ENROLLED IN PROGRAMS OF INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE.

Section 3120 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 2 of this Act, is further amended—

(1) by striking subsection (e); and

(2) by redesignating subsection (f) as subsection (e).

By Ms. SNOWE (for herself, Mr. REED, Mr. KERRY, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. KENNEDY):

S. 2865. A bill to permit qualified withdrawals from a capital construction fund account under chapter 535 of title 46, United States Code, for gear or equipment required for fishery conservation or safety of life at sea without regard to the minimum cost requirement established by regulation; to the Committee on Finance.

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the Fisheries Capital Construction Fund Enhancement Act of 2008. This bill will help alleviate the potentially devastating economic impacts of recent regulations on the lobster industry issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service, and simultaneously encourage conservation in our Nation's fisheries and enhance the safety of the men and women who make their living at America's most dangerous profession.

On October 5, 2007, the National Marine Fisheries Service, or NMFS, issued new regulations that will require ''fixed gear'' fishermen along the Atlantic Seaboard, including lobstermen, to use sinking groundline to connect their traps in large areas of the Gulf of Maine beginning next fall. The rules are intended to prevent entanglements of endangered whales in fishing gear. By NMFS's own estimates, this rule will impose annual costs of approximately $14 million on our fisheries, over 90 percent of which will be borne by the lobster industry. But a report issued by the Government Accountability Office in August 2007 found the agency's economic analysis to be insufficient, and that it could not estimate the extent to which these costly measures would protect whales. While we must protect our endangered species, it is senseless to impose ineffective measures on an already struggling industry.

These regulations are particularly concerning given the additional hardships our fishing communities currently face, especially down east where lobster plays an integral role in the regional economy. The groundfish industry, once the lifeblood of this region, is now virtually non-existent, with just one active permit remaining east of Penobscot Bay. Lobster has been the lone bright spot in recent years, with annual landings throughout the state in the neighborhood of $300 million. Unfortunately, early returns for 2007 have declined by more than 20 percent from the record highs of 2005 and 2006, and with fuel and bait prices at record highs, the harvest numbers already are leading to tightening budgets and dwindling profits. The bottom line is that it is no exaggeration to say that these rules could put many lobstermen out of business. The effect on fishing families, and even on entire fishing communities, could be devastating.

Furthermore, these rules bring additional safety concerns to the lobster industry. Many offshore areas in Maine have extremely rocky sea floors. Sinking rope vastly increases the likelihood that the line will chaff and snag, wearing the rope to the point that it can suddenly snap, or pulling the boat's rail towards the waterline where it can more easily be swamped and capsized by a large wave.

Passage of this bill would be a step toward alleviating the economic and safety impacts of these rules by opening fishermen's individually held Capital Construction Funds, or CCF's, to purchases of fishing gear required to meet conservation measures required within a fishery or for purchase of equipment to increase the safety of life at sea. Currently, fishermen can deposit a portion of their pre-tax income into a CCF, and that money can then be withdrawn for purchase or reconstruction of fishing boats. Expanding the qualified withdrawals from these accounts would reduce the safety and economic impacts of these and other fishing regulations. Furthermore, this bill would provide an additional outlet for the $221 million currently held in CCF's nationwide, limiting the expansion of fishing capacity and enhancing conservation efforts by reducing incentives to buy or upgrade existing vessels.

Our fisheries are the only remaining commercial wild capture industries in the Nation; fishermen are the last commercial hunters. As such, they must strike a unique balance between plying their trade and protecting the resource and the environment that supports it. The Nation's managers thus strive to balance the two parallel goals of sustaining our fish stocks and the viability of our fishing industries. The bill I introduce today will help achieve that balance by making fishing gear required for conservation or safety purposes more affordable for America's hard-working fishermen.

I want to thank my colleagues, Senators REED, KERRY, LIEBERMAN, WHITEHOUSE, COLLINS, and KENNEDY for co-sponsoring this legislation.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 2865

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Fisheries Capital Construction Fund Enhancement Act of 2008''.

SECTION 2. CERTAIN QUALIFIED CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION FUND WITHDRAWALS.

Section 53509 of title 46, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking ''or'' after the semicolon in paragraph (1) of subsection (a);

(2) by redesignating paragraph (2) of subsection (a) as paragraph (3);

(3) by inserting after paragraph (1) of subsection (a) the following:

''(2) the acquisition of gear or equipment required for safety of life at sea or to comply with conservation measures within a fishery; or''; and

(4) by inserting after ''withdrawal.'' in subsection (c) the following: ''The minimum cost requirements established by such regulations (50 C.F.R. 259.31) shall not apply to a withdrawal described in subsection (a)(2).''.

By Mr. BINGAMAN (for himself and Mrs. HUTCHISON):

S. 2867. A bill to authorize additional resources to identify and eliminate illicit sources of firearms smuggled into Mexico for use by violent drug trafficking organizations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the Southwest Border Violence Reduction Act. This legislation is aimed at addressing the drug-related violence that has plagued parts of Mexico and ensuring that we dedicate the resources necessary to stop the flow of weapons that help fuel this violence.

In the Mexican state of Chihuahua, which shares a border with New Mexico, there have been over 200 killings

since the beginning of 2008, an increase of about 100 percent over the previous year. This violence, which is mostly perpetrated by international drug trafficking organizations, impacts the well-being and safety of communities on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Recently it was reported that the entire police force in Palomas, a Mexican town just across the border from Columbus, New Mexico, resigned after repeated threats from drug traffickers. The Chief of Police fled to the United States to seek asylum. On another recent occasion, the Columbus Port of Entry was shut down after there were several killings nearby. As a result, American school children who commute back and forth over the border had to receive a police escort. And just yesterday, the Department of State renewed a travel advisory warning of the ongoing violence.

I have met with Mexico's Ambassador, Foreign Minister, and Attorney General to raise serious concerns about the level of violence in the region and to discuss ways to address this problem. I am pleased that the Government of Mexico understands the gravity of this situation and I appreciate Mexico's response in sending 2,000 troops to Chihuahua to bring it under control. However, both Mexican and U.S. law enforcement officials have stressed the need to more aggressively target the criminal enterprises that are supplying weapons to drug cartels. According to ATF, about 90 percent of the firearms recovered in Mexico are trafficked from the United States because high-powered weapons are much easier to purchase in the U.S. than in Mexico.

The drug cartels operating along the border smuggle illegal narcotics into the United States and use revenue derived from the drug trade to purchase the firearms they need to maintain control over drug trafficking routes. According to ATF, about 90 percent of the firearms recovered in Mexico originate from sources within the United States because high-powered weapons, such as M–50s, are much easier to purchase in the United States than in Mexico. The ability to fight drug traffickers is significantly hampered by the fact that these violent groups use smuggled weapons to assassinate military and police officials, murder rival members of drug organizations, and kill innocent civilians.

In order to reduce violence in the region and disrupt the drug trade, it is essential that we aggressively work to prevent drug trafficking organizations operating in Mexico from obtaining these weapons. This effort requires that additional resources be allocated to target weapons trafficking networks supplying these arms and enhanced international cooperation in tracing the sources of weapons seized in Mexico.

To this end, the legislation I am introducing today would authorize additional resources to expand a successful ATF initiative, Project Gunrunner, which is aimed at combating arms smuggling. The bill would also increase the training and support of Mexican law enforcement in investigating firearms trafficking cases.

Specifically, the legislation would enable ATF to hire, train, and deploy an additional 80 special agents to establish and support seven more Project Gunrunner Teams that are solely devoted to disrupting firearm trafficking organizations smuggling weapons into Mexico. The bill also would make it possible for ATF to place at least 12 additional special agents in Mexico to support Mexican law enforcement in tracing seized firearms. Two Special Agents could be assigned to U.S. Consulates throughout the border region, Guadalajara, Chihuahua, Matamoros, Hermosillo, Tijuana, and Mazatlan, in conjunction with existing DEA offices. Funds would cover salaries, protective and investigative equipment, and other costs associated with maintaining a foreign presence. And lastly, the legislation would significantly increase ATF efforts to assist and train Mexican law enforcement officers with weapons trafficking investigations. The bill authorizes $24.5 million for each fiscal year 2009 and 2010 to implement this Act.

I strongly believe that it is essential that the U.S. enhance its efforts to stop the flow of weapons being trafficked into Mexico, and I hope my colleagues will join me in this effort.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 514—CONGRATULATING THE BOSTON COLLEGE MEN'S ICE HOCKEY TEAM ON WINNING THE 2008 NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION DIVISION I NATIONAL ICE HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. KENNEDY (for himself and Mr. KERRY) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 514

Whereas, on Saturday, April 12, 2008, the Boston College men's ice hockey team (referred to in this preamble as the ''Eagles'') won the 2008 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I National Ice Hockey Championship by defeating the University of Notre Dame men's ice hockey team by the score of 4 to 1 in the final game of the Frozen Four;

Whereas the University of Notre Dame men's ice hockey team deserves great respect for reaching the Frozen Four for the first time in the team's history and then advancing to the National Championship game;

Whereas the victory for Boston College marked the Eagles' third national hockey championship, after the team's first championship win in 1949 and its second championship win in 2001;

Whereas the Eagles earned the number 1 seed in the NCAA hockey tournament with an impressive overall record of 24 wins, 11 losses, and 8 ties during the 2007–2008 season;

Whereas the Eagles were led by junior Nathan Gerbe, the Nation's leading scorer in men's college ice hockey, who came in second for the Hobey Baker Memorial Award, with 35 goals and 32 assists during the season;

Whereas the Eagles have made the National Championship game in each of the past 3 years, demonstrating extraordinary teamwork and dedication;

Whereas the remarkable 2007–2008 season also included a memorable victory for the Eagles in the historic Beanpot Championship in February 2008, earning Boston College its 14th Beanpot Championship;

Whereas Boston College ''Super Fans'' traveled great distances all year and gave the Eagles strong support throughout their championship season; and

Whereas Boston College and its student athletes are well known for their commitment to both athletic and academic excellence, ranking sixth nationally among NCAA Division I schools in the graduation rate of student athletes: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates—

(A) the Boston College men's ice hockey team for winning the 2008 National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I National Ice Hockey Championship; and

(B) the players, coaching staff, faculty and staff of the university, student body, and fans whose determination, strong work ethic, drive, and support made the 2007–2008 championship season possible;

(2) congratulates the University of Notre Dame men's ice hockey team for its success in the 2007–2008 season and for reaching the Frozen Four for the first time in the team's history; and

(3) directs the Secretary of the Senate to transmit an enrolled copy of this resolution to—

(A) Boston College President Father William P. Leahy, S.J.;

(B) Boston College Athletic Director Gene DeFilippo; and

(C) Boston College Head Coach Jerry York.

SENATE RESOLUTION 515—COMMEMORATING THE LIFE AND WORK OF DITH PRAN

Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself, Mr. REED, Mr. BIDEN, and Mr. CORNYN) submitted the following resolution, which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 515

Whereas, between 1975 and 1979, Dith Pran dedicated his life and journalistic career to preventing genocide by exposing the atrocities perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge regime in his native Cambodia;

Whereas Dith Pran, the subject of the Academy Award-winning film ''The Killing Fields'', survived the genocide in Cambodia in which up to 2,000,000 men, women, and children, including most of Dith Pran's extended family, were killed by the Khmer Rouge;

Whereas Dith Pran assisted many of his fellow journalists who were covering the impending takeover of Cambodia by the Khmer Rouge to escape unharmed from the country when the capital of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, fell to the Khmer Rouge in 1975;

Whereas Dith Pran was subsequently imprisoned by the Khmer Rouge, and for 4 years endured forced labor, beatings, and unconscionable conditions of human suffering;

Whereas, in 1979, Dith Pran escaped from forced labor past the Khmer Rouge's ''killing fields'', a term Mr. Dith created to describe the mass graveyards he saw on his 40-mile journey to a refugee camp in Thailand;

Whereas Dith Pran, in the words of New York Times Executive Editor Bill Keller,

''reminds us of a special category of journalistic heroism, the local partner, the stringer, the interpreter, the driver, the fixer, who knows the ropes, who makes your work possible, who often becomes your friend, who may save your life, who shares little of the glory, and who risks so much more than you do'';

Whereas Dith Pran moved to New York in 1980 and devoted the remainder of his life and journalistic career to advocating against genocide and for human rights worldwide;

Whereas Dith Pran educated people around the world about the horrors of genocide in general, and the genocide in Cambodia in particular, through his creation of the Dith Pran Holocaust Awareness Project;

Whereas, in 1985, Dith Pran was appointed a United Nations Goodwill Ambassador by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;

Whereas Dith Pran lost his battle with cancer on March 30, 2008, leaving behind a world that better understands the tragedy of the genocide in Cambodia and the need to prevent future genocides, largely due to his compelling story, reporting, and advocacy;

Whereas Dith Pran said, ''Part of my life is saving life. I don't consider myself a politician or a hero. I'm a messenger. If Cambodia is to survive, she needs many voices.''; and

Whereas the example of Dith Pran should endure for generations: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) Dith Pran is a modern day hero and an exemplar of what it means to be a citizen of the United States and a citizen of the world;

(2) the United States owes a debt of gratitude to Dith Pran for his tireless work to prevent genocide and violations of fundamental human rights; and

(3) teachers throughout the United States should spread Dith Pran's message by educating their students about his life, the genocide in Cambodia, and the collective responsibility of all people to prevent modern-day atrocities and human rights abuses.

SENATE RESOLUTION 516—SOLEMNLY COMMEMORATING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TRAGIC APRIL 1983 BOMBING OF THE UNITED STATES EMBASSY IN BEIRUT AND REMEMBERING THOSE WHO LOST THEIR LIVES AND THOSE WHO WERE INJURED

Mr. LUGAR (for himself, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. KERRY, Mr. FEINGOLD, and Mr. CASEY) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 516

Whereas, on April 18, 1983, terrorists detonated a bomb at the United States Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, killing 63 people, including 42 American and Lebanese Embassy staff;

Whereas the bombing injured many other people, including 35 Embassy staff;

Whereas President Ronald Reagan denounced the ''vicious terrorist bombing'' as a ''cowardly act''; and

Whereas the April 18, 1983 attack was at the time the deadliest attack against a United States diplomatic mission in history, but was followed by other terrorist attacks against Americans in Beirut including the bombing of the United States Marines barracks in Beirut on October 23, 1983, which killed 241 members of the United States Armed Forces, the bombing of the United States Embassy annex in Beirut on September 20, 1984, which killed 12 people, including 9 Embassy staff, and the bombing of a United States Embassy vehicle on January 15, 2008, which injured 2 Lebanese employees of the Embassy and killed 3 Lebanese passers by: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate, on the 25th anniversary of the April 18, 1983, bombing of the United States Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon—

(1) remembers the victims of the bombing;

(2) joins family and friends in mourning the American and Lebanese victims who lost their lives in this tragic bombing;

(3) condemns all terrorist acts that deliberately target the innocent; and

(4) reiterates its strong support for the people of Lebanon and their Government as they seek to build a better future free from the threat of terrorist violence.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 4527. Ms. LANDRIEU submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill H.R. 1195, to amend the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users to make technical corrections, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4528. Mrs. LINCOLN (for herself and Mr. PRYOR) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill H.R. 1195, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 4527. Ms. LANDRIEU submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill H.R. 1195, to amend the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users to make technical corrections, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 97, between lines 2 and 3, insert the following:

(1) in item number 273, by striking the project description and inserting ''Improvements to on/off ramp system from I–10 to Ryan Street (LA 385), including installation of an exit ramp for eastbound traffic on I–10, incorporating, as necessary, portions of Front Street and Ann Street, and including repair and realignment of Lakeshore Drive, and to include the expansion of Contraband Bayou Bridge'';

SA 4528. Mrs. LINCOLN (for herself and Mr. PRYOR) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill H.R. 1195, to amend the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users to make technical corrections, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 78, strike lines 3 and 4 and insert the following:

(386) in item number 3735 by striking the project description and inserting ''Widening existing Highway 226, including a bypass of Cash and a new connection to Highway 49''; and

NOTICE OF HEARING

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I would like to announce for the information of the Senate and the public that a hearing has been scheduled before the Subcommittee on National Parks. The hearing will be held on Wednesday, April 23, 2008, at 3:00 p.m., in room SD–366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

The purpose of the hearing is to receive testimony on the following bills: S. 662, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study to evaluate resources at the Harriet Beecher Stowe House in Brunswick, Maine, to determine the suitability and feasibility of establishing the site as a unit of the National Park System, and for other purposes; S. 827, to establish the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area in the States of Massachusetts and New Hampshire, and for other purposes; S. 923 and H.R. 1528, to amend the National Trails System Act to designate the New England National Scenic Trail, and for other purposes; S. 956, to establish the Land Between the Rivers National Heritage Area in the State of Illinois, and for other purposes; S. 2073, to amend the National Trails System Act relating to the statute of limitations that applies to certain claims; S. 2513, to modify the boundary of the Minute Man National Historical Park, and for other purposes; S. 2604, to establish the Baltimore National Heritage Area in the State of Maryland, and for other purposes; S. 2804, to adjust the boundary of the Everglades National Park, and for other purposes; H.R. 53, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to enter into a long-term lease with the Government of the United States Virgin Islands to provide land on the island of Saint John, Virgin Islands, for the establishment of a school, and for other purposes; and H.R. 1483 (Subtitles C, D, and F of title II, title III, section 4006 of title IV, and titles V and VI only), to amend the Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996 to extend the authorization for certain national heritage areas, and for other purposes.

Because of the limited time available for the hearing, witnesses may testify by invitation only. However, those wishing to submit written testimony for the hearing record should send it to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510–6150, or by email to rachel_pasternack@energy.senate.gov.

For further information, please contact David Brooks or Rachel Pasternack.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be authorized to meet during the Session of the Senate on April 15, 2008, at 10 a.m., to conduct a

hearing entitled ''Turmoil in U.S. Credit Markets: Impact on the Cost and Availability of Student Loans.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be authorized to meet, during the session of the Senate, to conduct a hearing entitled ''Ending Abuses and Improving Working Conditions for Tomato Workers'' on Tuesday, April 15, 2008. The hearing will commence at 10 a.m. in room 430 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, April 15, 2008, at 10 a.m., in 215 Dirksen Senate Office Building, to hear testimony on ''Tax: Fundamentals in Advance of Reform''.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, April 15, 2008, at 2:30 p.m. to hold a hearing on law of war treaties.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, April 15, 2008, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled, ''Nuclear Terrorism: Confronting the Challenges of the Day After.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, April 15, 2008, at 3:15 p.m. to conduct a hearing entitled ''Census in Peril: Getting the 2010 Decennial Back on Track, Part II.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 15, 2008, at 2:30 p.m. to hold a closed hearing.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS AND FORESTS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests, be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate to conduct a hearing on Tuesday, April 15, 2008, at 2:30 p.m., in room SD366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION SAFETY, INFRASTRUCTURE SECURITY, AND WATER QUALITY

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Environment and Public Works, Subcommittee on Transportation Safety, Infrastructure Security, and Water Quality be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, April 15, 2008 at 3 p.m. in room 406 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building to hold a hearing entitled, ''Pharmaceuticals in the Nation's Water: Assessing Potential Risks and Actions to Address the Issue.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that Maria Kate Dowling, a detailee of Senator KENNEDY's HELP Committee staff, be granted the privilege of the floor for the duration of the Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMEMORATING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE APRIL 1983 BOMBING OF THE UNITED STATES EMBASSY IN BEIRUT

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 516, which was submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 516) solemnly commemorating the 25th anniversary of the tragic April 1983 bombing of the United States Embassy in Beirut and remembering those who lost their lives and those who were injured.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I rise to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the tragic April 1983 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut. As we speak, thousands of State Department employees are living and working abroad, promoting U.S. interests and building stronger relations with foreign governments and their peoples. While their work is always important, it is also sometimes dangerous. The 25th anniversary of the April 18, 1983, bombing of the U.S. embassy in Beirut reminds us of this fact. On that sad day, the lives of 63 people, including 42 Americans and Lebanese members of the Embassy staff, were tragically taken. In addition to those who lost their lives, many others were injured, including 35 embassy personnel.

On April 18th, 2008, the State Department will host a commemoration ceremony. Senior U.S. Government officials will join Ambassador Robert Dillon, the U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon at the time of the bombing, and over 100 family members of the victims to remember their sacrifice. The U.S. Senate also joins in honoring the service of those who died, mourning their death, and condemning all terrorist acts that deliberately target the innocent. We also reiterate our unwavering support for the people of Lebanon and their government as they seek to build a better future free from the threat of terrorist violence.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 516) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 516

Whereas, on April 18, 1983, terrorists detonated a bomb at the United States Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, killing 63 people, including 42 American and Lebanese Embassy staff;

Whereas the bombing injured many other people, including 35 Embassy staff;

Whereas President Ronald Reagan denounced the ''vicious terrorist bombing'' as a ''cowardly act''; and

Whereas the April 18, 1983 attack was at the time the deadliest attack against a United States diplomatic mission in history, but was followed by other terrorist attacks against Americans in Beirut including the bombing of the United States Marines barracks in Beirut on October 23, 1983, which killed 241 members of the United States Armed Forces, the bombing of the United States Embassy annex in Beirut on September 20, 1984, which killed 12 people, including 9 Embassy staff, and the bombing of a United States Embassy vehicle on January 15, 2008, which injured 2 Lebanese employees of the Embassy and killed 3 Lebanese passers by: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate, on the 25th anniversary of the April 18, 1983, bombing of the United States Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon—

(1) remembers the victims of the bombing;

(2) joins family and friends in mourning the American and Lebanese victims who lost their lives in this tragic bombing;

(3) condemns all terrorist acts that deliberately target the innocent; and

(4) reiterates its strong support for the people of Lebanon and their Government as they seek to build a better future free from the threat of terrorist violence.

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 2008

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 9:30 a.m. tomorrow, Wednesday, April 16; that following the prayer and the pledge, the

Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, the time for the two leaders be reserved for use later in the day, and the Senate then proceed to a period of morning business for up to 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each and the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half; that following morning business, the Senate resume consideration of H.R. 1195, the highway technical corrections bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 7:05 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, April 16, 2008, at 9:30 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

MICHELE M. LEONHART, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE ADMINISTRATOR OF DRUG ENFORCEMENT, VICE KAREN P. TANDY, RESIGNED.

THE JUDICIARY

STEPHEN JOSEPH MURPHY III, OF MICHIGAN, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN, VICE PATRICK J. DUGGAN, RETIRED.

HELENE N. WHITE, OF MICHIGAN, TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE SIXTH CIRCUIT, VICE SUSAN BIEKE NEILSON, DECEASED.

IN THE COAST GUARD

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUAL FOR APPOINTMENT AS A PERMANENT COMMISSIONED REGULAR OFFICER IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD IN THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 14, U.S.C., SECTION 211:

To be lieutenant

TREVOR M. HARE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUAL FOR APPOINTMENT AS A PERMANENT COMMISSIONED REGULAR OFFICER IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD IN THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 14, U.S.C., SECTION 211:

To be lieutenant commander

SUSAN M. MAITRE

FOREIGN SERVICE

THE FOLLOWING-NAMED PERSONS OF THE AGENCIES INDICATED FOR APPOINTMENT AS FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS OF THE CLASSES STATED.

FOR APPOINTMENT AS FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER OF CLASS ONE, CONSULAR OFFICER AND SECRETARY IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

CRAIG LEWIS CLOUD, OF FLORIDA

FOR APPOINTMENT AS FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER OF CLASS TWO, CONSULAR OFFICER AND SECRETARY IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

JOHN CHARLES DOCKERY, OF TEXAS
MARY-KATHARINE RANKIN, OF TEXAS
ERICA KEEN THOMAS, OF MARYLAND
MARIKA RICHTER ZADVA, OF CALIFORNIA

FOR APPOINTMENT AS FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER OF CLASS THREE, CONSULAR OFFICER AND SECRETARY IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

RACHEL BICKFORD, OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
FREDERICK H. GILES, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
CYNTHIA M. GUVEN, OF VIRGINIA
ERIK W. HANSEN, OF VIRGINIA
RACHEL HODGETTS NELSON, OF CALIFORNIA

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

KIM FELICIA DUBOIS, OF FLORIDA
IRVIN HICKS, JR., OF MARYLAND
SARA K. HODGSON, OF MISSOURI
JEFFREY SCOTT WALDO, OF WYOMING

FOR APPOINTMENT AS FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER OF CLASS FOUR, CONSULAR OFFICER AND SECRETARY IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

MIRIAM LAILA AWAD, OF TEXAS
JARED BANKS, OF MARYLAND
ANNE WHITE BENJAMINSON, OF TEXAS
JOHN C. BERGEMANN, OF VIRGINIA
TIMOTHY DAVID BIRNER, OF MISSOURI
RUSSELL K. BROOKS, OF NEW JERSEY
NEDA A. BROWN, OF TENNESSEE
FREDERICK E. N. BRUST, OF NEW YORK
ANIA BURCZYNSKA CANAVAN, OF WASHINGTON
BENJAMIN CADE CANAVAN, OF FLORIDA
ANAMIKA CHAKRAVORTY, OF CALIFORNIA
AKUNNA E. COOK, OF MARYLAND
PETER J. COVINGTON, OF CALIFORNIA
MARIO CRIFO, OF TEXAS
JENNIFER J. DANOVER, OF MINNESOTA
JACQUELINE SAMARA DELEY, OF CALIFORNIA
BRIAN E. DENVER, OF VIRGINIA
VITO DIPAOLA, OF GEORGIA
ROBERT F. DOUGHTEN, OF MONTANA
LINDA A. FENTON, OF KANSAS
CYRIL M. FERENCHAK, OF FLORIDA
JOSHUA FISCHEL, OF IDAHO
DOUGLAS A. FISK, OF NEW MEXICO
ERIC GREGORY FLAXMAN, OF TEXAS
MARILYN R. GAYTON, OF CALIFORNIA
ALEXANDER C. GAZIS, OF NEW YORK
YVONNE MARIE GONZALES, OF CALIFORNIA
KATHERINE A. GREELEY, OF CALIFORNIA
CHRISTOPHER JAMES HARRIS, OF VIRGINIA
LAUREN HOLT HANSEN, OF CALIFORNIA
CHRISTOPHER DREW HOSTER, OF OHIO
KAREN W. HSIAO, OF UTAH
RODNEY MAX HUNTER, OF INDIANA
PAUL I. JUKIC, OF CONNECTICUT
HEATHER E. KALMBACH, OF PENNSYLVANIA
YOLANDA V. KERNEY, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
KRISTIN LOUISE KNEEDLER, OF FLORIDA
DANIEL D. KOSKI, OF TEXAS
BRIAN KRESSIN, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
SRINIVAS RAO KULKARNI, OF TEXAS
LAUREN MARCUS LADENSON, OF WASHINGTON
JILL MARY LARSON, OF MINNESOTA
LOWELL DALE LAWTON, OF NEVADA
ANDREW T. LEE, OF CALIFORNIA
EDWARD PAUL LUCHESSI, OF CALIFORNIA
LORA OMAN LUND, OF VIRGINIA
TODD HARRY LUNDGREN, OF WASHINGTON
ANDREW T. MACDONALD, OF TEXAS
ERIK J. MAGDANZ, OF CALIFORNIA
LATRANDA SHONTELL MARTIN, OF GEORGIA
MARIELLE HALLER MARTIN, OF INDIANA
MICHAEL J. MCKEOWN, OF TEXAS
TAWNIE A. MCNEIL, OF CALIFORNIA
ELISE MICHELLE MELLINGER, OF HAWAII
DENNY J. MEREDITH III, OF MISSOURI
KIMBERLY A. MORALES, OF PENNSYLVANIA
GREGORY LANE NAARDEN, OF TEXAS
LONG T. NGUYEN, OF CALIFORNIA
SUE ELLEN KRISTINE OSTREM, OF NEW JERSEY
MELINDA M. PAVEK, OF WYOMING
RAIMONDS PAVLOVSKIS, OF NEW YORK
JEAN L. PIERRE-LOUIS, OF FLORIDA
KRISTYNA L. RABASSA, OF MICHIGAN
ANNA RADIVILOVA, OF FLORIDA
CHRISTIAN WILLIAM REDMER, OF TENNESSEE
DOVAS A. SAULYS, OF ILLINOIS
MORDICA MICHELLE SIMPSON, OF FLORIDA
MATTHEW ANDERS SINGER, OF VIRGINIA
ROBIN DIANE SOLOMON, OF TEXAS
JOHN C. TAYLOR, OF WYOMING
YODCHIWAN DEW TIANTAWACH, OF OREGON
MATTHEW A. TOLLIVER, OF VIRGINIA
JESSICA MARIE TORRES, OF FLORIDA
ERIC RICHARD TURNER, OF VIRGINIA
ANDREW JOSEPH VADEN, OF TEXAS
JENNIFER R. VAN TRUMP, OF CALIFORNIA
PATRICK H. VENTRELL, OF COLORADO
RAJEEV M. WADHWANI, OF NEW JERSEY
JENNIFER D. WASHELESKI, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
CARL THOMAS WATSON, OF NEW YORK
GINA M. WERTH, OF NEVADA
DIANNE KAYE WEST, OF SOUTH DAKOTA
ALEXANDER WHITTINGTON, OF TEXAS
SARA S. YUN, OF VIRGINIA

THE FOLLOWING-NAMED MEMBERS OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE TO BE CONSULAR OFFICERS AND SECRETARIES IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

TERESA HOWES, OF MICHIGAN
WILLIAM KUTSON, OF MARYLAND
JESSE LAPIERRE, OF VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

CAROLYN LEE AKER, OF VIRGINIA
JEEMES LEE AKERS, OF VIRGINIA
EUNJOO A. ALAM, OF VIRGINIA
PAUL R. ALLEN, OF VIRGINIA
ERIK M. ANDERSON, OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
SHRI A. ARORA, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
RICHARD A. BAKEWELL, OF VIRGINIA
BENJAMIN BARRY, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
TRACY BECKER, OF VIRGINIA
STEVEN TERRY BENFELL, OF VIRGINIA
ROBERT C. BLACKSTONE, OF MARYLAND
JEREMY M. BLUM, OF FLORIDA
MELANIE LYNETTE BONNER, OF MISSISSIPPI
SARAH E. BOSWELL, OF VIRGINIA
BRUCE M. BOURBEAU, OF VIRGINIA
CARRIE BRAMAN, OF VIRGINIA
JOSEPH C. BRISTOL, OF WASHINGTON
HEATHER WINN BROMAN, OF VIRGINIA
BRUCE T. BROOKS, OF VIRGINIA
SUSAN A. BROWN, OF VIRGINIA
PETER EGILL EGGERZ BROWNFELD, OF VIRGINIA
STEPHEN C. BURGIN, OF VIRGINIA
EDWARD C. BURLESON, OF TEXAS
LEWIS W. BURNS III, OF NORTH CAROLINA
GINA M. CABRERA-FARRAJ, OF VIRGINIA
PAULINA CARRASCO, OF VIRGINIA
CHRISTINA JEANNE CAVALLO, OF VIRGINIA
TODD M. CISZ, OF VIRGINIA
LAWRENCE HUSTON CLIFTON, OF VIRGINIA
TALYON J. COLEMAN, OF MINNESOTA
STACIE LEIGH CONSTANTINE, OF VIRGINIA
SARAH B. CROCKETT, OF VIRGINIA
KELIA EILEEN CUMMINS, OF NEW YORK
RICHARD E. DALEY, OF FLORIDA
ANNE BARBER DAVIS, OF VIRGINIA
ANN MARIE DEAL, OF MASSACHUSETTS
NATHAN L. DIETRICH, OF VIRGINIA
STEVEN J. DUBÉ, OF ILLINOIS
KONSTANTIN DUBROVSKY, OF VIRGINIA
QUINTON L. DUFFY, OF COLORADO
J. COE ECONOMOU, OF NEW YORK
CHARLES WILLIAM ELLIOT III, OF VIRGINIA
MARY M. ENNIS, OF VIRGINIA
AMANDA M. EVANS, OF MARYLAND
HEATHER CARLIN FABRIKANT, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PHILLIP FANTOZZI, OF VIRGINIA
KATHRYNN RAE FESTA, OF VIRGINIA
HENRY DOUGLAS FLACH, OF VIRGINIA
COLLIN J. FLYNN, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MATTHEW D. FRANKE, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DAVID CHARLES GAMBLA, OF VIRGINIA
ANDREW M. GHOBRIEL, OF VIRGINIA
ACQUANIA V. GIBBS, OF MARYLAND
RENEE P. GOFF, OF VIRGINIA
ANN DELONG GREENBERG, OF VIRGINIA
LONI MARIA GREENBERG, OF MARYLAND
MICHAEL THOMAS HACKETT, OF CONNECTICUT
MAXWELL J. HAMILTON, OF LOUISIANA
J. MICHAEL HARVEY, OF WASHINGTON
CHARLES E. HAVENER, OF MARYLAND
ROBERT B. HAWKINS III, OF CALIFORNIA
ANDREW WILLIAM HAY, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
ROBERT ARMSTRONG HELWIG III, OF VIRGINIA
JOHN BRIAN HERICKHOFF, OF VIRGINIA
MICHAEL J. HESSLER, OF VIRGINIA
MICHEL C. HO, OF VIRGINIA
COURTNEY ANNE HOMAN-JONES, OF MARYLAND
HEATHER S. HONAKER, OF VIRGINIA
DAVID MAURICE JONES, OF ILLINOIS
KRISTIN MICHELLE HOOPER, OF VIRGINIA
PHILLIP ANDREW HOOPER, OF VIRGINIA
DAVID C. HORENGIC, OF VIRGINIA
CHARLES C. HULL, OF MARYLAND
OMAR KAMAL JABBOUR, OF VIRGINIA
ALEXANDER J. JARZ, OF VIRGINIA
BRENDAN H. JOHNSON, OF VIRGINIA
JEFFREY M. JORDAN, OF MARYLAND
KEITH P. JORDAN, OF VIRGINIA
NICKOLAS A. JORJANI, OF VIRGINIA
ROBERT WARREN KACHUR, OF VIRGINIA
STEPAN KARAKESISOGLU, OF MARYLAND
KATHERINE MICHELLE KELLEY, OF MARYLAND
MICHAEL JAMES KELLY, OF MARYLAND
SUSAN KOPP KEYACK, OF PENNSYLVANIA
DONG-SUNG KIM, OF MARYLAND
THANH C. KIM, OF TEXAS
CARINA DEA KLEIN, OF NEW YORK
GEORGE E. KRAMER, OF VIRGINIA
KRIS S. KUMAR, OF VIRGINIA
JONATHAN P. LALLEY, OF VIRGINIA
SCOTT D. LANDSMAN, OF ILLINOIS
JOSEPH AARON LARSON, OF VIRGINIA
ELLISON S. LASKOWSKI, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
JEFFREY DEAN LASSETER, OF VIRGINIA
DARLENE M. LIAO, OF VIRGINIA
LEAH CHRISTINE LIOTT, OF MARYLAND
KENDRICK M. LIU, OF CALIFORNIA
LIANA M. LUM, OF MARYLAND
AYO W. LYNN, OF VIRGINIA
PATRICK S. LYON, OF MARYLAND
ERIN NICHOLE MARKLEY, OF MISSOURI
NICHOLAS FRANCIS VAZQUEZ MATHEW, OF VIRGINIA
KEITH A. MCCOY, OF VIRGINIA
REID B. MCCOY, OF TEXAS
N. DEAN MESERVY, OF MARYLAND
FAITH MCCARTHY MEYERS, OF VIRGINIA
CHRISTOPHER C. MILLER, OF VIRGINIA

MARK R. MINEO, OF FLORIDA
MARLA ANNE MONTEVALDO, OF VIRGINIA
WILLIAM L. MORRIS III, OF VIRGINIA
GILBERT GEORGE MORTON, OF NEW YORK
KALPANA MURTHY, OF WASHINGTON
JASON ZIMPRICH NADON-RZASA, OF VIRGINIA
TODD R. NEIMAN, OF ILLINOIS
KEVIN D. NELSON, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
CHRISTOPHER R. NEWMAN, OF VIRGINIA
RUTH NEWMAN, OF COLORADO
RICHARD F. NICHOLES, OF VIRGINIA
CHARLOTTE SULLIVAN NUANES, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BRIAN O'BEIRNE, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
NICOLE L. O'BRIEN, OF VIRGINIA
KERRI ANN OLSEN, OF VIRGINIA
MATTHEW RYAN PACKER, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
TAMMY B. PALTCHIKOV, OF ALABAMA
ELEANOR B. PEARSON, OF VIRGINIA
CHARLES STEPHEN PENNYPACKER, OF VIRGINIA
LAUREN E. PETERS, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
SHANE M. PETERSEN, OF VIRGINIA
KRISTA PICA, OF VIRGINIA
JEREMY B. PINNER, OF VIRGINIA
ESTHER A. PIZARRO, OF VIRGINIA
JAMES PLASMAN, OF ILLINOIS
LOUIS S. POLLARD, OF VIRGINIA
PAMELA ROSS DIEFENDERFER PONTIUS, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
CARTER JAMES POTTS, OF VIRGINIA
CYNTHIA ZUNIGA PRASZCZALEK, OF MARYLAND
CLAIRE V. QUIRKE, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PRASHANTH RAJAN, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
NAYEONG L. RANDORF, OF VIRGINIA
GREGORY N. RANKIN, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
JAMES E. REESE, OF PENNSYLVANIA
JAMIE ROANE, OF VIRGINIA
ROSELLEN ALBANO ROBERT, OF VIRGINIA
MICHAEL A. ROBERTS, OF VIRGINIA
OLGA B. ROMANOVA, OF NEW YORK
IVAN F. RUIZ, OF VIRGINIA
ROBERT RUSCHENBERG, OF CALIFORNIA
ALEXANDER THEODORE RYAN, OF PENNSYLVANIA
BRIGITTA J. SAJCIC, OF VIRGINIA
TANYA YUKI SALSETH, OF CALIFORNIA
ROCCO C. SANTORO, OF MARYLAND
BRANDE HANNAH SASSMAN, OF VIRGINIA
CRAIG G. SCHMAUS, OF VIRGINIA
ANDREW HUBBARD SCHUT, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
ANDREW C. SCHWARTZ, OF MARYLAND
ANDREW CRAWFORD SCHWARTZ, OF VIRGINIA
JOE L. SEPULVEDA, OF VIRGINIA
MELISSA K. SHOEMAKER, OF VIRGINIA
ASHLI C. SIMPSON, OF TEXAS
EILEEN SIMPSON, OF VIRGINIA
JONATHAN M. SMALLRIDGE, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
NOLAN G. SMASH, OF MARYLAND
GREGORY MICHAEL SMITH, OF VIRGINIA
JASON A. SMITH, OF VIRGINIA
ROBERT THOMAS SMITH, OF VIRGINIA
STEPHANIE P. SMITH, OF VIRGINIA
RAVINDRA MOHAN SRIVASTAVA, OF COLORADO
JOHN W. STABLES, OF TEXAS
NATASHA N. STITH, OF VIRGINIA
ROBERT J. STOLZ, OF VIRGINIA
LIAM L. SULLIVAN, OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
MATTHEW JOSEPH SULLIVAN, OF VIRGINIA
MEREDITH JILL SUMPTER, OF VIRGINIA
ELIZABETH TANG SWEET, OF NEW JERSEY
TRISHA ANN TAINO, OF VIRGINIA
LISA Y. TAM, OF VIRGINIA
CONSTANTINO THEOHARATOS, OF ARIZONA
ERIC J. THEUS, OF VIRGINIA
BOBBI C. THOMAS-TAGAI, OF TEXAS
PATTY ANN TRUGLIO, OF VIRGINIA
DAVID COLIN TURNBULL, OF NEW YORK
ANDREW UTZ, OF VIRGINIA
PETER P. VELASCO, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
JILLIAN MARIE WALKER, OF VIRGINIA
ERIKA A. H. WANAMAKER, OF VIRGINIA
JUSTIN T. WARNICK, OF VIRGINIA
SHAWNTAE WHITE, OF OHIO
MICHELLE A. WHITEMAN, OF MARYLAND
CURT WHITTAKER, OF OREGON
ARIC C. WILLIAMS, OF VIRGINIA
GEORGE THOMAS WOOD IV, OF VIRGINIA
JEFFREY TODD WORKMAN, OF MARYLAND
JARED M. YANCEY, OF VIRGINIA
MARA YAVERBAUM, OF VIRGINIA
MICHAEL B. YORKE, OF VIRGINIA
KIRA L. ZAPORSKI, OF WISCONSIN

SECRETARIES IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

DENISE G. MANNING, OF VIRGINIA

THE FOLLOWING-NAMED CAREER MEMBERS OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE FOR PROMOTION IN THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE TO THE CLASSES INDICATED:

CAREER MEMBERS OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, CLASS OF MINISTER COUNSELOR, EFFECTIVE JANUARY 6, 2008:

ROBERT A. ECKERT, OF FLORIDA
KIMBERLY K. OTTWELL, OF ARIZONA

IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

TO BE LIEUTENANT GENERAL

MAJ. GEN. DANA T. ATKINS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be lieutenant general

MAJ. GEN. MARK D. SHACKELFORD

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be lieutenant general

MAJ. GEN. FRANK G. HELMICK

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be lieutenant general

BRIG. GEN. JOHN F. MULHOLLAND, JR.

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C. SECTION 624:

To be major

KENNETH D. SMITH

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C. SECTION 624:

To be lieutenant colonel

JOHN M. HOPPMANN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL'S CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 3064:

To be lieutenant colonel

AMY M. BAJUS
SHANE E. BARTEE
JOSEPH B. BERGER III
LOUIS A. BIRDSONG
PAULETTE V. BURTON
ERIK L. CHRISTIANSEN
DAVID T. CLUXTON
STEVEN P. CULLEN
GAIL A. CURLEY
KATHRYN A. DONNELLY
GREGG A. ENGLER
KWASI L. HAWKS
MICHAEL K. HERRING
JONATHAN HOWARD
JOHN T. HYATT
IAN R. IVERSON
MELVIN C. JENKS
CARL A. JOHNSON
NICHOLAS F. LANCASTER
JEFFERY D. LIPPERT
DONALD G. LOBEDA, JR.
JOSEPH M. MASTERSON
DAVID E. MENDELSON
MATTHEW M. MILLER
PHILIP C. MITCHELL
SUSAN E. MITCHELL
JOHN C. MOORE
MICHAEL E. MUELLER
CHARLES C. POCHE
LUIS O. RODRIGUEZ
JOHN T. ROTHWELL
MICHELLE L. RYAN
KENNETH W. SHAHAN
WILLIAM D. SMOOT III
SUSAN B. SUTHERLAND
KURT A. TAKUSHI
JAMES L. VARLEY
ROBERT P. VASQUEZ

IN THE MARINE CORPS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C. SECTION 624:

To be lieutenant colonel

DAVID G. MCCULLOH
ROBERT E. SAWYER
PAUL W. VOSS

IN THE NAVY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

ADAM J. COGHAN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

JOHN E. PASCH III

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

RICHARD C. BOEHM
MICHAEL D. CONGER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

JAMES R. DUNWORTH
BRUCE A. HORTON
ROBERT K. LANSDEN
FRANCIS J. MCCABE II
NEIL R. REILLY
CHARLES A. ROZHON, JR.
MICHAEL A. SANO

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

WILLIAM K. DAVIS
ROBERT T. DURAND
THOMAS R. GRESBACK
JON C. LUNDBERG
TERRANCE L. SHANNON
KATHLEEN R. WRIGHT

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

KATHLEEN GROMILOVITZ
JOHN F. LANDRY
JAMES M. MANCHER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

THOMAS E. FOLLO
JOHN M. PIETKIEWICZ
SARAH M. STANDARD

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

DAVID J. HARACH
WILLIAM T. LITTLE
MARK D. MAXWELL
PATRICK R. MULCAHY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

DONALD R. BURNS
MICHAEL D. COOK
RANDALL J. GEIS
DEAN C. HALVORSON
WILLIAM R. LARAY
WILLIAM D. MICHAEL

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

ROBERT J. BARTON II
MICHAEL P. CARTER
STEPHEN M. DEBRUYNKOPS
DOUGLAS S. FARNCOMB
CHARLES A. GUNZEL
THOMAS L. MORGAN
ANTHONY NICKENS
LYNN J. PETERSEN
ROBERT A. UHLIG
CHRISTOPHER M. WAALER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

DREW G. FLAVELL
ERIC W. JOHNSON
SCOTT A. LANGLEY
TONYA Y. W. PRINGLE
TODD A. ROSE
JOSEPH P. WAITE
PAUL F. WECKMAN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

TERI J. BARBER
MARY K. CAFFREY
SHARON S. DOXEY
VALERIE L. EICHENLAUB
STEPHEN D. KIBBEY
PATRICIA A. LEOPARD
ROBERTA E. SYBA
LORI A. YOST

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

ERIC B. ANDERSON
MARLIN C. ANTHONY

WILLIAM L. BACH
JAY S. BOWMAN
SYBIL V. BRADLEY
MICHAEL L. ELLIOTT
CARLOS E. FLANAGAN
DONALD M. GORDNIER
TED C. GRAHAM
KEVIN O. HENDRICKS
ANDREW E. HOPKINS
RANDOLPH B. JOHNSON
JON C. KREITZ
WILLIAM J. LEAR, JR.
PAUL G. MATTINGLY II
CHRISTOPHER S. MOORE
SAMUEL L. TATE
STEVEN D. VINCENT
GEORGE N. WHITBRED IV

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

CLAYTON R. ALLEN
AYAD N. ALSAIGH
DOUGLAS J. ANDERSON
SAMUEL W. ASBURY
KELLY J. BALTZ
JOHN H. BARNET, JR.
MICHAEL D. BELL
MATTHEW C. BINSFIELD
DANIEL J. BURQUE
ANDREW P. CAMPBELL
PAMELA K. L. CAREL
WESLEY J. CARPENTER
DOUGLAS R. CARROLL
STEPHAN J. CASSIDY
GREGG T. CLARK
MICHAEL W. CLARK
RICHARD G. COLBURN
MARTIN R. COSTA
GEORGE M. COX
RONALD A. CRADDOCK
JOHN W. CRAIG
OWEN J. CURLEY
RODNEY P. DEWALT
DAVID P. DIPESA
MATTHEW S. DOYLE
CRAIG R. DUGAN
MICHAEL R. DUNNE
MICHAEL S. EKLUND
DAVID C. ENGLEHART
ROBERT J. FINKELSTON
JEFFREY C. FLUMIGNAN
ADRIANANTHONY GARCIA
LEONARD A. GESHAN, JR.
SHANE A. GRAY
GERALD E. GREEN, JR.
MICHAEL L. HARRIS
DAVID W. HEGLAR
JOSEPH J. HORVATH
CHRISTOPHER K. HYDER
GUY D. V. JACKSON
WILLIAM S. JOHNSON
DANIEL T. KELLY
GEORGE A. KENYON, JR.
MICHAEL KIRKPATRICK
JAMES P. KITZMILLER
RUDOLPH KLICEK, JR.
LEIGH L. KOJIRO
JOSEPH G. LAMACK II
JOSEPH C. LAULETTA, JR.
STEVEN E. LEAHY
PAUL D. LEBRASSEUR
CLAUDE P. R. LIM
JAMES S. LITTLE
ALEXANDER R. LOVETT
MARK D. LOWMAN
WILLIAM F. LUSSIER
SCOT T. LYNN
MICHAEL A. MALOWNEY
KEVIN L. MARLOWE
DONATO B. MASAOY III
STEPHEN MASI
ALISON S. MCCRARY
TODD R. MCKINLEY
ANTHONY MCKINNEY
EDWARD MEANY
JAMES J. MEHAIL
JOHN E. MENDEL
DOMINIC J. MEOLI
KEVIN P. MONAGLE
WALLACE F. MOORE
KEITH E. MORAN
ARIEL C. NAGALES
MICHAEL S. NEWMAN
DAVID P. ODEA, JR.
MATTHEW P. OKEEFE
DONALD S. PAGEL, JR.
DAVID J. POPOVICH
GREGORY J. RALSTIN
RANDALL K. REID
PAUL D. REINHART
MARK J. RETZLOFF
ALLAN D. RISLEY
JEFFREY M. ROGALINER
DANIEL R. ROMAN
MARCO F. ROMANI
BRIAN S. RUSSELL
DAVID M. SALUTO
ANTHONY J. SANNICOLAS
STEVEN A. SCHELLBERG
DAN S. SCHINDLER
KENNETH A. SCHROEDER
ROBERT E. SECHRIEST
GERALD A. SHERMAN
KRISTI L. SIDEBOTTOM
THOMAS J. SKUBIC
ANDE A. SMITH
LANCE A. SNIDER
CRAIG S. SOER
DAVID V. SPEARS
MICHAEL A. STEWART
VINCENT L. TISEO
JESS H. UMPHENOUR
WARREN K. VANEMAN
FRANK T. WALLACE
DAVID H. WEEKS
CURTIS A. WOLD
ERIC F. ZANIN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

TAMMY M. BAKER
KATHLEEN BOEHMER
DAVID H. BULFORD
ROBIN K. CLEMENTS
CHARLES M. CONWAY III
TIMOTHY W. CROY
RALPH L. DEFALCO
DAVID J. DORAN
GEORGE C. DRISCOLL
MARY S. ELLIS
BRUCE D. GARROTT
GREGORY K. HAYES
WILLIAM R. HUNT
MARK A. KENNEY
LINDA K. KNIGHT
JOHN H. LAGORIO, JR.
DREW F. LIEB
EVAN C. LOVE
SAMUEL J. MANDELL
JOHN A. MANNARINO
KATHRYN L. MAURER
BRIAN C. POEHLER
ROBERT D. POWELL
CLYDE E. ROYSTON
ERIC S. SCHNEIDER
LUCY A. SIMONIAN
JOHN D. TODD
SUSAN D. TOTH
SCOTT A. WOODWORTH
LEONARD A. ZIMMERMANN I

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUALS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 531:

To be lieutenant commander

SAMUEL G. ESPIRITU
MILLER J. KERR
PAUL G. SCANLAN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR TEMPORARY APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 5721:

To be lieutenant commander

TERRY L. BUCKMAN
ROBERT D. CARTER, JR.
CHRISTOPHER C. COFFEY
KENNY J. COMEAUX
GEORGE R. EBARB
CHAD A. FELLA
WILLIAM D. FRANCIS
JOHN T. GREEN
JELANI K. HALE
JEFFREY P. HARVEY
ROBERT A. HEELY, JR.
TIMOTHY KNAPP
BRIAN J. LADIEU
DAVID C. LEIKER
TERRY P. MCNAMARA
ERIC A. NICHOLSON
JASON P. PATTERSON
DAVID A. PFAEFFLIN
ANGEL F. RODRIGUEZ
KENNETH M. ROMAN
ANTHONY M. ROMERO
CHAD J. ROUM
JOHN W. RYAN
KENNETH A. SABOL
KENNETH D. SAUNDERS
TIMOTHY J. SHIVOK
CHAD B. STEINBRECHER
GREGORY L. TAYLOR
RITCHIE L. TAYLOR
FRANCIS J. WALTER III
THOMAS M. WILLIAMS

WITHDRAWAL

Executive Message transmitted by the President to the Senate on April 15, 2008 withdrawing from further Senate consideration the following nomination:

STEPHEN JOSEPH MURPHY III, OF MICHIGAN, TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE SIXTH CIRCUIT, VICE SUSAN BIEKE NEILSON, DECEASED, WHICH WAS SENT TO THE SENATE ON MARCH 19, 2007.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. PHIL ENGLISH

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Madam Speak, on rollcall No. 185, H.R. 3548, the Plain Language in Government Communications Act of 2007, I would have voted in favor of the bill. I was held up in Pennsylvania due to a car accident that shut down the PA Turnpike.

Had I been present, I would have voted "yea".

HONORING AND RECOGNIZING THE DIOCESE OF ST. CLOUD CATHOLIC CHARITIES' MEALS ON WHEELS PROGRAM

HON. MICHELE BACHMANN

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mrs. BACHMANN. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize and pay honor to the immense service the Meals on Wheels Association of America, MOWAA, has made to the most vulnerable senior citizens of our Nation. The MOWAA represents a number of member senior nutrition programs in each State throughout the country, including several in Minnesota.

This organization represents America's commitment to community service by restoring dignity and respect to all citizens, regardless of race or religion. In addition, their annual March for Meals campaigns have served as a platform to raise funds, create awareness, and increase the number of volunteers to enhance the association and its critical objectives.

I would particularly like to commend the Meals on Wheels program run by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of St. Cloud. They provide hot, nutritious meals and deliver them to frail, homebound seniors.

Since its humble beginnings in Great Britain during World War II and the first American home-delivered meal program in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in January of 1954, Meals on Wheels has provided vulnerable senior Americans with not only a warm meal, but also a warm heart. There is nothing greater in life than a person's self-respect, and the MOWAA has made that ideal a cornerstone of their mission and organization.

Madam Speaker, it is my honor to recognize today the selfless commitment of the Meals on Wheels Association of America and its dedicated volunteers across the country. It is through their service that we can be proud to call ourselves Americans.

CELEBRATING THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF WEBSTER, TEXAS

HON. NICK LAMPSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. LAMPSON. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand before you today in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the City of Webster, Texas. Webster was incorporated on April 19th, 1958, almost 80 years after it was settled by James W. Webster.

Since its settlement in 1879, Webster has enjoyed a rich and varied history. Its temperate climate and the dedicated work of its residents nursed the fledgling Texas rice industry, now a multimillion-dollar economic success. In more recent years, Webster has become home for much of the aerospace industry and serves as the gateway to Johnson Space Center. Its population has blossomed, from a handful of ranching settlers in 1879 to over 9000 residents.

Webster has also served as a vital connector for the Bay Area. Its official emblem, an unbroken chain, reflects its role as a link in the Bay Area economy and between the cities of Houston and Galveston, as well as the Johnson Space Center. The emblem also symbolizes Webster's constant progress and growth, a connection between the past and the future.

As Webster enters its next 50 years, I have no doubt that it will continue to achieve success. I am proud to celebrate with the residents of Webster their legacy and hopes for the years ahead. I wish the City of Webster a bright future and congratulate them on this golden anniversary.

GAGE CARTER HERRINGTON

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Gage Carter Herrington, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 45, and by earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Gage has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Gage participated in the National Youth Leadership Training in Boy Scouts of America. Gage is also a Brave in the Tribe of Mic-O-Say.

Gage has also excelled academically, ranking 11th in his class of 201 at Lafayette High School. Gage participated in the National Geography Bee at the State level, earned a double varsity letter on the debate team, and earned medals at the Science Fair and Science Olympiad.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Gage Carter Herrington for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

TRIBUTE TO THE CLARION PUBLIC LIBRARY

HON. TOM LATHAM

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. LATHAM. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Clarion Public Library on its 100th year anniversary. The Clarion Public Library serves over 3,000 residents of Clarion, Iowa as well as residents of the surrounding areas in Wright County.

In February 1907, the Clarion City Council voted to contribute $5,000 to erect and maintain a public library after Mr. Morgan Everts, a pioneer of Webster City, Iowa, offered to supplement the project with a $10,000 donation. The structure of the library was erected by F.F. McManus at the contract price of $9,921, without a furnace or furnishings, and was built in the same style of architecture as the Carnegie libraries around the country. The building was opened to the public in April 1908.

The 5,000 square-foot library contains a large basement where the heating plant, store rooms and auditorium are located. A high flagstaff is set in front of the building, designed to hold "Old Glory," which was the gift of Captain Terrell.

From April 1908 to January 1913, Mrs. G.T. Eldridge served as the first librarian and was subsequently followed by Mrs. Irving E. Nagle. Mrs. Marrian Gannon was the longest serving head librarian from 1967 to 1996, and the current head librarian, Nola Waddingham, has served since 1996.

In 1984, a total remodeling of the library was completed. With a grant from the Kinney-Lindstrom Fund and help from the city council, the children's library was moved to the basement, an elevator was installed, and a meeting room for cultural events was constructed. Today the Clarion Library Board and the City of Clarion are raising funds to expand and renovate this historic library.

Throughout the many years the Clarion Public Library staff has strived to meet the needs of the people in the area by providing excellent information and encouraging citizens to read. I congratulate the Clarion Public Library on this historic anniversary. It is an honor to represent Nola Waddingham, the library board of trustees, and all of the Clarion Library staff in the United States Congress, and I wish the Clarion Public Library continued success well into the future.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO DAN McPARTLAND

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to rise today to honor Dan McPartland by entering his name in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, the official record of the proceedings and debates of the United States Congress since 1873. Today I honor Dan McPartland, who is retiring after 27 years of service to the Clark County School District Department of Food Services.

Mr. McPartland has been a resident of southern Nevada since 1968. Throughout his service, Dan has provided leadership and stability to a vital department of southern Nevada's education system. During his time as director of food services, Dan led numerous projects to effectively feed and nourish Clark County students. Such projects included technology upgrades in every school cafeteria networked to the main food service office as well as the implementation of a strict nutrition policy that regulated all foods sold in schools during business hours. Mr. McPartland expanded the department to keep up with rapid growth and maintained a financially sound budget while doing so. Dan was recognized with the Golden Carrot in 2004 for his exceptional innovation and leadership in promoting child health and nutrition through school food service.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to honor Dan McPartland. His dedication and commitment to the students of Clark County is commendable and his efforts have enriched countless lives. I congratulate Mr. McPartland on his much deserved retirement and wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. THOMAS H. ALLEN

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. ALLEN. Madam Speaker, on April 14, 2008, I was unavoidably absent from the House due to a family illness.

If I had been present, I would have voted ''yes'' on rollcall vote No. 183, a motion by Mr. ELLSWORTH of Indiana to suspend the rules and agree to the passage of H. Res. 886, a resolution expressing sympathy to the victims and families of the tragic acts of violence in Colorado Springs, Colorado and Arvada, Colorado.

I would have also voted ''yes'' on rollcall vote No. 184, a motion by Mr. DAVIS of Illinois to suspend the rules and agree to the passage of H. Res. 994, a resolution expressing support for designation of a National Glanzmann's Thrombasthenia Awareness Day.

I would have also voted ''yes'' on rollcall vote No. 185, a motion by Mr. BRALEY of Iowa to suspend the rules and agree to the passage of H.R. 3548, the Plain Language in Government Communications Act of 2007.

I ask unanimous consent that this statement be inserted in the appropriate place in the RECORD.

CONGRATULATING TAIWANESE PRESIDENT-ELECT MR. MA YING-JEOU

HON. DANIEL LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. LIPINSKI. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Mr. Ma Ying-jeou on his success in the March 22 presidential election in Taiwan, as well as applaud the democratic process that led to his election. The success of the fair and peaceful Taiwanese presidential election and the transfer of power from one party to another demonstrate that Taiwan is a genuine democracy and a shining example of freedom for the rest of the region.

As Mr. Ma is inaugurated on May 20th, I look forward to continuing the exceptional relationship between the United States and Taiwan. Taiwan is one of America's strongest partners in the region and a true friend of the United States. Similarly, I am pleased to know of Mr. Ma's pledged support for strengthening ties with the U.S. and I am confident that our relationship will grow stronger.

I also applaud the president-elect's initiatives to improve relations between Taiwan and China through increased dialogues on proposals that would greatly benefit the people of Taiwan and China. Increased communication and commerce between the people of China and Taiwan will greatly assist in reducing tensions in the region while allowing the Chinese to see firsthand the success of democracy in Taiwan.

I rise today, Madam Speaker, to commend the democratic process that led to the free and fair election of Mr. Ma Ying-jeou, whom I heartily congratulate on his attainment of this high office.

I sincerely hope that the rest of the world has taken note of the historic events that have transpired in these free and transparent elections. May this democratic spirit reach far and wide and inspire a desire to foster democracy all around the world. Again, I congratulate Mr. Ma in his election and wish him the very best.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. PHIL ENGLISH

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, on rollcall No. 184, H. Res. 994, Expressing support for designation of a National Glanzmann's Thrombasthenia Awareness Day, I would have voted in favor of the resolution. I was held up in Pennsylvania due to a car accident that shut down the PA Turnpike. Had I been present, I would have voted ''yea.''

IN HONOR OF BRENNY TRANSPORTATION'S COMMITMENT TO OUR HOMELAND SECURITY

HON. MICHELE BACHMANN

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mrs. BACHMANN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend Todd and Joyce Brenny, owners of Brenny's Transportation and Brenny Specialized in St. Cloud, Minnesota, for their participation in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Highway Watch program. By dedicating the time and effort of their drivers, Todd and Joyce Brenny are helping to keep our Nation safe.

Highway Watch is a program through which truck drivers are trained to spot suspicious activity while on the roads and to report it to a national call center so that public safety officials can both address a particular issue and detect early if a pattern is arising. Minnesota was one of the first three states to join this program when it was first started by the American Trucking Association, ATA, in 1998. Then it was a safety awareness program, teaching drivers to report road hazards and accidents.

Following 9/11, the Department of Homeland Security worked with ATA to add an anti-terrorism component to the program's curriculum. Since 2004, about 800,000 drivers, State transportation workers, and toll booth operators, including 9,921 drivers in Minnesota alone, have been trained. That turns out to be a cost of about $31 per driver. In 2007, more than 3,000 calls were logged as part of the program nationwide, including 1,700 security-related calls.

All 60 of Brenny's drivers and office employees participate in Highway Watch. They have taken a real interest in supporting our efforts to keep our Nation safe and I commend them and all their fellow trucking companies who take part in this program for their efforts.

LOPEZ SIBLINGS TO ALL COMPETE IN OLYMPIC GAMES

HON. NICK LAMPSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. LAMPSON. Madam Speaker, this summer, the United States will be sending three siblings to compete in the Olympic Games. This outstanding feat has not occurred since 1904, and I am honored to recognize these individuals from the Houston area: Steven Lopez, Mark Anthony Lopez, and Diana Lopez.

Each of the three is an exceptional athlete and will be representing the United States in the sport of taekwondo this summer. Steven Lopez spent the majority of his life in his hometown of Sugar Land, Texas, and is a two-time Olympic Gold Medalist and four-time world champion. Mark Lopez was born in Houston, Texas, and is a recipient of three World Championship Medals including a Gold Medal in 2005. Diana Lopez is the youngest of the three and was also born in Houston, Texas, and received a Gold Medal in 2005.

These extraordinary individuals deserve America's utmost appreciation and support. I am proud to have such remarkable citizens in my district, and I wish them the best in the 2008 Summer Olympics and in the years ahead.

CORY S. ADAMS

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Cory Adams, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 60, and by earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Cory has been very active with his troop, participating in many Scout activities. Cory has shown an extraordinary commitment to Scouting as evidenced by earning 45 merit badges. Cory is also a Brave in the Tribe of Mic-O-Say.

Cory's Eagle Scout service project was placing two swinging benches at the ponds located at Duncan park in Savannah, Missouri. Cory performed the majority of the work, and supervised other Scouts, friends and family that helped with the project. This project continued the tradition of community service established by the Boy Scouts of America.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Cory Adams for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. TRENT FRANKS

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Madam Speaker, on rollcall No. 182 I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea".

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR DESIGNATION OF APRIL 2008 AS NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

SPEECH OF

HON. HEATH SHULER

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 14, 2008

Mr. SHULER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 1097 to support National Child Abuse Prevention Month. I am committed to preventing child abuse and neglect so that all children can grow and prosper in a safe, nurturing, and healthy environment.

As a father of two children, nothing is more important to me than protecting the welfare of all children. Safe, nurturing, and healthy environments are necessary for the well-being of children and their families. All children need to know that they are special and that they are loved by their parents.

By raising awareness of child abuse and neglect, parents and teachers can protect children from the risks associated with abuse and neglect. By supporting National Child Abuse Prevention Month, Congress can take a strong stand against child abuse and neglect.

My heart goes out to all children and families that have experienced abuse and neglect in their homes.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues today to vote for this important resolution that will support the establishment of National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

QUESTIONS ABOUT DESIGN OF PROPOSED FLIGHT 93 MEMORIAL

HON. JIM RAMSTAD

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. RAMSTAD. Madam Speaker, Tom Burnett, Jr. was a true American hero. All Americans owe Tom and the other passengers on United Flight 93 a deep debt of gratitude for their bravery on September 11, 2001. Indeed, the Members of this body may owe their very lives to Tom Burnett, Jr. and the other courageous passengers. Tom Burnett, Jr. grew up in Bloomington, Minnesota, in the 3rd Congressional District, which I am privileged to represent.

Tom was among the small group of passengers who confronted the hijackers that fateful morning. Department of Defense officials believe Flight 93 was headed for a target here in Washington, most likely the White House or the Capitol.

Tom's father, Tom Burnett, Sr., has long-held and serious concerns about the design of the Flight 93 Memorial Project proposed for the site where the plane crashed in Pennsylvania.

Madam Speaker, I would like to insert comments from Tom Burnett, Sr., regarding what he believes to be serious problems with the design of the memorial to his beloved son and the other passengers. Here are Tom Burnett, Sr.'s important concerns about the Flight 93 Memorial:

"I am the father of Tom Burnett, Jr., a passenger on Flight 93 on 9–11–2001. Tom Jr. led the effort to take that flight back from the hijackers, and he and 39 passengers and crew almost succeeded.

"My son confronted a terrible moment of truth. Faced with a plot against our nation, he and the other heroes of Flight 93 fought back, and at the cost of their lives, foiled that plot to destroy the White House or the Capitol. Now it is time for the rest of us to face our moment of truth. Flight 93 has been rehijacked, and I am requesting that, if you can, demand that a proper investigation of the Memorial Project be conducted.

"This was no accident. The Memorial Project held an open design competition in time of war, inviting the entire world to enter. Guess who joined in? That group of trees that sits roughly in the position of the star on an Islamic flag is the crash site. What do you think is being memorialized here?

"A second Islamic feature that I also protested when I served on the Stage II jury is the minaret-like Tower of Voices, formed in the shape of a crescent, with its top cut at an angle so that its crescent arms reach up into the sky. Upturned crescents are a standard mosque adornment in many Muslim countries.

"Every iota of this original Crescent of Embrace design remains completely intact in the so-called 'redesign.' That is why Congressman Tancredo asked the Park Service to scrap the existing design entirely. Instead of getting rid of the giant crescent as Tancredo demanded back in 2005, architect Paul Murdoch only disguised it with a few surrounding trees.

"Also remaining are those 44 glass blocks on the flight path. (There were 40 passengers and crew and four Islamic terrorists on Flight 93.) The Memorial Project acknowledges the 40 blocks inscribed with the names of my son and the other heroes, and they acknowledge the three inscribed with the 9/11 date, but they pretend not to know about this one: the huge glass block that dedicates the entire site.

"When this 44th glass block is pointed out, Project Partners say that it can't be counted with the other blocks because it is not the same size. What? Because the capstone to the terrorist memorializing block count is magnificent, that is supposed to make it okay?

"For every Islamic or terrorist memorializing feature of the crescent design, the Park Service has another equally phony excuse.

"What do we have to do to convince those opponents that the proposed Flight 93 Red Crescent still doesn't cut it? It is terribly flawed and should be thrown out to begin the quest for an entirely new design worthy of their efforts, those heroic Americans who were on that plane that fateful day.

"I was on the second jury in August, 2005, that approved that design over my objections. I objected then, in August 2005, and I am still adamantly opposed today to a design that is riddled with Islamic symbols.

"By consensus, the Stage II jury forwards this selection to the partner (architect Paul Murdoch) with the full and unqualified support of each juror, says the report that was issued.

"No, to the contrary, the vote was not unanimous, it was 9 to 6, and we, the minority, had no veto power. This is my effort to get back in the game.

"I don't want that design that has been redesigned several times by its originator and a design committee. In addition to the Red Crescent being a giant mosque, the proposed 'Tower of Voices' looks like an Islamic minaret.

"Millions of Americans and I find the 'Red Crescent of Embrace' an insult to my son and the others on Flight 93 who engaged in a violent struggle to take that plane back from the Islamic hijackers and were suddenly placed in the vanguard of the war on terrorism. Facing unfathomable choices, Tom was calm, clear headed, decisive and fearless. I can only hope that in the years to come the rest of us live up to the standard of heroism that he and others set on 9/11.

"What I am preeminently concerned about is what our countrymen will feel and learn when they visit the site.

"The story, when properly presented, will honor and reverberate in history. What those heroes accomplished for their fellow Americans, and for the entire Western World.

"I would want them to feel the desperateness of those aboard Flight 93 as they became aware of what was happening, and their cold realization of what they had to do. I want them to ask themselves, what would I have done had I been aboard that flight? We know that in very little time the passengers got out of their seats, and attempted to take back the airplane.

"I do not want my son's name used anywhere on that Memorial, which is an insult to him and the other passengers and crew, and what is needed is a thorough, honest and objective investigation of the process during its selection, how and why.

"I am confused but undaunted by the attacks on me and anybody else who is against this design centered around Islamic symbolism.

"Those who have opposed me in many efforts to be heard includes some of the victims family members (thankfully, few), officials in the National Park Service, a few newspapers and some others.

''The possibility of them prevailing to railroad the acceptance of this flawed design worries me! But I am undaunted in my attempt to start over, to scrap it, and get a new design. That doesn't include a bow to the Islamic fanatics.

''An investigation is needed to avoid a cataclysmic mistake. It must be now, or else the flawed design could come about. Let us get at the truth. Their stubborn persistence is terribly misguided. Maybe well intentioned, but flawed in telling me that I don't see what I see.

''Designer Paul Murdoch (and others) are engaging in personal attacks on anyone opposed, including Alec Rawls who has written widely damning the Memorial. His latest, a book, ''Crescent of Betrayal,'' gives a reasoned and thorough explanation for scrapping it.

''I am suggesting that it is past time to start over with a new design, one that will truly be worthy of those 40 heroes.''

Madam Speaker, may God bless Tom Burnett and his family. And may God bless America and all the heroes like Tom who gave their lives to save others on September 11.

TRIBUTE TO COMMISSIONER PAUL ELIZONDO, FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

HON. CHARLES A. GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. GONZALEZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an extraordinary person and a dynamic force within the Center for Health Care Services community. Commissioner Paul Elizondo served with distinction on the Center for Health Care Services Board of Directors for 8 years. From 1988 until 1995 he served first as Board Secretary and then he served two terms as the chairman of the board.

CHCS would not have been the same without the efforts of Paul Elizondo. As chairman, he worked tirelessly, both internally and externally, to improve the center's services to its clients. He encouraged, funded, and pushed innovative programs in child and adolescent mental health care, substance abuse treatment, and mental retardation services.

During his tenure, the center rose to national prominence and he was appointed to the Executive Board of the National Council of Community Health Centers. I'm pleased to recognize his continuous dedication and willingness to foster the growth of CHCS throughout the community so patients might obtain more efficient access to treatment.

It is my honor to pay tribute to such a leader. He is an innovative thinker who continuously took it upon himself to confront various community issues with sound solutions.

Commissioner Paul Elizondo continues to keep track of the center's activities and services. At the national, State, and local level he is an omnipresent ''watchdog'' and advocate for the clients they serve. Above all, he wholeheartedly believes in the center, its people, its mission, and their ability to help the people they serve.

His hard work was much appreciated and along with others that know him, I would like the rest of America to recognize his many contributions. Our community is fortunate to have had such a devoted leader.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. PHIL ENGLISH

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, on rollcall No. 183, H. Res. 886, expressing sympathy to the victims and families of the tragic acts of violence in Colorado Springs, Colorado and Arvada, Colorado, I would have voted ''yea.'' I was held up in Pennsylvania due to a car accident that shut down the PA Turnpike.

Had I been present, I would have voted ''yea.''

ANDREW B. CARROLL

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Adam Carroll, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 60, and by earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Adam has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Adam has shown an extraordinary commitment to scouting as evidenced by earning 62 merit badges. Andrew is also a Brave in the Tribe of Mic-O-Say.

Andrew's Eagle Scout service project consisted of constructing and placing two Martin Bird Houses at Messick Park in Savannah, Missouri. Andrew supervised other scouts, friends and family that assisted with this project. This project continues the long tradition of community service established by the Boy Scouts of America.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Andrew Carroll for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

TRIBUTE TO BERNIE BALTIC

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Mr. Bernie Baltic of Cleveland, Ohio. Mr. Baltic, who recently passed away, was a tireless champion of liberty. His advocacy of applying the freedom philosophy to the issues of the day was made all the more effective by his voracious reading of both the classics of liberty and the latest policy studies.

Any politician or bureaucrat at any level of government who threatened individual liberty was sure to hear from Mr. Baltic. Mr. Baltic also worked to educate and mobilize his fellow citizens in the cause of liberty through writing letters to the editor, and by directly challenging anti-liberty officials at forums such as city council meetings. In addition to his own activities, Mr. Baltic generously shared his support and counsel with numerous organizations that work to advance the cause of liberty.

Perhaps Mr. Baltic's most lasting contribution to the freedom movement came when then-president of the Advocates for Self Government Marshall Fritz showed Mr. Baltic a computer game Mr. Fritz developed that identified an individual's political philosophy based on responses to 10 questions on economic issues and 10 questions on civil liberties. Mr. Baltic, who was quite impressed with the chart, suggested that the Advocates produce business-card sized versions of the graph and quiz. The result was the ''World's Smallest Political Quiz,'' one of the freedom movement's most recognized and effective outreach tools.

Bernie Baltic set an example for all those wishing to effectively advance the cause of liberty. Madam Speaker, I salute Bernie Baltic for his many contributions to the freedom movement and extend my condolences to Mr. Baltic's family and friends.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I regret that I was unavoidably absent yesterday afternoon, April 14, on very urgent business. Had I been present for the three votes which occurred yesterday, I would have voted ''aye'' on H. Res. 886, rollcall vote No. 183; I would have voted ''aye'' on H. Res. 994, rollcall vote No. 184; and I would have voted ''aye'' on H.R. 3548, rollcall vote No. 185.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR JOHN W. DRUMMOND

HON. JAMES E. CLYBURN

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. CLYBURN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a great statesman, a tremendous public servant and a good friend. Senator John W. Drummond will retire this year after serving in the South Carolina General Assembly since 1965. His leadership will certainly be missed.

John W. Drummond was born in Greenwood, South Carolina, on September 29, 1919, to mill worker parents. He was the fourth of seven children growing up a deeply religious, working-class family, whose values shaped the man John was to become.

As a young man, John's family moved to the town of Ninety Six, where he attended school until he graduated in 1937. With few options available to him, John decided to join the military. He joined the 263rd South Carolina Coast Artillery Regiment, the equivalent of today's National Guard, and was stationed in Charleston. By early 1941, John earned the rank of Sergeant and he enjoyed military life. Everything changed with the bombing of Pearl Harbor later that year.

John's regiment was federalized, and he was eager to see action in the war. He took a paratroopers exam at the Citadel, hoping to change his military assignment and get closer to the action. John scored so well, he was encouraged to become a pilot and was sent to Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio for training. The skills he demonstrated in flight training school led instructors to send John to Tallahassee to become a bomber pilot. After training, he was inducted into the 405th Bomber Group Unit of the 510th Fighter Squadron. His skill as a bomber pilot earned him the nickname "Ace." In September 1943, John's squadron was transferred from Florida back to his home State of South Carolina and an air base in Walterboro.

His return home got John into some hot water. While out on a training mission, John buzzed his hometown of Ninety Six. This forbidden practice earned him a demotion in rank to 2nd Lieutenant and a winter of sleeping out in a pup tent.

Finally in March 1944, the 510th received its orders to report to Christchurch, England, to begin its service on the war front. By May, John was flying reconnaissance and combat missions over the German-occupied Normandy area of France. He rose to the rank of Captain and was a fighter commander. On D-Day, June 6, 1944, John was in the midst of the invasion protecting the ships that were attacking the beaches of Normandy.

On July 29, 1944, John's plane was shot down by German anti-aircraft fire, and he managed to escape the burning plane, although his parachute didn't open fully due to his close proximity to the ground. Although injured, John rolled into the bushes, but was soon captured by German soldiers. He became a POW and was sent to a camp in Germany where he remained in horrid conditions until May 13, 1945.

When he returned to the United States after his liberation, John spent time recovering in a military hospital from severe malnutrition and other ailments related to his time in the POW camp. Upon his return to Ninety Six, John made good on a promise he had made to himself to woo and marry an acquaintance, Holly Self, affectionately known as Ms. Holly. The two married on June 12, 1947, and had three sons.

In 1946, John was officially discharged from the Air Force. He decided to go into business for himself, and opened a donut shop—the Golden Ring Bakery. He owned, managed and did all the work himself with the help of just one employee until 1954. John then accepted an offer from his father-in-law to become a manager at Greenwood Petroleum Company. He showed a real talent for the oil business, growing and expanding its operations. Later he inherited Greenwood Petroleum and began Drummond Oil Company, making both very successful businesses.

On June 6, 1964, John announced his candidacy for the South Carolina House of Representatives. He won his first election, and took his seat in the General Assembly in January 1965. He immediately caught the attention of the very powerful Speaker of the House, Sol Blatt, and he became one of "Sol's boys," which provided him invaluable tutelage and political opportunities.

Just two years later, John challenged the incumbent Senator from Greenwood over the issue of who should provide power to their rural county. He, with the help of his ally Duke Power, won that contest, and in January 1967, John became a South Carolina State Senator representing Greenwood.

Senator Drummond came into office with high ideals and a mind to shake up the status quo. His first effort was an attempt to eliminate the seniority system which controlled the Senate. His bold move was quickly thwarted by the Senate President Pro Tempore Edgar Brown.

During his 43 years in the General Assembly, Senator Drummond made education his top priority. He was a staunch supporter of the Education Finance Act of 1977, the Education Improvement Act of 1984, and the Education Accountability Act of 1998. He was also a strong advocate for the Home Rule Act of 1976, which allowed counties and municipalities more autonomy.

Senator Drummond has always been a proponent of more transparency in government. It was appropriate that his first committee chairmanship was of the Senate Ethics Committee. Under his leadership, the Senate passed the South Carolina Ethics Act of 1975, which established the State Ethics Commission with oversight over financial disclosure, campaign disclosure and conduct of elected officials. He was also a leading voice to expand the Commission's authority with the passage of the Ethics Reform Act of 1991, following the Operation Lost Trust scandal.

Senator Drummond was also a key player in the restructuring of State government. He served on the Commission on Government Restructuring, which made numerous recommendations that were enacted into law in 1993. In order to ensure passage of these reforms, Senator Drummond used his role as Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee to threaten to withhold the budget until the government restructuring package was approved. His political maneuvering paid off, and the Restructuring Act of 1993 passed with bipartisan support.

In 1996, Senator Drummond became the Senate President Pro Tempore, a title which he earned through the seniority system he had sought to dismantle as a young, independent-minded Freshman Senator. Although his rogue tendencies mellowed over time, Senator Drummond's effectiveness grew. In 2001, he became President Pro Tempore Emeritus when the Republicans took control of the Senate, but he didn't succumb to the pressure to switch parties as so many of his colleagues had.

Madam Speaker, I ask that you and my colleagues join me today in celebrating the extraordinary career and life of South Carolina Senator John Drummond, who I am proud to call one of my best friends in South Carolina politics and government. He is a true public servant, from his courageous service in World War II to his uncompromising representation in the South Carolina General Assembly. He has always remained true to the values instilled him growing up in the small community of Ninety Six. His tremendous legacy is one that honors his humble beginnings and speaks highly of his personal integrity. I commend John Drummond for his statesmanship and his numerous contributions to South Carolina and the Nation. I am proud to call him a friend.

CONGRATULATING THE PLATTSBURGH STATE WOMEN'S HOCKEY TEAM UPON WINNING THE 2008 DIVISION III NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

HON. JOHN M. McHUGH

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. McHUGH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the State University of New York at Plattsburgh (Plattsburgh State) Lady Cardinals upon winning the 2008 NCAA Division III Women's Ice Hockey National Championship, their second consecutive national championship. I am proud to represent the Lady Cardinals and the community of Plattsburgh.

On March 22, 2008, Plattsburgh State won the Division III National Championship when it defeated the Manhattanville College Lady Valiants by a score of 3 to 2 at the Stafford Ice Arena in Plattsburgh, NY. The Lady Cardinals seized the lead at 9:59 of the first period when Laurie Bowler scored the first goal of the game. After the Valiants evened the score just over a minute later, Stephanie Moberg and Captain Danielle Blanchard combined on a beautiful goal, finished by Blanchard, to put the Lady Cards back in the lead at 13:50. Forty-nine seconds later, Amber Ellis scored the Cardinals third and the eventual game-winning goal, which was assisted by Kate Fairfield and Brittany Meade. Goaltender Danielle Beattie turned away 22 shots to win her 21st game of the season.

Blanchard, Beattie, Captain Julie Devereux, Moberg, and Sharis Smith were all named to the NCAA All-Tournament Team; Blanchard and Devereux were also named to the AHCA All-American First Team. Blanchard, a three-time All-American who scored a career-high 28 goals as part of a 48-point season, also earned the 2008 Laura Hurd Award, which is given to the Nation's top player.

The Lady Cardinals were coached by head coach Kevin Houle, who won the Division III Women's Ice Hockey Coach of the Year for the third straight year and currently has the best career record (121–19–7; 847 winning percentage) among all active coaches in NCAA hockey. Other team members included assistant coaches Chad Kemp and Erin O'Brien and players Kristen Bond, Ainsley Brien, Assistant Captain Lindsay Brown, Kara Buehler, Shay Bywater, Elise Campbell, Megan DiJulio, Helen Giroux, Amanda Hoy, Tara Khan, Mandy Mackrell, Kayla McDougall, Steph Moon, Claire O'Connor, and Sarah Samson.

Madam Speaker, it is an honor to have the opportunity to congratulate the Plattsburgh State Lady Cardinals ice hockey team. Accordingly, I now ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the entire Lady Cardinals hockey team for their remarkable accomplishments this season.

CONGRESSWOMAN JO ANN S. DAVIS POST OFFICE

SPEECH OF

HON. BOB GOODLATTE

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 9, 2008

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this legislation. I think this is a fitting tribute to our late friend and colleague Jo Ann Davis. This legislation would designate Jo Ann's home post office in Gloucester, Virginia as the ''Congresswoman Jo Ann S. Davis Post Office.''

I had the opportunity to first meet Jo Ann Davis when she was a member of the Virginia General Assembly. She showed there the same courage, determination and hard work that she showed here during her service in the United States Congress. Right through to her final week here, she was still working for the people of the First Congressional District of Virginia. She was very proud of her representation of those great people and often talked about her district as being America's First Congressional District because it contained Jamestown and Yorktown and Williamsburg, and worked very hard for the past several years as we prepared for last year's celebration of the 400th anniversary of the settlement of Jamestown.

Sadly, Virginia lost a devoted public servant when Congresswoman Jo Ann Davis passed away after her two year battle with breast cancer. Jo Ann was not only a dear friend but a true public servant, working tirelessly on behalf of all Virginians. Jo Ann was an active and vocal participant of this body. She was vigilant in looking after the interests of Virginia and her congressional district. Jo Ann loved being in her district and particularly her home in Gloucester. It was here at home that she could be with her wonderful husband, Chuck, her children and grandchildren, and her horses and it was here where she passed on.

It is only fitting that the Jo Ann S. Davis Post Office will be in Gloucester, the town that she loved, in the district she fought tirelessly for here in Congress. This will serve as a memorial to her work for the people of America's First Congressional District, the people she served with distinction, courage, great honor and determination.

I am proud to be a cosponsor of this tribute to my friend Jo Ann. I hope that all members will join me in honoring the service of our brave and courageous colleague.

EXTENSION OF THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT TAX CREDIT

HON. ZOE LOFGREN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Madam Speaker, I rise to ask my colleagues to act swiftly to pass a strengthened and seamless extension of the Research and Development Tax Credit.

The R&D tax credit expired at the end of last year, creating an unacceptable degree of uncertainty for our country's most innovative industries.

An investment in R&D is an investment in the U.S. economy. In 2003, for example, U.S. companies invested $140.1 billion in domestic research and development.

As we have seen in Silicon Valley and elsewhere, that investment has strengthened our economy and led to remarkable technological advancements.

At a time when our economy is shedding jobs, a swift extension of the R&D tax credit makes abundant sense. More than 90% of the benefits of the credit are attributable to salaries of workers performing U.S.-based research.

A permanent extension of the credit would be ideal. Since its inception in 1981, the R&D tax credit has been extended 12 times for periods ranging from 5 years to 6 months.

Given the long time horizon for returns on R&D investments, this ad hoc and piecemeal approach to extending the credit is problematic.

Nonetheless, the prospect of the credit lapsing altogether is even more problematic. Given the intense global competition faced by our most innovative industries, we cannot cede any more ground to those countries that provide expansive, permanent R&D incentives to lure away R&D investments.

Swift action on the R&D tax credit is critical to innovation centers like the Silicon Valley and to the overall health of the U.S. economy.

We must act quickly and decisively to maintain and advance America's place as a leader in innovation.

ZACHARY BEATTIE

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Zachary Beattie, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 60, and by earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Zachary has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Along with his 42 merit badges, Zach has earned the World Heritage Award and the Mile Swim Award. Zach is also a Warrior in the Tribe of Mic-O-Say.

In 2003, Zach earned the Shawn Burke High Adventure Scouting Award and in 2005 he earned the Jeff Prewitt Scouting Spirit Award. Along with scouts, Zach is active in many community and school activities. Zach is also a member of Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Future Teachers of America and National Honor Society.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Zachary Beattie for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

TRIBUTE TO COMMEMORATE THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF DR. KING'S ASSASSINATION

HON. JAMES E. CLYBURN

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. CLYBURN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to mark 40 years since the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In doing so, I would like to submit for the RECORD a statement from Ralph B. Everett, President and CEO of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. The Joint Center is one of the nation's premier research and public policy institutions and the only one whose work focuses primarily on issues of particular concern to African Americans and other people of color.

''While the 40th anniversary of the assassination of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. evokes deeply troubling memories, it also serves as an important milestone in assessing the progress this nation has made and how far we must yet go to transform America in the way that Dr. King envisioned.

For many people, the passing of four decades has not diminished the memory of how difficult and uncertain those times were. In my hometown of Orangeburg, South Carolina, the tragic and untimely death of Dr. King intensified the sense of despair and unease that many of us already felt after the February 8, 1968, shooting by law enforcement officers of three unarmed students, including my high school classmate Delano Middleton, during a protest at South Carolina State College against a segregated bowling alley. This became known as the Orangeburg Massacre.

In those dark days we wondered, how would the dream survive without Dr. King to lead us toward the Promised Land?

But history records that sadness and anxiety gave way to determination and action. Dr. King's spirit continued to guide the movement as African Americans began to concentrate on the everyday task of translating hard won rights into representation and influence in our system of governance in order to secure justice under the law, greater opportunity and an America that lives up to its historic promise.

The Joint Center was founded for this purpose and played a critical role in the ensuing progress. Today, we honor Dr. King for his bequest of a legacy and a dream that did not die with him, but rather has served as a lodestar for all that has been accomplished since the tragic day of his assassination.

We also recognize there is much to be done—just as Dr. King did when, in the wake of historic gains in civil and voting rights, he sought to direct our attention to the need for fundamental changes in the political and economic life of the nation, so that justice could truly prevail and opportunity could flow to every American. On this day and in his memory, let us commemorate Dr. King's vision and, at the same time, invigorate ourselves with resolve and forbearance to make his dream a reality from sea to shining sea.''

Madam Speaker, I ask you to join Ralph B. Everett, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, and me in honoring the great legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. As we celebrate the life of Dr. King, I hope that we will be reminded to never be silent in the face

of injustices and inequities. I hope we will stand, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stood, for what is right, and just for all.

ULTIMATE TEST OF A MORAL SOCIETY

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, according to GAO we are $5.3 trillion deep in publicly held debt, and have an estimated $54.3 trillion in unfunded promised benefits if we don't change our current course.

The Social Security and Medicare Trustees reports recently issued only reinforce the dire condition of our fiscal health.

This is a fundamental issue for our country's economic future. It's also a generational issue.

Pete Peterson's commentary in Newsweek last week ends by quoting Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor who was instrumental in the resistance movement against Nazism.

He said, "The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world it leaves to its children."

I can't help but wonder what sort of future today's partisan Washington is leaving generations to come. If we can come together—both sides of the aisle—we can ensure that our children and grandchildren have all the opportunity you and I have had.

The bipartisan Cooper-Wolf SAFE Commission could give this country a chance to get back on track—to rein in entitlement spending. If there are other bipartisan ideas on how to address this issue, we should talk about those too.

Doing nothing is simply not an option. I urge Congressional leadership and Treasury Secretary Paulson to embrace the Cooper-Wolf legislation.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BILL SHUSTER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. SHUSTER. Madam Speaker, on rollcall Nos. 183, 184, and 185 I was not present because I was returning from a field hearing. Had I been present I would have voted: "yes" on rollcall 183—H. Res. 886, "yes" on rollcall 184—H. Res. 994, and "yes" on rollcall 185—H.R. 3548.

TRIBUTE TO DONALD DILLMAN

HON. MIKE PENCE

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. PENCE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Don Dillman's remarkable life of selfless service. Inspired by his strong Christian faith, he subordinated his personal struggle with diabetes to his singular focus on the important volunteer work he did to improve the community of Hope, Indiana. His admirable courage in the face of adversity is something special that deserves honoring today on the floor of the people's House.

Donald W. Dillman was born in Columbus, Indiana on March 8, 1940, to Shirley "Bud" and Jessie Cecil Anderson Dillman. He was a graduate of Hope High School, Class of 1957. On June 24, 1962, he married Rena Blake, with whom he shared and celebrated forty-five years of marriage.

The "unofficial mayor" of Hope, Don helped organize countless civic projects and community initiatives over the years ranging from new playground equipment for the town square to launching the Hope Chamber of Commerce. He even stepped in as an anonymous reporter covering Hope Town Council meetings for the Hope Star Journal.

Don worked for decades to improve the community, serving in important leadership positions. He served as President of Heritage of Hope for over thirty-five years. He was a founder and board member of the Hawcreek-Flatrock Endowment Fund, applying his fundraising prowess to help it grow to over $225,000. Since the early 1970s, Don led the Hope Heritage Days festival, which draws thousands to the town each fall.

Don was not just bold about fundraising for the community; he was also bold about his faith. He served as a deacon at the First Baptist Church of Hope for many years. But most of all his faith shone through his commitment to the community of Hope, Indiana despite his own physical illnesses.

Sadly, Don has passed away, but he leaves a strong legacy of personal faith and selfless service that serve as a powerful example to all who knew him. I offer my sincere condolences to his wife Rena, their sons Jon and Darrell, and two grandchildren James and Jessica.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL HORMONE DISRUPTION ACT AND THE WOMEN'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND DISEASE PREVENTION ACT

HON. LOUISE McINTOSH SLAUGHTER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, today I'm proud to introduce the Environmental Hormone Disruption Act and the Women's Environmental Health and Disease Prevention Act.

Consider for a moment that a woman's lifetime risk of breast cancer is 1 in 7 today, compared to 1 in 22 in the 1940s—over half of the cases are unexplained. And, over the last 30 years, the U.S. has seen a steep rise in the occurrence of childhood cancers, testicular cancer, juvenile diabetes, attention deficit disorder, learning disabilities, thyroid disorders, cognitive impairment, and autoimmune disorders. Autism cases alone rose 210 percent between 1987 and 1998.

About 100,000 chemicals are registered for use in the United States. However, 90 percent of these have never been fully tested for their impact on human health. Scientists have found that exposure to these synthetic chemicals disrupts hormone function and contributes to increased incidences of diseases. We already know the tragic impact that diethylstilbestrol, or DES, has had on the daughters of women who took this anti-miscarriage drug prescribed until 1971.

Furthermore, a recent article in the Boston Globe highlighted the possible link between obesity and exposure to bisphenol A (BPA), an estrogen-like compound found in many common plastic objects.

While the evidence is mounting that there is an association between these chemicals and hormone disruption, research remains limited, particularly on the impact on women and on how long-term, low-dose exposure to environmental pollutants impacts children at critical stages of development.

A couple years ago, I participated in a study conducted by the Environmental Working Group to find out what toxic substances I, in particular, and Americans in general, have been exposed to throughout our lives. My stunning test results showed literally hundreds of chemicals pumping through my vital organs every day. These chemicals include PCBs that were banned decades ago, as well as chemicals like Teflon that are currently under Federal investigation.

The study also tested 10 newborn babies and found that on average, each one had some 200 chemicals in their blood at the time of birth. The fact that we have children coming into this world already polluted and at the same time, do not know what the effects of that pollution will be on their mental and physical development, is both bad policy and immoral. We must test chemicals before they go onto the market, not after they get into our bloodstreams.

For several years, I have called on Congress to enact legislation that would allow NIH to expand its research on the impact of these chemical pollutants on the health of women and children.

Once again, I am introducing two important bills that I hope will advance this research—the Environmental Hormone Disruption Act and the Women's Environmental Health and Disease Prevention Act. The Environmental Hormone Disruption Act authorizes the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) to conduct a comprehensive program to research and educate the public on the health effects of hormone-disrupting chemicals. The Women's Environmental Health and Disease Prevention Act authorizes the NIEHS to establish multidisciplinary research centers to investigate how environmental factors may be related to women's health and disease prevention.

Increased investments in research now could prevent and treat a broad range of diseases and disorders in future generations. I urge my colleagues to support these bills today.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ROBERT E. ANDREWS

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. ANDREWS. Madam Speaker, I was unavoidably detained from voting on April 10, 2008. Had I been present I would have voted "yea" on the following rollcall votes: rollcall No. 178, rollcall No. 179. rollcall 180, rollcall 181.

I would have noted "nay" on the following rollcall vote: rollcall No. 182.

HONORING MATHEW DAVID BUCHHOLZ

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Mathew David Buchholz a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 303, and in earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Mathew has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Mathew has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Mathew David Buchholz for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

CONGRATULATING JUNOT DIAZ FOR WINNING THE 2008 PULITZER PRIZE FOR FICTION

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to praise and congratulate Junot Diaz for winning the Pulitzer Prize for fiction on Monday, April 7, 2008, for his novel ''The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao.''

Junot Diaz was born in the Dominican Republic on December 31, 1968, but has lived most of his life in New Jersey. As a child he loved reading, and his favorite book of all time is ''Planet of the Apes.'' After high school, Junot attended the University of Rutgers where he received his Bachelor's Degree in English in 1992, later received his Master of Fine Arts at the University of Cornell in 1995, where he decided to develop his passion for creative writing.

Junot Diaz first made a name for himself with his critically acclaimed short story collection ''Drown'' in 1996, which featured the short stories ''Ysrael'', and ''Drown''. In this novel he developed the short stories into segments of the life of a Dominican immigrant getting accustom to life in the United States. He also published a translated version of ''Drown'' titled ''Negocios.'' This short story novel made him a household name in the Dominican American communities nationwide.

His latest novel, ''The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao'' has been praised as the best novel of 2007 by Time Magazine, New York Magazine, the Washington Post, and countless other newspaper publications. In this novel he portrayed the story of a boy, who is fascinated with comic books, who lives with a dysfunctional Dominican family, who decide to move back home during the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo.

Junot Diaz is a wonderful example that anything you put your mind and dedication to can be achieved in great depth. He has achieved goals that many only dream about in a lifetime, at a tender age of 39. He serves as a great role model for youth in the United States as evidence the American dream can be achieved.

CONGRATULATING CLARENCE W. DUPNIK FOR 50 YEARS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICE TO THE TUCSON, ARIZONA, COMMUNITY

HON. ED PASTOR

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. PASTOR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to one of America's finest, Clarence W. Dupnik, Sheriff of Pima County, Arizona, who, this year, celebrates 50 years of law enforcement service to his community in Tucson, Arizona. Sheriff Dupnik began his career in February, 1958, as a Patrol Officer with the City of Tucson Police Department. While there, he held various positions, rising to Major in charge of Field Operations when he retired in January, 1977. From there, he was appointed Chief Deputy Sheriff of the Pima County Sheriffs Department, and was appointed Pima County Sheriff on February 19, 1980. Since that time, Sheriff Dupnik has been elected to 7 consecutive terms of office as Pima County Sheriff, a position in which he remains today. Of his 50 years of law enforcement service, Clarence Dupnik has served 31 years as Sheriff of Pima County, the 2nd largest populated county in the States of Arizona, and the 7th largest county in the nation—a remarkable achievement!

During his law enforcement career, Sheriff Dupnik has, among other things:

Led the reduction of the per capital crime rate in Pima County to levels equal to the City of Scottsdale and one-half the crime rate within the City of Tucson.

Created the Metropolitan Area Narcotics Trafficking Interdiction Squads (MANTIS).

Founded the Command Group of the Arizona Alliance Planning Committee, a joint federal, state, and local law enforcement task force to interdict and prevent the smuggling of illegal narcotics into Arizona from Mexico.

Collaborated with the FBI to participate in the Joint Terrorism Task Force, and was appointed to serve on the Executive Committee of the FBI.

Pursued and secured funding from the Department of Homeland Security for a helicopter to identify and interdict terrorists.

Introduced Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) in Pima County Schools.

Founded the drug prevention group known as the Arizonans for a Drug-Free Workplace, and serves as its Chairman.

Madam Speaker, the dedication and service of Clarence Dupnik to Pima County during his 50 year law enforcement career is truly commendable and worthy of note by this body. We thank Sheriff Dupnik for his long and illustrious career, and wish him further success in the years to come. We know that all of the years of public service have sacrificed time from this family and personal matters, so we take this moment to also thank and acknowledge his wife, Susie, and their families. The Tucson community, and the state of Arizona as a whole, is a better place because of you, my friend, Sheriff Dupnik.

IN HONOR OF SENATOR THURMAN G. ADAMS, JR., PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE DELAWARE STATE SENATE

HON. MICHAEL N. CASTLE

OF DELAWARE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. CASTLE. Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to recognize Senator Thurman G. Adams, Jr., who was elected by his colleagues as Senate President Pro Tempore of the Delaware General Assembly in January of 2003. Senator Adams is also the longest serving member of the State Senate in Delaware history, as he has represented the 19th Senate District of Sussex County since 1972, and I had the personal pleasure of serving with him in the State Senate during my last term as a Senator from 1972 to 1976 and again as Lt. Governor from 1981 to 1985. In addition, when I was Governor of Delaware from 1985 to 1993 I worked closely with Senator Adams on many issues.

During his career in public service, Senator Adams has held many distinguished positions. Before becoming President Pro Tempore, he served as Senate Majority Leader from 1999 to 2003. Senator Adams serves on several standing committees, including the Agriculture Committee, the Highways & Transportation Committee, and as longtime Chairman of the Executive Committee. In this position he has overseen the appointment of Chief Justices, Judges, cabinet secretaries and individuals to other prominent positions within State Government. He has worked for the interests of Delaware's farm community and expended much effort toward such causes as improving roads and the quality of Delaware's public education system. As a member of the Public Safety Committee, Senator Adams sponsored legislation that established Delaware's ''Enhanced 911'' emergency telephone system.

Senator Adams is a lifelong Delawarean, being born and raised in Bridgeville, DE, in the very district that he now represents. After graduating from Bridgeville High School, Senator Adams went on to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Education from the University of Delaware. Senator Adams was married for almost 50 years to Hilda McCabe Adams, who passed away in 2002. His world revolves around family and his two daughters, Polly and Lynn, son Brent who passed away, seven grandsons and four great-grandchildren mean the world to him. He is the president of T.G. Adams & Sons, Inc., a feed and grain company, and oversees a large farming business. Senator Adams has served on various boards, including the Eastern Shore Grain Dealers Association, of which he was president, chairman of the United Methodist Church Administrative board, president of Harrington Raceway, and as director of Baltimore Trust Company, Milford Memorial Hospital and the Medical Center of Delaware. In addition to his public service, Senator Adams devotes time to community outreach and charitable projects through the Bridgeville Lions Club, several Shrine Clubs, and numerous other organizations. Finally, if we could get his beloved Baltimore Orioles back into the World Series I am certain Senator Adams would consider his work complete, well at least for a moment or so.

I commend and thank Senator Thurman Adams for his innumerable contributions and many years of admirable service to the State of Delaware. I am confident that he will continue to serve the people of Delaware with passion and excellence and I am very proud to call him my friend.

CONGRATULATING THE ARMY RESERVE ON ITS CENTENNIAL

SPEECH OF

HON. STEVE BUYER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 8, 2008

Mr. BUYER. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of House Joint Resolution 70. The Centennial of the Army Reserves marks our proud heritage of citizen soldiers who have always answered the call to duty with honor and pride. I want to thank my colleagues Mr. BISHOP, Mr. TAYLOR, and Mr. SHIMKUS for their leadership on this resolution. As an original cosponsor of this resolution and as a co-chair of the National Guard and Reserve Components Caucus, I'm very pleased that 260 of my colleagues from both sides of the aisle recognize the crucial impact the members of the Army Reserve have had on this great Nation throughout its 100-year history.

Over my 28 years of service as a member of the Army Reserve, I have had the good fortune to see firsthand the actions of the men and women of this fine organization—they are the virtual bedrock of our Nation. I've seen the dedication of these Citizen-Soldiers operating across the United States; in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany; during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in Kuwait and surrounding countries; and in the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Regardless of the operating environment or the personal sacrifice required, these great Americans have responded again and again to our Nation's call. From the initial call-up of the Army Reserve to run down the bandit ''Pancho'' Villa, through bloody battles in World Wars I and II, to the wars in the Persian Gulf, they have always answered the Nation's call in its time of need, riding toward the sound of the guns, around the world, without hesitation.

Today's Army Reserve can no longer be characterized as a strategic reserve; it is an operational force called upon to be at the forefront of our Nation's warfighting capability. Of the 180,000 officers and enlisted soldiers serving in today's Army Reserve, nearly 3,000 are Hoosiers. I'm extremely proud of these men and women and the sacrifices that they make every day to keep our Nation free and safe.

Lieutenant General Jack Stultz, the Chief of the United States Army Reserve, recently said, ''Our Citizen-Soldiers depend on their families, friends, civilian employers, and community to help them balance their responsibilities and commitments.'' And so, to those who support our federal Citizen-Soldiers, I offer my heartfelt thanks and congratulations for helping make this centennial possible. And to the families and loved ones of the 156 soldiers of the Army Reserve who have borne the ultimate sacrifice in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, including the family of Staff Sergeant Keith Maupin whose body was indentified only days ago after being classified as missing-captured for nearly 4 years, I offer my deepest thanks and respect for your sacrifice. And to the family of Sergeant Ahmed Altaie, who is still listed as missing-captured after 16 months, I offer my continued hope and prayers.

At any given time, more than 20,000 Army Reserve Soldiers are deployed to no fewer than 18 countries around the world. Their efforts ensure that America's vital national security interests are fulfilled and that our homeland is protected. I am proud to be counted among their ranks.

These Soldiers and their loved ones shoulder a greater share of our burden than at any time in our Nation's history. This resolution represents an opportunity for Congress to recognize the incredible history of service, sacrifice, and accomplishment of those Soldiers who have served in the Army Reserve since its inception. Please join me in celebrating that heritage and recognizing their proud history by supporting this resolution.

CONGRATULATING THE ARMY RESERVE ON ITS CENTENNIAL

SPEECH OF

HON. TODD TIAHRT

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 8, 2008

Mr. TIAHRT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to join my colleagues in support of H.J. Res. 70, congratulating the Army Reserve on their 100-year history. The U.S. Constitution of 1789 and the Militia Act of 1792 officially reaffirmed the continued reliance of the new Nation on the citizen-soldier for defense. According to Army Reserve Historian Lee S. Harford, Jr., the antecedents and heritage of the current United States Army Reserve are found in the tradition of the ''federal'' or ''national'' American citizen-soldier, dating back at least as far as the French and Indian War (1756–1763). America would be a very different place were it not for the patriotism and dedication of these citizen-warriors.

Members of the Army Reserve bring maturity, experience and civilian-acquired skills to the active military components and since September 11, 2001, over 188,025 soldiers have been mobilized in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Army Reserve provides trained and ready soldiers and units with the critical combat service support and combat support capabilities necessary to support Nation strategy during peacetime, contingencies and war. They are a key element in the Army multi-component unit force, training with Active and National Guard units to ensure all 3 components work as a fully integrated team.

Since September 11th, the Nation's Reserve Components have evolved from a strategic force in reserve to an operational force that is constantly deployed. Gone are the days of working 2 weekends a month and 2 weeks in the summer. The on-going Global War on Terrorism has seen citizen-warrior deployments go from 1 in every 5 years to now 1 in every 2–3 years. Army Reserve members are deployed all around the world and fulfill a wide range of capabilities that include war-fighting, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and post-conflict and transitional operations such as democracy building, stability efforts and peace-keeping. Many of my fellow Kansans share in this tremendous Army Reserve tradition, as members of the 89th Regional Readiness Command. Their mission is to help train and deploy America's most effective supporting ground forces.

Army Reserve soldiers must balance military obligations with family obligations and also manage a delicate balance with their full-time civilian careers. Employers must cope with these year-long deployments and balance the instability created from having one less employee to conduct business. Additionally, we as a Nation must ensure that these Army Reserve heroes are taken care of when they return from deployments. We must properly treat returning soldiers for post traumatic stress disorders, and ensure their transition back to civilian life is as smooth as possible.

I encourage my colleagues to support this important resolution and am pleased that today the House recognizes the role of the Army Reserve.

HONORING MR. JOSEPH DELANEY FOR HIS YEARS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE ON STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK

HON. VITO FOSSELLA

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. FOSSELLA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a pillar of community service in my district, Mr. Joseph Delaney. The University of Notre Dame Alumni Association officially recognizes 230 Alumni clubs throughout the world. This includes the University of Notre Dame Alumni Club of Staten Island, located in my Congressional District. For 10 years the Staten Island Club was led by a gentleman I rise to honor today, Mr. Joseph Delaney.

During Joe's leadership, the Alumni Club became one of the most altruistic, charity-oriented organizations on Staten Island. The University of Notre Dame Alumni Association recognized the Staten Island Club with its prestigious Charlie F. Lennon Award, recognizing it as the most outstanding club in the entire network, in both 1999 and 2005. The club was also recognized by the University Alumni Association as the most outstanding club for their size of membership three times, in 1997, 2002, and 2005.

Joe's community service is not restricted solely to his leadership of the Alumni Club. In the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks Joe arranged for the University of Notre Dame Glee Club to visit Staten Island and headline a fundraiser which raised $11,000 to help the families of police and fire officers who died at the World Trade Center. On two separate occasions Joe has coordinated fundraisers for the benefit of St. Peter's Elementary School raising a total of $17,000 for the school.

While no longer serving as the Club's President, Joe continues to direct their annual Christmas Toy Drive which aides the Salvation Army, The New York Foundling Hospital, and the Seaman's Society. He also coordinates their Annual Thanksgiving Clothes Drive which provides coats to the needy at Project Hospitality. One of Joe's greatest charity successes has been building the annual ''Bread of Life Food Drive.'' Through this drive the Alumni

Club has donated over 800,000 food products to local needy families and individuals. The New York City Council recognized Joe's efforts for the Food Drive and honored him with an award in 1997.

Certainly, Joe Delaney is a giant of the Staten Island community service community and I rise today to join the Notre Dame Alumni Club in honoring Joe for his years of service to our community. The Alumni Club will be honoring Joe at their annual ''Universal Notre Dame Celebration'' on April 18th.

I rise to offer gratitude to Mr. Delaney on behalf of my constituents on Staten Island, and to thank him for his years of community service.

CONGRATULATING MICHAEL J. MAHER ON RECEIVING THE MOTHER ROSALIE CLIFTON HILL SERVICE AWARD

HON. DARRELL E. ISSA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. ISSA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Michael J. Maher upon his receipt of the University of San Diego's Mother Rosalie Clifton Hill Service Award for 2008.

In honor of Mother Rosalie Clifton Hill, the University of San Diego (USD) presents this award annually to an alumnus who personifies the spirit and philosophy of the University. Such a person must exhibit involvement, service enthusiasm and commitment well beyond what is expected of an USD alumnus; demonstrate support of, and service to the USD Alumni Association; and must exemplify in all aspects of his or her life an incorporation of honesty, loyalty, integrity and fidelity.

Michael J. Maher epitomizes these above mentioned qualifications. Graduating from the University of San Diego in 1970 with a bachelor's degree in philosophy, Mr. Maher returned to San Diego in 1976 to begin his 32-year professional career.

Maher has been a fervent supporter of the University of San Diego's athletic programs. He has been instrumental in the continued success of the University's golf program as well as the Torero Athletic Committee. He has dedicated hundreds of hours of mentoring to student athletes.

His continued support of the University has positively influenced associates and fellow alumni to become more involved.

Madam Speaker, I ask you to please join me in congratulating Michael Maher upon his receipt of this esteemed honor.

WEEK OF THE YOUNG CHILD

SPEECH OF

HON. NANCY E. BOYDA

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 14, 2008

Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, on February 5, 2008 the President sent Congress his proposed budget. This budget is out of touch with the values of the good people who reside in the Second District of Kansas. I am deeply concerned about the President's funding cuts in early childhood education.

Head Start is a successful national school readiness program. It provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition and parent involvement services to low-income children and their families. Unfortunately, Head Start has experienced a 12 percent decline in funding from Fiscal Year 2002 through Fiscal Year 2009. These recent cuts have left individual Head Start programs strapped for funding and only able to serve about 40 percent of the eligible population of children and families. Without increased funding, this percentage will continue to decrease due to the reality that more families are having difficulty making ends meet. For Kansas, this means putting in jeopardy the over 50,000 children who currently use these services. I joined with my colleagues in sending letters to the Budget Committee and the Appropriations Committee asking them to make funding for Head Start a priority and hope we will soon vote to increase funds for Head Start.

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program provides funding for child care for low income families. Child care costs continue to skyrocket—Kansas families pay an average of about $9,000 a year for an infant in full-time center care. Yet federal support for affordable child care hasn't kept pace. Because of funding shortfalls, only about one in seven children eligible for federal assistance actually receives it. Over the last six years about 150,000 children lost child care due to CCDBG funding shortfalls. Congress must renew its commitment to making sure our children—our future—aren't the ones bearing the burden of tight financial times. Kansans rely on CCDBG—in 2005, 18,800 Kansas children were served by the CCDBG. We need to make sure that Kansas' working parents have access to low-cost, high-quality child care so they can continue working and supporting their family. I joined in sending a letter to the Appropriations Committee asking them to support funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program and hope to vote for an increase in funding this year.

My fellow colleagues, it is time that we have a frank and open conversation with the American people. The decisions that this Congress is going to have to make for this next fiscal year are going to be tough, but they must be done. Over the next months, we must work together to restore fiscal responsibility and, at the same time, make sure we deliver services to our constituents. Being fiscally responsible does not mean that we can forget about the importance of early childhood education. Programs like Head Start and CCDBG are important for everyone involved: they enable lower income families to work and improve their economic situation; they make sure that dedicated public servants, like child care providers, receive the compensation they deserve; and they ensure that all children get the social and educational start that will serve them throughout their lives.

HONORING CHUCK AND BOBBIE TERRELL

HON. JOE BACA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. BACA. Madam Speaker, on May 16, 2008, the San Bernardino community will gather to honor Chuck and Bobbie Terrell as they are presented with the prestigious Golden Baton Award from the San Bernardino Symphony Guild. In the Guild's 77 years of its existence, this will only be the ninth time that this honor has been awarded. The Guild is honoring them not only for their significant contribution to the San Bernardino Symphony but also for their commitment and dedication to the San Bernardino community as a whole for having spent over 50 years in the field of education.

After honorably serving his country in the United States Marine Corps, Chuck began his career by teaching social science at Azusa High School in 1956. Over the next 10 years, he served as a teacher, a counselor, the director of activities, the unit administrator, and finally, as principal, starting in 1963. During those years, Bobbie supported her husband by raising their children, and also stayed active in her church, the Jr. Women's Club and the United Way. In addition to performing his duties as principal, Chuck received his education doctorate from the University of Southern California.

From 1966 to 1977, Chuck served as superintendent of schools for the communities of Needles, Corona and Norco. Bobbie received her B.A. in psychology from Cal State Fullerton in 1974, and began teaching elementary school in Chino.

For the past 30 years the Terrells have made their home in San Bernardino. Chuck became San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools in 1982 and worked in that capacity until his retirement in 1993. After receiving her master's degree in counseling from Cal State San Bernardino, Bobbie worked in the Alvord School District as an elementary counselor and a resource specialist. Bobbie eventually earned her school psychologist's credential from Cal State San Bernardino and became a school psychologist in the Jurupa Unified School District until her retirement in 1993.

Their careers aside, I am sure the Terrells would say that their greatest accomplishment is their family, which includes their children Greg and Kathy, their six granddaughters and two great-grandchildren.

In retirement, the Terrells continue to serve their community as they always have. Chuck still serves San Bernardino to this day, as president of the board of trustees for the San Bernardino Community College District. Bobbie has served as treasurer for the San Bernardino Symphony Guild for the past 4 years. Active in the Presbyterian Church, she has also served as treasurer at the presbytery level for 6 years.

Madam Speaker, it is my great honor to recognize the service, sacrifice, and dedication of Chuck and Bobbie Terrell. Their impact on our community over the years serves as a great reminder that a life spent educating others is a life of a true patriot.

HONORING MORGAN WALKER MARTZ

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize, Morgan Walker Martz a

very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 175, and in earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Morgan has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Morgan has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Morgan Walker Martz for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

APRIL 15TH—TAX DAY

HON. MICHAEL T. McCAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. McCAUL of Texas. Madam Speaker, once again the Tax Man cometh. Today, April 15, is the day American taxpayers scramble to comply with a tax code, over 67,000 pages long.

In 2007, individual taxpayers spent an estimated 3.18 billion hours complying with the Federal income tax laws. Individuals spend $26.5 billion for tax software, tax preparers, postage, and other costs related to filing their Federal income tax, while corporations spend $156.5 billion to comply with Federal tax laws. Americans may send two and a half trillion dollars to the IRS, but the cost to our economy is much greater. Despite this, the majority party is forcing a $654 billion tax increase on the American people, the largest in American history.

It's time to scrap the IRS and this oppressive tax code. It's time to look at the fair tax or the flat tax as viable alternatives to our overly burdensome tax code. It's time to stop punishing taxpayers and pass fundamental tax reform.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam Speaker, I was unable to be present for three rollcall votes on April 14th. If I had been present for those votes, I would have voted as follows:

First, on rollcall No. 183, to suspend the rules and pass H. Res. 886, Expressing sympathy to the victims and families of the tragic acts of violence in Colorado Springs, Colorado and Arvada, Colorado, as a cosponsor of the resolution I would have voted ''yes.''

As the resolution reminds us all, on Sunday, December 9, 2007, a troubled individual was responsible for killing several innocent people and injuring others at, first, the Youth With a Mission facility in Arvada and, a few hours later, at the New Life Church in the Colorado Springs Area—where he was fatally shot by Jeanne Assam, a volunteer private security guard.

The resolution rightly commends Ms. Assam and the quick response of local first responders in the city of Arvada and in Jefferson County as well as those in El Paso County and Colorado Springs who, assisted by Federal authorities and medical professionals limited the danger to the church and local community. And it offers the heartfelt condolences of the House of Representatives to the victims and families of these tragic acts of violence in Colorado and conveys our gratitude to Jeanne Assam, city and county officials, as well as the police, fire, sheriff, Federal authorities, and emergency medical teams whose quick response saved lives.

Second, on rollcall No. 184, to suspend the rules and pass H. Res. 994, regarding National Glanzmann's Thrombasthenia Awareness Day, I would have voted ''yes.''

And, third, on rollcall No. 185, to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 3548, as amended, the Plain Language in Government Communications Act, as a cosponsor of that measure I would have voted ''yes.''

H.R. 3548 requires Federal agencies to use plain language in government documents related to obtaining a service or a benefit. It responds to the fact that government documents often are complex and difficult to understand, particularly when they are not written clearly. To address this problem, President Clinton in 1998 issued a memorandum that, in part, required Federal agencies to use plain language in all documents that explain how to obtain a benefit or service. However, while a few agencies still maintain plain language programs, efforts to promote plain language have waned. H.R. 3548 defines plain language and requires agencies to use plain language in any new document that explains how to obtain a service or a benefit or that is relevant to obtaining a service or a benefit. The bill ensures that many of the letters, forms, and other documents that people receive from the government will be written in a clear, understandable way. Under this bill, for example, the Social Security Administration would be required to use plain language in letters that provide beneficiaries information about Social Security.

I joined in cosponsoring the bill because I think it is important for those of us in government to do more to communicate clearly with our employers, the American people, and I hope that the Senate will join the House in giving prompt approval to the legislation.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BOBBY L. RUSH

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. RUSH. Madam Speaker, during the week of February 25–29, 2008, I was unavoidably absent from rollcall votes 69–87.

Had I been present I would have voted ''yea'' on rollcall vote 69, H. Res. 978, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 70, H. Res. 930, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 71, H. Res. 944, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 74, H. Res. 974, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 75, H.R. 3521 the Sires of New Jersey Amendment, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 76, H.R. 3521 the Meek of Florida Amendment, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 81, H. Res. 1001, ''nay'' on rollcall vote 83, H.R. 5351 on Motion to Recommit with Instructions, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 84, H.R. 5351, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 85, S. 2272, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 86, H.R. 4454, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 87, H.R. 4454.

Madam Speaker, during the week of March 3–7, 2008, I was unavoidably absent from rollcall votes 88–106.

Had I been present I would have voted ''yea'' on rollcall vote 88, H.R. 1143, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 89, H.R. 1311, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 90, H.R. 816, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 91, H.R. 4191, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 92, H. Con. Res. 278, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 93, H. Res. 951, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 96, H. Res. 1014, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 97, H.R. 4774, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 98, H. Con. Res. 286, ''nay'' on rolicall vote 100, H.R. 1424 the Motion to Recommit with Instructions, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 101, H.R. 1424, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 102, H.R. 5400, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 104, H. Res. 1015, ''nay'' on rollcall vote 105, H.R. 2857 the Flake of Arizona Amendment, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 106, H.R. 2857 the Inslee of Washington Amendment.

Madam Speaker, during the week of March 10–14, 2008, I was unavoidably absent from rollcall votes 108–145.

Had I been present I would have voted ''yea'' on rollcall vote 108, H. Res. 537, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 109, H.R. 3196, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 110, H.R. 4166, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 115, H. Res. 924, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 116, Motion, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 117, H.R. 2082, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 118, H. Res. 948, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 119, H. Res. 493, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 122, H. Res. 1031, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 130, H. Res. 1036, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 131, H.R. 5563, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 132, H. Con. Res. 316, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 133, H. Res. 936, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 134, S. 2733, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 137, H. Con. Res. 312 Kilpatrick of Michigan Amendment, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 138, H. Con. Res. 312 Lee of California Amendment, ''nay'' on rollcall vote 140, H. Con. Res. 312 Ryan of Wisconsin Amendment, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 141, H. Con. Res. 312, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 142, H. Res. 991, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 143, H. Res. 1041 On Ordering the Previous Question, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 144, H. Res. 1041 On Agreeing to the Resolution, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 145, H.R. 3773.

Madam Speaker, during the week of March 31–April 4, 2008, I was unavoidably absent from rolicall votes 147–160.

Had I been present I would have voted ''yea'' on rollcall vote 147, H.R. 3352, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 148, H.R. 2675, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 149, H. Con. Res. 302, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 150, H. Con. Res. 310, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 151, H. Res. 1005, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 152, H. Res. 1021, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 154, H. Res. 1065 On Ordering the Previous Question, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 155, H. Res. 1065 On Agreeing to the Resolution, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 156, H.R. 5501 Carson of Indiana Amendment, ''nay'' on rollcall vote 157, H.R. 5501 On Motion to Recommit with Instructions, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 158, H.R. 5501 On Passage, ''nay'' on rollcall vote 159, H.R. 4847 On Motion to Recommit with Instructions, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 160, H.R. 4847 On Passage.

Madam Speaker, during the week of April 7–11, 2008, I was unavoidably absent from rollcall votes 161–182.

Had I been present I would have voted ''yea'' on rollcall vote 161, H.J. Res. 70, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 162, H.R. 2464, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 163, S. 793, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 164, H. Res. 1084 On Ordering the Previous Question, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 165, H. Res.

1084 On Agreeing to the Resolution, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 166, H. Res. 1077, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 167, H.R. 2016 the Grijalva of Arizona Amendment, ''nay'' on rollcall vote 168, H.R. 2016 the Bishop of Utah Amendment, ''nay'' on rollcall vote 169, H.R. 2016 the Bishop of Utah Amendment, ''nay'' on rollcall vote 170, H.R. 2016 the Bishop of Utah Amendment, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 171, H.R. 2016 the Altmire of Pennsylvania Amendment, ''nay'' on rollcall vote 172, H.R. 2016 the Pearce of New Mexico Amendment, ''nay'' on rollcall vote 173, H.R. 2016 On Motion to Recommit with Instructions, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 174, H.R. 2016 On Passage, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 175, H.R. 2419, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 176, H.R. 5489, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 177, H.R. 5472, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 179, H. Res. 1083, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 180, H. Res. 1038, ''yea'' on rollcall vote 181, H. Res. 1092, ''nay'' on rollcall vote 182, H.R. 2537 the Flake of Arizona Amendment.

THE DAILY 45: 23 CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOL CHILDREN KILLED TO DATE

HON. BOBBY L. RUSH

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. RUSH. Madam Speaker, today, Americans across the country are engaging in a debate on whether or not they are bitter. Whether it's bitterness about guns or bitterness about the economy.

Madam Speaker, this debate is a diversion from the real issue of the plague of gun violence in our communities. I rise, today, to mourn the gun-related deaths of far too many young people who were students at Chicago's public schools. As of today, that number stands at 23–all but two of those deaths was due to gun violence.

That's 23 young people who, in the pursuit of what other families take for granted—getting an education—have to duck and cover just to learn how to read and write.

Shannon Brown, 17, is the latest student to die from a gunshot. Described by his younger brother, Keishawn, as a ''good big brother,'' Brown was a happy and responsible child who enjoyed school and hanging out with his friends. He became the victim of gun violence following a fist fight in his neighborhood.

Like a scene from a bad Hollywood movie, he stumbled toward his home, while bleeding profusely, and collapsed on the stairs. Last week, law enforcement captured his alleged assailant, the 26–year-old who Shannon had bested in the fist fight.

When will Americans say ''enough is enough? Stop the killings!

INTRODUCTION OF THE ROTH TSP ACT OF 2008

HON. THELMA D. DRAKE

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Ms. DRAKE. Madam Speaker, today is tax day. This is a day when all Americans are reminded of the federal government's treatment of their hard-earned money, investments, and retirement savings. Our servicemembers in Iraq and Afghanistan think about these issues as well. I firmly believe it is time to improve the options at their disposal to secure a comfortable retirement after their service to our Nation.

Currently, two common options available in the private sector used as retirement savings tools are the Individual Retirement Account (IRA) and a 401(k), which is an employer-sponsored retirement plan where the employer matches the employee's contributions up to a specified limit. Both can be structured as either a ''Traditional'' or ''Roth'' plan.

Many are familiar with the Roth and Traditional IRA options as Roth IRAs have been around since 1998. However, a Roth 401(k) is a fairly new option that is similar to the Roth IRA in that it allows after-tax contributions to fund tax-free retirement income.

The Roth 401(k) option was established as part of the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 (EGTRRA) and went into effect on January 1, 2006. The Pension Protection Act of 2006, signed into law by President Bush on August 17, 2006, makes the Roth 401(k) permanent, removing the December 31, 2010 expiration date that previously was in force.

Traditional IRA and 401(k) plans are funded through tax-deferred contributions or ''before-tax'' contributions, which means the money contributed is taken out of a person's pay before Federal and, in almost all cases, state income taxes are withheld. Any earnings are also tax-deferred. This means that an individual does not pay income taxes on contributions and earnings in their IRA or 401(k) account until their money is withdrawn, usually at retirement.

With a Roth plan, an individual does not receive the tax deduction for their contribution, but all the money in the account grows tax-free and can be withdrawn tax-free subject to certain criteria. For many, the Roth is the better deal.

As such, more and more companies have started to offer Roth 401(k)s since they were allowed to start doing so two years ago, and many firms that don't yet provide this option are considering adding it in the future.

However, in a glaring omission, this same option has not been extended to the federal Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), which is the federal government's in-house 401(k) retirement savings plan for the federal workforce and our men and women in uniform.

That is why today I have introduced the Roth TSP Act of 2008. This bill will simply provide the same 401(k) options available in the private sector to participants in the TSP. Currently, there are 3.9 million account holders in the TSP. These include civilians who are employed by the U.S. Government and our military personnel.

Our men and women in uniform and the federal workforce may find the option to structure their retirement plans as a Roth TSP to be a better deal. My legislation will place the same options available in the private sector at their disposal and provide another option when considering their long term financial and retirement planning. Allowing this option could provide greater growth potential and greater return on investment for their retirement savings than under the traditional TSP structure.

Consider the potential benefit to our military. If military personnel serve in a combat zone as an enlisted person or as a warrant officer for any part of a month, all military pay received for military service in that month is excluded from their gross income. For commissioned officers, the monthly exclusion is capped at the highest enlisted pay, plus any hostile fire or imminent danger pay received. With a Roth TSP, these individuals could earn this pay tax-free, grow their investment in their Roth TSP, and then withdraw it all tax-free after age 59½, having never been required to pay taxes on the invested money.

The men and women of our military worry about consequences on a day-to-day basis that most Americans never even consider. The least we can do in return is provide our service members with choices and options that will allow them to plan for their future and help to ensure that they never have to worry about a secure retirement.

WEEK OF THE YOUNG CHILD

SPEECH OF

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 14, 2008

Mr. SKELTON. Madam Speaker, let me take this means to add my voice of support to the Head Start program. As you know, since the program began more than 40 years ago, it has served millions of low-income children and their families across the United States.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to visit Head Start centers across Missouri's 4th Congressional District, which I have the honor to represent in Congress. I am always impressed by the dedicated staff who do so many good things to help prepare the children for their school careers. Every child in America has the right to a good start in life. It can make all the difference in their future. By partnering with parents to promote early childhood development, which is so critical, Head Start helps make sure that those futures are not jeopardized on the basis of a family's income.

This year, I have continued my strong support for Head Start funding and will work with my colleagues in the days ahead to see that this vital program's future is secure. Children truly are the hope of our Nation. They will be the leaders of tomorrow, and we owe it to them to see they have every opportunity to succeed.

CELEBRATING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EDGE HILL FIRE COMPANY

HON. ALLYSON Y. SCHWARTZ

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Ms. SCHWARTZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and congratulate the Edge Hill Fire Company on the celebration of their 100th anniversary. Beginning in 1908 with just a few volunteers and hand drawn equipment, the Edge Hill Fire Company has developed into a modern, professional fire company.

In Philadelphia 272 years ago, Benjamin Franklin started the first fire department in

America. Franklin's brigade, comprised entirely of volunteers, was dedicated to looking out for their neighbors. Today, volunteers constitute 73 percent of all firefighters nationwide, and Franklin's proud tradition of volunteerism is being continued by the brave firefighters of Edge Hill Fire Company.

In 1909, following a serious fire in the village of Edge Hill, a few residents spearheaded the effort to protect properties and lives in their community against future destruction. By 1911, Edge Hill Fire Company was able to purchase a fire truck, the first motorized apparatus in Abington Township. In 1933, the company moved into a new firehouse, built and funded largely by the company's volunteers. This firehouse, located on Limekiln Pike at Cricket Avenue is still in use today, but has been renovated to serve as a meeting hall. As the community grew, so did the fire company, building a large addition in 1956 to include three truck bays, a service bay, hose tower, radio and recreation room.

Today, the company continues their proud tradition of providing the best service to the community. They, as the firefighters described by Benjamin Franklin, still "apply themselves with all vigilance and resolution," as well as dedication and courage, to the protection of their community in times of fire crises and as promoters of fire safety and prevention.

Madam Speaker, once again I congratulate the members of the Edge Hill Fire Company for their service, commitment, and sacrifice. I ask that my colleagues join me in celebrating this milestone and wish the dedicated firefighters another 100 years of success and safety.

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL ALBERT P. BARRY

HON. JOHN P. MURTHA

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. MURTHA. Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the late Lt. Col. Albert P. Barry, USMC (Ret.). On December 2, 2007, Lt. Col. Barry passed away at his South Carolina home with his loving wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Taylor Barry, by his side. On January 16, 2008, he received full U.S. Marine Corps honors at Arlington National Cemetery. The date was very special in that it would have been Al and Liz's 20th wedding anniversary.

Madam Speaker, Al lived a full and courageous life even through his battle with glioblastoma, terminal brain cancer. He refused to give up and he and Liz filled their last year with hope, prayer, and as much laughter as possible. Sustained by family and all those who knew him well, Al's reaction was typical of the Marine within. He had been given his "orders"—by physicians this time—and he set out to "beat it." He never complained—and never failed to be Al Barry.

Albert P. Barry was born on April 12, 1936, in New Haven, Connecticut. He earned a Bachelor's Degree at Tufts University and a Master's Degree at Syracuse University. In 1958, he joined the U.S. Marine Corps, was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in December 1959, and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1979. His 21-year active duty service in the Marine Corps included tours with three Marine Divisions. He served as a Marine Barracks Commanding Officer in the Personnel Management and Assignment Office at Marine Corps Headquarters, and completed his career in the Liaison Office to the United States Senate from July 1975 until November 1979. He spent two tours in the Vietnam War with duty as an Aerial Observer; he served as a Battery Commander twice, a Battalion Operations Officer, an Assistant Regimental Operations Officer, and a Marine Amphibious Unit Operations Officer and Fire Support Coordinator. He received many notable personal decorations during his military service, which include the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star with Combat "V," the Air Medal, the Navy Commendation Medal with the Combat "V," the Navy Achievement Medal, the Combat Action Ribbon, the Presidential Unit Citation, the Navy Unit Citation, the Vietnam Staff Service Honor Medal and other campaign medals.

Following his U.S. Marine Corps Service, Mr. Barry served as a Legislative Director in the U.S. Senate and was appointed in 1981 as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Reagan Administration. He was awarded the Department of Defense Civilian Distinguished Service Medal in 1985.

Mr. Barry's professional positions included Director of Legislative Affairs for Sikorsky Aircraft, Director of Washington Operations for Pneumo Abex Corporation, and Vice President of Washington Operations for AAI Corporation. He was active in defense and industrial associations, and officially retired in March of 2006.

Surviving family in addition to his wife, Elizabeth, include eight children, two step-children, five sons-in-law, one daughter-in-law, and eleven grandchildren. The children are Barbara Barry, Emily Helm, Paul Barry, Kathleen Mullins, Eileen Macleay, Beatrice McMurrer, Sarah Smith, Matthew Barry, Tanya Taylor, and Tom Taylor.

Madam Speaker, Lt. Col. Albert Barry was a true American Patriot. He was a man who loved his family and did his duty to his country. He was unselfish in service and he was a great friend to many, including myself. I want to conclude my remarks by commending him for his life well lived and I want to thank him for his many years of service in helping to make our country great.

TAX DAY, APRIL 15TH

HON. JACKIE SPEIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, I have long known that the war in Iraq was costing our Nation far too much. But after less than a week here in Washington, I'm sad to say, it is even worse than I thought. Today, on the day millions of Americans pay their Federal income taxes, it is disheartening to point out that the average American's total tax bill pays for less than one half of one second of this unnecessary war.

At a time when hard-working, two-income families struggle to pay their mortgages, when gas prices force small businesses to raise prices on basic services and necessities, when support for college students continues to decline and CEO salaries rise faster than a carnival balloon, it is time to bring a dose of sanity to our tax laws.

Madam Speaker, today we took an important step by passing legislation to deny government contracts to firms that are delinquent in tax payments. No longer shall we allow corporations to reap war profits while defrauding taxpayers by not paying their fair share.

We also took aim at the ridiculous practice of hiring outside collection agencies to harass American taxpayers at a cost higher than the money they take in. If America truly is the land of opportunity, then that opportunity must extend to all members of the American family. We cannot be nickel-and-diming hardworking families while losing tens of billions of dollars in waste, fraud and abuse in questionable contracts awarded to politically-connected firms doing business in Iraq.

Madam Speaker, I am new to this body, but I am not new to politics. I understand that the only way anything gets done in the halls of power is when someone stands up and insists on action. Today, on Tax Day, let us make a promise to work toward ending this devastating and costly war, providing middle-income tax relief and once and for all doing away with subsidies for oil companies. Only then, can Americans start to feel that Tax Day is something more than a shake-down of hard-working families.

CBO COST ESTIMATE FOR H.R. 5715, THE ENSURING CONTINUED ACCESS TO STUDENT LOANS ACT OF 2008

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, with respect to the requirements of clause 3(c)(2) of rule XIII of the House of Representatives and section 308(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 and with respect to requirements of 3(c)(3) of rule XIII of the House of Representatives and section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Committee on Education and Labor received, subsequent to the filing of the Committee report, the following estimate for H.R. 5715 from the Director of the Congressional Budget Office:

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, April 15, 2008.

Hon. GEORGE MILLER,
Chairman, Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the enclosed cost estimate for H.R. 5715, the Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act of 2008.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Deborah Kalcevic.

Sincerely,

ROBERT A. SUNSHINE,
(For Peter R. Orszag, Director).

Enclosure.

H.R. 5715—Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act of 2008

Summary: H.R. 5715 would:

Alter repayment and eligibility terms on parent Loans for Undergraduate Students (PLUS),

Increase the annual and aggregate borrowing limits on unsubsidized loans,

Give the Department of Education temporary authority to purchase guaranteed loans from private lenders, and

Clarify provisions relating to the lender-of-last-resort program.

On balance, CBO estimates that enacting the bill would increase direct spending by $320 million over the 2008–2013 period and by $390 million over the 2008–2018 period. The bill would have no impact on revenues. CBO has not yet completed an estimate of the impact of H.R. 5715 on discretionary spending: implementing the bill would probably increase costs for administering the federal student loan programs.

H.R. 5715 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

Estimated cost to the Federal Government: The estimated budgetary impact of H.R. 5715 is shown in the following table. The costs of this legislation fall within budget function 500 (education, training, employment, and social services).

	By fiscal year, in millions of dollars—												
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2008–2013	2008–2018
CHANGES IN DIRECT SPENDING													
Changes to PLUS Program:													
Estimated Budget Authority	−35	−75	−75	−80	−85	−95	−100	−110	−115	−125	−135	−445	−1,030
Estimated Outlays	−20	−55	−65	−70	−75	−85	−90	−95	−105	−110	−115	−370	−885
Raise Limits on Unsubsidized Loans:													
Estimated Budget Authority	−90	−180	5	105	115	105	115	125	135	145	155	60	735
Estimated Outlays	−50	−135	−45	65	100	100	100	110	115	125	135	35	620
Purchase of Guaranteed Loans:													
Estimated Budget Authority	0	655	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	655	655
Estimated Outlays	0	655	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	655	655
Lender of Last Resort:													
Estimated Budget Authority	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Estimated Outlays	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Total Changes:													
Estimated Budget Authority:	−125	400	−70	25	30	10	15	15	20	20	20	270	360
Estimated Outlays	−70	465	−100	−5	25	15	10	15	10	15	20	320	390

Note: PLUS = Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students, * = less than $500,000.

Basis of estimate: For this estimate, CBO assumes that H.R. 5715 will be enacted before July 1, 2008. As required under the Federal Credit Reform Act of 1990, the costs of student loans are estimated on a net-present-value basis.

Changes to PLUS program

The bill would make two changes to the PLUS program. First, it would allow parents to defer payment on their PLUS loans until six months after the dependent borrower leaves school. Under current law, parents must begin repaying the loan 60 days after disbursement. CBO projects that approximately 10 percent of parent borrowers would take advantage of this determent before repaying their loans. Interest rates on parent loans range between 7.9 percent and 8.5 percent. Because interest on these loans would accrue during deferment, CB0 estimates this provision would decrease direct spending by $370 million over the 2008–2013 period and by $885 million over the 2008–2018 period.

In addition. H.R. 5715 would allow a lender to determine that a potential PLUS borrower who is delinquent on a home mortgage payment for fewer than 181 days (and might otherwise be deemed not creditworthy) to quality for the PLUS program due to extenuating circumstances. Based on information from lenders and other groups, C130 estimates this provision would have a negligible impact on direct spending.

Raise limits on unsubsidized loans

H.R. 5715 would increase the borrowing limits on unsubsidized loans for all students by $2,000 per year and raise aggregate borrowing limits to accommodate those increases.

Based on data from the National Student Loan Data System and the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) and about applicants for federal financial assistance. CBO estimates these changes would increase the volume of unsubsidized loans by more than $1 billion in fiscal year 2008; that increase would grow to more than $8 billion in fiscal year 2018. CBO expects that the volume of loans made to parents and graduate students in the PLUS program would decrease, as these students and parents would shift some of their borrowing to the unsubsidized loan program, which has a lower interest rate. CBO estimates these changes would increase direct spending by $35 million over the 2008–2013 period and by $620 million over the 2008–2018 period.

Purchase of guaranteed loans

The bill would grant the Department of Education the authority to purchase guaranteed loans originated on or alter October 1. 2003. from lenders in the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL,) program, if the Secretary determines that there is insufficient capital available to meet the demand for guaranteed loans. The Secretary would have full discretion over the purchase price of the loans and the decision to buy. This authority would expire on July 1, 2009.

Under the hill, the Secretary could purchase guaranteed loans only after determining that such a purchase is in the best interests of the United States and does not have a cost to the government. C130 believes that the likelihood of increased costs is greater than the likelihood of increased savings if the Secretary purchases guaranteed loans for the following reasons:

CBO expects that the volume of loans purchased by the department would yard directly with the offer price. In considering possible outcomes, higher prices would result in higher volumes, and hence relatively large costs; outcomes assuming lower prices would probably involve a lower volume of loans purchased, and any savings under such scenarios would he relatively small. Thus, the expected value of the range of possible results would be a cost.

C130 expects that lenders would have better information about the future profitability of each loan than the Secretary and might he able to sell loans that are more likely to enter default. and thus generate costs to the government. Lenders would have an incentive to sell the loans that are most likely to result in costs to the government,

Finally, CBO is unsure how the Secretary would balance the need to be budget-neutral with a competing need to ensure that the loan guarantee industry has sufficient capital to make student loans for the upcoming school year.

For those reasons, we expect that allowing the Department of Education to purchase guaranteed loans would likely increase costs to the federal government. Based on preliminary information from FEEL lenders, guaranty agencies, and the Department of Education, CBO estimates this provision could increase direct spending by $655 million in 2009. Those costs could be higher or lower depending on what price the Secretary sets for guarantee purchases.

Lender of last resort

H.R. 5715 also would clarity two provisions of the lender-of-last-resort program, which provides loans to students who otherwise are unable to obtain a loan under the regular loan application process. First, it would specify that guaranty agencies may carry out the functions of the lender-of-last-resort program on a school-wide basis rather than an individual borrower basis. CBO estimates that this provision would have a negligible impact on direct spending.

Second. it would clarify that the Secretary of Education has the authority to advance federal funds to guaranty agencies serving as lenders of last resort who do not have sufficient capital to originate guaranteed loans. CBO estimates this provision would have no impact on direct spending because the U.S. Department of Education has this authority under current law and has published regulations governing the lender-of-last-resort authority.

Intergovernmental and private-sector impact: H.R. 5715 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

Estimate prepared by: Federal costs: Deborah Kalcevic and Justin Humphrey; Impact on state, local, and tribal governments: Burke Doherty; Impact on the private sector: Nabeel Alsalam.

Estimate approved by: Peter H. Fontaine, Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

Daily Digest

Senate

Chamber Action

Routine Proceedings, pages S2985–S3037

Measures Introduced: Thirteen bills and three resolutions were introduced, as follows: S. 2855–2867, and S. Res. 514–516. **Pages S3025–26**

Measures Reported:

S. 2731, to authorize appropriations for fiscal years 2009 through 2013 to provide assistance to foreign countries to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute. (S. Rept. No. 110–325) **Page S3025**

Measures Passed:

Congratulating Boston College Men's Ice Hockey Team: Senate agreed to S. Res. 514, congratulating the Boston College men's ice hockey team on winning the 2008 National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I National Ice Hockey Championship. **Pages S2994–95**

Commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the 1983 Bombing of the United States Embassy in Beirut: Senate agreed to S. Res. 516, solemnly commemorating the 25th anniversary of the tragic April 1983 bombing of the United States Embassy in Beirut and remembering those who lost their lives and those who where injured. **Page S3034**

Measures Considered: Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users: Senate began consideration of H.R. 1195, to amend the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users to make technical corrections, after agreeing to the motion to proceed to its consideration. **Pages S2993–94, S2995–S3019**

A unanimous-consent agreement was reached providing for further consideration of the bill at approximately 10:30 a.m., on Wednesday, April 16, 2008. **Pages S3034–35**

Nominations Received: Senate received the following nominations:

Michele M. Leonhart, of California, to be Administrator of Drug Enforcement.

Stephen Joseph Murphy III, of Michigan, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan.

Helene N. White, of Michigan, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit.

2 Air Force nominations in the rank of general.

2 Army nominations in the rank of general.

Routine lists in the Army, Coast Guard, Foreign Service, Marine Corps, Navy. **Pages S3035–37**

Nomination Withdrawn: Senate received notification of withdrawal of the following nomination:

Stephen Joseph Murphy III, of Michigan, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit, which was sent to the Senate on March 19, 2007. **Page S3037**

Messages from the House: **Page S3025**

Measures Referred: **Page S3025**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages S3026–28**

Statements on Introduced Bills/Resolutions: **Pages S3028–33**

Additional Statements: **Pages S3024–25**

Amendments Submitted: **Page S3033**

Notices of Hearings/Meetings: **Page S3033**

Authorities for Committees to Meet: **Pages S3033–34**

Privileges of the Floor: **Page S3034**

Adjournment: Senate convened at 10 a.m. and adjourned at 7:05 p.m., until 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, April 16, 2008. (For Senate's program, see the remarks of the Acting Majority Leader in today's Record on pages S3034–35.)

Committee Meetings

(Committees not listed did not meet)

APPROPRIATIONS: DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies concluded a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2009 for the Department of the Interior,

after receiving testimony from former Senator Dirk Kempthorne, Secretary of the Interior.

APPROPRIATIONS: FDA

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies concluded a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2009 for the United States Food and Drug Administration, after receiving testimony from Andrew von Eschenbach, Commissioner, United States Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services.

U.S. CREDIT MARKETS AND STUDENT LOANS

Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs: Committee concluded a hearing to examine credit markets in the United States, focusing on the impact on the cost and availability of student loans, after receiving testimony from John F. Remondi, Sallie Mae, Inc., Reston, Virginia; Tom Deutsch, American Securitization Forum, New York, New York, on behalf of the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association; Patricia A. McGuire, Trinity Washington University, and Sarah Flanagan, National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, both of Washington, D.C.; and Mark Kantrowitz, FinAid.org, Cranberry Township, Pennsylvania.

LANDS BILLS

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests concluded a hearing to examine S. 570 and H.R. 1011, bills to designate additional National Forest System lands in the State of Virginia as wilderness or a wilderness study area, to designate the Kimberling Creek Potential Wilderness Area for eventual incorporation in the Kimberling Creek Wilderness, to establish the Seng Mountain and Bear Creek Scenic Areas, to provide for the development of trail plans for the wilderness areas and scenic areas, S. 758, to direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey the Alta-Hualapai Site to the city of Las Vegas, Nevada, for the development of a cancer treatment facility, H.R. 1311, to provide for the conveyance of the Alta-Hualapai Site to the Nevada Cancer Institute, S. 1680, to provide for the inclusion of certain non-Federal land in the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge and the Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge in the State of Alaska, S. 2109, to designate certain Federal lands in Riverside County, California, as wilderness, to designate certain river segments in Riverside County as a wild, scenic, or recreational river, to adjust the boundary of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument, S. 2124, to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to convey certain land in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, Montana, to Jefferson County, Montana, for use as a cemetery, and S. 2581, to designate as wilderness additional National Forest System lands in the Monongahela National Forest in the State of West Virginia, after receiving testimony from Senators Warner and Boxer; Joel Holtrop, Deputy Chief, National Forest System, United States Forest Service, Department of Agriculture; Henri Bisson, Acting Senior Advisor to the Secretary for Alaska Affairs, and Elena Daly, Director, National Landscape Conservation System, Bureau of Land Management, both of the Department of the Interior; J.J. Murray, Virginia Wilderness Committee, Charlottesville; Stanley Senner, Audubon Alaska, Anchorage; and Della Trumble, King Cove, Alaska, on behalf of the Agdaagux Tribe.

PHARMACEUTICALS IN DRINKING WATER

Committee on Environment and Public Works: Subcommittee on Transportation Safety, Infrastructure Security, and Water Quality concluded a hearing to examine pharmaceuticals in the nation's drinking water, focusing on assessing potential risks and actions to address this issue, after receiving testimony from Benjamin H. Grumbles, Assistant Administrator for Water, Environmental Protection Agency; Robert M. Hirsch, Associate Director for Water, United States Geological Survey, Department of the Interior; Shane Snyder, Southern Nevada Water Authority, Henderson, on behalf of the American Water Works Association; David Pringle, New Jersey Environmental Federation, Trenton, on behalf of the New Jersey Environmental Federation and Clean Water Action; and Jennifer Sass, Natural Resources Defense Council, and Alan Goldhammer, Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, both of Washington, D.C.

TAX REFORM

Committee on Finance: Committee concluded a hearing to examine tax reform, focusing on the fundamentals for advancement, after receiving testimony from Daniel N. Shaviro, New York University School of Law, New York, New York; Michael J. Graetz, Yale Law School, New Haven, Connecticut; and Jason Furman, Brookings Institution, and Robert Carroll, Tax Foundation, both of Washington, D.C.

TREATIES

Committee on Foreign Relations: Committee concluded a hearing to examine Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Adoption of an Additional Distinctive Emblem (the "Geneva Protocol III"), adopted at Geneva on December 8, 2005, and signed by the United States on that date, the Amendment to Article 1 of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on

the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (the ''CCW Amendment''), and the CCW Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War (the ''CCW Protocol V'') (Treaty Doc. 109–10), the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (the Convention) and, for accession, The Hague Protocol, concluded on May 14, 1954, and entered into force on August 7, 1956 with accompanying report from the Department of State (Treaty Doc. 106–01), and protocols to the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects: the amended Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices (Protocol II or the Amended Mines Protocol), the Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Incendiary Weapons (Protocol III or the Incendiary Weapons Protocol), and the Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons (Protocol IV) (Treaty Doc. 105–01), after receiving testimony from John B. Bellinger, Legal Adviser, Department of State; and Charles A. Allen, Deputy General Counsel (International Affairs), and Brigadier General Michelle D. Johnson, Deputy Director for the War on Terrorism and Global Effects, J–5 Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate, Joint Staff, the Pentagon, both of the Department of Defense.

NUCLEAR TERRORISM

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: Committee concluded a hearing to examine nuclear terrorism, focusing on confronting the challenges of various nuclear attack scenarios, after receiving testimony from John R. Gibb, New York State Emergency Management Office, Albany; Ashton B. Carter, Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Cham E. Dallas, University of Georgia College of Public Health, Athens; and Roger C. Molander, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California.

2010 DECENNIAL CENSUS

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the 2010 Decennial Census, focusing on automation and information technology in order to improve census coverage, accuracy, and efficiency, after receiving testimony from Carlos M. Gutierrez, Secretary, and Steve H. Murdock, Director, United States Census Bureau, both of the Department of Commerce; and Mathew Scire, Director, Strategic Issues, and David A. Powner, Director, Information Technology Management Issues, both of the Government Accountability Office.

TOMATO WORKERS' WORKING CONDITIONS

Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: Committee concluded a hearing to examine ending abuses and improving working conditions for tomato workers, after receiving testimony from Lucas Benitez, Coalition of Immokalee Workers, and Roy Reyna, both of Immokalee, Florida; Charlie Frost, Collier County Sheriff's Office, Naples, Florida; Mary Bauer, Southern Poverty Law Center Immigrant Justice Project, Montgomery, Alabama; Reginald L. Brown, Florida Tomato Growers Exchange, Maitland; and Eric Schlosser, Monterey, California.

INTELLIGENCE

Select Committee on Intelligence: Committee held closed hearings on intelligence matters, receiving testimony from officials of the intelligence community.

Committee recessed subject to the call.

House of Representatives

Chamber Action

Public Bills and Resolutions Introduced: 25 public bills, H.R. 5788–5812; and 3 resolutions, H. Con. Res. 328; and H. Res. 1108–1109 were introduced. **Pages H2354–55**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages H2355–56**

Report Filed: A report was filed today as follows:

H. Res. 1107, providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 5715) to ensure continued availability of access to the Federal student loan program for students and families (H. Rept. 110–590). **Page H2354**

Recess: The House recessed at 11:07 a.m. and reconvened at noon. **Page H2272**

Suspensions: The House agreed to suspend the rules and pass the following measures:

Federal Law Enforcement Officers Congressional Badge of Bravery Act of 2007: H.R. 4056, amended, to establish an awards mechanism to honor Federal law enforcement officers injured in the line of duty; **Pages H2276–78**

Supporting the mission and goals of National Crime Victims' Rights week: H. Res. 1053, to support the mission and goals of National Crime Victims' Rights week in order to increase public awareness of the rights, needs, and concerns of victims and survivors of crime in the United States; **Pages H2278–80**

Recognizing and honoring the 40th anniversary of congressional passage of title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (the Fair Housing Act) and the 20th anniversary of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988: H. Res. 1095, to recognize and honor the 40th anniversary of congressional passage of title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (the Fair Housing Act) and the 20th anniversary of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988; **Pages H2280–84**

Religious Worker Visa Extension Act of 2008: H.R. 5570, amended, to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to eliminate the sunset in the special immigrant nonminister religious worker visa program; **Pages H2284–89**

Agreed to amend the title so as to read: "To amend the Immigration and Nationality Act with respect to the special immigrant nonminister religious worker program, and for other purposes.". **Page H2289**

Providing that the usual day for paying salaries in or under the House of Representatives may be established by regulations of the Committee on House Administration: H.R. 5493, to provide that the usual day for paying salaries in or under the House of Representatives may be established by regulations of the Committee on House Administration; and **Pages H2297–98**

Permitting active duty members of the Armed Forces who are assigned to a Congressional liaison office of the Department of Defense at the House of Representatives to obtain membership in the exercise facility established for employees of the House of Representatives: H. Res. 1068, amended, to permit active duty members of the Armed Forces who are assigned to a Congressional liaison office of the Department of Defense at the House of Representatives to obtain membership in the exercise facility established for employees of the House of Representatives. **Page H2298**

Agreed to amend the title so as to read: "To permit active duty members of the Armed Forces who are assigned to a Congressional liaison office of the Armed Forces at the House of Representatives to obtain membership in the exercise facility established for employees of the House of Representatives.". **Page H2298**

Suspension—Failed: The House failed to agree to suspend the rules and pass the following measure:

Emergency Assistance for Secure Elections Act of 2008: H.R. 5036, amended, to direct the Administrator of General Services to reimburse certain jurisdictions for the costs of obtaining paper ballot voting systems for the general elections for Federal office to be held in November 2008 and to reimburse jurisdictions for the costs incurred in conducting audits or hand counting of the results of the general elections for Federal office to be held in November 2008, by a ⅔ yea-and-nay vote of 239 yeas to 179 nays, Roll No. 188. **Pages H2289–97, H2306–07**

Authorizing the use of the rotunda of the Capitol for the presentation of the Congressional Gold Medal to Michael Ellis DeBakey, M.D.: The House agreed to discharge from committee and agree to S. Con. Res. 71, to authorize the use of the rotunda of the Capitol for the presentation of the Congressional Gold Medal to Michael Ellis DeBakey, M.D. **Pages H2298–99**

Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act of 2008: The House passed H.R. 5719, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to conform return preparer penalty standards, delay implementation of

withholding taxes on government contractors, enhance taxpayer protections, and assist low-income taxpayers, by a recorded vote 238 ayes to 179 noes, Roll No. 190. **Pages H2299–H2306, H2307–22**

Rejected the Herger motion to recommit the bill to the Committee on Ways and Means with instructions to report the same back promptly with an amendment, by a yea-and-nay vote of 210 yeas to 210 nays, Roll No. 189. **Pages H2319–21**

Pursuant to the rule, the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Ways and Means now printed in the bill shall be considered as adopted. **Page H2299**

Agreed that the Clerk be authorized to make technical and conforming changes to reflect the actions of the House. **Page H2323**

H. Res. 1102, the rule providing for consideration of the bill, was agreed to by a recorded vote of 222 ayes to 195 noes, Roll No. 187. **Page H2306**

Agreed to the Sutton amendment to the rule by voice vote, after agreeing to order the previous question by a yea-and-nay vote of 220 yeas to 196 nays, Roll No. 186. **Pages H2305–06**

Suspension—Proceedings Resumed: The House agreed to suspend the rules and pass the following measure which was debated on Monday, April 14th:

Texas Military Veterans Post Office Designation Act: H.R. 5517, to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 7231 FM 1960 in Humble, Texas, as the "Texas Military Veterans Post Office", by a ⅔ yea-and-nay vote of 413 yeas with none voting "nay", Roll No. 191. **Pages H2322–23**

Quorum Calls—Votes: Four yea-and-nay votes and two recorded votes developed during the proceedings of today and appear on pages H2305, H2306, H2306,07, H2320–21, H2321–22, H2322. There were no quorum calls.

Adjournment: The House met at 10:30 a.m. and adjourned at 11:25 p.m.

Committee Meetings

CIA

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Defense/Select Intelligence Oversight Panel met in executive session to hold a hearing on the CIA. Testimony was heard from the following officials of the CIA: Stephen R. Kappes, Deputy Director; and Brian P. Shortley, Chief Financial Officer.

IRS

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government held a hearing on the IRS. Testimony was heard from Douglas Shulman, Commissioner, IRS, Department of the Treasury.

CAPITOL VISITOR CENTER

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Legislative Branch held a hearing on the Capitol Visitor Center. Testimony was heard from the following officials of the Architect of the Capitol: Stephen Ayers, Acting Architect of the Capitol; Bernie Ungar, Project Executive; and Terrie Rouse, CEO, Visitor Service, both with Capitol Visitor Center; Terry Dorn, Director, Physical Infrastructure Issues, GAO; and Phillip Morse, Chief, U.S. Capitol Police.

SOUTHCOM

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies held a hearing on SOUTHCOM. Testimony was heard from Adm James E. Stavridis, USN, Commander, U.S. Southern Command.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIP CAPACITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERAGENCY

Committee on Armed Services: Held a hearing on Building Partnership Capacity and Development of the Interagency. Testimony was heard from Robert M. Gates, Secretary of Defense; and Condoleeza Rice, Secretary of State.

OVERSIGHT—DEFENSE TRAVEL SYSTEM

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing on oversight of the Defense Travel System. Testimony was heard from the following officials of the Department of Defense: Michael L. Dominguez, Principal Deputy Under Secretary, Personnel and Readiness; and David Fisher, Director, Business Transformation Agency; McCoy Williams, Director, Financial Management and Assurance, GAO; and a public witness.

OVERSIGHT—FCC

Committee on Energy and Commerce: Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet held a hearing entitled "Oversight of the Federal Communications Commission—the 7 MHz Auction." Testimony was heard from the following officials of the FCC: Kevin J. Martin, Chairman; Michael J. Copps, Jonathan S. Adelstein, Deborah Taylor Tate and Robert M. McDowell, all Commissioners; and public witnesses.

FINANCIAL LITERACY AND EDUCATION

Committee on Financial Services: Held a hearing entitled "Financial Literacy and Education: The Effectiveness of Governmental and Private Sector Initiatives." Testimony was heard from the following officials of the Department of the Treasury: Anna Escobedo Cabral, Treasurer of the United States;

Cassandra McConnell, Director, Consumer and Community Affairs, Office of Thrift Supervision; and Barry Wides, Deputy Comptroller for Community Affairs, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency; JoAnn Johnson, Chairman, National Credit Union Administration; Sandra Braunstein, Director, Division of Consumer and Community Affairs, Federal Reserve Board of Governors, Federal Reserve System; Robert W. Mooney, Deputy Director, Consumer Protection and Community Affairs, FDIC; Dean Martin, Treasurer, State of Arizona and public witnesses.

EMERGENCY MORTGAGE LOAN MODIFICATION ACT OF 2008

Committee on Financial Services: Subcommittee on Capital Markets, Insurance, and Government Sponsored Enterprises held a hearing on H.R. 5579, Emergency Mortgage Loan Modification Act of 2008. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

TSA OUTLOOK

Committee on Homeland Security: Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection held a hearing entitled ''Moving Beyond the First Five Years: How the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) will Continue to Enhance Security for all Modes of Transportation.'' Testimony was heard from Kip Hawley, Assistant Secretary, Transportation Security Administration, Department of Homeland Security; Cathleen Berrick, Director, Homeland Security and Justice, GAO; pubic witnesses.

MILITARY AND OVERSEAS VOTING

Committee on House Administration: Held a hearing on Military and Overseas Voting: Problems and Progress in Ensuring the Vote. Testimony was heard from Representatives McCarthy of California and Maloney of New York; Michael Dominguez, Principal Deputy Under Secretary, Personnel and Readiness, Department of Defense; Beth Chapman, Secretary of State, Alabama; and public witnesses.

NATIONAL SECURITY LETTERS REFORM ACT OF 2007

Committee on the Judiciary: Subcommittee on Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties held a hearing on H.R. 3189, National Security Letters Reform Act of 2007. Testimony was heard from the following officials of the Department of Justice: Glenn A. Fine, Inspector General; and Valerie E. Caproni, General Counsel, FBI; the following former officials of the Department of Justice: Bruce Fein, former Associate Deputy Attorney General; Michael J. Woods, former Chief, FBI National Security Law Unit; and David Kris, former Associate Deputy Attorney General; and a public witness.

OVERSIGHT—WEST-WIDE ENERGY AND MINERAL PROCESS

Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands and the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held a joint oversight hearing on the West-wide Energy Corridor Process: State and Community Impacts. Testimony was heard from Luke Johnson, Deputy Director, Programs and Policy, Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior; Joel Holtrop, Deputy Chief, National Forest System, USDA; Joanna Prukop, Secretary of Energy and Minerals, State of New Mexico; and public witnesses.

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURES; OVERSIGHT DC WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service and the District of Columbia approved for full Committee action the following bills: H.R. 5718, Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act; and H.R. 3774, Senior Executive Service Diversity Assurance Act of 2008.

The Subcommittee also held an oversight hearing on D.C. Water and Sewer Authority (DCWASA), Testimony was heard from John B. Stephenson, Director, Natural Resources and Environment, GAO; Ben Grumbles, Assistant Administrator, Water, EPA; the following officials of the D.C. Water and Sewer Authority: Robin B. Martin, Chairman, Board of Directors; Jerry Johnson, General Manager, Daniel Tangherlini, City Administrator, District of Columbia; Timothy Firestine, Chief Administrator Officer, Montgomery County; Anthony H. Griffin, County Executive, Fairfax County, and Jacqueline F. Brown, Chief Administrator Officer, Prince Georges County, all Members of the Board.

NEW CONTRACTING AND PROPERTY BILLS

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform: Subcommittee on Government Management, Organization and Procurement held a hearing on New Contracting and Property Bills. Testimony was heard from the following officials of OMB: Paul Denett, Administrator, Federal Procurement Policy; and Danny Werfel, Acting Comptroller, Federal Financial Management; the following officials of the GSA: David Drabkin, Acting Chief Acquisition Officer and Senior Procurement Executive; and Stan Kaczmarczyk, Acting Deputy Associate Administrator, Office of Governmentwide Policy; Barry Sabin, Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Criminal

Division, Department of Justice; and a public witness.

ENSURING CONTINUED ACCESS TO STUDENT LOANS ACT OF 2008

Committee on Rules: Granted, by a vote of 8–4, a structured rule providing for consideration of H.R. 5715, the Continued Access to Student Loans Act of 2008. The rule provides one hour of general debate equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Education and Labor. The rule waives all points of order against consideration of the bill except clauses 9 and 10 of rule XXI. The rule provides that the amendment printed in Part A of the Rules Committee report accompanying this resolution shall be considered as adopted and that the bill, as amended, shall be considered as read. The rule waives all points of order against provisions of the bill, as amended. The rule provides that no further amendments to the bill, as amended, shall be in order except those amendments printed in Part B of the Rules Committee report. The further amendments made in order may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. The rule waives all points of order against the further amendments printed in the report except for clauses 9 and 10 of rule XXI. The rule provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions. The rule provides that, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to a time designated by the Speaker. Testimony was heard from Representatives George Miller of California and McKeon.

ENERGY'S FUTUREGEN PROGRAM

Committee on Science and Technology: Subcommittee on Energy and Environment held a hearing on Department of Energy's FutureGen Program. Testimony was heard from C. H. Albright, Under Secretary, Department of Energy; and public witnesses.

FEDERAL MARITIME COMMISSION BUDGET

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure: Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation held a hearing on Fiscal Year Budget: Federal Maritime Commission. Testimony was heard from the following officials of the Federal Maritime Commission: A. Paul Anderson; Joseph E. Brennen; Harold J. Creel, Jr., and Rebecca F. Dye, all Commissioners.

VETERANS' HEALTH MEASURES

Committee on Veterans' Affairs: Held a hearing on the following bills: H.R. 5730, To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to display in each prosthetic clinic of the Department of Veterans Affairs an Injured and Amputee Veterans Bill of Rights; H.R. 2818, to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the establishment of Epilepsy Centers of Excellence in the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans' Affairs; H.R. 5554, Veterans' Substance Use Disorders Prevention and Treatment Act of 2008; H.R. 5622, Veterans Timely Access to Health Care Act; H.R. 5595, Make Our Veterans Smile Act of 2008; and H.R. 5729, To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide comprehensive health care to children of Vietnam veterans born with Spinua Bifida, and for other purposes. Testimony was heard from Representatives Filner, Michaud, Ginny Brown-Waite, Perlmutter, Carney, and Ellsworth; Gerald M. Cross, M.D., Principal Deputy Under Secretary, Health, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs; and representatives of veterans organizations.

INSTABILITY OF HEALTH COVERAGE IN AMERICA

Committee on Ways and Means: Subcommittee on Health held a hearing on the Instability of Health Coverage in America. Testimony was heard from former Senator Dave Durenburger of Minnesota; and public witnesses.

MIP BUDGET

Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence: Met in executive session to hold a hearing on Fiscal Year 2009 Budget-Military Intelligence Program. Testimony was heard from departmental witnesses.

Joint Meetings

FARM BILL EXTENSION ACT

Conferees met to resolve the differences between the Senate and House passed versions of H.R. 2419, to provide for the continuation of agricultural programs through fiscal year 2012, but did not complete action thereon, and recessed subject to the call and will meet again on Wednesday, April 16, 2008, at approximately 1:30 p.m.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 2008

(Committee meetings are open unless otherwise indicated)

Senate

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Defense, to hold hearings to examine the Department of Defense medical programs, 9:30 a.m., SD–192.

Full Committee, to hold hearings to examine the Supplemental Request for war funding for fiscal year 2008, 12 noon, SD–106.

Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, to hold hearings to examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2009 for the Department of Energy, 2 p.m., SD–138.

Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, to hold hearings to examine proposed budget request for fiscal year 2009 for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2 p.m., SD–124.

Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government, to hold hearings to examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2009 for the Internal Revenue Service, 3 p.m., SD–192.

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Personnel, to hold hearings to examine the defense authorization request for fiscal year 2009 on military beneficiary organizations regarding the quality of life of Active, Reserve, and retired military personnel and their members, and the future years defense program, 2:30 p.m., SR–232A.

Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs: to hold hearings to examine U.S. credit markets, focusing on proposals to mitigate foreclosures and restore liquidity to the mortgage markets, 10 a.m., SD–538.

Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation and Community Development, to hold hearings to examine affordable housing opportunities, focusing on reforming the housing voucher program, 2 p.m., SD–538.

Committee on Environment and Public Works: Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure, to hold hearings to examine surface transportation and the global economy, 10 a.m., SD–406.

Committee on Foreign Relations: to hold hearings to examine the nominations of Robert J. Callahan, of Virgina, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Nicaragua, Heather M. Hodges, of Ohio, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Costa Rica, Barbara J. Stephenson, of Florida, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Panama, Peter E. Cianchette, of Maine, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Costa Rica, Hugo Llorens, of Florida, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Honduras, Stephen George McFarland, of Texas, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Guatemala, all of the Department of State; and Samuel W. Speck, of Ohio, to be a Commissioner on the part of the United States on the International Joint Commission, United States and Canada, 2:30 p.m., SD–419.

Committee on the Judiciary: Subcommittee on Crime and Drugs, to hold hearings to examine violence and exploitation in the 21st century, focusing on solutions for protecting our children, 2 p.m., SD–226.

Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship: to hold hearings to examine the impact of the credit market on small businesses, 2:30 p.m., SR–428A.

Special Committee on Aging: to hold hearings to examine caring for the elderly, focusing on how to support those on the frontline, 3 p.m., SD–562.

House

Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government, on SEC, 10 a.m., 2220 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agency Agencies, on Special Operations Command, 10 a.m., H–143 Capitol.

Committee on Armed Services, hearing on the National Industrial Security Program: Addressing the Implications of Globalization and Foreign Ownership for the Defense Industrial Base, 10 a.m., 2118 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Land Forces and the Subcommittee on Readiness, joint hearing on H. Res. 834, Regarding the readiness decline of the Army, Marine Corps, National Guard, and Reserves, and the implications for national security, 2 p.m., 2118 Rayburn.

Committee on Education and Labor, to mark up H.R. 3185, 401(k) Fair Disclosure for Retirement Security Act of 2007, 1 p.m., 2175 Rayburn.

Committee on Financial Services, Subcommittee on Capital Markets, Insurance, and Government Sponsored Enterprises, hearing entitled "Examining Proposals to Reform Insurance Regulation," 2 p.m., 2128 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, hearing on H.R. 5679, Foreclosure Prevention and Sound Mortgage Servicing Act of 2008, 10 a.m., 2128 Rayburn.

Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Border, Maritime, and Global Counterterrorism, hearing entitled "Moving Beyond the First Five Years: Ensuring Successful Implementation of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, 2 p.m., 311 Cannon.

Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security and International Law, oversight hearing on the H–2b Program, 2 p.m., 2141 Rayburn.

Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Fisherie, Wildlife and Oceans, oversight hearing on the implementation of the Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported fishing provisions of the High Seas Driftnet Fishing Moratorium Protection Act and a hearing on H.R. 5741 Shark Conservation Act of 2008, 10 a.m., 1324 Longworth.

Subcommittee on Water and Power, oversight hearing on Indian Water Rights Settlements, 2 p.m., 1324 Longworth.

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform hearing on Healthcare Associated Infections: A Preventable Epidemic; and to consider the following measures: H.R. 5683, Government Accountability Office Act of 2008; H.R. 4791, Federal Agency Data Protection Act; H.R. 5712, Close the Contractor Fraud Loophole Act; H.R. 5718, Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act; H. Res. 49, Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that there should be established a National Letter Carriers Appreciation Day; H.R. 127, Recognizing and celebrating the 50th anniversary of the entry of Alaska in the Union as the 49th State; H. Res. 1073, Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that public servants should be commended for their dedication and continued service to the Nation during Public Service

Recognition Week, May 5 through 11, 2008; H. Res. 1091, Honoring the life, achievements, and contributions of Charlton Heston and extending its deepest sympathies to the family of Charlton Heston for the loss of such a generous man, husband, and father; and H. Res. 5477, To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 120 South Del Mar Avenue in San Gabriel, California, as the ''Chi Mui Post Office Building,'' 9:45 a.m., 2154 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census and National Archives, hearing on the Electronic Communications Preservation Act, 2 p.m., 2247 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, to continue hearings on What are the Prospects, What are the Costs?: Oversight Missile Defense, 2 p.m., 2154 Rayburn.

Committee on Science and Technology, hearing on the National Nanotechnology Initiative Amendments Act of 2008, 10 a.m., 2318 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Technology and Innovation, to consider the Science and Technology Innovation Act of 2008, 2 p.m., 2318 Rayburn.

Committee on Small Business, Subcommittee on Contracting and Technology, hearing on the obstacles that small businesses currently face in securing federal contracts, 2 p.m., 1539 Rayburn.

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, hearing on the Clean Water Restoration Act of 2007, 11 a.m., 2167 Rayburn.

Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, hearing on the following bills: H.R. 4883, To amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to provide for a limitation on the sale, foreclosure, or seizure of property owned by a servicmember during the one-year period following the servicemember's period of military service; H.R. 4884, Helping Our Veterans to Keep Their Homes Act of 2008; H.R. 4889, Guard and Reserves Are Fighting Too Act of 2008; H.R. 4539, Department of Veterans Affairs Loan Guaranty Cost Reduction Act of 2007; H.R. 3646, To direct the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs and the Secretary of Labor to conduct a joint study on the fields of employment for which the greatest need for employees exists in various geographic areas; H.R. 5664, to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to update at least once every six years the plans and specifications for specially adapted housing furnished to veterans by the Secretary; H.R. 3798, National Guard Employment Protection Act of 2007; H.R. 3681, Veterans Benefits Awareness Act of 2007; H.R. 3393, Reservist Access to Justice Act of 2007; H.R. 3889, To amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a longitudinal study of the vocational rehabilitation programs administered by the Secretary; and H.R. 5684, Veterans Education Improvement Act of 2008, 1 p.m., 334 Cannon.

Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, executive, briefing on Fiscal Year 2009 Budget-HUMINT, 1 p.m., H–140 Capitol,

Subcommittee on Terrorism, Human Intelligence, Analysis, and Couner-Intelligence, executive, briefing on Hot Spots, 8:45 a.m., H–405 Capitol.

Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, hearing entitled ''Green Capital: Seeding Innovation and the Future Economy,'' 2 p.m., 210 Cannon.

Joint Meetings

Conference: meeting of conferees on H.R. 2419, to provide for the continuation of agricultural programs through fiscal year 2012, 1:30 p.m., SH–216.

Next Meeting of the SENATE

9:30 a.m., Wednesday, April 16

Senate Chamber

Program for Wednesday: After the transaction of any morning business (not to extend beyond 60 minutes), Senate will continue consideration of H.R. 1195, Highway Technical Corrections.

Next Meeting of the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

10 a.m., Wednesday, April 16

House Chamber

Program for Wednesday: Consideration of H.R. 2634—Jubilee Act for Responsible Lending and Expanded Debt Cancellation of 2007 (Subject to a Rule). Possible continued consideration of H.R. 2537—Beach Protection Act of 2007.

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