the needs of our citizens. We passed re-
form that fulfilled those needs and re-
stored funding to the nursing homes and
hospitals that our law required us to do.
Millions of seniors rely on Medicare
every day. Our government must con-
tinue to improve and strengthen this
lifeline for our seniors. We still have a
year left in this Congress, and I hope
that the President will work with us to
find long-term solutions to the prob-
lems that affect the Medicare program.
As important as retirement security is
to older Americans, education is vital
to the future of all Americans. As a
former public school teacher, improv-
ing education is one of my top prior-
ities.
America’s teachers and parents and
grandparents have told us that they
want the government to help improve
the quality of education. We have re-
sponded by putting education improve-
ment at the top of our agenda, and I
am proud to say that we passed more
education funding with less strings at-
tached, which ensures that more dol-
ars will go directly to the classroom.
Earlier this year the President signed
our legislation that would give more
control over education to parents and
teachers and local administrators. Al-
though Washington provides only 6 per-
cent of the resources for our Nation’s
schools, it mandates over 80 percent of
the red tape that our schools have to
deal with. The Federal Government
should be providing a helping hand not
a heavier load for our Nation’s schools.
We also passed legislation to improve
teacher quality, improve student re-
sults, and give parents and teachers
more flexibility to teach our children.
Every child should have the oppor-
tunity to go to a school in a safe envi-
ronment. I am committed to seeing
that those opportunities exist.
Likewise, all Americans must be safe
from international threats, and so our
Republican majority will continue our
commitment to improving the national
security.
I am proud to say that we have suc-
cessfully increased commitment to our
men and women in uniform. We have
given them a well-deserved pay in-
crease. We have increased defense
spending in other areas so that our
troops have the resources to get the
job done. And why have we made this
commitment to our nation’s defense? It is
a dangerous world out there, and for
too many years the administration has
been slashing funding for our military,
while at the same time asking our
troops to serve in more and more dan-
gerous places around the world.
We currently have soldiers and sail-
ors stationed in the Middle East, in
Bosnia, in Kosovo, in East Timor and
Korea. It’s a lone just a few places. Our
veterans and servicewomen spend
months away from their families and are
poorly compensated for doing so, and,
as a result, many of them are
leaving the military. In these good eco-
nomic times, it is crucial that we in-
crease our military budget to deter
belligerents safer. Many hostile nations
are developing missile technology that
will soon put the United States in
harm’s way. Fortunately, our missile
defense bill makes it a national pri-
ority for the United States to develop a
missile defense system capable of pro-
tecting us from the threat of enemy
missiles.
As Americans, our liberty is our
most valuable asset, and we must pro-
tect ourselves from those who would
challenge it for National security is one
of the most important roles of our Fed-
eral Government. This is why this Con-
gress will continue to support our mil-
tary and give our troops the funding
they need to defend America and her
interests.
Finally, we remain committed to
providing tax relief to the American
people. This is why we sent a fair and
responsible tax relief package to the
President’s desk.
Currently we have a Tax Code that
punishes couples for getting married
through the marriage tax penalty. We
have a Tax Code that punishes people
for trying to save for retirement
through the capital gains tax. We have
a Tax Code that punishes widows
through the death tax.
The time has come to get some fair-
ness to the Tax Code. Couples should
be able to get married without the fear
of higher taxes, the government should be
capturing every cent of money to save for retire-
ment, not punishing them, and our tax
relief package was responsible because
it took money out of Washington and
put it back into the pockets of the peo-
ple who earned it, the American people.
It would be irresponsible to leave the
whole $3 trillion surplus here in Wash-
ington so that only politicians can spend it.
Our tax relief package kept faith
with the balanced budget and it se-
cured $2.2 trillion for retirement secu-
rity and debt relief. And a matter of
fact, our budget spends down $350 bil-
lion of national debt this year. Al-
though the President vetoed this com-
mon sense proposal, I hope he will
work with us next year to provide tax
relief to the American people.
We have come a long way since the
House first asked me to be the Speak-
er, but we still have much left to ac-
complish next year, and we will con-
sider a conservative agenda that makes
America a more compassionate place
to live.
Earlier this month the President and
I went to the South Side of Chicago to
promote a plan that we hope will revi-
talize America’s most impoverished
urban and rural communities. It ac-
complishes this goal through tax incen-
tives, environmental cleanup, and
other private sector and public sector
partnerships. Coupled with common
sense education reform and better
crime and drug control strategy, we
can make these communities a safer
place to grow up and to raise a family.
This is compassionate conservatism.
We will push for tax relief for the
American family. It is compassionate
to put more dollars into the family
budget.
We will consider health care legisla-
tion that will make HMOs more ac-
countable and health care insurance
more accessible.
We will take up a trade bill for Africa
and the Caribbean basin. We believe
helping these countries help them-
selves is done more effectively with
trade, not necessarily foreign aid.
We will continue to find ways to im-
prove retirement security for our Na-
tion’s seniors by addressing the long-
term problems that face our Social Se-
curity system, our Medicare system,
and our pension system. And we will
continue to do the work of the House.
As we continue our agenda in the sec-
ond session of the 106th Congress, we
will fight for certain principles. We
will fight to keep the Social Security
surplus dedicated only to retirement
security, we will also continue to fight
for the principles of a smaller and
smarter government, and we will con-
tinue to fight against government
waste, unnecessary government power
and undue government influence.
Government does have an important
role to play in the lives of the Amer-
ican people. It does have a responsi-
bility to secure the freedom and pro-
ounce the general welfare of its citi-
zens.
But we must remember this: the Gov-
ernment works for the people; the peo-
ple should not be forced to work for the
Government.
I want to thank my colleagues for
the great trust that they have placed
in me over the course of this session. It
is a great honor and privilege to serve
as Speaker of the House. I look forward
to an even more productive second ses-
sion.

RECESS

The Speaker. Pursuant to clause 12 of
rule I, the Chair declares the House in re-
cess for 5 minutes.

Accordingly (at 12 o’clock and 20
minutes p.m.), the House stood in re-
cess for 5 minutes.

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House
was called to order at 12 o’clock and 25
minutes p.m.