collected $320,000 for Terrebonne Parish merchants who were given 3,600 worthless checks. Torres said about 30 percent of checks are returned to gambling. "It's eating people up," he said. 'It's real sad when people don't have a dollar. No money for food because of gambling addictions. I've seen it up close, and video poker plays a large role in the problem,' Torres said. The Courier.

Gambling affects children.

"A 4-year-old girl remained in protective custody in Fort Mill, South Carolina, after her mother was charged with leaving her in a locked car while she played video poker. Tuesday in Ridgeland, a woman whose 10-day-old baby died in a sweltering car while she played video poker was given a suspended sentence and 3 years' probation. York citizen to go to the casinos and Bruce Bryant said such incidents reflect the addictive nature of video poker. 'You see the same thing with people addicted to cocaine and heroin. They lose all rational thought and will do anything to support their habit, sell the furniture right out of their house, leave their babies in locked cars during the middle of summer,' he said." The State, Columbia.

"Children have been left unattended at Indiana's riverboat casinos more than three dozen times while their parents or other guardians were gambling during the past 14 months. A Courier-Journal review of Indiana Gaming Commission records found 37 instances involving an estimated 72 abandoned children since May of 1999 when the State first began compiling reports of such episodes. In one case, an infant had to be revived with oxygen." Louisville Courier-Journal.

Gambling affects families. We hear so much talk about family values on this floor. When I think of both political parties taking money from the gambling interests, they should read this story:

"There is an ugly undercurrent that's sweeping away thousands of Missourians, people whose addiction to gambling has led to debt, divorce and crime. This is a world of people like Vicky, 36, a St. Charles woman who regularly left her newborn son with baby-sitters to go to the casinos and who committed suicide after losing $100,000. And Kathy, a homemaker and mother of two from Brentwood, who would drop her kids at school and spend the entire day at a casino playing blackjack. She used a secret credit card that her husband didn't know about to rack up more than $30,000 in debt." St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

In short, while the explosion of various forms of gambling across America has, of course, generated some revenue for States and for the gambling industry, it has left in its wake human misery that is only now beginning to be understood. This misery ends up costing the State more than it receives and creates a vicious cycle as the needs of social services dramatically increases. Whatever the lottery, a casino or a cruise to nowhere, gambling is a poor bet for funding legitimate social needs.

And soon gambling will be in every home in America with an Internet connection. More than 800 Internet gambling sites worldwide had revenues in 1999 of $1.67 billion, up more than 80 percent from 1998 according to Christiansen Capital Advisors, which tracks the industry. Revenues are expected to top $3 billion by 2002.

I want this Congress, I want this Congress and this country, I want this administration, who talks about family values also to reflect on the seriousness of this issue. Frankly, I have heard from people on both sides speak out on this issue, although to their credit they are new, but we have not spoken out on this issue. This is not about whether or not one makes a choice to travel to Las Vegas or Atlantic City and gamble for recreation. The reality is that such a choice takes planning and some time. As gambling spreads throughout the country, there is less planning time and much more availability for potential addicts to gamble. Imagine this availability being just one click away.

This Congress and this administration needs to consider the seriousness of not passing an Internet gambling ban. Are we really ready to have a virtual casino in every home in America with an Internet connection?

Mr. Speaker, with all this hard evidence, who is speaking out against the spread of gambling? Crime, corruption, family breakdown, suicide, bankruptcy and jobs lost is dehumanizing. In fact, in this body, they passed a faith-based proposal yesterday which is supported, and the broken bodies will be helped by that faith-based community. Yet the Bush administration, the White House, the Commerce or the White House itself has not spoken out on this issue. Where is the Bush administration on this issue?

I want to conclude by asking our political leaders, go on people on both sides of the aisle, I want to ask our religious leaders, I want to ask those who care about the poor, that care about the poor that Jesus talked about in Matthew 25, I want to ask those who care about the elderly, I want to ask those who are always talking about family values to speak up on this issue, because if you do not speak up on behalf of the Nation's most vulnerable, who will?

VETERANS' HEALTH CARE NEEDS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KERNs). The Chair reallocates 5 minutes of the balance of the majority leader's hour to the gentleman from New York (Mr. W. ALsH) and his colleagues...
will be in the forefront of the fight to make certain that the efficiencies that we have long sought will finally come to bear.

The military has often told me that they are having a difficult time in recruiting people to serve in the armed services of our country.

It may be that the veterans who have served before are telling them that it is not all what it is cracked up to be. I think if we decide to emphasize the need to provide those expedited claims processes, we would find more veterans thrilled with the idea that their government is standing by them, as they stood by us. Maybe you would find young recruits thinking about engaging in military service, when they asked a veteran, that they would get that gold-plated assurance that, yes, the government did stand by me after I had served and made my life better.

So I thank the gentlemen and gentlewomen who have participated in increasing mental health by substantial amounts each year in all of the services of our country.

The mission-capable rate is the ability of an airplane, whether it is a fighter-plane, or a helicopter or an Air Force aircraft from an air base, to be able to fly out, take off, go do its mission, whether it is reconnaissance or escort or fighter duties, and return back to that base and land. Can it do its mission? That is the mission-capable rate.

The mission-capable rates of all of our front-line fighters have been dropping dramatically during the last 8 years of the Clinton administration. I pointed out that they have gone down, and this chart represents that fall in mission-capable rates. They have gone down from an average of about 83 percent to 88 percent back in the early nineties to only about 73 percent today. So that means that this small Air Force that we now have, these 13 air wings, actually are less than that, because each of those air wings has fewer aircraft that are ready to go than the air wings of the force of 1992.

I pointed out during the last 8 years of the Clinton administration that our shipbuilding rate was falling; that instead of building the 9 to 10 to 11 ships that we needed each year to maintain at least a 300-ship Navy, we were consistently building only four or five or six or seven ships, building toward a 200-ship Navy. That is compared to Ronald Reagan’s 600-ship Navy of the 1980s. I criticized that strongly.

I criticized the fact that the Army, by their own admission, by their own statement from the Chief of Staff of the Army, was 1,200 pilots short of basic ammunition. One thing you do not want to run out of in a war is ammunition; yet we were $3 billion short. I criticized the fact that the Marine Corps was $200 million short of basic ammunition.

At the same time, we criticized the fact that the U.S. Air Force was at one point 700 pilots short. That got up in the Clinton administration to as high as 1,200 pilots short. The last time I checked the other day, the Air Force Secretary under the Clinton administration, right at the end of the administration, at that point it had gone from 700 pilots short to 1,300 pilots short. It had gone back a little bit. We were still 1,200 pilots short in the U.S. Air Force.

Well, today we have a new administration. It is the Bush administration, and it is headed by George W. Bush, a President whom I admire, a President of great personality, great vision, good common sense, and a President whom I think most Members of this House, whether they are Republican or Democrat, have a deep respect for.

But, Mr. Speaker, facts are stubborn things, and if we are going to maintain intellectual honesty in this body, and I think all of us try to do that as much as we possibly can, we have to be consistent. I have looked at this budget that this President has sent over to Congress, and this budget, which is seeking right now to plus-up defense, to add to defense $18 billion, which would take it up to a level $18 billion ahead of the last Clinton budget that was submitted and voted on and increased by this Congress, I find that that budget is still totally inadequate.

Facts are facts. We still have only 10 Army divisions, down from 18. We still have only 13 Air Force divisions, Air Force air wings, down from 24. This year, under this administration’s budget, we are only going to build five ships, which is building at a rate that would lower the U.S. Navy to less than 200 ships.

We still have the $3 billion ammo shortage in the U.S. Army. We still have the $200 million ammo shortage in the U.S. Marine Corps. We still have a major gap in pay between our military personnel and the civilian sector.

Mr. Speaker, I asked the Air Force, where is the pilot shortage now? Are we down from the 1,200 in the Clinton administration? The answer was no, we are still at 1,200, and we might even be shorter over the next several months.

Spare parts, have we got the spare parts that we need? The answer is no. We started something in the Clinton administration, Mr. Speaker, that I thought was an important tool of accountability, and that is that our great chairman, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE), always asked the military to give their honest answer after we had the Clinton budget. He would say, what do you really need? What is your unfunded requirement? What is that you need in terms of ammo, spare parts, pay, training, that your budget did not give you? They would send over a list.