

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, the 2006 budget that we just passed that now moves to a conference committee makes the wrong choices for our Nation. It reflects secured priorities and runs counter to our deepest held beliefs. This budget embraces disastrous economic policies while at the same time fails to put forward a vision of what this great country of the United States should be.

What America needs instead are responsible policies that reflect our values and helps bring our Nation together and invests in the future by expanding opportunity. But this budget proposes to cut vital domestic investments and services for the middle class, for our veterans, for our seniors, for our children, for the needy among us, while continuing to accumulate a huge budget deficit.

And, Mr. Speaker, there is no State in the union that is hurt more from this budget, from the cuts of it these budgets, than our State of Georgia. And keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, this is a State that just recently voted overwhelmingly for the President. But yet here we are in Georgia suffering more from this budget than any other State, \$800 million cut from the Centers For Disease Control when we need all of the help we can get to fight the mounting diseases, life threatening diseases, that are moving across our Nation.

Sixty million dollars have been cut from last year's spending for military construction projects in Georgia, \$366.8 million dollars from 91,050 Georgia children by underfunding No Child Left Behind, \$26.7 million in homeland security funding in Georgia has been cut under this budget, \$7.9 million has been cut from the Georgia Regional Hospital; TRIO programs for almost 13 million Georgians, affecting 13,000 students and many of these students from impoverished backgrounds, many of these students first-time members of college from families. Thirty-seven million dollars have been cut in Perkins scholarships in Georgia. And one particular project, Mr. Speaker, \$75,000 has been cut from an educational and recreational center in Powder Springs in Cobb County, Georgia, in the midst of construction, which halts the construction of this badly needed project.

And let me turn to HOPE VI, one of the most successful housing programs this Nation has ever produced. It is being eliminated completely from the budget, which revitalizes public housing. And in Atlanta, Georgia, in the metropolitan area, HOPE VI is the greatest success story among HOPE VI projects in the entire Nation, but it is costing our community \$120 million in economic loss, not to count the millions that is lost from leveraging those badly needed dollars and improving the surrounding communities. Heartless and cruel are words that come to mind.

Section 8 families are cut by 8,700 in Georgia. Community Development

Block Grants, which our cities and our counties and our local communities live by, cut by \$211.9 million. And health care for 2 million Georgia veterans cut. Funding for firefighters cut by 30 percent.

This is not a budget of vision. This is not a budget of hope. This is a great country. This budget does not reflect the vision of a great country. This budget cuts nearly \$2 billion out of Georgia's economy. And on top of that in spite of the cuts, each Georgia family's share of the national debt has been increased by \$38,281. This budget is irresponsible, and the cuts are going to hurt an awful lot of America's precious people.

As a member of the Blue Dogs, we have repeatedly said we must pay as we go. We have repeatedly said that the Federal budget should be an honest blueprint for spending of priorities of the Federal Government. However, this budget is not honest. It is passing our obligations and responsibilities and challenges to our children and our grandchildren while cutting vital programs. This budget increases the national debt. It increases the deficit while cutting important programs.

Now we must work, Mr. Speaker, and implore this House/Senate joint conference committee to do the responsible thing for America and let us move with the vision, the courage that the people of America expect us to do and restore these cuts and move forward with a responsible budget.

THE NATIONAL DEBT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the Republicans' budget that was just passed in this House a little while ago, H. Con. Res. 95. Principally I think it fails to address the crucial and central issue which this Congress should address, and that is fixing our national budget.

Somebody in my area the other day asked me the question, what keeps me awake at night? And my answer was pretty simple. Being an investment banker by profession before I came to this House, I said our deficit and our debt.

We have a serious problem, Mr. Speaker, our Treasury is over \$7 trillion in debt.

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We continue to borrow every year under this administration at something over \$500 billion a year. And how does this Congress react? We signed up for another credit card. Interest rates are low. We can afford it. And when we max out our new credit card, we will just go and get another credit card.

Free money. That is what this Congress is doing.

But even if the money is cheap, it is not free. And while it may be cheap now, at some point what went down must come up. Interest rates will rise. That is the history when you look at the markets. They always do.

I wonder if the American public fully appreciates that this Congress and this President continue to borrow on their credit cards the way we do. Do they know, for example, that our deficits are being financed by the Chinese? As of last year, \$1.9 trillion of our debt, or 40 percent of it, was owned by foreign investors. The Chinese own about \$217 billion of that, the Japanese cover about \$668 billion, the oil-rich OPEC countries own about \$48 billion, and the list goes on and on.

So we keep cutting our taxes so we are not sending that money to Washington, D.C., but we keep spending as if we had that revenue, as long as our friends the Chinese and the Japanese and other foreign investors continue to prop up our debt. How long will that last?

We need to protect our financial security. Carrying around this much debt is making us incredibly vulnerable. We are essentially being held hostage by our own financial obligations. As long as we continue down this road, we weaken our position as a world leader because our financial stability is in the hands of other nations.

This is not just a national security problem. Running a big deficit and debt is also a problem for the economic health of this country. As a Nation, personal savings has dropped from almost 11 percent in 1984 to about 1 percent in 2004. We are not saving.

We are also weak in investment, despite historically low interest rates. In fact, if you look at this budget, you will see that we are spending about \$1.5 billion a week in the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, \$1.5 billion a week. But we are cutting education, and we are cutting the health care system. We are cutting our national parks budget; we are cutting transportation. We are not investing and reinvesting in our water and sewage systems. All the investment that we need to be a productive country, we are not investing.

Do you think the Chinese are investing \$1.5 billion a week in Iraq in a war? No. They are building their water systems, they are educating their people, they are building their transportation systems, their telecommunications systems. They are investing. We are just spending.

It is poor fiscal judgment; and this Congress, led by this side, is guilty of putting that on a credit card that all Americans will end up paying.

My background is in finance. I used to do that. I used to finance for companies, for people. I used to tell them how to do things. I have never seen this

kind of disregard, this structural problem that we are creating.

So I hope, Mr. Speaker, that this Congress begins to make the tough choices, and that is the reason I opposed H. Con. Res. 95 today.

CONGRATULATING MAUI ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY, INC., ON ITS 40TH ANNIVERSARY

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

Mr. CASE. Mr. Speaker and fellow citizens of our country, and especially of my Great State of Hawaii, and of the great County of Maui, celebrating its centennial this year and the place to where my own great-grandparents moved and made their life home in 1900, aloha.

"Maui no ka oi," Maui is the best, not just because of its scenery and lifestyle, but because it has always been an innovator, and because, like all of our Hawaii, it takes care of its own. And there is no better example of the true spirit of Maui than Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc., which I stand today to congratulate on the occasion of its 40th anniversary.

Mr. Speaker, Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc., MEO, is a private, non-profit Community Action Partnership Agency, which was chartered on March 22, 1965, by Federal mandate under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. MEO provides an enormous array of community services annually to over 20,000 people throughout Maui County, encompassing the four islands of Maui, Molokai, Lanai, and Kahoolawe.

MEO's model is "Helping People, Changing Lives." Its mission is simple and direct: to help the poor, the elderly, children and youth, persons with disabilities, immigrants, other disadvantaged people, and the general public to help themselves, so that they may become self-sufficient.

MEO has more than fulfilled this mission. In 2003, for example, MEO was one of only four agencies out of 1,000 community action agencies nationwide to receive an Agency of Excellence Award from the National Community Action Partnership. This prestigious award, for MEO's superior administrative operations and program excellence, is a true testament to its advocacy and its outstanding services tailored to the specific and often unique needs of Maui County.

Among those many services, MEO provides the largest specialized transportation program in Maui County, with vehicles carrying the elderly, low-income, persons with disabilities, youth, Head Start children, and the public, 7 days a week and up to 18 hours a day. MEO's award-winning Head Start program provides services to 384 children through 14 centers county-

wide. The MEO YouthBank, including an AmeriCorps program, provides opportunities for youths ages 14 to 26 to work, learn and prepare for their future.

The MEO community services staff works tirelessly in challenging situations, providing emergency assistance, job placement, training and other support services. The MEO Development Corporation provides loans and training to start small businesses, create jobs, and boost the community's economy. MEO's Anlace Hispano provides services to the Hispanic-speaking and immigrant population, and the Being Empowered and Safe Together reintegration program serves individuals making the difficult transition from prison back into the community.

Moreover, MEO has never hesitated to go above and beyond its core mission in times of dire community need. In the aftermath of 9/11, for example, MEO, in partnership with the County of Maui, distributed \$1.5 million to residents affected economically when Maui's tourism industry slumped. Just a few weeks ago, MEO volunteered its services to assist employees dislocated through the destruction by fire of Kahului Mall.

Of course, the secret of MEO's success has always been its wonderful, dedicated and caring staff, led by some truly extraordinary executive directors throughout the last 4 decades. My former State House of Representatives Speaker and colleague, Joe Souki, well laid the groundwork for the modern era and was followed for the last 2 decades by the irrepressible Gladys Baisa, who will soon retire. Maui County will truly miss your leadership, Gladys; but you and MEO chose well in your successor, Sandy Bas.

So you can see, Mr. Speaker, that Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc., has truly created a better community for everyone and richly deserves these happy birthday greetings before it moves on into a bright and equally rewarding future. Mahalo, and aloha.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE VETERANS OF THE PERSIAN GULF

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

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to the veterans of the Persian Gulf who are from the Mahoning Valley in Ohio. Our valley has long been blessed to have local sons and daughters willing to volunteer to serve in our country's military, and our most recent veterans of the Persian Gulf are cut from the same cloth. When they were called on to serve overseas in the Middle East, leaving their families and friends for extended periods of time to fight in a foreign land, they answered the call. They an-

swered the call, even though they faced great physical risk, even death; and I thank them for their service, for their patriotism, and for their sacrifice.

We as a country owe them a tremendous debt and are forever grateful. We need to ensure that they are provided the equipment and support they need in the field to complete their jobs effectively, that their families are taken care of when they are away, that they have jobs to come home to when they return, and that they receive the benefits that they have earned as veterans.

We have no higher legislative priority, I know myself and speaking for the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND), than fully funding the veterans benefits that they have been promised.

Yesterday, I voted for the supplemental funding bill for the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. I believe that we need to finish the job we started in the Middle East and bring stability to that region and then to immediately bring our troops home.

God bless the men and women who have served during the war on terror, and God bless the men and women who are still serving on the other side of the world. These veterans have protected this country for years, since its inception; and the highest honor that we could bestow upon them is to make sure that we take care of them.

Mr. Speaker, we have the freedoms we enjoy today because of the sacrifices that our soldiers have made throughout history, and I am proud today to honor the men and women of the Mahoning Valley who have served this country in the Persian Gulf and have served so nobly.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my good friend, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND).

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to thank my friend, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), for sharing these moments with me as we stand here in the Chamber of the people's House, the House of Representatives, to honor those from our region.

Ohio is a patriotic State, and the great Mahoning Valley is certainly a patriotic region of Ohio. Over the years, literally thousands of young men and women have left the great Mahoning Valley and have served in this country's Armed Forces. They are serving today, so many of them, in harm's way, unselfishly giving up of their time and their talents, while their loving families wait at home, hoping and praying that they will be safe.

Both the gentleman and I have visited Walter Reed Hospital. We have talked with Americans who have lost their legs, many have been blinded, so many have sustained brain injuries. I have been to the Bethesda Naval Hospital and seen young people walking down the hallways with their families walking with them, young people who have been terribly disfigured.