

Following Iraq, I was able to speak with a small business owner, an Iraqi woman who had traveled to America about a year ago and shadowed me for a day. And she thanks the American military, and because of the freedom that our men and women in uniform have helped to deliver there on the ground, her Iraqi sisters are now elected officials. Imagine that. A woman in Iraq, many women in Iraq who are holding elected office. It is change. It is a step forward.

□ 2000

While we were in Israel, we talked peace, not just a distant hope for peace generations from now, but of a long-term agreement and soon. This is because of our steady and dedicated commitment to involvement in the Middle East.

In Iraq, we reviewed the Iraqi military training with General Petraeus, who had been the commanding general at Fort Campbell. This American-Iraqi military training is going to help give that nation the protection, the ability to protect from the insurgents who are there every day, growing weaker; but they are there. It will help the Iraqis take responsibility for their security. We have got about 150,000 Iraqis that are trained; and some of our big Tennesseans, the 278th regiment from east Tennessee, they are working hard, and they are helping train many of the Iraqis.

In Jordan, we visited with the Iraqi police training facility. We have got about 50,000 Iraqis who are now trained, carrying on the work of the police force in Iraq.

When you are there in Iraq on the ground, you cannot help but notice the green fields and the sense that order is taking place to their daily lives, not only in government but also in business.

The progress made in Iraq is sending shockwaves throughout the Middle East. We have seen the Lebanese people resist the Syrian domination of their government. In Saudi Arabia and Egypt, there is movement. It is slow, but there is movement towards democracy.

None of this would have been possible without our military men and women, and it is that change that is going to destroy terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, I just stand today to commend the men and women in uniform, to say a special thanks to our Tennesseans who are serving, and I know that America joins me in thanking them and their families for their sacrifice, their bravery, and their dedication.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order for 5 minutes.

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

There was no objection.

FEDERAL BUDGET DEFICIT

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

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, the Federal budget deficit is one of the gravest problems that our Nation faces. It is one of the largest it has ever been. It is \$412 billion this past year. It is likely to continue at that size for the foreseeable future.

\$412 billion is a whole lot of money, but the truth is that the real budget deficit is even higher than that because, due to the Social Security surplus of about \$155 billion this last year, that is used by the administration to disguise the true size of the deficit. So that means the true deficit is not \$412 billion, even though that is a near record setter. The true deficit this last year was \$567 billion.

We have a real problem in America because each annual deficit turns into debt, debt that we have to pay interest on. We have no choice about that because America has never defaulted and will never default on its obligations.

Those interest costs add up. It took the first 204 years of our Nation's history to get us the first \$1 trillion in debt, 204 years to do that; but now we add another \$1 trillion every 2 or 3 years.

Mr. Speaker, we do that because our Nation is simply not paying its bills today. It is too easy to spend money that we do not have, too easy to spend money that we are borrowing increasingly from dangerous countries like China. We are borrowing \$1.3 billion a minute, over \$1 billion a day; and, Mr. Speaker, that adds up to a terrible debt burden for our children and grandchildren.

We have got to do something about that. It is sad but true that it is unlikely that the Congress this year will even have a budget. We passed one in the House of Representatives and the Senate passed one, but the two are so different they are probably irreconcilable.

Guess what, Mr. Speaker, last year we did not have a budget either. So how is our Nation, the greatest nation in the history of the world, going to proceed without a budget, meanwhile running some of the largest deficits in American history, adding, as I said earlier, \$1 trillion to our children's and grandchildren's debt every year or two now?

Well, most Americans are not informed about this, and that is an outrage because what the leadership of this House has done is they eliminated any votes on raising the debt ceiling.

That used to be a way that the American public could tell when the debt was being increased dramatically, when we bumped up against that debt ceiling. Now there are few, if any, recorded votes on that. No news to report. It just happens automatically.

Mr. Speaker, everybody talks about spending cuts as a way to get out of the deficit hole. That is a great idea; but, Mr. Speaker, it is unlikely that a body of 435 in this House and 100 in the Senate is going to come up with spending cuts. We need Presidential leadership, and that has been conspicuously lacking for the last 4 or 5 years.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush is the first President in the United States since James Garfield never to have vetoed a bill. Not one single piece of legislation has President Bush vetoed, the first President since Garfield, who served back in 1881; and poor Garfield was only in office for 6 months before he died. We are now in the 5th year of the Bush Presidency, and he has yet to veto a bill.

To give President Bush credit, he says he really needs the line item veto, the special narrower form of veto that would enable him to cut individual programs out of larger bills. That would be a wonderful thing for the President to have, but the Supreme Court has ruled it is unconstitutional. It would take at least 2 or 3 years to pass a constitutional amendment. Meanwhile, we would have another President.

But what the President has not acknowledged is he has got rescission power which is just about as good as the line item veto power; and guess what, just like the real veto, he has never used the rescission power either.

President Clinton used rescission power 163 times, and he won 111 of those cuts; but President Bush, in his 5 years as President, has never asked for a rescission power. Period.

Well, that is an outrage. So not only are we not seeing Presidential leadership on the veto, we are not seeing Presidential leadership regarding rescission power either.

I think the American people need to ask. We want Presidential leadership and he has provided excellent leadership in a number of areas, but regarding our Federal budget deficit, there has been almost no leadership.

We need to start a clock saying when is the President going to finally veto a bill and try to discipline a Congress that likes to spend money too much? When is the President going to rescind spending and start disciplining Congress? The American people deserve to know the answer.

STANDING BEHIND OUR MEN AND WOMEN IN HARM'S WAY

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

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, tonight I would like to read just a few paragraphs from an article written by Mona Charen, who is a well-known journalist here in Washington, DC, and around this Nation. The title of her article: "Is the Marine Corps P.C.?" PC meaning political correct.

"Second Lieutenant Ilario Pantano was making a six-figure income as an energy trader with Goldman Sachs in New York when the World Trade Center was attacked. Pantano had friends who worked in the Twin Towers and friends among the firefighters who perished trying to save them.

"This Marine veteran had already served his country in the first Gulf War, set aside his career, which also included work in film and television, kissed his wife and two children goodbye, and headed to Quantico, Virginia, for officer training school."

I continue Ms. Charen's comments in her article: "A Marine Corps colleague asked, 'How many guys do you know who would drop 100 grand a year to go sleep in fighting holes in the nasty mud and dust for, what, 25 grand a year?'"

"There are a few, and the rest of us owe them more than we can possibly express, which is why it is shocking to learn that Pantano may now be facing murder charges."

Mr. Speaker, that is why I am on the floor. I want to read from part of a resolution, H. Res. 167, which I introduced the day before we left for Easter:

"On April 15th, 2004, Second Lieutenant Pantano led a platoon in Mahmudiyah, Iraq, that apprehended two Iraqis who were suspected insurgents.

"Second Lieutenant Pantano ordered the suspected insurgents to be detained, then ordered them to search their own vehicle in the event that it contained explosives.

"The vehicle's seats were not bolted down, a tactic commonly used by insurgents to retrieve weapons, and nails and bolts were found in the trunk of the vehicle, items commonly found in improvised explosive devices.

"In response to threatening movements by the suspected insurgents, Second Lieutenant Pantano took action in self-defense that resulted in their deaths.

"Accusations that Second Lieutenant Pantano's actions were something other than self-defense did not surface until almost 2 months after the incident.

"In his Combat Fitness Report dated August 5, 2004, nearly 4 months after the incident, Second Lieutenant Pantano's superior officers gave the following evaluation of his performance from March through July, 2004."

I am just going to read a couple of these, Mr. Speaker. One, "He is a Marine who 'leads from the front, always, and balances his aggressive style with

true concern for the welfare of his Marines.'

"He was 'ready for increased responsibility,' and was a soldier who the Marine Corps should 'retain, promote and assign to challenging assignments.'"

Now, "Therefore be it," Mr. Speaker, this is the close of my resolution, "Second Lieutenant Ilario Pantano, United States Marine Corps, was defending the cause of freedom, democracy, and liberty in his actions of April 15, 2004, that resulted in the deaths of two suspected Iraqi insurgents and that subsequently have given rise to certain charges against him.

"The United States Government should dismiss all charges against Second Lieutenant Ilario Pantano arising from the actions referred to in paragraph (1)."

I hope my colleagues that may be listening tonight will join me or at least look on our Web site or call our office and ask about this resolution, H. Res. 167. I can also say, Mr. Speaker, that his mother, who I have spoken to three times, who is a wonderful lady, has set up a Web site called www.defendthedefenders.com.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, last Friday I went down to Wilmington, North Carolina, where the American Legion was holding a barbecue and a fish fry to help Lieutenant Pantano with his defense. I have never met such a fine young man in all my entire life. He's 29 years old, a beautiful wife and two children. I met them and I hope that my colleagues here tonight and those in the office will look at this resolution, H. Res. 167. We need to stand behind our men and women who are in harm's way in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I close by asking the good Lord in heaven to please bless our men and women in uniform and their families, and I ask the good Lord in heaven to please bless the United States of America and to help us find peace in this world, and May God please, please bless America.

TRIBUTE TO POPE JOHN PAUL II

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

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a man who embodied the values of compassion and selflessness.

Serving for the past 26 years as the spiritual and emotional beacon of the Catholic Church, John Paul II exhibited charisma, character, and conviction when carrying his divine message to millions of people across the world.

He passed away this past Saturday at the age of 84 after a courageous struggle.

I join millions of mourning people across the world in honoring his remarkable life and recognizing his wondrous achievements.

Many great men and women have devoted themselves to a single cause or to a group of people. Pope John Paul devoted his efforts to all humanity around the world.

When he was elected Pope on October 16, 1978, he was well aware of the problems occurring not only in the Catholic Church but throughout the world. Communism had a grip on many areas, including his beloved homeland of Poland.

John Paul II had a social and political vision of what the world should be and dedicated himself to changing the reality that we knew.

He inspired incredible change, leading with unwavering faith and exceptional sincerity. His duty to the church was purposeful and his love for mankind was unconditional.

He undertook the goals of sewing the schisms of Christianity, healing the wounds of the Christian-Judeo relationship, and creating a legacy for the world to follow. He left his imprint on all faiths, as well as the scholar world.

As a devoted Catholic, I am honored and privileged to recognize such a special and loved person.

□ 2015

He was my inspirational compass and guided my faith through his unyielding dedication to the tenet of integrity and morality.

Mr. Speaker, today I mourn the passing of Pope John Paul II, but salute and express sincere admiration in his unparalleled life and lasting legacy, and I wrote a poem that I would like to dedicate to John Paul II that's called "The Spirit of Life Is."

To live is to believe. To see is to believe. To express is to believe. To feel is to believe. To respect is to believe. To forgive is to believe. To have hope is to believe. To love is to believe. For if you possess these values, you truly can enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and the spirit of life will be within you. For you truly have touched the life of the world around us in making it a better place for humanity, changing the course of history. Your legacy will live in the lives of those who truly believe."

MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURPHY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MURPHY. Tonight Republican Members of Congress will be talking about Medicare. Now, as we are getting into this, what I want to make sure that we first look at here is that many talk about is the Federal Government doing much with regard to health care? And Medicare, Medicaid, veterans benefits, and other programs that the Federal Government pays for consume a