

as the number one national security threat facing this country. Last week, in a valedictory interview with the Associated Press, Attorney General John Ashcroft also singled out the danger to America posed by terrorists armed with nuclear weapons.

I agree with the President and the Attorney General. I also share the conviction of almost every expert in and out of government who has looked at this problem that if we do not act now to secure existing nuclear material and weapons, as well as the expertise needed to build new weapons, a nuclear terrorist attack on the United States is only a matter of time.

Mr. Speaker, I will be introducing the Omnibus Nuclear Nonproliferation and Anti-Nuclear Terrorism Act of 2005 to better enable the United States to prevent what Graham Allison of Harvard University has termed “the ultimate preventable catastrophe.” I am pleased to announce that several of my colleagues will be joining me as co-sponsors.

Over the past several months I have consulted with a range of experts to produce a range of policies that I believe will be effective and which can be implemented quickly, as time is of the essence and time is not on our side.

First, the bill creates an Office of Nonproliferation Programs within the Executive Office of the President to coordinate and oversee America’s efforts to prevent terrorists from gaining access to nuclear weapons and to manage the effort to secure existing nuclear material in the former Soviet Union and other places.

The bill expands the ability of the President to carry out the Cooperative Threat Reduction programs both in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere.

It will enhance the Global Threat Reduction Initiative announced by Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham, our former Secretary, last May to advance the global cleanout of the most vulnerable stockpiles of nuclear weapons materials.

The legislation calls on the President to expand and strengthen his Proliferation Security Initiative to interdict the shipment of nuclear material.

My bill also urges the President to work with other nations and international organizations to develop and implement standards to improve the security of nuclear weapons and materials.

It authorizes the Department of Energy to assist Russia in conducting a comprehensive inventory of its tactical weapons and requires reports to Congress on those efforts.

My bill will also expand the President’s authority to fund non-defense research by Russian WMD scientists so these scientists would not be tempted to sell their secrets to North Korea, Iran or al Qaeda.

Finally, the bill will require the President to report on ways to strengthen the Non-proliferation Treaty by more effectively controlling nu-

clear technology and material and by mobilizing the international community to close the loophole in Article IV of the treaty.

Mr. Speaker, as the Nation and this Congress grappled with the attacks of September 11, we asked ourselves how we could have failed to foresee the danger posed by al Qaeda and taken steps to prevent 9/11. We know about the danger of nuclear terrorism. We have been warned repeatedly. We are in a race with terrorists who are actively seeking nuclear weapons. The choice is ours. We can continue doing what we are doing now and risk an almost inevitable nuclear attack or we can take action to prevent it. When you consider the consequences, Mr. Speaker, the choice is really no choice at all.

DAMAGING SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for helping to organize this Special Order with me.

I would like to thank and recognize my colleagues who have agreed to participate in this Democratic hour of discussion. Those who are here tonight to speak are from the Democratic Women’s Caucus, from the Congressional Black Caucus, from the Hispanic Caucus, and we have many other like-minded Members here tonight to speak.

Tomorrow night, we will listen to the President describe his domestic agenda for the next 4 years. He has already told us what he will spend most of his time talking about. He will not be talking about paying down the staggering national deficit or addressing the international crisis over the falling American dollar or getting Americans back to work after we have lost over 2 million jobs.

He will be talking about Social Security. He is going to spend his first annual address to the Nation trying to sell us on his plan to cut Social Security in half. Of course, that is not what he is going to call it, but that is exactly what it is.

I suggest that we listen carefully tomorrow night not to what the President says as much to what he does not say. In fact, the White House admitted today to the Washington Post that the President will not talk about the size of the benefit cuts his plan requires or about how the size of the proposed private accounts compare to the benefits retirees are now getting.

Let us see tomorrow night if the President tells the public that his plan will raise the deficit by over \$2 trillion or put in jeopardy the trust fund that guarantees retired American workers financial dignity in their old age.

Let us call it like it is. The President wants to privatize Social Security, although I am sure he will not use that word, because they know that Americans do not like gambling in the stock market with the Social Security Trust Fund. Democrats will make clear that his plan means putting at risk the Social Security Trust Fund that guarantees working Americans an old age with financial dignity.

The President wants to cut benefits drastically. He has to make his plan work, but he will not say that. Democrats will tell Americans the Bush plan means each of you will get less than you get now and less than you would get if you did nothing at all.

The President wants to increase the deficit by \$2 trillion to pay for his plan, additional debt that would most likely be held by a foreign country such as China or Japan, but he will not mention that his reckless deficit increase lets other nations control America’s economy and perhaps even our future.

Democrats are standing up for our economic security and for that of our children. Enough American debt is already in the hands of other countries.

If that is not bad enough, the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) wants to calculate monthly benefits based on race and gender. For example, women get less each month in his proposal than men because they tend to live longer.

Democrats are saying we will not accept a Social Security formula based on race or gender. It raises serious constitutional questions and is just plain wrong and unfair.

Let us just call this plan what it is. It is a bad plan with bad results for American workers, especially women and minorities, and here are the facts: The White House is pushing a proposal that would cut in half the amount of income replaced by Social Security for the average retired American worker. Unlike the present system which allows benefits to grow with the economy and wages, the Bush plan would fix benefits to current living standards. That means that retirees would have to live on an amount that is not keeping pace with the cost of living but effectively shrinking each year. An average worker retiring today would have 42 percent of his or her lifetime average income replaced by Social Security, and that is the green line right here.

Under the current system, the workers would get 40 percent of it and the lower income workers on this side would get more than the higher income workers.

Under the Bush plan, in 70 years this benefit would fall to 18 percent. That is a dramatic fall. In other words, workers are denied roughly half of the benefits they have earned over a lifetime of work.

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As my colleagues can see from this chart, and this chart was prepared by the nonpartisan, independent Economic Policy Institute, the President’s

plan is particularly bad for lower-income workers, those who earn less than the average; and this includes many women and minorities, lower income here. So we can tell that there is more of an impact on lower-income workers. Everybody loses but the lower-income earners. The people who need it most lose the most.

To add insult to injury, under the President's plan, at retirement, workers would effectively lose about half of their so-called private account, since about 50 cents on the dollar is deducted from their guaranteed benefits that they would otherwise get. Even a good investor loses half of what he or she made.

So far, the White House has been silent on that feature, but they need it in order to make their plan add up; and we will not be able to avoid that by opting out of the private account system. The President has been calling the plan, quote, voluntary; but under his plan, workers who do not want to gamble with part of their Social Security money lose the corresponding portion of their guaranteed benefits anyway. So how voluntary is that?

We have not even mentioned the risk to the trust fund, to the taxpayers and to individual retirees that comes from letting individuals play the stock market with Social Security money. What about those who take money out of the trust fund under the President's plan to invest in stocks that go belly up? Who takes care of them? The taxpayers, of course. So the system really ends up paying twice.

Today, in contrast, the trust fund provides guaranteed benefits for older Americans, backed by the full faith and credit of the United States Government. That is a better investment for Social Security and for the American people.

If the President told the whole truth to the Nation, Americans would see clearly that his plan is a lousy deal for the American people. Women and minorities are particularly hurt by the Bush plan.

Let me spend a moment on just how bad the plan is for women. Women still earn less than men on average, about 79 cents to the dollar; and that wage differential translates to an even greater pension disparity. In addition, many Social Security recipients are not retired workers but receive benefit as the spouse, child, or widowed spouse of a worker or a disabled worker. Most of these recipients are women and children. So women depend on Social Security more than men do. Women are 70 percent of Social Security recipients at age 65 and over 75 percent at age 85 and above. Social Security benefits are particularly important to keeping women and minorities out of poverty.

This chart that was prepared from the Joint Economic Committee shows that for nonmarried women over 65 Social Security cuts the poverty rate from almost 60 percent to 16 percent, and we can see that the figures for Af-

rican Americans and Hispanics are comparable. It is 21 percent for blacks and 15 percent for Hispanics. In New York, for example, my home State, 55 percent of elderly women would live in poverty without Social Security.

The President's plan affects women and minorities even worse than men. Women and minorities tend to be at the lower end of the income area, whereas, as we saw in the first chart, benefits drop even more under the Bush plan than on average. Also, the fact that the Bush plan fixes benefits to current living standards cuts benefits to spouses, children, and surviving spouses even more drastically than it does to retirees. Once again, the administration is hurting those who are most vulnerable.

This effect is so obvious that even the White House suddenly feels it has to have some sort of Band-Aid to paste over it; but since the cuts under the Republican plan become larger over time, the temporary increase in benefits the President is rumored to favor will not make up for the cuts for a very long period.

On top of this, the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) suggests that we reduce women's benefits because they live longer than men. This proposal is just absolutely wrong. It is at odds with the moral values of our society. Since the chairman seems to be taking it seriously, let me note that it also raises serious constitutional and legal issues.

Under well-established Supreme Court decisions, city and State pension plans are barred by title VII from using the fact that women live longer as a reason to pay them less each year. Surely, the Federal Government should hold itself to the same standard.

This proposal should be off the table. Together with 40 of my colleagues we have asked the President to make it clear that he rejects the gentleman from California's (Mr. THOMAS) proposal, and we will be listening to his comments tomorrow night.

Let me add that I have a great deal more to say, but I have many distinguished colleagues with me; and I would like to call upon the gentleman from California (Ms. WATSON) who is one of the representatives from the Congressional Black Caucus.

Before that, I would like to place in the RECORD at this point an article by Paul Krugman which points out that his plan is particularly harmful to minorities.

Social Security privatization really is like tax cuts, or the Iraq war: the administration keeps on coming up with new rationales, but the plan remains the same. President Bush's claim that we must privatize Social Security to avert an imminent crisis has evidently fallen flat. So now he's playing the race card.

This week, in a closed meeting with African-Americans, Mr. Bush asserted that Social Security was a bad deal for their race, repeating his earlier claim

that "African-American males die sooner than other males do, which means the system is inherently unfair to a certain group of people." In other words, blacks don't live long enough to collect their fair share of benefits.

This isn't a new argument; privatizers have been making it for years. But the claim that blacks get a bad deal from Social Security is false. And Mr. Bush's use of that false argument is doubly shameful, because he's exploiting the tragedy of high mortality for political gain instead of treating it as a problem we should solve.

Let's start with the facts. Mr. Bush's argument goes back at least seven years, to a report issued by the Heritage Foundation—a report so badly misleading that the deputy chief actuary (now the chief actuary) of the Social Security Administration wrote a memo pointing out "major errors in the methodology." That's actuary-speak for "damned lies."

In fact, the actuary said, "careful research reflecting actual work histories for workers by race indicate that the nonwhite population actually enjoys the same or better expected rates of return from Social Security" as whites.

Here's why. First, Mr. Bush's remarks on African-Americans perpetuate a crude misunderstanding about what life expectancy means. It's true that the current life expectancy for black males at birth is only 68.8 years—but that doesn't mean that a black man who has worked all his life can expect to die after collecting only a few years' worth of Social Security benefits. Black's low life expectancy is largely due to high death rates in childhood and young adulthood. African-American men who make it to age 65 can expect to live, and collect benefits, for an additional 14.6 years—not that far short of the 16.6-year figure for white men.

Second, the formula determining Social Security benefits is progressive: it provides more benefits, as a percentage of earnings, to low-income workers than to high-income workers. Since African-Americans are paid much less, on average, than whites, this works to their advantage.

Finally, Social Security isn't just a retirement program; it's also a disability insurance program. And blacks are much more likely than whites to receive disability benefits.

Put it all together, and the deal African-Americans get from Social Security turns out, according to various calculations, to be either about the same as that for whites or somewhat better. Hispanics, by the way, clearly do better than either.

So the claim that Social Security is unfair to blacks is just false. And the fact that privatizers keep making that claim, after their calculations have repeatedly been shown to be wrong, is yet another indicator of the fundamental dishonesty of their sales pitch.

What's really shameful about Mr. Bush's exploitation of the black death

rate, however, is what it takes for granted.

The persistent gap in life expectancy between African-Americans and whites is one measure of the deep inequalities that remain in our society—including highly unequal access to good-quality health care. We ought to be trying to diminish that gap, especially given the fact that black infants are two and a half times as likely as white babies to die in their first year.

Now nobody can expect instant progress in reducing health inequalities. But the benefits of Social Security privatization, if any, won't materialize for many decades. By using blacks' low life expectancy as an argument for privatization, Mr. Bush is in effect taking it as a given that 40 or 50 years from now, large numbers of African-Americans will still be dying before their time.

Is this an example of what Mr. Bush famously called "the soft bigotry of low expectations?" Maybe not: it isn't particularly soft to treat premature black deaths not as a tragedy we must end but as just another way to push your ideological agenda. But bigotry—yes, that sounds like the right word.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot condone irresponsible actions, and to support the President's plan on the destruction of Social Security would be just that, irresponsible.

Social Security is a program that should be strengthened and preserved for future generations. Republicans are manufacturing a Social Security crisis that does not exist in order to dismantle Social Security. The administration should be working with Congress to promote personal wealth and savings through investment, but not at the cost of Social Security.

Despite the President's claims, Social Security will remain solvent for nearly 50 more years under the current system. Modest changes to the system would enable Social Security to pay full benefits well into the future. The President's plan for Social Security reform only achieves solvency through massive cuts in guaranteed benefits, not through privatization.

Under the President's plan, according to the CBO, benefits for the typical retiree in 2065 will be 45 percent lower than under the current system. The so-called private accounts will be taxed around 50 percent before the money is available to the beneficiary.

I am especially disappointed at the recent comments made by the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means. The elimination of racial and gender disparities is an issue whose

time is long overdue. As a Federal elected official, a Congressional Black Caucus member and a senior woman, I want to call attention to the following facts.

Social Security makes up a much larger share of total retirement income for unmarried women and minorities than it does for married couples, unmarried men and whites.

Among seniors, Social Security is the sole source of income for 26 percent of nonmarried women.

Social Security is a family insurance program, not an investment scheme. Every American that is drawing Social Security put in the blood, sweat and tears required to earn the benefit. Social Security has been very effective in reducing poverty; and without Social Security, 47 percent of whites age 65 or older would have incomes below the poverty line. Sixty percent of blacks age 65 or older would be below the poverty line, and the poverty rate would be over 55 percent for Hispanics age 65 or older as well.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to honor the Americans that have accepted stewardship of this great country for over 65 years of their lives. We are a stronger Nation when we protect and respect our seniors. We gain wisdom, institutional memory, guidance, and family values by ensuring the well-being of all our elder citizens.

Forty-eight million people receive Social Security benefits each month. Thirty million are retired workers who have paid into the system, and more than 90 percent of people age 65 or older obtain Social Security income.

Mr. Speaker, we should not endorse a plan that will destroy Social Security. The President's plan is simply irresponsible.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her comments, and I would place in the RECORD at this point a letter that was signed by 40 of my colleagues asking him to make it absolutely clear that he rejects the gentleman from California's (Mr. THOMAS) notion, and I hope that we hear that tomorrow night.

Hon. GEORGE W. BUSH,
President,
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President, We were appalled to hear Ways & Means Chairman Bill Thomas propose Sunday on "Meet the Press" that Social Security benefits should be based on race and gender. Chairman Thomas said that Congress "needs to consider how many years of retirement you get based on your race" and that women should receive fewer benefits each year because they tend to live longer than men. Asked if Congress would accept such an idea, Chairman Thomas didn't seem to know the answer.

The answer is "No," Mr. President. We, the undersigned members of Congress, will not accept a Social Security formula that is

based on race or gender. This idea is unfair, it is unjust, it is profoundly anti-American. We call on you to repudiate it. We request a meeting with you to give you our views in person and receive your response.

Cutting benefits to those who need them most is counter to the core principles on which Social Security was founded. That great program is the financial safety net for all working Americans in their old age. All workers have earned their benefits and are entitled to them regardless of gender or race. Social Security's formulas are race and gender neutral and must remain so. To propose that women should receive fewer benefits because they tend to live longer denies benefits to retired women workers who depend on them to survive and is fundamentally wrong. To advocate that minorities should receive different benefits on the basis of their race is repugnant in a society that has renounced racial discrimination and where all persons are equal before the law.

Chairman Thomas' proposal attacks the most vulnerable among us. Retired women workers are twice as likely as men to live below the poverty line and to depend on Social Security as their sole means of support. For African-Americans, Social Security cuts the poverty rate from 59 percent to 21 percent.

Sunday was not the first time Chairman Thomas has proposed basing Social Security on race and gender, but it was the first he made clear on national TV that he will advance this outrageous agenda in the Congress. It is time to make clear that Congress will not accept it. Nor should you or your administration. Chairman Thomas' proposal goes against everything for this great nation stands, and it is counter to our deepest moral values. We call on you to renounce clearly and unambiguously any change to Social Security benefits premised on race or gender.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Maloney; Frank Pallone, Jr.; Nancy Pelosi; Tammy Baldwin; William Jefferson; Alcee Hastings; Dale Kildee; Diane Watson; Michael Michaud; Gene Green; Steve Israel; Maxine Waters; Lynn Woolsey; Joe Baca; Sheila Jackson-Lee; Chris Van Hollen; Jerrold Nadler; Gary Ackerman; Raul Grijalva; Barbara Lee; Gwen Moore; Luis Gutierrez; Sam Farr; Bobby Rush; Marty Meehan; Mike Honda; Ed Markey; Tim Bishop; Robert Menendez; Donald M. Payne; Tom Lantos; Eddie Bernice Johnson; Al Green; Loretta Sanchez; Henry Waxman; Julia Carson; Maurice Hinchey; Elijah Cummings; Linda Sanchez; Artur Davis; and Major R. Owens; Members of Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to read briefly a letter that came into my office on this issue from one of my constituents, and she wrote:

"I want to thank you for standing up on the Congress floor and speaking out against the appalling recommendation made by the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) on Meet the Press. No decisions regarding Social Security should be based on a recipient's gender or race. To this day, women and often minorities still earn less on average

than men. This has placed an unfair burden on women who often are the sole providers for their children to have the means in which to save for their retirement. Shall we further ensure their poverty in their final years? Please do not allow the gender gap to become acceptable and government-controlled."

Another person who has spoken out strongly on this issue is the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN), and I thank her for joining us.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) for yielding to me and also for her efforts in organizing this evening's Special Order so that we can bring greater attention to this critical issue.

Of all the programs instituted by government during our Nation's history, Social Security is arguably the most successful, one of the most meaningful. It is the only universal defined benefit, inflation-protected pension system for American workers.

It is a little known fact that Wisconsin had a very strong connection to Social Security in its origins, its authorship and its administration. In the 1920s, lured by the promise of quick profits, millions of Americans invested all of their assets in the stock market, losing everything when the Market crashed in 1929. In the Depression that followed, no group suffered more than the millions of senior citizens who had no income, no resources and were forced to live in poverty.

Spurred by that tragedy, two Wisconsin natives and University of Wisconsin-trained economists led President Roosevelt's Committee on Economic Security in drafting and shepherding through Congress what became the Social Security Act of 1935. The conceptual underpinnings of Social Security came directly from what we call the Wisconsin Idea, the concept that governments and the university could and should collaborate to address serious social and economic problems.

The successful results of this collaboration cannot be questioned. For nearly 70 years Social Security has served as a vital resource for our Nation's seniors, preventing millions from spending their final years in poverty.

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In fact, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the national poverty level among senior citizens is 10 percent, which is two-and-a-half percentage points lower than the national percentage of the population living in poverty.

Social Security benefits are predictable and steady. They protect against inflation, and they also provide vital disability and survivor benefits. No private pension or savings account can provide that type and kind of protection.

Those who seek to privatize the program have sought to portray Social Security as unaffordable, unsustainable and facing some sort of imminent fi-

nancial crisis. Yet a close look reveals that the facts are otherwise. According to the Social Security Trustees' Annual 2004 Report, Social Security will be able to pay full benefits to all retirees until the year 2042. The Congressional Budget Office projects that Social Security will be able to pay 100 percent of benefits until 10 years later, 2052.

However, if current workers are allowed to divert money out of the Social Security Trust Fund and contract into private accounts, there will not be enough revenue to pay benefits to current beneficiaries and, without raising taxes, the government would be forced to borrow that money, raising the deficit by an estimated \$2 trillion.

So why the clamor to create private accounts? Despite its undeniable success, there have always been people opposed to Social Security who have worked repeatedly to dismantle the program. They simply do not believe that government should insure Americans against poverty. I find this indefensible.

Social Security is a product of, among other things, the Wisconsin idea, reflecting Wisconsin values that government should work to further the common good. As generations did before us, it is now our duty to strengthen the Social Security program and keep this promise to all generations that follow.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Wisconsin. I was not aware of Wisconsin's important role in the development of this program.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to yield to my colleague, the gentleman from the great State of New York (Mr. OWENS), and to thank him for speaking out and being with us here tonight.

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

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from New York for this Special Order, and I rise to make a fervent appeal.

Social Security should be a nonnegotiable part of a democratic society in America. I must appeal and beg the White House and the Republican majority in the House and the Senate to end the torture of millions of Americans. Right now they are going through torture.

Torture is a correct word. A cruel psychological torture is being executed every day when we launch these overt attacks, assaults on Social Security. People are fearful. I feel the pain and fear of the millions who are now trembling under this barrage of Republican propaganda which attacks Social Security, uses trick words and booby trap concepts that frighten people a great deal.

It is not reform. It is the destruction of Social Security as we know it which is being attempted. Social Security must be made as permanent as the United States Constitution. Social Se-

curity represents a high expression of compassion. It is a massive and systematic application of collective compassion. It works. It is not a perfectly administrated program. Nothing is perfect. But it has made possible a helping hand in a systematic way to more people than any other program ever conceived by any government.

Social Security is a Democratic Party creation. Fortunately, we heard our colleague previously talk about how Social Security evolved out of State programs. It is a Democratic Party creation because it was greatly resisted by the Republican Party from the very beginning.

It is important to note this fact and have people understand in this generation at this particular time that Social Security was not created by magic. There was a certain kind of moral dedication and political determination that was necessary in order to create Social Security. Moral dedication. Morality in the truest sense of the word. Morality: Caring for the lives of people. Morality: Wanting to make that part of the preamble to the Declaration of Independence which talks about the pursuit of happiness, wanting to make it a reality for the poorest people.

So it is probably the greatest act of morality of our government, the one that impacts on the most lives over history, over time, than any other. So when we speak of moral values, let us remember it was the Democrats who created Social Security, the Franklin Roosevelt administration.

It was the Democrats who later created Medicare and Medicaid. The great disciple of Franklin Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson clearly understood that government is not on people's back when government takes steps to organize systems which allow people to pursue happiness, allows the elderly to be part of the process of pursuing happiness, allowing all people to have reasonable health care, no matter how poor they are. Medicaid and Medicare are under attack also as well as Social Security.

America today must appreciate that maybe there were miracles involved, but they were not from heaven, I assure you. There were miracles that took place in this city, in Washington. There were miracles that took place on the floor of the House and the Senate. There were miracles that took place in the White House to make Social Security a reality.

We do not want to lose this reality. We want it to continue to be an expression of our moral values at the very highest.

I feel the fear of millions of people, but I also first feel the fear of individuals that I know. The senior citizens whose faces I look into, they are frantic. Because the way in which we have approached this problem is to first stampede people into the feeling it is doomed, it is about to go over the cliff, that any day now that they will cut off Social Security checks.

We did not mean to make it quite that dramatic, but for a poor person, a

senior who has no other income, no other income, and there are millions who have no other income except Social Security, for them to face a situation where they hear on the radio, they see on television the talking heads talking about the need to privatize Social Security, privatize to them means the government is not running it, and they do not trust private individuals.

There are all sorts of scenarios running through the heads of people who are dependent upon Social Security. So I feel the fear directly. I feel the fear because I know people who cannot make it any other way without Social Security, and they think that any day now they are going to be without it.

This stampede is a kind of terror. It is unnecessary terror. It is setting the stage politically to force us to act faster and with a kind of frantic fear that makes people, Members of Congress, do what they know is wrong. The stampede should stop.

The stampede is made more fearful by the insulting language and the distorted arguments that are already being used, as we have heard my colleagues talk already. I heard my colleague on the Committee on Ways and Means, the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, I heard him on television. I could not believe my ears when I heard the discussion about women live longer and, therefore, women should probably have reduced benefits. That would be the fair thing to do. I just cannot comprehend in this day and age a statement like that could be made. Women should be penalized for living longer.

Along with that statement, Mr. Speaker, came the statement that blacks, particularly black males, would be the beneficiary of a privatization program because they would have greater control over the money they put in. They could take it out earlier, because, after all, black males are dying earlier.

The actuarial statistics show clearly that black males are swindled out of their Social Security payments at a greater rate than anybody else. They die earlier and so do not get their benefits. So, therefore, instead of trying to have a health care system and a set of working conditions in America which allow people to live longer in general, and certainly black males to live longer, instead of creating a program for jobs so that the kind of economic tyranny that black males live under, where they cannot make it, they cannot live a healthy life because they do not have the income, instead of addressing those problems, we are implying they should just live shorter lives and be grateful that we will give them their money back through a privatization system in Social Security.

I just could not believe it. I cannot reconcile that with living in America and having a responsible official making that kind of statement.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to make the case for the millions also who do hard,

back-breaking work every day. They get up early every morning, and they are in motion all day. Most of us do not know what hard work is. We do not understand what it means to be in motion all day and what back-breaking work means.

I understand a little bit because I came from the City of Memphis, Tennessee, which is located in the corner of Tennessee, just between two agricultural States, Mississippi and Arkansas. And the poor children in my neighborhood, we went to Mississippi or Arkansas in the summer to chop cotton. You made \$3 a day sweating under the hot sun all day chopping cotton. That was before the invention of the machines. Or in the fall you went to pick cotton, which was much worse than chopping because you had to bend over all day, and you came home sore all over.

So I had a taste of what it meant to do hard work. But I see men and women all the time who are lifting and moving about doing hard work greater than that all the time. So those are the people who need the retirement earlier, not later. Do not move it back from 65 to 67, and they are now talking about moving it to 70.

I think my father was fortunate. He did hard work all the time. He worked in a furniture factory in the mill, the place where you have the raw boards and raw lumber that has to be ground down and refined, and he was moving all the time. He was pretty tired when he came home, and he is fortunate he lived to be 68. He lived to be 68. So he had 3 years where he did collect Social Security. A very happy man because he could retire and receive Social Security. That is what he looked forward to, retiring, stopping the process of getting up every morning and going to work in that mill with the sawdust and the other things. He died of a disease which is caused by an overexposure to sawdust. It was at the age of 68. So he at least got 3 years of his Social Security.

All he would have had, all he would have had was that Social Security payment if he had not had children who could pay his bills, and later on one of my brothers built a house for him. But for 3 years he was able to benefit from what he paid in Social Security. And many of his colleagues, in fact, most of them, never lived to 65 and were able to realize that.

So I rise to speak for all those millions out there who have seen Social Security as an outstretched hand from their government, which is deserved by working families, which is a compassionate act, and which is one of the most efficient programs that ever the government has invented. We want to maintain Social Security.

We hope that the torture that is going on right now will end. We hope there will be a retreat from this effort to destroy Social Security, and I thank the gentlewoman for yielding to me.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his truly moving presentation today.

I had very much the same reaction he did. I was home during the snowstorm watching Meet the Press, when the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS), suggested that we reduce women's benefits because they live longer than men. I truly almost fell out of my chair. I could not believe it.

And many of the sentiments that the gentleman has expressed on the floor were in Paul Krugman's op-ed piece on January 28 that showed how the program is particularly harmful to minorities. One of the things we need to work on is improved health care and medicine and hospital care for minorities so they live longer, not manipulating the Social Security System in a way that does not help minorities, women or men or anyone.

Mr. OWENS. It was almost a proposal to die early. Please die early.

Mrs. MALONEY. It was astonishing, absolutely astonishing.

Mr. Speaker, I now yield to one of the organizers of this Special Order, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY). I thank her very much for her hard work on putting this together and for her leadership on Social Security and so many other issues.

□ 2045

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) for organizing this Special Order.

Mr. Speaker, soon President Bush will unveil the details of his program to cut Social Security. We already know, however, that the President aims to dismantle a program that has been historically successful in our country and incredibly important to the well-being and financial security of women.

Women make up the majority of Social Security beneficiaries and are less likely than men to receive pensions or have retirement savings. Women are more apt to live on just Social Security. More than 24 million women receive Social Security benefits, and if these benefits were to be taken away, the result would be nearly 60 percent of senior women would be living in poverty. I shudder to think of the possible consequences of breaking apart the strongest social safety net that we have.

Social Security helps to ensure equal footing for women in retirement by using a progressive benefit formula that proportionately pays a greater benefit to those who earn less. Women earn only 77 percent on the dollar compared to their male counterparts and spend less time in the workforce, putting them at an immediate disadvantage for saving. Women who work hard providing for their families, who leave the workforce to raise children should not be penalized in later years for time outside of the workforce when they were not able to add to their private accounts. In fact, if men could have babies, I wonder what they would be doing about their shorter work lives.

Recently, some of my Republican colleagues have proposed that women, because they live longer, should receive smaller benefits than men. Imagine such an idea, that women would receive less money than men because they live longer. If anything, the longer average life span of a woman is an argument against private accounts which do not guarantee paid benefits throughout a person's life. Social Security benefits cannot be outlived and are inflation-proof. Women need to know that they can rely on this safety net to ensure that every American can live out their life with financial security.

Mr. Speaker, although this issue is important to seniors, we need to recognize that the issue affects every American. Today's workers are tomorrow's retirees. As a mother and as a grandmother, I want to make sure that a system that Americans have relied on for so many years will still be there when my children and grandchildren retire.

Social Security is a safety net that must remain in place so that we ensure the welfare of our seniors. We need, however, to encourage Americans to save for their retirement outside and above Social Security to guarantee that they will live comfortably after they are out of the workforce, especially low-wage earners, especially women.

The President's proposal to needlessly and recklessly dismantle the greatest social program in our country's history will have long-lasting and far-reaching effects.

I am deeply troubled by a proposal that would take money away from a guaranteed benefit and subject it to the roller-coaster fluctuations of the stock market. Our goal must be to ensure that Social Security is fiscally sound so that the system our families rely on is not recklessly undermined. We must keep the Social Security safety net in place without subjecting it to the whims of Wall Street. Recently, we have seen too many pension plans that people counted on for their retirements be swallowed up by corporate greed and an unstable stock market. We cannot allow the same thing to happen to our Social Security program.

Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me in opposing the proposals that undermine the strength of our retirement system and the original intent of Social Security. This program has become a cornerstone for American workers' financial stability in their later lives, and it must not be dismantled.

If our President wants to improve the lives of retirees, he will put in place a savings plan on top of Social Security savings, acknowledging that Social Security alone is not enough to live on. We need to provide incentives so that workers at every level will save and have a savings account, an investment account above Social Security which is only a safety net.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her won-

derful presentation. She raised a very important point. Democrats wants to preserve the safety net of Social Security, but we also support any plan that encourages savings for individuals. But let us not undermine this whole system. I believe the gentlewoman pointed that out very well.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS), a former chair of the Congressional Black Caucus and an important leader on this issue and many others.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for organizing this Special Order. This is very important. I am here tonight, but I intend to make many, many speeches over the next few weeks about this important issue.

Social Security is a vital program which provides an important safety net for our seniors. Nearly 30 million seniors receive a benefit under the program, and Social Security is essential for keeping millions out of poverty. Social Security is also vitally important to millions of Americans who depend on Social Security survivor and disability benefits.

When we include these individuals, the total number of people who depend on Social Security in order to live at a decent standard climbs to nearly 48 million Americans. If we privatize Social Security, as the President suggests, millions of individuals will be thrown into poverty. We simply cannot let this happen. We must strengthen Social Security, not gamble with it, not destroy it. Privatization is simply rolling the dice, gambling with a program that has proven to be consistently solid, that we can depend on.

In my home State of California, without Social Security, 49 percent of elderly women would be poor. Privatization would do nothing to decrease the number of Californians in poverty. In fact, the number of California women living in poverty would increase if we were to privatize Social Security.

Under current law, the typical recipient of a Social Security widow's benefit in California receives \$892 per month. According to the Congressional Budget Office, under plan 2, this is a plan, one of the President's plans, under plan 2 of the President's Commission to Strengthen Social Security, today's kindergartners are projected to receive 45 percent less than they were promised under current law, even when the proceeds from their private accounts are included in the total. Therefore, if plan 2, the President's plan, were put into law, the typical California widow would receive only \$490 a month, a dramatic cut in benefits that would force many into poverty.

Mr. Speaker, the administration argues that privatizing Social Security would be good for African Americans and other minorities because we have a shorter life span than white Ameri-

cans. I am really insulted by this administration playing the race card on Social Security. I think they should stop doing it. Not only is it insulting, it is just not true. To quote White House press secretary Scott McClellan, privatization "will enable us to be able to pass on those savings to our heirs if they happen to pass away early. African American males have a shorter life span than other sectors of America."

What I dislike about this race card that the President and his representatives are playing with African Americans is this: They have to factor in that the health disparities that we are confronted with are going to continue. As a matter of fact, not only do they factor it in, they plan on it continuing. We are after the President and this administration to help us do away with health disparities, not to accept them and to factor them into their planning in ways that say to us oh, we know you are going to die early, we will factor this in, we will privatize Social Security and you can save some money and you can pass it on to your heirs. I wish they would stop it and stop it now because we are not going to stand for it.

Again, while it is true that African Americans have a shorter life span, it is because of health disparities which cause many young blacks to die early. Privatization will do nothing to help African Americans live longer or better lives than we do under the current system.

The Social Security Administration's actuaries, as well as studies conducted by AARP, clearly show that African Americans, minorities, and other low-wage earners do much better under the Social Security system than they would under other retirement plans because of the progressive structure of Social Security. Social Security is structured so that the lowest-income earners, which are often African Americans, receive the highest retirement benefits.

If we take away this aspect of Social Security, millions of African Americans would slip into poverty. If the President is really concerned about the black community and ensuring that we receive full retirement benefits, I would urge him to join with me and others in working to eliminate these health disparities that cause so many African Americans to die prematurely.

Mr. Speaker, this is the debate we should be having, not how to privatize Social Security.

Mr. Speaker, the President consistently tells the American people that Social Security is in a crisis and that the system is going to be bankrupt in 50 years, but these statements are just plain wrong. We can strengthen Social Security so it can meet its obligations, but we can strengthen it through simple and modest changes.

Mr. Speaker, privatization will not strengthen it. It will only break it. We should not expect our parents and grandparents to gamble their retirement savings on the whims of the stock market.

I urge my colleagues to oppose any effort to privatize Social Security.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her statement. She made many strong points, particularly on health disparities. The gentlewoman pointed out that health disparities are not caused by Social Security. There are health disparities in our country, and we should address that with better health care. The fact that some people do not have good health care is no reason to undermine the entire system of Social Security, but we should focus on that area of need to help people in this country. I thank the gentlewoman for her time.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON), who has worked very hard on many equality issues and, in fact, used to run the office of economic equality in the Carter administration, I believe.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) for her initiative. Millions of Americans want to know what the truth is. Because of the gentlewoman's leadership, we are trying to get those facts out here today.

Yes, I was chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission under President Carter.

The gentlewoman from New York and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) have been talking about the issue of race and gender.

Let us be clear, this argument is a nullity. Under the Constitution of the United States, government benefits may not be distributed taking race and sex into account. The courts have spoken on that. So if there are racial disparities or gender disparities, they are off the table constitutionally. Race is a suspect classification, and I do not want to get technical, which means you can only use race if there is no other way to accomplish the purpose.

What is the purpose we are trying to accomplish here? Does the other side want to make sure that black men who have lower incomes than others get what? Privatize what little income they have, take it out of their meager earnings for private accounts? Are you going to give them more money because they die early? Come on. Let me hear what you are going to do to make up for the fact that black men die early, and leave aside health, because that is very clear. You cannot do it in any way, and maybe if you are on the Committee on Ways and Means you have not looked at the Constitution, but some of us have. We cannot put race and sex on the table under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and under the equal protection clause of the United States.

I do want to say how we got into this crisis. Do we forget that the Republicans inherited a Social Security Trust Fund that was in surplus? Why are we here? Do you forget the days of the lockbox when Clinton-Gore said do not touch Social Security, we have a

surplus, put the money in the lockbox and we will never have to worry about Social Security?

□ 2100

We had enough to pay for Social Security and then a surplus. What happened to it, my friends? George Bush and the Republicans came to power and they decided they had a use for the funds in the lockbox and they unlocked it, and they distributed it in disproportionate amounts to the very rich who do not need to even think about Social Security. They distributed it in a war, a controversial war from which they cannot extricate themselves. And to have had the nerve to quote President Clinton talking about the crisis. Indeed he was. He said, over and over again, we are going to have a crisis if you get into this lockbox, and he had hardly gotten out of Washington then George Bush was picking the lock. They got us into this crisis, and they want to make it worse because they want to privatize Social Security. The only way to do that is take more money, this time not from the surplus because they have used that up, but from deficit spending. This is not even ancient history. It is history that many Members of this House have lived.

Finally, let me say a word on race and gender. I know that the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) said he was only putting it on the table. Thank goodness the 14th amendment keeps us from putting certain kinds of things on the table. You cannot say to somebody, because you are black, I think you are going to live a little less long and so, I am not sure what the remedy is, by the way, but I am going to do something to you for that reason. And women, wait a minute, you live too long, so I am not sure what I am going to do to you.

Let us hear what their proposal is. Are you going to take back their Social Security? Reduce their Social Security? Any of those things, my friends, is unconstitutional under the equal protection clause. They should be taken off the table. You threw it out there, and you expect us not to respond.

Finally, let me say this. One of the reasons why women and people of color embrace Social Security so much is because, in fact, they get disproportionately from Social Security. Because their wages are lower and because the Social Security system is progressive, they pull from Social Security disproportionate amounts given what they, in fact, contributed to Social Security, because this is not a one-on-one system, what you give to the system, you get back. This is a progressive tax system, so you get back disproportionately. I do think it is important to get into some of these details so that, in fact, people can understand why we must oppose the privatization of Social Security. You can bank on this, Democrats who gave us Social Security are not going to be present at the funeral of Social Security. We are here this

year to save it for the American people. I thank the gentlewoman for her leadership on this very important issue.

Mrs. MALONEY. I thank the gentlewoman for her leadership on so many constitutional issues and equality issues. She has always been out there really leading the way. We thank her for being with us tonight.

I yield to the gentleman from the Show-me State of Missouri (Mr. CARNAHAN). I thank him for being here. Welcome.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to discuss an issue that is of paramount importance to the people of the Third District of Missouri and across this country, Social Security. For over 60 years, Social Security has provided a dependable and predictable income for retired or disabled workers, their dependents and their survivors. In my St. Louis area district alone, there are over 100,000 Social Security beneficiaries, many who have contacted me. For those people, this debate is vital. Changes made to Social Security will affect not only their lives but also their families, neighbors and communities. We must take every necessary precaution to protect this vital program and prevent it from being undermined by risky privatization schemes that would weaken the very foundation of Social Security.

As we all know, the President has proposed a system of private accounts. He claims that these private accounts will solve the so-called Social Security crisis. The Social Security system is not in crisis. While the program faces many challenges, it will be financially viable for at least the next half a century.

According to our own Congressional Budget Office, this is a manufactured crisis created to help sell a privatization plan. The President's plan will not help preserve the benefits for those people who depend on them the most. The practical effect of the President's plan is that guaranteed benefits will be cut in half over the life of a retiree. That is not acceptable. A system subject to private fees, investment risk, and massive increases to our national debt is not acceptable.

Social Security supports and protects families across this Nation. It is a family insurance program, not an investment scheme. It has reduced poverty in America and given a guaranteed source of income to those who need it most. Let us keep the solid foundation of Social Security and look to encourage supplemental savings plans to further strengthen the retirement security of Americans. Privatization is a gamble Americans cannot afford to take. Let us keep Social Security safe and oppose misguided privatization plans.

Mrs. MALONEY. I thank the gentleman.

I yield to one of the organizers, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE). I thank him for his leadership on putting together this Special

Order and his leadership on so many important issues before this body.

Mr. PALLONE. First of all I want to thank my friend from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) for organizing this Special Order this evening. She has been a strong advocate for women in the U.S. House for many years, and she is also a strong advocate for protecting and strengthening Social Security. As we know, the gentlewoman from New York was so concerned by the comments that Ways and Means Chairman Bill Thomas made last month supporting the exploration of Social Security formulas based on race and gender that she drafted a letter to President Bush that was signed by several dozen of my Democratic colleagues, including myself. In that letter, Democrats categorically stated that we would not accept a Social Security formula based on race or gender.

I just wanted to comment on Social Security and women. I know many of my colleagues have done so this night in this Special Order; but as we know, more than 24 million women receive Social Security; and without it, over half of all senior women would live in poverty, without those benefits. Cutting benefits by almost 50 percent, as Republicans have proposed, would make it impossible for millions of women and children to achieve financial security. Cutting benefits just for women, as Ways and Means Chairman THOMAS suggested should at least be explored, he said, would be even more unfair and that is because Social Security is a good deal for women. Because women only make 77 cents for every dollar a man makes and have less time in the workforce, they would receive less than men from their private accounts. The largest group of losers from privatizing Social Security would be women. This is true for women in all birth years, all kinds of marital status and all income levels. This was the most critical finding in a recent comprehensive analysis of privatization proposals.

I just wanted to say again, I think that what the Bush administration and the Republicans are really trying to do here, let us be honest, is destroy Social Security. Republicans do not want to reform Social Security. They want to destroy it. For years, Republicans have been saying that the only way to reform Social Security programs is to privatize it. President Bush said exactly that back in 1978 when he was running for the U.S. House. Then House candidate George W. Bush said, and I am quoting, I think it, meaning Social Security, will be a bust in 10 years unless there are some changes. The ideal solution would be for Social Security to be made sound and people given the chance to invest the money the way they feel.

That is what he is trying to do. This is 30 years ago. They are trying to destroy Social Security. History has proven that President Bush was wrong. He was advocating privatization as a

way to save Social Security back in 1978. President Reagan and congressional Democrats had a different opinion. In 1983 in a bipartisan manner, President Reagan and House Speaker Tip O'Neill came together and reformed Social Security without privatization. It could be done then. It can certainly be done today. We do not have a crisis. This is something that can be easily fixed if we sit down. We do not have to destroy Social Security. We certainly should not deal with this on a gender or racial basis.

I really appreciate the fact tonight that so many of our colleagues joined the gentlewoman from New York because I think it is really crucial that we make this point.

Mrs. MALONEY. I thank the gentleman for his statement. I would suggest that the gentleman from New Jersey and others listen very carefully to the State of the Union tomorrow night, ask some serious questions and demand some answers.

Mr. Speaker, I submit the following article for the RECORD.

[From the Washington Post, Feb. 1, 2005]

BUSH MAY BACK CURBS ON ACCOUNTS—PRESIDENT COURTS CRITICS OF SOCIAL SECURITY PLAN

(By Jim VandeHei and Jonathan Weisman)

President Bush is privately expressing support for limits on the cost and risk of partially privatizing Social Security, in an effort to mollify nervous Republicans and win over dubious Democrats, according to White House aides and congressional Republicans.

Bush, who plans to make Social Security the centerpiece of tomorrow's State of the Union address, has privately told GOP lawmakers and aides that he would support phasing in changes to the system to keep deficits under control over the next several years and push individuals who opt for private accounts into more conservative investments, such as bonds, as they near retirement to mitigate long-term risks, the sources said.

In addition, Bush has expressed strong support for protecting lower-income workers from the brunt of any future reductions in benefits, a chief concern of Democrats. The Treasury Department is doing a budget analysis to determine how many lower-income Americans could be shielded from benefit cuts necessary to offset the overall cost of creating private accounts, the officials said. "The administration as a whole is committed to an unprecedented effort to better communicate the proposal," especially its limits on cost and risk, said Rep. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), a top White House adviser.

The president wants to allow younger Americans to divert a third or more of their Social Security payroll taxes into private investment accounts, which would take billions of dollars from the trust fund that finances the nearly 70-year-old retirement and disability program. In order to close that funding gap between benefits promised future retirees and taxes expected to be collected, the president would reduce future Social Security benefits, at least for those who choose to set up private investment accounts.

As a result, the president is scrambling to assure lawmakers—and voters—that private accounts can be created without putting the federal budget and people's retirement nest eggs at risk.

With most Democrats opposed to the president's proposal, Bush intends to use the State of the Union speech to begin to detail these ideas, and to argue that new Social Security accounts will be highly regulated and voluntary—and necessary to keep the system from going bankrupt decades from now.

In his speech, the president will not detail the size of new private accounts or the benefit cuts needed to help offset the revenue losses, according to an administration official briefed on the speech. But Bush will talk more specifically about how the proposed accounts would offer only a few, regulated investments options, much like the Thrift Savings Plan for government employees.

The speech will focus on the policy, but its aim is highly political, Republicans say. After surveying roughly half a dozen Senate Democrats whom the White House considers potential converts to Bush's plan, the president and his congressional allies realize they must limit the budget impact of creating a new system and protect lower-income workers, who rely heavily on Social Security for their retirement income.

One way of holding down short-term costs would be to allow Americans to shift gradually part of their payroll taxes into private accounts. Critics say this would do little to reduce the overall transition cost, which experts say could cost \$1 trillion to \$2 trillion over the next two decades.

Bush plans to target Senate Democrats facing reelection with speeches and town hall meetings on Thursday and Friday. He suffered a minor political blow yesterday, when the Congressional Budget Office released new projections for Social Security's financial health, pushing forward the year when Social Security benefits begin to exceed Social Security taxes. The CBO now projects that date for 2020, a year later than its earlier assessment and two years earlier than the Social Security Administration's projection.

The new forecast, by Congress's non-partisan, official budget scorekeeper, highlights the uncertainty about the system's future.

CBO officials attributed the slight improvement to small economic revisions, but CBO Director Douglas Holtz-Eakin was quick to say the changes are economically insignificant.

"Anyone who's making policy based on what they think is a change in these numbers would be making a mistake," he said.

But what is economically significant and what is politically significant are two very different things. Democrats who contend that Bush is exaggerating the need to act and the benefits of his plan pounced on the latest report.

"Today's numbers from the Congressional Budget Office provide further confirmation that Social Security is on solid financial footing for decades to come," said Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.). "While we do face a long-term challenge that should be addressed, there is no reason to rush to privatize Social Security while making deep cuts in benefits and exploding our national debt."

Indeed, the politics of Social Security are playing a prominent role in shaping the debate. Even before Bush has detailed his plan, almost every Democrat has vowed to oppose it, and a large number of Republicans have expressed deep concerns. This has forced Bush to rethink his strategy and rework his proposal.

MoveOn.org, a liberal group that was highly critical of Bush throughout the 2004 presidential campaign, today will begin airing television ads warning three House members not to "privatize" Social Security: Reps. Allen Boyd Jr. (D-Fla.), Chris Chocola (R-Ind.), and Jim Gerlach (R-Pa.).

The 2006 elections are nearly two years away, and Chocola is already facing MoveOn.org's ads and a flurry of automated phone calls to his constituents from an unidentified group condemning plans to change the system. Chocola, a second-term lawmaker likely to face a tough reelection in 2006, said the offensive will prove futile.

At the same time, Republican-leaning groups are readying their own ad campaigns. The Business Roundtable, which represents large corporations, is planning to spend \$15 million to \$20 million on ads and other lobbying efforts in support of Bush's plan, according to spokeswoman Johanna Schneider.

And Progress for America, a group with close ties to the White House, will spend \$250,000 next week on national cable ads to support the president's efforts.

IRAQI ELECTIONS

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

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, as I was waiting for our time to arrive this evening listening to this previous hour, my colleagues on the Democratic side of the aisle started out by telling us what the President might say tomorrow night about Social Security for the 21st century. Then for 60 minutes the Democrats proceeded to use their typical scare tactics to frighten seniors just as they did last year with the issue of the prescription drug benefit for our neediest Medicare beneficiaries.

They have the prerogative to talk about anything they want to during this Democratic leadership hour, and they make a decision or their leaders decide whatever the theme du jour is going to be. After all, my colleagues, remember, our 2006 congressional elections are just around the corner. We have only got 639 days left. So let us be just as partisan and negative as we can possibly be toward President Bush and his Republican majority. That is their theme du jour. As I say, my colleagues on the other side, the Democrats and their leaders, they had a choice of topics tonight. They could have talked about anything they wanted to on this eve of what will be one of the most historic State of the Union addresses in the history of our country.

My fellow Members, for almost 2 years now, we have been in a shooting war, fighting to rid the world of terrorism, and to bring liberty and freedom to the long-suffering Iraqi people. These brave souls had an opportunity this past Sunday, just 3 days ago, January 30, to vote for the first time in their lives, indeed a vindication, a renewal of spirit, a new beginning for a great and proud people of the Middle East. I fully expect the President, and my colleagues were predicting what he might say tomorrow night, I fully expect the President to talk about this great, historic occasion.

And that, my colleagues, is what we the Republicans and our leadership have decided to talk about tonight to

the American people on the eve of the State of the Union address, to talk about the historic election that occurred in Iraq just 3 days ago. I think that is what is important to the American people. It is important to the Iraqi people. It is important to the world. And to delve down into pure, raw partisan politics at a time like this again, as I say, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle can do what they want to, but I think they missed a golden opportunity to hear some joy and good news and vindication, yes, of our efforts and the efforts of the Iraqi people over the last couple of years.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the Members' attention to a couple of charts that we have here tonight. The first one, from the Los Angeles Times, Monday morning, January 31, look at it: "Iraqi Turnout Trumps Violence." Yes, there were some people killed, I think some 44. At least half of them were Iraqi security people who were trying to secure the polls and making sure the good men and women, some of them disabled, struggling to get to the polling place in Iraq, could vote and not be harmed. Look at that headline from the Los Angeles Times.

Here is another, The Washington Post, Monday, January 31: "Iraqis Defy Threats As Millions Vote." How many million? Eight million, 60 percent of the registered votes. In fact, that percentage is just as high as we had in our recent Presidential elections in many parts of this country, where we do not have to worry about getting to the polling place. We have to worry about maybe missing a son or a daughter's soccer match or being late for work, which of course we are permitted to do that on Election Day; but we certainly do not have to worry about the threat of violence or indeed losing our lives and here, 60 percent, millions, vote, 8 million people in Iraq. And expatriate Iraqis around this world in 14 different countries had an opportunity to vote on this historic occasion and in many places here in the United States as well.

So this is what we want to talk about. This is what the Republican leadership, this is what the rank-and-file Members want to talk about tonight as we celebrate and we look forward and we are so happy and grateful for the sacrifices that the Iraqi people have made for themselves and that we have made on behalf of them, and we want to commend this President for having the courage to stand strong in the face of unyielding, terrible criticism of his efforts.

□ 2115

So tonight it gives me a lot of pleasure to manage this time on behalf of the majority to talk about something that is really good and positive for this great country and for our world, certainly for the Middle East. I am so pleased that many of my colleagues on my side of the aisle have joined me in this hour, and we will be hearing from a number of them.

I want to start out by yielding to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE), who serves with me on the House Committee on Armed Services, a great Member of this body who just got back from Iraq, led a small congressional delegation of members of the House Committee on Armed Services to be over there to see, to understand what the people were going through in the lead-up to these elections. At this point, I would like to let him share with us exactly what he saw on the ground in Iraq in the lead-up to these historic elections.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota, and I thank him for being with us tonight.

Mr. KLINE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me and for his leadership on this and so many other issues. It has been a great pleasure to serve with the gentleman from Georgia, and I do have comments about what is truly a world historic event.

It was so exciting on Saturday and Sunday in the United States as we watched the results of the Iraqi elections to see the millions of Iraqis overcoming horrific intimidation to get to the polls and vote. I want to talk about some of that.

In the weeks and months leading up to the January 30 elections in Iraq, we were warned of plans for violent attacks, mass chaos surrounding polling places, and the improbability of any positive outcome. We heard it on the news. We heard it in briefings. And, indeed, we did see the loss of life of Iraqi citizens and members of the international alliance providing support, and we were pained. The reality was grim, but it served to underscore just how important it was to proceed with the January 30 date for legitimate elections in Iraq and the promise, the long-last promise of true freedom for the Iraqi people.

In that recent trip which the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) was discussing, I did have the opportunity and indeed the great pleasure and honor to lead a delegation. Four of my colleagues went with me to visit Afghanistan and Iraq, and it provided us with a better understanding of just how very important, in fact, critical, it was to hold fast to the January 30 date for Iraqi elections. The soldiers that we talked to, the Marines that we talked to, officer and enlisted, Iraqi leadership, the ambassador and his staff all insisted that the elections must go forward on January 30; and the reality of Sunday's success reflects just how true their calls were and how important that lesson was.

Prior to the election, there was a brutal, a brutal campaign of fear and intimidation waged by those who feared a strong and democratic Iraq. After decades of tyranny, a transition to democracy presented a challenge to the predatory environment in which these individuals thrived under Saddam Hussein. These anti-Iraqi forces, the AIF, sought to thwart democracy