

have nearly 8 million new homeowners. That is a million more families each year that have achieved homeownership. That has come about, obviously, because we have made the right decisions with regards to our budget since then. We have lower mortgage rates and higher employment, and new policy has helped in many areas for first-time homeowners, minority homeownership and, of course, dealing with senior citizens and reverse mortgages contracts.

But we have much work to go before we are done. Many of our cities, for instance, have less than 50 percent homeownership. And by, of course, establishing a stake in these communities, we can be very helpful to changing the success of these urban areas. But we have to keep programs like CRA and HMDA in place, the FHA program, which has been so important, to continue the progress with regards to homeownership. These polices work hand in hand with the partnership approach involving the private sector, home builders, realtors, mortgage bankers, title insurers, Fannie Mae, and Freddie Mac, and, of course, financial institutions, banks, not for profit roles like the community reinvestment act and a myriad of national polices that are tailored to respond in today's marketplace.

I urge my colleagues and citizens across the country to celebrate this great event, National Homeownership Week, Homeownership the American dream is alive and well, Madam Speaker.

820TH RED HORSE COMBAT ENGINEER SQUADRON

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Madam Speaker, the Air Force has a motto of "service before self." That is a fitting description of the 204 members of the 820th Red Horse Combat Engineer squadron from Nellis Air Force Base, who will be departing for Albania very soon.

Their mission will be to repair critical roads and bridges to help prepare the way for a safe and expeditious return of the Kosovar refugees who were displaced from their homes in this unfortunate conflict.

Having seen the environment that they will be working in firsthand, I can tell my colleagues that their work will be challenged. However, I am very confident that their skills, training, and motivation will be equal to the task.

As the struggle for a peaceful solution to the Kosovo conflict is played out on the TV and in our newspapers, it is the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines who continue to work hard in the background, focused on accomplishment of their mission.

I want to say thanks to all our troops deployed in support of Operation Allied Force and to the men and women of the

820th Red Horse Squadron, their families and loved ones. Good luck in your deployment. Godspeed. A quick return. But most importantly, thank you for your service and sacrifice for this nation.

GUN CONTROL LEGISLATION

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I think in the next couple of days we will have an opportunity to do what is right for America and do what is right for our young people.

Although we are not marking up the juvenile justice crime bill in the House Committee on the Judiciary, of which I am a member of the Subcommittee on Crime, we will have an opportunity to come to this floor.

I do not believe that we should pass any juvenile justice crime bill that does not have provisions for mental health services to enhance and give to our children the kind of resources they may need. We should not pass a bill that does not have parental responsibility and parental education about how to help with raising our children to the extent of giving them resources when our children are troubled. And we should not pass a bill that does not have real gun safety, with an ammunition clip restriction, with a restriction on gun shows, and the instant check and the waiting period.

We should realize, Madam Speaker, that we now can stand collectively as Americans and confront this issue not in an attacking mode but a collaborative mode. We must stand up together to respond to the crisis of school violence not only in rural America and urban America but the longstanding concept that this whole country has too many guns.

I do not believe our hunters in the far west or the far east would argue against gun safety and responsibility.

Let us all stand against the negatives of the National Rifle Association and collectively as Americans for safety for our children.

IN APPRECIATION OF MEDIA COVERAGE OF OKLAHOMA STORM

(Mr. LUCAS of Oklahoma asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LUCAS of Oklahoma. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my heartfelt appreciation to all of the radio and TV stations that provided around-the-clock coverage during the recent storm that ravaged the State of Oklahoma.

The advanced emergency weather warnings provided by these stations and their employees allowed Oklahomans to find safe cover before tornadoes struck their neighborhoods and communities. This outstanding service saved countless lives.

Not only did these local broadcasters provide early storm warnings, but they continued to offer accurate and useful information to their audiences during the chaos that followed the terrible storm.

I know I speak for all Oklahomans as I thank them for their tireless efforts during this tragedy.

WHERE DOES DEMOCRAT LEADERSHIP STAND ON TAXES?

(Mr. CHABOT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Speaker, President Clinton ran on a middle-class tax cut back in 1992. However, once in office, he raised taxes by a record amount; in fact, the largest tax increase in American history.

The tax increase would have continued, but in 1994 the American people elected the first Republican majority in the House of Representatives in 40 years. Republicans then forced the President to accept a tax cut, a tax cut he did not want and a tax cut that was ardently opposed by his folks here in the House, the Democrats.

So where does the Democratic leadership, who so desperately want to take back the House of Representatives, stand on taxes? Well, on a tour promoting his new book, *A Better Place*, just the other day, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT), the leader of the Democrats in the House said, and it has been quoted before but I think it bears hearing it again, "You've got to have a combination of taking it out of the defense budget and raising revenue." In other words taxes. "We can argue about how to do that, closing loopholes or even raising taxes to do it."

Well, there it is: Cut defense and raise taxes. That is not my idea of a better place.

PARTY OF THOMAS JEFFERSON IS DEAD

(Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Madam Speaker, how is it that the party of Thomas Jefferson, who was a champion of the common man, has become the enemy of middle-class families? How is it that the party of Jefferson, champion of freedom from oppressive government, now rushes to embrace expansion of government and every conceivable encroachment on human liberty?

Just consider the evidence. "New Democrat" Bill Clinton won office in 1992 by promising a middle-class tax cut. He then promptly passed the largest tax increase in our history. And now we have the leader of the Democrat Party in Congress, the distinguished gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT) who is on record saying just over a week ago, and I have the quote