

RECOGNIZING FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

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

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to recognize and to commend the work of our public servants and those individuals who do the work of the Federal Government every single day. Our Federal employees are not thanked enough for their service to our country. They do the work that keeps this country moving. Yet they are not given the compensation and the benefits that they deserve for the work that they do. Instead of receiving wages comparable to the private sector, instead of receiving affordable health care benefits, Federal workers are attacked by my colleagues often on the other side of the aisle.

Recently a friend of mine handed me a letter that I found deeply disturbing. The letter is a fund-raising appeal sent out on behalf of a private organization and signed by a distinguished Member on the other side of the aisle.

Unfortunately, the letter does more than argue for Tax Code changes. It condemns the work of thousands of dedicated employees of the IRS. The letter says that, by establishing a flat tax, and I quote, "We will effectively dismantle the Internal Revenue Service which in addition to being the most burdensome, intrusive and aggressive Federal agency, is also considered one of the most wasteful." It goes on to discuss how people believe the IRS is grinding this country to a halt and jeopardizing the future opportunities for the next generation.

Mr. Speaker, I believe these kinds of blanket attacks on a Federal agency and its workers are unjustified, they are unfair, and they are offensive. While no one would argue that our tax system is perfect, we certainly cannot blame Federal employees for its shortfalls. After all, the IRS employees are only doing their jobs, enforcing our Nation's laws.

In all my years of representing the people of Michigan, I have found Federal employees to be some of the most dedicated, hard-working and honest workers that I have ever met. They are our public servants. They come to work every day to make sure our seniors get their Social Security checks, our schools get funds to teach our children, and our communities get the resources to protect their environment.

They come to work every day knowing they are being paid on an average 30 percent less than the private sector counterparts and struggling to afford Federal health insurance premiums that have soared 36 percent over the past 4 years.

They come to work every day unsure of their jobs, whether they will be contracted out to private companies the next time the Bush administration gets a chance.

We depend on our Federal employees, and they deserve our recognition and

respect for the hard work that they do. After all, no matter how much we may simplify our Tax Code or any other regulation, we still need public servants to enforce our laws and do the people's work.

While we consider policy changes that affect Federal agencies and their workers, it is my hope that we will stay focused on the policy. We have had enough scapegoating of the people who we have given the responsibility to enforce and implement these policies. Our Federal workers do a phenomenal job with the task we put before them. They deserve to be applauded, not attacked for their service to our country.

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

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 27. An act to amend the Federal election Campaign Act of 1971 to provide bipartisan campaign reform.

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

(Mr. LIPINSKI addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

READINESS FACTS

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, I decided to come to the floor tonight to talk about the military readiness of our men and women in uniform.

Last week, I happened to hear the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), who is a ranking member of the Committee on Armed Services, on the floor talking about this same issue that I am going to be talking about tonight.

Then last night, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), who is chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Readiness, also came to the floor. I am a member of the Committee on Armed Services. I am also a member of the Subcommittee on Military Readiness.

I just wanted to come on the floor to remind my colleagues, as well as this administration, that our men and women in uniform who are willing to give their lives for this country have a

lot of need that we need to start addressing.

I am very hopeful that the administration will soon be working with the Congress to submit an emergency supplemental. There is a dire need by our military.

I certainly want to commend the Secretary of Defense. I think he was right in requesting this top-to-bottom review. But in addition to what he is doing, we also need to make sure that our men and women in uniform are ready to defend the national security interest of this country.

What is beginning to happen is that the accounts are becoming very low of money, and they are beginning to have some serious problems. Let me give my colleagues a few examples on this.

The Navy Flying Hour Program is short over \$450 million for fiscal year 2001. Since the end of the Cold War, the average age of Air Force aircraft has risen 58 percent. The Army is more than \$3 billion short of basic ammunition. Although improving, separate spare parts problems caused the mission-capable rates of both the AV-8B Harrier and the CH-53 helicopter to drop below 40 percent last year.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, the Coast Guard has projected a fiscal year 2001 shortfall reaching almost \$100 million. Let me also share with my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, the military health care plan is expected to be \$1.4 billion short in the same year.

I wanted to be on the floor tonight because this is a very unsafe world that we live in. We certainly know about the unrest and the problems of the Middle East; but we also know that Iran, Iraq, and these countries are not friendly towards the American Government. In addition, I think of North Korea. In addition, China. All these countries that I mention are spending a great deal of their gross national product on building their military.

So I wanted to come to the floor tonight to join the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), as well as the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), and there are many others on both sides of the political aisle on the Committee on Armed Services that feel like I, as well as the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), that we need to move forward now with this emergency supplemental.

So I will tomorrow be sending my second letter. My first letter went to the President of the United States, asking him to please start the movement forward on this emergency supplemental for our military.

I intend tomorrow to write a letter to Mitch Daniels, the OMB director, and say that we do not need to continue to wait, that we need to prepare this legislation, that we need to put this legislation in just as soon as we return after the Memorial Day recess.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to all the men and women in uniform that I