true. History has proven that chronic deficits threaten our economic strength by crowding out private investment, driving up interest rates, and slowing economic growth. Indeed foreign investment in the United States has dried up because foreign investors have no confidence in the Bush economic agenda. This Administration's irresponsible budget policies have turned a surplus into a large deficit that is choking off growth in the American economy.

President Bush likes to say his budget is geared towards tax cuts for all Americans. When in fact the average American won't receive a substantial tax cut, but will instead be hit with a tax hike in the form of an ever-growing deficit. A large deficit means taxpayers have to shoulder the costs of paying the interest on this new national debt. The end result will be a debt tax on the great majority of Americans. This will be a tax on lower and middle class Americans; it will be tax on our heroic war veterans; it will be a tax on the elderly and, most unfortunately, it will be a tax on our children. The truly sad part of the President's budget is that, while it is bad for America today, it is even worse for future generations of American taxpayers.

TAX CUTS

I want to highlight some of the most egregious examples of this Administration's misplaced priorities. President Bush believes we can spend tens of billions of dollars a year to provide $66,000 tax cuts to the top 1 percent of tax payers, but he does not feel we can afford many vital programs, some of which are even tied to our national security.

Perhaps the most blatant example of this Administration's irresponsibility is the fact that the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) budget was actually cut. At a time when our national security is under such great scrutiny, I cannot think of too many agencies that face greater pressure than the FAA to keep our Nation safe. How can this President spend so much time and effort stressing the importance of homeland security and then cut the budget of the agency on the front line of stopping terrorists from attacking our Nation? The irresponsibility does not stop there; the President's budget fails to provide the U.S. Postal Office with $779 million needed for biodetection technology that guards against anthrax-like attacks. After the Ricin incident in the Senate Office Buildings a week ago, how can anyone in this body in good conscious approve a budget that does not address our vulnerability for bioterrorism attacks through the mail? This is where President Bush lacks credibility; he has taken drastic, and some would say unconstitutional, measures in the name of national security, but now when it comes to fully funding our most sensitive security concerns he decides it is more important to appease the richest 1 percent of Americans with irresponsible tax cuts.

Unfortunately the misplaced priorities do not stop with out national security. I point again to the ''No Child Left Behind'' initiative that has been left underfunded by $9.5 billion—a full 27 percent less than Congress authorized. In addition, funding for America's veterans will be cut by $13.5 billion over the next five years. It's truly sad how this President not only doesn't fully fund sensitive security issues, but is also cutting funding to two of our most sensitive constituencies: Our children who are our future and our veterans who in the past have sacrificed so much so that we may live freely. Instead of supporting those constituencies, this President believes that the richest 1 percent of Americans deserve yet another tax cut. These misplaced priorities are evident throughout the President's budget and demonstrate a fundamental lack of understanding about the needs of the average American.

President Bush's budget is threatening to so many deserving American interests. We have seen how this budget continues his failed policies and in fact this budget will further the damage that this President has already done. Because of President Bush's insistence on making the tax cuts permanent, many central programs will be cut. This President will have no problem cutting Medicare to our seniors. It is also clear that this Administration's goal is to privatize Social Security. These policies will deeply affect my constituents in the 18th Congressional District of Texas. So many of my constituents in Houston rely on these programs, and this President has decided to take advantage of the trust they had placed in him to protect their interests. The more I go through this budget the more I realize it's bad for my constituents in Houston, it is bad for the people of Texas, and we cannot allow ourselves to stand idly by while this President continues an irresponsible agenda that's just simply wrong for America.

JOB LOSS

President Bush has been one of the worst Presidents ever to take office when it comes to job creation. Simply put, our economy can never truly be considered successful until Americans who want jobs can find jobs. This is simply not the situation that the average American faces today. Under the Clinton Administration job growth continually improved. In contrast, under the Bush Administration the rate of unemployment has soared. In his State of the Union Address the President stated that jobs are on the rise; unfortunately the rise in employment he spoke of amounted to 1,000 jobs created in the month of December. At that rate of job growth, it will take 192 years and 8 months for the economy to return to the number of jobs at the beginning of President Bush's term of office. We are 8.4 million jobs behind where we are supposed to be at this point. That is a staggering number and it should be unacceptable to every Member of this body. The Bush Administration assured the American people that tax cuts would result in job growth. The American people are still waiting to see this growth; too many of them are waiting unemployed and fearing for their prosperity. This Administration has argued that deficits do not matter and that job growth is not an economic priority. I can't think of too many Americans who would agree with that assessment. This President is not in touch with the needs and aspirations of the American people. This budget continues to reflect his irresponsible agenda based on a few special interests.

IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

It's unfortunate that this Administration does not understand the necessity of proper planning and vision. It has become painfully obvious to many of us in this body that this President did not have a plan to deal with post-war Iraq and Afghanistan. That point is exacerbated by the fact that in this entire budget there is no funding included for the 2005 costs of ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is truly irresponsible; our brave fighting men and women are risking their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan and this President cannot even provide figures for the costs that these military operations will incur. Does this President want us to believe that the costs for this War on Terror have disappeared? Or is he telling us that he plans to pull our troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan? Once again, this President's irresponsible agenda is being exposed; he does not have the credibility for us to allow yet another flawed budget to pass this body.

NASA

I was there a few weeks ago at the White House when President Bush announced his new NASA initiative to return America to the moon and eventually manned missions to Mars. The funding for NASA has been increased in this budget, but it only begins to pay for future exploration efforts; a detailed plan on how the President plans to achieve his NASA initiatives is still needed. I believe the President when he says he has the aspiration to get America back to the moon, it's just unfortunate that he does not have the proper planning to do so. His actions in Iraq and Afghanistan leave him no credibility in this body to believe that he can achieve his ambitious agenda. This entire budget in fact is riddled with false promises and underfunded ambitions.

This President has consistently asked for patience from this body and from the American people to allow time for his policies to start showing progress; unfortunately time has run out. Too many Americans are suffering and it is clear that President Bush's vision for America is not one that coincides with that of the average American. I hope we will continue to stress the danger of this budget; together we will be the ones to push the true interests of our constituents, to push for a real vision of America.

REFORMING IMMIGRATION

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

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I am here this evening to highlight one of the most important issues facing this country and this Congress: how to make our immigration system work for us, not against us.

First of all, I think it is a positive sign that President Bush has put forward his proposal to get this debate started again. I wish he was as concerned for employees in this country as he is for employers. But whatever his motivation, his involvement does put pressure on his Republican colleagues in Congress to at least consider taking action to address our failed immigration system.

The Democrats have also put forward their immigration reform principles outlining the changes necessary to shape immigration policy in this country. The Democratic plan is much more comprehensive, compassionate, and concrete. Our principles put a face to the immigrant who is trying to build a better life for himself and his family while making a better America for all

of us. These 8 million workers are an integral part of our society, and reality dictates that we recognize that and find a fair way to integrate them fully into our society. We can do this while still protecting the labor standards in this country by wage and hour enforcements. We need to take our failing immigration system and turn it into something that can work for all Americans. And failing it is. We have a huge, and I mean a huge, backlog of visa applications pending that are preventing husbands from being with their wives and parents from being with their children.

The current delay in reunifying families from the Philippines is 22 years. Is this a humane system? That is outrageous. Not only do we have to speed up the process; we have to make more family and employment visas available. This bottleneck needs to be opened up. The first and foremost action we should take to fix our immigration system is to bring families back together and allow them to be reunified. Sadly, however, the Bush proposal does nothing to help solve the problem of family reunification.

Secondly, we need to offer a future to those immigrants who have been working in this country for years, have paid their taxes, abided by our laws, and contributed to their communities all over this Nation. The fact is that they are here now, and they have earned their right to stay. While some may not have come through the proper channels, they should not be condemned outright for leaving despair and poverty behind for a better life. These workers have had a positive impact on this country through their contributions, and a guest-worker program alone does not even begin to acknowledge this reality.

Not only does earned legalization take this hidden work force out of the shadows, but it provides certainty for employers and hope for the employees that they can work towards a meaningful goal: legitimate acceptance in the United States. Another reality is that the immigrant children of these workers also deserve a place in our society. It is only to our benefit that they have access to a good education. They should be granted a vehicle for obtaining lawful permanent status and qualify for in-state educational benefits and financial aid.

Again, the Democrats take this into account in the overall debate on immigration reform, but the Republican Party chooses to ignore this quick and easy change that could go forward right away without further delay.

The Bush administration and the Republican leadership also ignore the fact that legislation already exists to expand the current guest-worker program. If President Bush is serious about moving forward on immigration reform and not just playing election-year politics, he should call on the Republican majority in the House to pass the Berman Ag Jobs bill. We can get this done now.

Finally, let us focus our national security efforts on protecting this Nation against real terrorist threats instead of using it as an excuse to round up 8 million law-abiding workers and kicking them out of this country. I do not know about other Members, but I would much rather have the Department of Homeland Security knowing the identities of the people living here because they are no longer hiding from authorities for fear of deportation.

Let us get real about the immigration dilemma in this country, real about the kind of hard-working, sincere people these immigrants are, how they have benefited this country, and what it would take to put the immigration system back in working order. Let us take our heads out of the sand and get to work on real immigration reform. I am serious about the work ahead, and I challenge my colleagues in the House to give more than lip service to the idea of meaningful immigration reform.

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

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

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG LEGISLATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I come to the House floor tonight to once again highlight several questionable activities by Republicans during and after the Medicare prescription drug legislation passed the House of Representatives last year.

Seniors have already begun to voice their opposition to the new prescription drug bill, as well they should. Seniors know that the Republican bill forces seniors to get their prescription drug benefits outside of Medicare. They have already calculated the supposed prescription drug benefit they would be getting under the law and realize that it is minuscule.

Just to cite some examples, consider that seniors with a thousand dollars in annual prescription drug costs would pay $857 out of their own pockets; or that those seniors with prescription drug costs of $5,000 a year would be forced to pay $3,920. Now I ask: What kind of benefit is that? If seniors are not getting the money, where is the $500 billion that it is now estimated that this prescription drug so-called benefit would cost the Federal Government? Where is the money going if it is not coming to the senior citizens?

There is no doubt in my mind that both Republicans here in the House and in the Bush administration are concerned that seniors are not buying this plan. Many of our seniors have contacted us and told us that this is a terrible plan and it is not going to help seniors, and it is a boondoggle for the special interests, HMOs, and the pharmaceutical companies. I think what is happening is the Republican leadership here in the House and President Bush and his administration realize that the public thinks, rightly so, that this Republican prescription drug plan for seniors is a farce. So last week we got wind of the fact that the Bush administration's Department of Health and Human Services was going to spend $22 million to rebut criticism, and this was stated by the administration, to ''rebut criticism of the new Medicare law through an advertising campaign on television and through the mail.''

Some may have already seen these ads. I think it is outrageous. I have to say that here we are talking about how bad this bill is as part of our free speech that we all exercise, and seniors are saying it is a bad bill, and the Bush administration has the gall to now spend $22 million in taxpayer money to try in their own terms, and I quote, to ''rebut criticism of the new Medicare law.''

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I think the American public should be concerned that the President is spending $22 million of the taxpayers' money, money that could be used to actually help seniors with their prescription drug bills, than trying to rebut legitimate criticism of the Republican and the Bush administration Medicare prescription drug plan.

President Bush should be concerned that seniors are not buying his prescription drug bill, but maybe, instead of spending taxpayers' money to try to rebut legitimate criticism, he should be talking about how he could change the bill. Or, alternatively, if the President wants to use his own campaign dollars, he has amassed about $150 million in campaign contributions over the last couple of years, a lot of which has come from the pharmaceutical and the insurance industry, if he feels that he needs to rebut the criticism, then let him spend money out of his own campaign war chest from those same people that he helped in creating this terrible legislation. Do not use the taxpayers' money to do it.

The Republicans are saying, and this is what I have heard, they claim they are just trying to inform seniors about the new prescription drug plan with this taxpayer-paid ad campaign. One of the ways that you know that that is not the case is that the Department of Health and Human Services decided to use the same media firm that is working on advertising for President Bush's reelection campaign. We know there are a lot of advertising agencies out there, but why would the Department of Health and Human Services just happen to choose National Media, Inc.,