

There is still one Member of the freshman class to introduce, Madam Speaker. I am a little biased. It happens to be my favorite Member of the freshman class. He is a Hoosier. That is not the only reason that he is my favorite Member. He is also a businessperson, someone that has actually created jobs, has actually learned how to seize the opportunities of economic growth and has contributed greatly to his local community before being elected to Congress.

He also ran for Congress in 2002 and was unsuccessful and ran again in 2004 and proved that persistence pays off, and that is a very admirable quality.

I am talking about MIKE SODREL. MIKE SODREL comes from his small business, his family business, called Sodrel Trucking. I see his trucks on the roads of Indiana every single day. He expanded that business in 2000 when he founded Sodrel Logistics.

He has served as a past chairman for the Southern Indiana Chamber of Commerce. He has also been recognized as the Southern Indiana Small Businessperson of the Year.

Service to his Nation is nothing new for MIKE SODREL. He served in the Army National Guard and continues service as a member of the American Legion. He is a community leader in many respects, and he leads many organizations, including the Boy Scouts of America, his Rotary Club, Junior Achievement, the Chamber of Commerce, the National Federation of Independent Businesses and the Boys and Girls Club.

MIKE is a native of New Albany, Indiana. He lives there today, and he has been married to his wife Marquita for 36 years. Together, they have two children, Noah and Keesha, and they are the proud grandparents of six grandchildren.

I know that MIKE will serve this body well, and I certainly look forward to working with him and all of his colleagues of the freshman class to serve Hoosiers and every citizen of this country.

Madam Speaker, we have just introduced a great class, and this great class will take the oath in the next coming months, and they will become part of the 109th Congress. I fully expect that the 109th Congress will be an historic Congress because it was the result of an historic election and, indeed, is an historic time for our Nation.

We did more than just keep our majority. We received a mandate from the American people. In the last 2 years, we delivered on health care, we delivered on security, cutting taxes and much, much more.

Our constituents recognized that. As the NRCC chairman, the gentleman from New York (Mr. REYNOLDS), stated, "The only people that think the GOP needs to be repudiated are two Democrat leaders from California, while the whole United States obviously disagrees."

What the United States wants and what the people of this country want is

a Congress that keeps working on their behalf, and as we have seen from the headlines, America has spoken. What America has said is they want Members of Congress that will get over the bickering and work on their behalf and do things like have budget process reform to make sure that we have more clarity and responsibility in how we spend the taxpayers' money and reduce the deficit.

America has spoken that says we want to have lawsuit abuse reform, to make sure we lift the burden of frivolous lawsuits off of our economy, which really hurts the creation of jobs and economic growth.

We have also heard from the American people that we need to have things like tax reform, to make sure we have a fair and flatter tax system that helps grow our economy as well.

We have also heard that we need to make sure that every generation of American gets the Social Security benefits they have earned and they deserve; and, most of all, we have heard from the American people that we have to make sure that we keep this Nation and our families and our communities safe and secure.

So, Madam Speaker, this has been an extraordinary hour where we have met an extraordinary class of incoming freshmen to the Republican-controlled Congress. So it has been my honor to have my colleagues join me. I thank them and I look forward to working with them in the 109th Congress, as well as all of the Members of this body.

#### FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Mr. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment bills of the House of the following titles:

H.R. 4794. An act to amend the Tijuana River Valley Estuary and Beach Sewage Cleanup Act of 2000 to extend the authorization of appropriations, and for other purposes.

H.R. 5163. An act to amend title 49, United States Code, to provide the Department of Transportation a more focused research organization with an emphasis on innovative technology, and for other purposes.

H.R. 5213. An act to expand research information regarding multi-disciplinary research projects and epidemiological studies.

H.R. 5245. An act to extend the liability indemnification regime for the commercial space transportation industry.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed bills and a concurrent resolution of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 2280. An act to establish a coordinated national ocean exploration program within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

S. 2283. An act to extend Federal funding for operation of State high risk health insurance pools.

S. 2489. An act to establish a program within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to integrate Federal coastal and ocean mapping activities.

S. 2526. An act to reauthorize the Children's Hospitals Graduate Medical Education Program.

S. 2618. An act to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to extend medicare cost-sharing for the medicare part B premium for qualifying individuals through September 2005.

S. Con. Res. 145. Concurrent resolution to correct the enrollment of H.R. 1417.

#### INCREASING THE DEBT LIMIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MUSGRAVE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. SPRATT. Madam Speaker, 4 years ago, the Bush administration was just getting started. They sent us their first budget, then told us, based upon a projected \$5.6 trillion in surpluses over the next 10 years, that there could be huge tax cuts, between a trillion five and \$2 trillion, huge tax cuts and still a budget surplus, and that they would not have to even come back to Congress to ask again for an increase in what we call the debt ceiling until the year 2008, 7 years later.

The debt ceiling is a statutory limit, a limit that we impose by law on the total amount of debt that the United States of America can incur. It currently stands at a level of \$7.384 trillion.

We did not buy into this argument. We did not vote for the tax cuts, and we on this side of the aisle were not surprised, disappointed, bitterly disappointed, because we had strived mightily to put the budget in surplus for the first time in 30 years during the 1990s. We did not vote for it, but we were not surprised when in the year 2002, not 2008 as predicted, but in the year 2002, the Bush administration came back to Congress and said that the statutory debt ceiling is about to be hit. In other words, we have run up so much debt that we are right at the ceiling of the total amount of debt that the government of the United States can incur, and, therefore, we need a \$450 billion increase in the debt this year, 2002.

The next year they were back asking for more, and now they are back asking for still more, this time \$800 billion. It is phenomenal when you consider that the last increase occurred 18 months ago and amounted to \$984 billion. That was the largest increase at any one given time in the fiscal history of this country. As a matter of fact, \$984 billion, the amount by which the debt ceiling was increased in May of 2003, \$984 billion is more than the total indebtedness of the United States when Ronald Reagan came to office in 1981, and how long has it lasted, this \$984 billion increase in the debt service? Eighteen months.

In fact, right now, this administration, under its fiscal policy of the budgets passed by the Republican majorities in this House and the Senate, has