

shabby treatment from this administration.

We spend \$1 billion a week in Iraq, \$4 billion a month, but this administration zeros out funding for Amtrak. Just one week's investment in Iraq would significantly improve passenger rail for the entire country for an entire year.

I just want someone to explain to the American public why investing in transportation in Iraq is so much more important than investing in passenger rail service right here in the U.S.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for this administration to step up to the plate and make a decision about Amtrak based on what is in the best interest for the traveling public, not what is best for the right ring or the Republican Party or the European counters over at OMB.

Today in America, we have 50 million people without health care. We have the highest trade deficit in the history of this country. We have a \$477 billion Federal deficit. We have a \$375 billion shortfall in transportation funding, and we still do not know what happened to the weapons of mass destruction or who at the White House outed one of the CIA agents. Yet this President's top priority is bankrupting Amtrak. I do not understand that.

I represent central Florida, which depends on tourists for its economic development; and we need people to be able to get to our State to enjoy it. Ever since September 11, more and more people are turning from the airlines to Amtrak, and they deserve safe and dependable services.

This is just one example of Amtrak's impact on my State. Amtrak runs four long-distance trains from Florida, employs 990 residents with wages totaling over \$43 million, and purchased over \$13 million in goods and services last year alone, and they are doing the same thing in every State they run in.

Some people think the solution to the problem is to privatize the system. If we privatize, we will see the same thing we saw when we deregulated the airline industry.

Shortly after 9/11, I was in New York when the plane leaving JFK Airport crashed immediately after takeoff. I, along with many of my colleagues in both the House and Senate, took Amtrak back to Washington. I realized once again just how important Amtrak is to the American people and how important it is for this Nation to have more than one form of transportation.

I encourage everyone that uses Amtrak to get to work or to travel to call their Congressman or Senator and let them know how important Amtrak is to them. This is not about fiscal policy. This is about providing a safe and reliable public transportation system that the citizens of this Nation need and deserve.

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.)

#### ENERGY POLICY DESPERATELY NEEDED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I heard a colleague just a few moments ago refer to tomorrow being the day that is known as the filing day for our taxes. Some might call it a rainy day in April. The gentleman is so right. It is the day that so many Americans are filing their returns and are hoping to pay for the governance of this Nation. Many Americans in this time frame are facing some very difficult times.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to put before this body a challenge that I think is enormously important. What do you say to Americans who are filing their tax forms and who are facing \$2 plus and growing price per gallon on gas? This is an indistinguishable amount, meaning you can be a multi-billionaire or a person who is simply trying to make ends meet, keeping the doors open, paying the rent, providing for four or five members of their family, working in a blue collar or hourly job, and in order to get to a job across town, across county, or into the next State, we are asking Americans to pay \$2 plus per gallon for gas.

Internationally, gasoline is quite high. The United States has always had the opportunity to experience a better quality of life. This is a hardship on Americans. And as the committee of jurisdiction has marked up energy legislation, I frankly believe it is not soon enough and it will not move soon enough. I think it is important for the President of the United States to announce an energy relief policy that deals specifically with the high price of gas for those who are now suffering under that burden.

I do not want to leave industry out. As I have traveled through the airports, I am delighted to see that the numbers have gone up after 9/11. But, frankly, representing Houston's Intercontinental Airport and the fourth largest city in the Nation, realizing the traveling public has many needs to travel by airplane, the cost of jet fuel is killing our airline industry. In fact, my hometown airline, their employees have taken an actual cut in salary so the airline can survive. But as they have done that, the jet fuel prices continue to go up and up and up.

□ 1700

Any legislation that we pass next week or the following week will not address that crisis, so I call upon the administration to acknowledge this as an economic crisis and establish some immediate relief, whether or not it is

going into those petroleum reserves on a temporary basis, a 60-day basis, to bring some relief because there is going to be a point when those airlines that equate to a sizable proportion of our GNP are going to collapse under the burden of jet fuel cost; and there will be a time when whole communities, urban areas and rural areas, will have a population of employees who on an hourly basis are working and cannot afford to get to work.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about and to add to the discussion what I think was an unfortunate legislative initiative that was passed today. We all would hope to run away from bankruptcy. That is not the direction that the American people desire to go. I find the American people innovative, hardworking, desirous of a better quality of life, desirous of giving their children a better quality of life.

And so I am offended by a bankruptcy bill that suggests that we represent a bunch of ne'er-do-wells and those who are running away from their legitimate debts. That is what we did today. Frankly, we passed a bankruptcy bill, Mr. Speaker, that puts in place a provision that clearly is not needed. We have a bankruptcy code and a series of bankruptcy judges and each and every day they make a decision when a frivolous litigant comes through the door and looks in all the raging color, this is certainly a person who is just simply trying to avoid paying their debts, has the resources, and that person, if you will, is dismissed or their case is not allowed to proceed in the bankruptcy court.

Now, in the backdrop of a number of corporate filings of bankruptcy, my own constituent, Enron, that filed bankruptcy and put 4,000 people out of work, some of whom lost their lives because of the tragedy, when we allow all of these major corporations to file bankruptcy, now we are going to stand in the door of the courthouse and tell hardworking Americans and middle-class Americans, if you don't pass a litmus test, you get back out there and fall under the crunch and the concrete of your debts. If you have a medical emergency, if there is death in the family, if you have lost your job or if you happen to be active duty Reservists whose families have lost the income of that breadwinner, who now are in Iraq and Afghanistan not for 6 months but for 1 year or 2 years and some who are forced to re-enlist again because of the shortage of personnel, these individuals now will have to pass a means test in order to be able to file bankruptcy because they are burdened by the responsibilities that they cannot pay.

Mr. Speaker, we voted on a bankruptcy bill, and we defeated the motion to recommend that would help these Reservists. It is a shame on us and a shame on this House. Mr. President, I beg of you not to sign this bankruptcy bill until we take care of the active duty Reservists and National Guard. That is the least we can do for those who are offering their lives.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER  
PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PRICE of Georgia). The Chair reminds Members to address their remarks to the Chair.

APPOINTMENT OF HON. TOM  
PRICE OF GEORGIA TO ACT AS  
SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE TO  
SIGN ENROLLED BILLS AND  
JOINT RESOLUTIONS THROUGH  
APRIL 19, 2005

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
Washington, DC, April 14, 2005.

I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM PRICE to act as Speaker pro tempore to sign enrolled bills and joint resolutions through April 19, 2005.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,  
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the appointment is approved.

There was no objection.

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

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

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

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

## 30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

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

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is once again a pleasure to address the House of Representatives and also to talk about a very important issue to all Americans, which is Social Security. I would also like to thank the Democratic leader for allowing the 30-something Working Group to come to the floor once again to talk about issues that are facing not only young Americans but Americans in general.

Through her leadership and through others that are in the Democratic Caucus, the Democratic whip, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER); the chairman, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ); and also the vice chairman, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN), we have been able to come to the floor to share facts, not fiction, to bring accuracy to the Social Security debate as it stands now.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to just share a few things as relates to Social Security. We encourage the

Members to continue to keep an open mind. First of all, I want to commend Members on the Democratic side of the aisle for having so many town hall meetings, a number of town hall meetings, hundreds of town hall meetings in their own districts and that have traveled outside of their districts to share with Americans the truth about Social Security and how we protect Social Security and how we continue to have the benefit structure that so many, 48 million Americans, are celebrating now today.

I must also add that I would like to commend some of my Republican colleagues that have the courage to stand up to the forces of leadership, to say that they are willing to make sure that their constituents are able to celebrate and to be able to survive in a program that they have been promised that will be there for them in their time of retirement.

I would also like to thank those Members on both sides of the aisle who see the benefit of protecting Social Security, not coming up with a privatization scheme, not because someone said it is a way that we can be innovative, not subscribing to saying that there is some sort of Federal emergency as it relates to the protection of Social Security, not the fact that the President is flying around the country some 60 days burning Federal jet fuel at taxpayers' expense, higher than at any other time in the history of this country since Presidents have been flying, to persuade Americans that there is some Federal emergency. We will try to address that a little later. We are going to celebrate not only within the moment but within the future.

I want to just share a few things, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to how many Americans that are not only beneficiaries of Social Security but also Americans who look forward to benefiting from Social Security.

Social Security is the foundation of all retirement for the American worker. Like I mentioned earlier, 48 million Americans celebrate and take part in the benefits that Social Security has to provide. Retirees receiving Social Security benefits are 33 million. That is a great number of Americans that have served our country well. Seniors who live within the poverty line, 48 percent of those individuals, of the 48 million, receive those benefits. The average monthly benefit is \$955. That is making ends meet for so many Americans, some 48 million Americans.

The size of the average benefit, like I mentioned, is \$955; but the real issue is the fact that the benefits will be there for almost 50 years. Some may say 48, some may say 49, but for almost 50 years, the present benefit structure as we see it now for Social Security recipients, including those individuals that are receiving survivor benefits that I must add, Mr. Speaker, those survivor benefits is the legacy of the commitment that their parents made that have passed on, that have gone on to glory. The only thing that they were able to leave for their child are sur-

vivor benefits. And the benefits will be here until 2052; 2052, Mr. Speaker. That is not tomorrow. That is not next week. That is not even 2 years. 2052.

And so many of the individuals that are running around here saying that we need to call the fire department because Social Security is on fire are not really telling the truth. One may say that the administration has a plan or the majority side leadership has a plan for Social Security. That is also not true. One may say that the President, like I said, the administration, has a plan. That is not true. Is there posturing on the majority side about the fact that they are going to come up with a plan? Yes, there is some conversation going on, but Washington is known for conversation. There is nothing wrong with conversation as long as it is bipartisan. And that is not happening. Leadership is about a bipartisan dialogue to improve Social Security. So if it is going to be addressed in this Congress, for us to move in a productive way, we are going to have to work together. And there is no leadership from the majority side for us to work together.

Some may say, well, where is the Democratic plan? Well, I think the Democratic plan is celebrated by 48 million Americans today, not fiction, not something that may happen in the future; and in the 1980s it was a Democratic Congress that came together with Speaker Tip O'Neill and Ronald Reagan and saved Social Security. A supermajority of Democrats voted for it, and even the creation of it.

So when one starts to argue about, well, where is the Democratic plan, the Democratic plan is in the wallets of 48 million Americans. And those Americans that are walking around working now with a Social Security card can say, wow, I am glad we have Social Security in the way we have it. And for those retirees that take their card out with those digits on them, they can thank the leadership of the Democratic Congress when it was created and also the Democratic Congress that saved Social Security to make sure that every American can have the maximum amount of benefits possible to them to help that 48 percent of the 48 million Americans that without Social Security would be living in poverty, to help 33 million of those retirees that are now, this is fact, not fiction, able to receive Social Security because, let us say, for instance, in that 33 million Americans, I am sure, Mr. Speaker, a number of their companies have gone back on their commitment on retirement. But Social Security is there for them. For those individuals that have passed on and gone on to glory, they were able to leave legacy benefits for their children.

Let us talk a little bit about the private accounts, because I think it is important that we talk about the privatization scheme that some people in this