

made by the service members themselves.

This is an important task, and I am hopeful that Congress will continue giving this the concerted attention it deserves as we prepare the Defense Authorization bill for next year.

#### OUR U.S. MILITARY SUCCESSES IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FORTENBERRY). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the accomplishments that we have been able to achieve in Afghanistan, thanks to the dedicated and courageous service of our men and women in uniform. These Marines, sailors, airmen, and soldiers exemplify the best of what our country has to offer. By risking, and sometimes giving, their lives, they have allowed the 30 million people of Afghanistan to live in peace and prosperity, free from the fear and tyranny of the Taliban.

By liberating Afghanistan, our fighting men and women also ensured that al Qaeda would no longer be allowed to operate with impunity in what was then a failed state. In a brilliantly waged campaign, our Special Forces brought the fight to our enemies. By utilizing local resistance forces and at times even charging into battle on horseback, they liberated this beautiful country from a menacing dictatorship.

What the Afghans, with the help of the U.S. and our Coalition forces, were subsequently able to achieve is nothing less than a miracle. On October 9, 2004, barely less than 2 years since the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan held the first democratic elections in its history, overwhelmingly electing Hamid Karzai as its President. Afghanistan is now scheduled to hold another election on September 18 to select its first parliament.

These two elections, coming less than a year apart, are even more impressive given that this country has been at war for the better part of the last 30 years. First, fighting a Soviet invasion, and later, a civil war between the different mujahideen.

I could not find better words than those of a reporter of the Associated Press to describe the presidential election in Afghanistan when he wrote: "After a generation of conflict, Afghans are slowly emerging from darkness. In the afterglow of last fall's presidential election, there is hope in Kabul."

In this country of 30 million people, more than 10 million registered to vote, 41 percent of them women, these elections were monitored by more than 5,400 independent observers from groups such as the EU, the OSCE, the U.S., and the U.N., giving further validity to these historic elections.

The hard work of our men and women in uniform does not stop there. They have worked closely with our allies to train a national Afghan army so that their people and their hard-fought democracy can be protected. Almost 19,000 soldiers now serve in the Afghan national army with another 3,400 being trained by our troops. These soldiers are being deployed to all corners of the country.

The United States has also trained more than 25,000 police officers, and other countries have assisted as well. Germany, for example, has trained nearly 6,000 border and national police. Our U.S. Armed Forces have also trained 120 judges, lawyers, and court personnel. Ensuring the rule of law that it would be protected in this nation that has known only war and tyranny is miraculous.

The U.S. military has also helped to rehabilitate more than 7,500 canals, underground irrigation tunnels, reservoirs, and dams to increase agricultural output in this arid country. These policies have resulted in an 82 percent increase in wheat production.

Our U.S. military forces were also able to assist in the demining and paving of the very important Kabul-Kandahar highway, ahead of schedule, as well as rehabilitating 74 bridges and tunnels.

These accomplishments have led to a 30 percent growth in the Afghan economy from 2002 to 2003 and an estimated 16 percent growth from 2003 to 2004. These policies have led to 2.4 million refugees returning to Afghanistan from neighboring countries after many years of being displaced by war. Another 600,000 internally displaced individuals have also been able to return home.

Mr. Speaker, I could stand before this body for hours to speak about our success in Afghanistan and the positive difference that our U.S. military troops have made in this country. I understand their sacrifices and those of their families. My own husband, retired Lieutenant Dexter Lehtinen, was a platoon leader in Vietnam until a grenade almost took his life. The scars on his face are constant reminders of the price so many Americans have paid for our freedom and the price that so many more continue to pay.

As my stepson, Aviator First Lieutenant Douglas Lehtinen, prepares to deploy Iraq, I cannot help but think about the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform. While nothing can replace those who were lost and although the scars will never disappear, those acts of bravery have not been in vain.

May God bless our men and women in uniform and may God bless America.

#### CAFTA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, a bowling ball weighs about 170 times the weight of a slice of sandwich bread. It does not take a physicist to see the mismatch between a bowling ball and a slice of bread. It does not take a trade expert to see the economic mismatch between the United States and the nations that make up the Central American Free Trade Agreement, CAFTA: Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador.

The way that proponents of the Central American Free Trade Agreement talk, one would think that Central America was one of the biggest economies in the Western Hemisphere. CAFTA nations, in fact, are not only among the world's poorest countries, they are among its smallest economies.

Think about this: This big trade agreement that President Bush wants, CAFTA, the combined purchasing power of CAFTA nations is almost identical to the purchasing power of Columbus, Ohio.

Tomorrow the House will hold a hearing on CAFTA. Since President Bush took office, Congress has voted within 55 days of the President's affixing his signature on a trade agreement. April 28, coming up, will mark the 11-month anniversary of when the President signed CAFTA. In other words, trade agreements are always sent to Congress quickly. Within a couple of months, we vote on them.

The President has delayed CAFTA for 11 months because this simply is not an agreement that the American people want or need. As I said, other trade agreements were all done within about 2 months, but because CAFTA is so unpopular, because trade policy in this country is so wrong-headed, the President still has not asked this Congress to vote on CAFTA.

Clearly, there is dissension in the ranks for good reason. CAFTA is the dysfunctional cousin of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and continues a legacy of failed trade policy.

Look at NAFTA's record; NAFTA is the United States, Mexico, and Canada: One million U.S. manufacturing jobs lost to the North American Free Trade Agreement. Wages of Mexicans have stagnated. Environmental conditions, especially along the U.S.-Mexican border have worsened dramatically. And yet the U.S. continues to push for more of the same: more of the same job hemorrhaging, more of the same income-lowering trade agreements, more trade agreements that ship jobs overseas, more trade agreements that neglect environmental safety standards, more trade agreements that keep foreign workers in poverty, more trade agreements that undercut our food safety laws in our country. The only difference between CAFTA and NAFTA is the first letter.

The definition of insanity is repeating the same action over and over and over again and expecting a different result. On trade we hear the same promises over and over and over again, and

we see the same results: lost jobs, a weakened economy, lower standards of living in Mexico, bad environmental outcomes. But this Congress somehow barely in the middle of the night continues to pass these trade agreements, and we see the same bad results.

But do not take my word for it. Look at the numbers. The U.S. economy, with a \$10 trillion GDP in 2002, is 170 times bigger than the economies of the CAFTA nations, at about \$62 billion combined. It is like comparing a bowling ball that weighs 170 times a slice of bread.

CAFTA is not about robust markets for the export of American goods. It is about outsourcing. It is about access to cheap labor. We send our jobs overseas. Workers overseas get paid almost nothing, not enabling them to raise their standard of living even a bit. U.S. corporations make more money. American workers lose their jobs. It is the same old story time and time again.

Again, the combined purchasing power of the CAFTA nations is about that of Columbus, Ohio, or Orlando, Florida, or the entire State of Kansas. Trade pacts like NAFTA and CAFTA enable companies to exploit cheap labor in other countries in the developing world, then import their products back into the United States under favorable tariff terms.

American companies outsource their jobs to Guatemala, outsource their jobs to China, outsource their jobs to Mexico. It costs American workers their jobs. It does almost nothing for workers in those countries. Yet profits at Wal-Mart and GM and so many other companies continue to rise.

CAFTA will do nothing to stop the bleeding of manufacturing jobs except make it worse. It will do even less to create a strong Central American consumer market for American goods.

Throughout the developing world, workers do not share in the wealth they create. Our decades of economic success in this country show that employees share in the wealth they create for their employer. If one works at GM, they help GM create wealth; they help GM make a profit. They get some of that money back. These trade agreements in the developing world simply do not work, and when the world's poorest people can buy American products rather than just make them, then we will know our trade agreements finally are working.

Vote "no" on the Central American Free Trade Agreement.

#### ENERGY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, we commemorate Earth Day at a time when American soldiers are in Iraq, in part as a consequence of our energy dependence. No matter what the press re-

leases say, the way this Congress is commemorating Earth Day is by recycling the energy bill.

It is replete with massive subsidies that will continue to tie us to the past. Rather than the development of true energy independence gained by working with renewables and a massive effort at energy conservation, this energy bill is a monument to Congress's inability to think comprehensively about the future. Our energy dependence and wasteful policies mean that we are desperately dependent on a volatile Middle East, especially Iraq and Saudi Arabia, as we spend a major portion of our defense budget protecting the stability in that oil-rich region.

The Pentagon is also the largest single consumer of fuel in the United States, almost 2 percent of the country's total transportation fuel. And much of this fuel use is due to highly inefficient vehicles, from an Abrams tank, weighing 68 tons, that gets only about half a mile to a gallon, to an aircraft carrier that gets 17 feet to a gallon.

The United States military now uses 1.7 million gallons of fuel a day in Iraq. The cost of this fuel can be up to \$400 a gallon depending on how it is delivered. Our military itself is clearly held hostage by the philosophy that energy efficiency does not matter. As the lines of supply are dangerously stretched with more points of vulnerability, while the flexibility and nimbleness of our troops are compromised by having to have huge amounts of gasoline close at hand. Lighter, more energy efficient vehicles are harder targets for the enemy to strike, and they can move greater distances between refueling and do not need this long chain of supply with more points of vulnerability for the vehicles and for our soldiers.

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The situation the military faces in Iraq and other potential trouble spots demands action on an ambitious energy policy with a significant commitment to fuel conservation and renewable technologies, if only for the sake of the security of our Nation and the safety of our troops.

The skyrocketing gas prices this spring further demonstrates that we are hostage to an inadequate energy infrastructure with constrained refining capacity. The energy bill contains almost no incentives for change, as all those currently in control profit by this restricted supply, vulnerability, and volatility. As gasoline prices have increased 50 cents a gallon in a matter of weeks, every tank of gasoline is a reminder that the Republican leadership in Congress for 10 years has refused to significantly increase fuel efficiency standards, which would have meant significant money in the pocket of every American family.

The inability or unwillingness to establish a predictable window for wind energy development, by making the

production tax credit permanent means that tens of thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in new investment are delayed, with the advances in technology and additional elements of supply are denied to the public. This is ironic, when our military is touting the contribution that wind energy is making to the security and efficiency of operations at Guantanamo.

The energy bill continues to spend too much for the wrong people to do the wrong things and shortchanging the technologies and strategies that ultimately will make a difference for the future. There is no question that America in this century will rely much more heavily on renewables and conservation. The sad note is that we are slipping behind the Chinese, who are increasing their cars' fuel efficiency standards, and further behind the European and Japanese, who are already racing ahead of us in energy efficiency.

Even in a defense-dominated, security-obsessed environment that this Congress operates in, we cannot make energy investments that will at least enhance our military to make the military and America's families more secure. We can and should do better.

#### FEDERAL LEGISLATION TO PROHIBIT PREDATORY LENDING

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FORTENBERRY). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MILLER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. MILLER of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, the financial condition of American working and middle-class families is a mess. Wages are stagnant, health care costs are exploding, the individual savings rate for 2004 was 1 percent, and credit card debt is more than \$800 billion.

The bright spot is that 69 percent of American families own their own home. The equity that American families build in their homes by years of faithfully paying a mortgage is the bulk of the net worth, the life savings, of most homeowners.

Homeownership is more than an investment. The deed to a home is a membership card to the middle class. Families living on the fringes of poverty can begin to get their footing when they own their own home and become part of a neighborhood where parents know their children's playmates. Financially vulnerable families are even more likely to have to borrow against the equity in their homes to provide for life's rainy days, however.

Every American homeowner faces a mountain of documents when they borrow money to buy a home or when they use their home to secure a loan. Many vulnerable homeowners borrow knowing only how much their monthly payment will be, only to learn later that they signed away a big part of their home equity, of their life savings.