

district, the city of Marietta, Georgia, took the opportunity; and the results serve as a model for the tremendous potential of personal retirement accounts.

Rather than collecting 1.5 percent from Social Security like the rest of us, Marietta city employees have personal accounts with yearly rates of return ranging from 3 to 20 percent.

The results go far beyond the rates of return. Employees' paychecks are higher than the surrounding cities because only 6.1 percent is taken out of their paychecks, as opposed to 12.4 percent.

Think it does not get any better? Well, it does.

Employees are continually educated about the program, the choices that they have, and how the company administering their pensions makes decisions. Because of this education program, employees are allowed to direct where their money goes depending on the rates of return and their personal goals.

Mr. Speaker, the tremendous potential of personal retirement accounts has been realized by some in my district. Let us hope the rest of the country is able to realize the true benefits of personal retirement accounts some time soon.

WE ARE A NATION AT WAR

(Mr. KUCINICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, in moments like yesterday, we are one in support for each other's safety and well-being. Thankfully, it was an error by the pilot of a small plane.

The White House's response was telling: "We have to remember we are a Nation at war."

We are. But at war against Iraq. Iraq did not attack us. Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11. We may well be proving that the best way to avoid a war is not to wage one.

Einstein said the significant problems we have cannot be solved at the same level of thinking with which we created them. Does the war against Iraq make us safer or less safe?

After spending \$420 billion annually for the military and an additional \$270 billion for the war in Iraq, why are we still running for the exits? Has the so-called war on terror made us less safe?

We all want safety and security for ourselves, our loved ones, our Nation, and the world. But there has to be a better way than war. One of our greatest Presidents, Franklin Roosevelt, knew this and he knew war. He concluded: "If civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships, the ability of all peoples of all lands to live together and to work together in the same world at peace."

THE GROWING ECONOMY

(Mr. CONAWAY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that we are experiencing a growing economy in this country, a growing economy which creates jobs. Figures just released show that 274,000 additional jobs were created in this economy this last month. That is 274,000 families that are better off because they are working. They have also revised the figures to show that 93,000 additional jobs were created in February and March.

I participated in a needs assessment in Midland, Texas, back in the early 1990s, a process about figuring out what was going on within those communities. We came up with the top 10 needs that the folks in Midland, Texas, told them about. Nine of those top 10 needs would have been positively impacted by a job. And so we have now created 274,000 jobs.

The economy grew at 3.1 percent during the first quarter of this year. We continue to experience a growing economy led by the pro-growth policies of this administration and this House and this Senate.

REPUBLICAN ABUSE OF POWER

(Ms. SCHAKOWSKY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, Senate Republicans are preparing to blow up 200 years of tradition in the U.S. Senate, abusing their power in order to force through a few judges who have been unable to earn a bipartisan consensus for their lifetime judicial appointments.

Democrats have helped confirm 95 percent of President Bush's judicial nominees. The few that our Democratic colleagues in the Senate have opposed are those who have had serious questions raised about their independence, fairness, and record on issues involving our most vital rights.

Republicans are willing to attack the constitutional system of checks and balances and change the rules of the Senate in the middle of the game, all of this for seven extreme judges.

Senate Republicans know full well the impact their nuclear option will have on the bipartisanship that is necessary for a productive and effective Senate, but they simply do not care. If Senate Republicans are successful at abolishing the rights of the minority, what is next?

EXTENDING FREEDOM TO BELARUS

(Mr. SHIMKUS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of the country of Belarus and their ongoing struggle for fair and free elections. The last dictator in Europe, Aleksander

Lukashenko, rules this country through a combination of intimidation and fear. He is suppressing the voices and rights of the Belarusian people as they watch their neighbors in Georgia and Ukraine rise up and take back their countries and emerge as thriving democracies.

As President Bush said in his visit to Riga, Latvia, "All the nations that border Russia will benefit from the spread of democratic values, and so will Russia itself. Together, we have set a firm and confident standard. Repression has no place on this continent."

I have had the privilege of meeting with the opposition party representatives from Belarus several times. It is inspiring to see these men and women from every political ideology come together with a unified goal, to let the Belarusian people decide for themselves who should lead their country, rather than have it forced upon them by Lukashenko's regime.

As co-chairman of the House Baltic Caucus, it is my hope that the United States Congress will stand with our friends in Eastern Europe and support all efforts to bring democracy, freedom, and the rule of law to this part of the world.

REPUBLICAN ABUSES OF POWER

(Ms. LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, congressional Republicans continue to abuse their power here on Capitol Hill. Rather than trying to mend fences and work in a bipartisan fashion, they instead choose a very partisan course.

Here in the House, for example, the Republican leadership ignored protocol and expedited weakened ethics rules through the House without ever consulting the Democrats. Everyone here knows that ethics changes cannot be successful unless both parties play a role.

And now, Republicans in the other body, not to be outdone by their counterparts here in the House, plan to change the rules on the filibuster that have been in place for more than 200 years, rules that give the minority a voice in Washington. Talk about an extreme abuse of power.

Mr. Speaker, Republican attempts to do away with the filibuster is the last check, really, on the one-party rule here in Washington. Simply, this is not the way to end the divisive tone here. When are the Republicans going to learn that their absolute power here on Capitol Hill is really corrupting their every action?

We talk about spreading democracy abroad. Let us begin by preserving it here at home.

EVENTS OF YESTERDAY

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1