

in tax cuts for the absolute least needy—adding another \$16–20 billion to the Federal deficit. So I ask, what sense does this heartless bill make?

While I am glad the manager's amendment tries to soften the blow to the vulnerable by making sure that children who currently receive school lunches will not be cut off, as well as by making other small vote garnering changes to the Medicaid and food stamp programs, these are small pluses that do very little to outweigh the many minuses of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, to achieve this deficit increase, the budget reconciliation bill before us today would cut precisely those programs that help the poor, the sick, the weak, and the young so that the wealthiest among us can receive additional tax cuts.

Let me review for a moment what the tax cuts already enacted have done to our Nation.

According to the Urban Institute-Brookings Institution Tax Policy Center, as a result of the tax cuts implemented by the administration and by the Republican leadership in Congress to date, households with incomes exceeding \$1 million can expect to receive tax cuts this year that will average \$103,000.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, after adjusting for inflation, the after-tax income of the 1 percent of tax filers with the highest incomes rose by nearly \$49,000 in 2003 while the lowest 75 percent of tax filers saw their incomes decrease in 2002.

Not surprisingly, as income disparity has grown, the poverty rate in this Nation has increased from 11.7 percent in 2001 to 12.7 percent in 2004, and there are now more than 37 million Americans living in poverty in this Nation, including 13 million children.

Further, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, last year there were more than 38 million individuals living in households that at some point during the year were food "insecure," meaning that they were unable to afford to buy enough food to feed themselves.

On September 16, President Bush traveled to New Orleans to announce a bold and ambitious plan to rebuild the gulf coast region following the hurricanes. During his speech, the President acknowledged that poverty and indifference had left so many of our fellow Americans vulnerable to the hurricanes in the gulf region.

Unfortunately, the budget reconciliation bill before us illustrates in the starkest possible terms that as the storm and its revelations about our society begin to fade from the front pages to the back pages, the Republican leadership of this House has chosen to repudiate the President's commitment to address poverty.

Rather than embrace the President's call for action, the Republican leaders of this House have put forward a bill that will continue policies of neglect and indifference in service to what they see as the greater good: continued tax cuts for the wealthiest in this Nation.

The budget reconciliation act before us presents a stark choice for all Members of the House of Representatives—between supporting tax cuts for the wealthiest among us or opposing reductions in our already thin social safety net.

I urge my colleagues to make the moral choice today. Budgets reflect the moral compass of a nation. This budget reconciliation package is devoid of humanity and compas-

sion and would take our Nation far off course of helping its neediest citizens. I urge my colleagues to stand with the children, the elderly, and the vulnerable of our Nation by voting against this reconciliation act.

If its passage occurs, I implore the conferees to be compassionate and fair and to restore and maintain the social safety net for our neediest citizens.

DEFICIT REDUCTION ACT OF 2005

SPEECH OF

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 17, 2005

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my opposition to and concern about the devastating cuts to essential services passed in this House today as part of the budget reconciliation package.

The cuts this body adopted today will have disastrous impacts on the western New York communities I represent. The unnecessary cuts to health, education and children's programs will be particularly hard felt in and among the working families of Erie and Chautauqua Counties.

The ranks of the uninsured continue to swell in this country, and more and more Americans are concerned that someday they may find themselves without health insurance and unable to afford needed care. In fact, over 45 million Americans are currently without health insurance. Medicaid represents this government's promise to provide health care to Americans who can least afford it. Over 4 million New Yorkers are enrolled in this quite literally life-saving program, including 1.8 million children. I voted against the bill today because it will cut Medicaid spending by more than \$11 billion. That's an \$11 billion cut from caring for children suffering from leukemia, from pregnant mothers struggling to survive and from mentally disabled men and women trying to make a place for themselves in our communities; we should not make our budget cuts on their backs. Instead, we should be increasing health care access to more Americans, not fewer. If Medicaid is expanding, it's because fewer Americans can afford health insurance, let's not deny them the only access to care available to them.

I am also concerned that this legislation cuts over \$14 billion from successful Federal student loan programs—the largest cuts ever to student aid. This is the wrong cut at the wrong time, because college costs continue to skyrocket with no end in sight. In fact tuition at 4-year public colleges has increased 46 percent since 2001. Children from working families in Erie and Chautauqua Counties, and over 470,000 students across the State, depend on these loans to afford college and they depend on college as the key to economic opportunity. These cuts will needlessly deny that opportunity to young people in western New York who want to go to Medaille, Canisius, the University of Buffalo, my alma mater, Buffalo State, and others.

The reconciliation package is also an abdication of our responsibility to children. The bill cuts child support enforcement by almost \$5 billion, abandoning single parents and rolling back the progress our society has made in

this field. Children are not responsible for divorce or for parents abandoning their families. Let's not turn back the clock and make them carry that responsibility. The bill cuts \$577 million from foster care programs. And perhaps most troubling, it cuts \$796 million from food stamps, which represent our promise that amid this country's great wealth, no American child, whether in the cold winters of Erie County or the sun baked mountains of Arizona, should starve.

What is perhaps most objectionable about this process is the doubletalk used to sell these cuts. While we have been told that these spending cuts are necessary to reduce the deficit, they do nothing of the sort. Instead, the \$50 billion in spending cuts are coupled with \$106 billion in tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans. That means that all of these cuts, all of them, will be used to pay for irresponsible tax cuts that we can't afford and that do not put money back in the pockets of my hard-working constituents in Buffalo; not one dime will actually go to reduce the deficit.

In fact, this reconciliation process will increase, not decrease, the deficit. I agree that it is well past time for Congress to put our fiscal house in order, but to call this package a deficit reduction measure at best makes no sense, and at worst is patently dishonest. We need to do better by the American people and I pledge to do better for the people of Western New York. Frankly, they do not deserve this bad budget.

Mr. Speaker, I object to the cuts this House adopted today, and I object to the slight of hand used to sell them.

DEFICIT REDUCTION ACT OF 2005

SPEECH OF

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 17, 2005

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, most Americans watching their televisions looked on in horror at the extent of the poverty and desperation among the victims of Hurricane Katrina. President Bush and congressional Republicans apparently looked at these pictures with indifference and disdain.

I am forced to believe this because their budget bill—the so-called Deficit Reduction Act—aims to cut more than \$50 billion from nearly every poverty program this country offers for the sake of later passing approximately \$60 billion in tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans.

Sadly, their recent actions fit neatly with their track record. Since the Republicans gained control of both the White House and Congress in 2001, 1.7 million more Americans live in poverty, average median income has declined \$1,700, and the minimum wage—which has not been increased since 1997—has its lowest purchasing power since 1990.

This budget continues the Republican trend of failing the American people in every possible way.

The Republican budget requires poor mothers with children under age 6 to double their weekly work hours from 20 to 40 in order to remain eligible for job training and vocational education. Yet, it fails to provide \$10.5 billion for childcare funding which the non-partisan

Congressional Budget Office estimated would be needed for mothers to afford to work the longer hours and maintain their benefits.

Disgracefully, their proposals don't stop there. The Republican budget leads to \$24 billion less in child support payments. It also cuts \$14.3 billion from Federal student aid programs so the average student borrowing for college will now pay an additional \$5,800. It cuts health care for disabled and impoverished people, aid for abused and neglected foster children, financial assistance to the aged and disabled poor and food subsidies.

However, they don't cut everything. In true Republican, let-them-eat-cake fashion, the Republican budget does have one program to help those in need. The bill provides two \$40 coupons to people so that they can buy converter boxes for their television sets, so they can watch digital television.

Together, America can do better than trading crisp, clean digital television for food, health care and education. I urge my colleagues to vote against this disgrace and not pay for tax cuts for millionaires on the backs of the poor.

HONORING ERIE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS, RALPH J. GALANTI, JR.

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 18, 2005

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure and gratitude that I stand here today to recognize Ralph J. Galanti, Jr., Erie Community College Director of Athletics who is retiring after 36 years of service to ECC.

Born and raised in the City of Lackawanna, over the last three and one-half decades Ralph "Chico" Galanti has completely transformed ECC's athletic program, putting ECC on the map in the college sports world.

As coach of the ECC hockey team, Galanti led the team to appearances at eight NJCAA national championships, winning five regional titles.

In his role as Athletic Director, Galanti was instrumental in brining football to ECC and had a hands on role in the development of ECC's Burt Flickinger Athletic Center, a facility awarded for its design, which not only serves the college but the entire community, hosting national athletic events.

Galanti's ongoing efforts increased enrollment at the school where he pushed students to balance athletics and academics.

For his accomplishments, Chico has been inducted into the Greater Buffalo Hall of Fame and the National Junior College Athletic Association Hockey Coaches Hall of Fame.

The Ralph and Grace Galanti Memorial Scholarship fund honor's Ralph's parents, and continues his legacy of commitment, by assisting the student athletes in our community.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure I recognize Ralph Galanti, Jr., a man whose devotion to Erie Community College has shaped the lives of thousands of ECC students and left a positive mark on the entire Western New York community. On behalf of the residents of New York's 27th Congressional District I would like to wish Chico health and happiness in his retirement by using his signature farewell, "be happy."

HONORING THE LIFE OF LIEUTENANT COLONEL THOMAS A. WREN

HON. TOM DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 18, 2005

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas A. Wren and to recognize his service to our Nation.

Lt. Col. Wren graduated from George Mason University and received a commission in the Army Reserve through the Reserve Officer Training Corps. He joined the 80th Division Army Reserve unit in 1984 and held positions in Virginia, Delaware, Maryland and Pennsylvania. He was called to active duty four times since 2000, serving in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq. While not on active duty, Lt. Col. Wren worked as a project manager at Sytel working on projects at USAID, USDA, Army Research Laboratory as well as the State Department. His numerous decorations include two Bronze Stars.

His most recent assignment was assisting with the training of the Iraqi military. Tragically, Lt. Col. Wren was killed in an accident on November 5, 2005 in Tallil, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Words cannot express the gratitude we feel to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. This is a debt that can never be repaid. I know words are not much comfort for the family of Lt. Col. Wren, who are no doubt suffering in the wake of the loss of this intelligent and dedicated man. I hope they will take some solace in knowing that we will never forget Lt. Col. Wren's sacrifice or the sacrifices made by other patriots like him in defense of our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I call upon my colleagues to remember in our minds and in our hearts the bravery and sacrifice of Lt. Col. Thomas A. Wren, as well as that of all the men and women of the armed services who honorably protect the American people.

COERCED STERILIZATIONS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND SLOVAKIA

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 18, 2005

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, last week, the district court in the Czech town of Ostrava reached a very important decision. The court concluded that, in 2001 after the birth of her second child, a local Romani woman was sterilized without informed consent. In fact, since last year, the Czech Ombudsman has been examining dozens of similar cases. Although he has not yet issued any public findings, it is expected that the Ombudsman will confirm that many other Romani women experienced similar violations of their rights, as documented by several Czech human rights groups and the European Roma Rights Center.

Sadly, the issue of sterilizations without informed consent is not new in this region. As early as 1977, the dissident group Charter 77 reported on systematic efforts to target Romani women in Czechoslovakia for coerced

sterilization. While the vast majority of sterilizations in the Czech Republic and Slovakia since 1989 were performed with informed consent, the Ostrava case demonstrates that the practice of performing sterilizations without informed consent did not completely end with the fall of the communist regime.

That precedent-setting court decision sheds light on a number of legal points in one specific case. At the same time, there are many larger questions still at issue, including whether racism against Roma contributed to the abuse. Frankly, given the large percentage of Roma among the victims of sterilization without informed consent compared with the small percentage of the Czech population that Roma constitute, it is hard for me to believe that race did not play some role. There are, of course, other possible factors to consider: what role did a poor quality of medical care or training play in these cases of medical malpractice? Did a lack of respect for an individual's liberty—a hold-over mentality from the totalitarian period—also contribute to the abuse?

I welcome the Ostrava court's decision and commend the plaintiff in that case, Helena Ferencikova, for her courage in bringing it forward. I have also been heartened by the apparent seriousness of the Ombudsman's investigation into this difficult and sensitive matter.

Unfortunately, similar issues in neighboring Slovakia continue to be met with government denials and stonewalling.

In 2003, the Slovak Government concluded a year-long investigation into allegations that some Romani women were sterilized without informed consent, even after the fall of communism. That investigation was deeply flawed. At one point, for example, a spokesperson for the Minister for Human Rights threatened that anyone bringing forward allegations of sterilization without informed consent would go to jail, one way or another. This is not the way to foster confidence in an investigation or to encourage victims to speak out.

Significantly, the Czech investigation and the Slovak investigation both revolved around the same 1992 Czechoslovak law on sterilizations, put in place before the two countries split apart. Czech authorities have understood that law as requiring that sterilizations had to be requested by the person who was going to be sterilized, that there had to be evidence of consent by that person, and that consent had to be meaningfully informed. Being "informed" means, for example, that the expectant mother must be told why the procedure is necessary. If someone was given false information about the procedure, which was the case in many instances, then she was not meaningfully "informed."

When interpreting the same law, however, Slovak authorities maintained that consent did not have to be "informed." Accordingly, Slovak investigators examined numerous cases where there was no informed consent but still concluded there was no violation of the 1992 law because, according to their twisted logic, consent didn't have to be informed!

In reality, the Slovak Government seemed to organize its investigation into the sterilization cases in a way that was designed to cover up the magnitude of the problem. The Slovak Government's investigation revealed seven cases of Romani minors who were sterilized in violation of the then-existing Slovak law. In reality, the Slovak Government's