

patriotism that led him to enter the United States Army.

Bill was initially deployed with the renowned Band of Brothers to Camp Giant, near the Korean demilitarized zone in March of 2003. A year later, he was assigned to the 2nd Battalion 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team of the 101st Airborne Division of Fort Campbell, Kentucky. It was there he married his wife, Lauren Lynn, on August 18, this year, 2005. She was the daughter of a Colonel who was also serving in Iraq.

Bill was then deployed to Iraq just 3 months later, in October of 2005. Two months after that, on the day before Thanksgiving this year, Sergeant Bill Meeuwsen was one of two soldiers killed in action when his unit came under direct fire near Baghdad. He was the 186th Texan killed in Iraq since the war began. One out of every ten people serving in the United States military today is from the State of Texas.

Mr. Speaker, Bill is remembered as a person who loved his friends and family. He enjoyed playing basketball with his buddies, and he had compassion for animals. When he was growing up, he used to hide animals in his home. His friends and family will never forget his friendly and ever-present smile.

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He had a great sense of humor and a way of making anyone around him feel comfortable. His father, Mike, spoke of his sense of adventure and interest in exploring other countries and cultures, which he was doing by fulfilling his Army experience.

While in Iraq, Bill spoke with his wife, Lauren, and parents, Mike and Thresa frequently. In one of his most recent conversations, he was upbeat and excited about his unit's recent success in the field in Iraq. He felt strongly they were accomplishing their mission and goal, making a difference in Iraq for those people. A week before he died, he sent home this photograph of him taking a break in Iraq enjoying tea in the Iraqi custom.

Mr. Speaker, here is a photograph of Bill shortly before he was killed in active duty in Iraq. It shows this big man, this big son of America, taking a break while on duty in Iraq for his country and for the people of Iraq.

During another conversation with his mother Thresa, she was crying when she spoke with her son because Bill's platoon had recently suffered four casualties, and she was worried how he was handling this. But Bill was very clear in his response to his mother. He told his mother, "Mom, you do not need to cry for the soldiers who were killed. They are all in heaven. They were good men. They died doing what they wanted to do. Cry for their families." Wise words from one of America's sons.

His clear and matter-of-fact responses have been a tremendous source of comfort to his wife and to his parents since his death.

While Bill was stationed in Korea before he went to Iraq, he met a man named Ahn. Ahn was a sergeant in the South Korean Army. He and Bill made quick friends. They made an odd pair since Ahn was relatively short and Bill was 6 foot 4 inches tall. On numerous weekends the two of them would catch the train to Seoul, South Korea, where they explored the city, and Ahn helped Bill learn the customs of the Korean people. Bill even got to go to Ahn's parents' home.

After he learned of Bill's passage, Ahn sent a heartfelt letter in broken English to the Meeuwsen family in Texas. It reads in part: "There is an old Korean saying that 'too nice and good person tends to be taken by God earlier than usual.' I strongly sure that Holy Father have special plan to brighten the heaven with Mr. Meeuwsen."

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that heaven is already brighter with Bill up there, and I would like to extend my prayers and our condolences to his parents, Mike and Thresa, to his relatives, his friends, the community of Kingwood, Texas, his wife, Laura Lynn. Sergeant Meeuwsen touched so many lives in his 24 years. He was a freedom fighter, he was an Aggie, a son of proud parents, a member of the band of brothers, an American warrior, and an inspiration to all patriots. His patriotism and heroism and his life will not be forgotten. He paid for freedom with his life. He paid for our safety with his blood, and he paid for our future years with his youth.

When I talked to Sergeant Meeuwsen's father, Mike, about what his son believed in and his reasons for his personal involvement in Iraq, he said this: "I am here for God, country, and freedom."

Mr. Speaker, that says it all.

God bless Bill and God bless our troops and God bless America. That is just the way it is.

TAX CUTS BENEFIT THE PROSPEROUS

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

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, in the face of our \$3.1 trillion debt, the House recently passed a budget reconciliation bill. This so-called Deficit Reduction Act cut spending by \$53 billion by cutting programs like health care for the sick, education benefits for students, child support help for parents, and food stamps for hungry families. Even as supporters of the budget reconciliation bill applauded their own new-found frugality, they knew the savings would never be realized because today the House passed a tax reconciliation bill, erasing the 3-week-old savings of \$53 billion with \$70 billion in new tax cuts. And most egregiously, the lion's share of these tax cuts benefit the most prosperous among us.

At a time when one in seven Americans have no health insurance, the budget bill cut \$11 billion for Medicaid, the most basic part of America's safety net. It further empowered health care providers to turn away patients who are unable to pay. This was not only uncaring but fiscally unwise. It will cost our Nation more certainly in the long run when significant health problems are left untreated.

Mr. Speaker, with a Federal debt now of \$8 trillion, every American owes \$27,000. Americans understand that the inability of the administration and Congress to balance the budget will have a disastrous effect on future generations. Imagine leaving our kids with an unpaid \$27,000 credit card bill and more interest on the way.

But holding back medical treatment for chronically ill children is not the way to restore fiscal discipline. Neither is making cuts to education that will close the doors of opportunity to a generation of students. The budget bill cut student loan programs by more than \$14 billion. With new fees and higher interest rates, educational opportunities will be lost, and all of the stimulus to the economy that would have been generated by all those new engineers and scientists will be lost with them.

Does our Nation truly benefit economically or otherwise by pushing so many deeper into poverty, or by closing the doors to higher education? In the wake of Hurricane Katrina and all that it revealed about the persistence of poverty in America, can we really have a more secure future with a less effective safety net?

I am proud to be a member of the Blue Dog Coalition, a group of moderate and conservative Democrats concerned about fiscal responsibilities. I join my Blue Dog colleagues in seeking ways to reduce the debt; but we were compelled to oppose this bill because it was a sham, a debt increase that made the poor poorer, the rich richer, and the country's future even more precarious. Any reasonable look at the numbers will easily reveal the truth: these bills result in an increase to the national debt.

As a Nation, we have gone from an \$86 billion surplus under President Clinton in 2000 to a record \$412 billion deficit last year. Our fiscal house is more than out of order; it is spiraling out of control.

What we need right now is a balanced budget strategy and one that honors the values of the American people, that rewards work not wealth, that requires the sacrifice of all Americans for the common good and not the sacrifice alone of the poor, the young, or the infirm.

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

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