

Mr. Speaker, I remind this body, the Constitution does not only protect the rights of the people, it also protects the rights of the States. This is our responsibility, to remember them when we write, debate and vote on legislation here in this Chamber.

What I am urging here is not only a political philosophy that most would argue has drifted from the mainstream, but a most important one that has affected our budget, and a gloomy budget forecast it has been for the future.

This is what the caucus is about, these weekly information sessions. It is really well past time that we turn a critical eye on to the Federal Government. This will be how we will lower our deficit, grow our economy and ensure that America remains that "beacon on the Hill."

Now, aside from being informational, this caucus also seeks to make specific legislative gains in the name of governmental efficiency and constitutional adherence. We will support legislation that seeks to return power and authority back to where it belongs, to the States, to the local governments and to the people.

So, to close, I look forward to working with my friend from Utah and other members of this caucus and other Members of this body, from both sides of the aisle, as we work each week in the days and weeks ahead. We owe nothing less to our constituents and to generations, both past and future, to defend this great experiment of American republicanism and democracy.

□ 1715

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

(Mr. EMANUEL 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 Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. VAN HOLLEN 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 gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE OFFICIAL TRUTH SQUAD ON THE HISTORY OF AMERICA

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, the Official Truth Squad tonight is going to continue the theme that has already been addressed by three of our friends, Mr. OTTER from Idaho, Mr. BISHOP from Utah and Mr. GARRETT from New Jersey. They have been talking about our history. They have been talking about the philosophy of America and who we are and what we are and what we stand for. So for the next few minutes we will be discussing our history, the American Revolution, the people who lived before us, what they thought, what they wrote, and what they said.

I have with me tonight my friend from Texas, another freshman, Mr. CONAWAY from West Texas, and he is going to start out discussing our heritage and giving us some truth about who we are, what we are, and what we stand for.

Mr. CONAWAY. Judge, I thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to share this hour with you tonight and to be able to discuss these very important topics with our colleagues in the House.

One of the things that occurred to me while I have been here in Congress is that we don't do a real good job of delineating between the role of the Federal Government and everybody else. There is a great push every single day while we are here to expand the reach, to expand the scope, to expand the Federal Government's role in all of our lives. One of the reasons for that is I don't think we have a really good, clear appreciation for our founding documents.

So I have introduced a bill, H. Res. 485, called the America Act, a modest effort to reinstitute the Constitution in America, which would require every Member of Congress, every Representative, every Senator, to read the Constitution once a year. It would also require our senior staffers to also read the Constitution, because an awful lot of what you and I do every single day is somewhat influenced by what our staff does; the idea being that you and I raise our hand in January of every odd-numbered year, one of the seminal moments of my short term here in this Congress in January of 2005 when we stood up to take our oath of office. We pledge to protect and defend the Constitution. In our role as lawmakers, we write laws to implement the Constitution, and, every once in a while, we attempt to change the Constitution.

So it seems pretty self-evident to me we should know what is in the Constitution, and, given the reach of this Federal Government over the years, it seems we may have lost our way with respect to that.

When the Constitution was being written 230-plus years ago, there was a constant struggle or tension, as has already been discussed on this floor tonight, of what the role of the Federal Government should and should not be. Those headed up by Alexander Hamilton thought a wide-ranging, wide-reaching government would be appro-

priate. Others, such as Adams and Jefferson, thought a much more narrow interpretation of the Constitution would narrow the scope of this Federal Government.

I doubt that if our Founding Fathers could join us today, that even the strongest proponents of the most expansive Federal Government would recognize what we have done under the Constitution with this Federal Government. It reaches into every single portion of our lives.

You and I also, when we campaign and when we are talking on this Hill, talk about reducing the size of government, reducing Federal spending, the threat that the growth in spending has to our way of life.

The real solution, in my mind, is going to lead to some hard decisions that sweep major programs, major perhaps Cabinet-level agencies, out of the Federal Government; a clear recognition that this Federal Government should be limited; that there should be certain things that are totally left up to the States. I am not going to name any of those tonight, because that is going to create some controversy when we begin to talk about that.

The truth of the matter is if we are, in fact, going to rein in the growth of the Federal Government, we have to begin limiting the reach into particular areas that our Founding Fathers did not envision. So a modest step, a new effort to try to help each of us understand clearer what our role should be and what this Federal Government's role should be in our day-to-day lives, will be a reading of the Constitution.

So I am going to begin asking each of my colleagues to cosponsor and join this effort to pass this resolution that would require all of us to read the Constitution once a year. It is going to be an honor system. We are honorable men and women in this body, and I think we can trust ourselves.

I am a CPA by trade. You are an attorney. Our professions all require continuing professional education: doctors, lawyers, engineers, CPAs. CPAs in particular have to have 40 hours a year of continuing education just to stay current.

It seems to me that politicians and folks serving this body should be as well informed about their job as anybody serving in a profession should be informed, and the start of that would be the Constitution, the base document on which this great hall is founded.

So this requirement would require each of us to read that Constitution once a year, and record that in our records, and be available for constituents to ask us, now, when is the last time you read the Constitution, Mr. Congressman?

I want to thank my good colleague from Texas, the great judge from the southeast part of the State. We are from the same State, but we are probably 600 miles apart in our homes. But it is a wonderful State to represent,