

the Hill when finalizing negotiations on the Deficit Reduction Act.

To offset the cost of these changes, we are looking at multiple options: Redirecting the stabilization fund from the Medicare Modernization Act provides some funds. Also Medicare currently pays for indirect costs of medical education twice, directly and by inflating payments to Medicare Advantage plans. By paying only once, we can find additional money.

Mr. Speaker, I would submit that there are other cost saving measures that can be employed, and we are certainly encouraging many groups across the healthcare spectrum to partner with us on this.

A recent article in CQ Healthbeat News from January 25th talks about the changes that might occur in the SGR. We had a hearing on Tuesday. The article says, "Tuesday's hearing may have marked progress of sorts, because not only were lawmakers at least talking about what was seemingly an intractable issue, but they actually offered some ideas for a down payment on a long-term fix.

"Offering a road map on the issue was legislation, H.R. 5866, that would erase the scheduled payment cuts while arming Medicare beneficiaries with more information on the quality of physician care.

"The bill would lower the MEI by 1 percentage point, which in 2007 would mean a payment increase of 2.7 percent. The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission called for an update based on the MEI of 3.7 percent in 2007 minus an adjustment fact of 0.9 percent, essentially the same number.

"The bill would also enact recommendations by the Institute of Medicine to improve Quality Improvement Organizations which contract with Medicare to improve quality of care under the program. The bill would make the quality improvement activities of QIOs available to all providers, guarantee a minimum of funding for QIOs and a required review of their resources when the organization's duties are expanded."

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a worthwhile bill. I think this Congress owes it to the patients and the physicians in this country that depend upon the Medicare system. We have done some great things with expanding the prescription drug program, but it is time to address some of the other shortcomings of the program.

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

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California 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 Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio 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 New York (Mr. WEINER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. WEINER 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 Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

THE TRUE FACTS IN REGARD TO PROGRESS IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for one-half the remaining time until midnight as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, today was an historic day on this House floor when we heard in a joint session of Congress from the Prime Minister of Iraq, Nouri Al-Maliki. The Iraqi people have spoken and their prime minister has spoken.

Last night during our special hour, Mr. Speaker, two of my colleagues from Georgia talked about the economic activity of this country and how well we have done under the policies of this President and this Republican leadership, and they termed that hour the truth hour as presented by the truth squad, to make sure the facts are presented to our colleagues and to the American people, the true facts.

What I would like to do in this short time that we have tonight, Mr. Speaker, is to talk about the true facts in regard to Iraq and the Iraqi people and why we need to continue to support them and not consider for a moment to bail out in these difficult times that they are continuing to go through.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just talk about some of the progress that we have made. I have got a couple of slides here that I would like to present.

First, just talking about the security in Iraq, Iraq's brutal former dictator, Saddam Hussein, as we all know, is behind bars and has been for the past couple of years. Just in the last couple of months, Mr. Speaker, the infamous, the notorious Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al Qaeda in Iraq, was eliminated by United States troops, with the help, I might add, Mr. Speaker, of the Iraqi people, from actionable intelligence that we obtained from them.

The Iraqi Security Forces now number over 260,000, and they are participating in more than 90 percent, 90 percent, of all security operations in their

Nation. The Iraqi citizens are coming forth, as I say, with tips about insurgents like al-Zarqawi and terrorist activities, more than 4,500 tips in March of this year alone.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, this infamous photograph of Zarqawi is recognized by every Member in this Chamber. And listen to his quote. "Americans are the most cowardly of God's creatures. They are an easy quarry. Praise be to God. We ask God to enable us to kill and capture them." This was a letter to al Qaeda in February of 2004. Thank our God that this infamous Zarqawi no longer exists and is no longer a threat to the Iraqi people and to our brave military that are fighting in Iraq.

Let me just speak a little bit about democracy, and, of course, the prime minister spoke to that so well today. Prime Minister Maliki serves as a democratically elected prime minister of Iraq. More than 70 percent of Iraq's citizens voted in a series of free and fair elections. The Iraqi citizens ratified a constitution and they elected the Iraqi National Unity Government. For the first time, women are part of the political process, holding 31 percent of the assembly seats. The number of judges has increased seven-fold.

Let's speak just a little bit about the society in Iraq. Mr. Speaker, this shows a picture, that famous picture of an Iraqi woman holding up that victory sign with that blue ink on her finger signifying that she has voted, having stood in line all day long. There were lots of terrorist attacks that day, yet the Iraqi people voted in a higher percentage than we Americans vote in a presidential election year.

Our troops are continuing to help the Iraqi people in building schools, sanitation projects and medical centers.

□ 2300

The Iraqi people can now watch commercial television and read independent newspapers, signs of a growing freedom of speech.

Primary school enrollment has increased by nearly 3 million children. Iraqi medical schools are graduating 2,250 doctors each year. Unemployment is down dramatically. In the past 3 years, Iraq's GDP per capita has more than doubled.

More than 40 countries and international groups have established embassies or missions in Iraq to assist the developing democracy. Listen, Mr. Speaker, to some of the excerpts of the prime ministers speech to Congress today on the floor of this House, as he thanked the American people.

"Iraq will not forget those who stood with her and who continue to stand with her in times of need. Thank you for your continued resolve in helping us fight the terrorists plaguing Iraq, which is a struggle to defend our nascent democracy, and our people who aspire to liberty, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. All of those are not just western values, they are universal values for humanity. They

are as much for me the pinnacle embodiment of my faith and religion and they are for all free spirits”.

I quote further. “Today Iraq is a democracy which stands firm because of the sacrifices of its people, and the sacrifices of all those who stood with us in this crisis. And that is why I thank you. I would like to thank them very much for all their sacrifices”.

Again, this is the prime minister speaking today from the floor of this House to the American people. He goes on. “The journey has been perilous and the future is not guaranteed. Yet many around the world who underestimated that resolve of Iraq’s people and were sure that we would never reach this stage. Few believed in us. But you the American people did and we are grateful for this”.

I want to just go on briefly before I call on one of my colleagues, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING), who has joined me and would also like to talk about the success that we have had in Iraq and why we need to continue to stay the course.

The prime minister further said, “I know some of you here question whether Iraq is part of the War on Terror. Let me be very clear. This is a battle between true Islam, for which a person’s liberty and rights constitute essential cornerstones, and terrorism, which wraps itself in a fake Islamic cloak, in reality wages a war on Islam and Muslims and values and spreads hatred between humanity”.

That quote from prime minister Maliki today. And that is exactly right. He continues by saying, “wherever human kind suffers a loss at the hands of terrorists is a loss for all humanity. It is your duty and our duty to defeat this terror. Iraq is the front line in this struggle, and history will prove that the sacrifices of Iraqis for freedom will not be in vain. Iraqis are your allies in the War on Terror”.

So, Mr. Speaker, let us put to rest this question of doubt, of the resolve of the Iraqi people and their commitment. Sure, we have made tremendous sacrifices in 2,600 of our soldiers who have been killed, and probably 12,000 to 14,000 that have been severely injured in trying to fight this Global War on Terror, and bring a form of democracy to these people who are striving so hard for the principles of freedom.

We have paid a sacrifice. But they have paid a tremendous sacrifice. And the estimate could be as many as 40,000 killed, if not more, many of them innocent Iraqi citizens, and many of them women and children.

Mr. Speaker, it is a very important time today on the heels of the prime minister’s visit and speech to the Congress today that we talk about this tonight. And, yes, once again the Truth Squad needs to speak loudly on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, with that I would like to call on my colleague from Iowa (Mr. KING) for his remarks.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. GINGREY for leading this spe-

cial order hour tonight and for stepping up front to stand up for freedom and liberty for the American people, for the Iraqi people, and one day, I hope and pray it is for all people on this planet.

If there was a theme that came out of prime ministers Al-Maliki’s speech today, it was that theme, that theme of freedom and liberty, and that theme that ties us all together when he told that freedom is not an American value, but it is a value that God gives to all humanity.

One of the statements that he made, I am not sure if you might have already made this statement, Mr. GINGREY, but I want to emphasize it. And this is one that gripped me when I heard it said this afternoon. Prime Minister Maliki: “The fate of our country and yours is tied. Should democracy be allowed to fail in Iraq and terror permitted to triumph, then the War on Terror will never be won elsewhere”.

Mr. Speaker, we must win this battle in this Global War on Terror, this battleground that is Iraq. There is no alternative but victory. In fact, we are moving down this path in a successful fashion. You just cannot simply every day take a measure of it. It is kind of like going on a diet in the morning and weighing yourself at noon and deciding you want to change your diet. We need to look at milestones.

There have been milestones after milestones that have flowed out of Iraq. And there been three elections with 70 percent of the people going to the polls, more people going to the polls in some of the elections, than came to the polls in a U.S. national election.

That ought to tell you where their commitment is. And the picture of the lady with the purple fingers and shining it in victory, that says what is going on there. It is a very, very proud thing that they stepped up to freedom.

When I asked them, the Iraqis, are you first an Iraqi, or are you first a Kurd or a Sunni or a Shia, invariably they will say, I am an Iraqi first. They want to have a unified nation, they want to have a free nation, they want to be a free people.

Part of the rest of the speech was, as Al-Maliki said, “this terrorist front is a threat to every free country in the world and their citizens. What is at stake is nothing less than our freedom and liberty. Confronting and dealing with this challenge is a responsibility of every liberal democracy that values its freedom. Iraqi is the battle that will determine the war. If in continued partnership we have the strength of mind and commitment to defeat the terrorists and their ideology in Iraq, they will never be able to recover”.

Which brings me to mind a meeting that I had in Iraq my last time there with General Casey and General Abizaid, when General Casey made the statement, “the enemy cannot win if the politicians stay in the fight”.

That means the people here in Washington, D.C., the politician all across America. That means the politicians in western Europe and all across the world. That means the politicians in Iraq as well. They have all got to stay in this fight.

When I look these soldiers in the eye that are over there in that 125 and 130 degree heat today, they will say to me, “I am proud to serve my country. I am proud to stand here, and I am willing to put my life on the line for a year or more if necessary. But why do I have to fight the United States news media too”?

Well, no soldier or marine should have to do that. In fact, that is our job. And we take that on and we put the facts out here on this floor. And we do so in press conferences. That is our way of fighting this war.

The object of war, according to Klauswitz is to destroy the enemy’s will and ability to conduct war. The object of war, according to Steve King is, war is over when the losing side realizes that they have lost.

And if voices come out of this Congress that seek to convince them otherwise, that works against the cause and does not support our troops. In the end, it costs American lives. And that has happened. And the cemeteries have brave Americans that would otherwise be living a normal life that have given their lives for freedom that would not have had to, if we stuck together as a people in this country.

But a core of us are together, a majority of us, a vast majority of us are together and we will stick this out. You know, I would rather be on this side as I listen to the pessimism that comes sometimes from the other side of the aisle, then I would be on the other side of this battle in Iraq. I would a lot rather be on the side of freedom, on the side of the Iraqi military and the coalition troops than I would be on the side of al-Qaeda and the terrorists in Iraq.

Just to state that, I believe it was a year ago, it must have been April of 2004 when Zarqawi wrote a letter, about a 17-page letter full of lamentations. And he said then this was not like Vietnam, that they did not have mountains or forests to hide in, the only place they could hide was in the homes of the Iraqi people that would be willing to take them in, and the Iraqis that were willing to hide al-Qaeda were, “as rare as red sulfur”.

I am just going to presume that red sulfur is quite rare, maybe like frogs or chickens teeth, but quite rare. I have never seen any red sulfur over there, and I have looked around quite a lot. I am sure he meant it was awfully hard to find a place to lay down and get some rest in a country like Iraq when the people do not want to take in al-Qaeda. That was a couple of years ago.

Now, Zarqawi has gone on to meet his eternal reward, justly so. And I have visions of what that might be like for him. But rather than paint those on

this floor and perhaps be gaveled down, Mr. Speaker, I point out what it looks today like for the survivors that are still on the side of al-Qaeda.

How bad must it be over there to try to find optimism when you are losing as badly as they are. Other folks would like to convince us that we are losing. In fact, there is nothing that supports that. How bad are they losing? Well, one of the latest blows to al-Qaeda in Iraq, this is an excerpt from a May 8, 2006 Associated Press, could not get more credible than the Associated Press article, about documents captured during mid-April's raid south of Baghdad.

The highlights of disorganization that already existed in Iraq, and the disorganization for al-Qaeda and the terrorists that continues to this day. It is this way. "Every year is worse than the previous year". That is a quote from captured documents of al-Qaeda and the terrorists. "Every year is worse than the previous year."

The strategy document complains that, "the strength of the brothers in Baghdad, is based mostly on car bombs and groups of assassins lacking any organized military capabilities".

We will go on with the AP article. The writer complains that the Americans and the Iraqi government forces were able to absorb our painful blows, raise new recruits and take control of Baghdad as well as other areas one another.

There is why every year is worse than the previous year, as far as the Mujahadin's control and influence over Baghdad, according to the document that was captured. That should give the American people a sense of what it is like on the other side, on the losing side.

And if we sang from the same hymnal, sang the same chorus, carried forth the same message, which is we are in this thing for victory, Iraq is a battleground in a Global War on Terror, we will stick this thing out, not only to put this issue away and behind us and make sure that there is a platform and a climate for freedom for the Iraqi people, but as far and as long as we have to go so that we can secure the safety and the security for the American people and for all freedom-loving people all around the globe.

Today we are watching about the 14th or probably the 15th day of the battleground in Israel, where they were attacked from both sides, from the south in Gaza and the north out of Lebanon. By Hamas in the south and Hezbollah in the north. At the directive and order, I believe, of the mullahs in Iran and Ahmadinejad.

Because they wanted to change the subject on the United Nations pressure on Iran for violating nuclear proliferation agreements, and UN Resolution 1559. So they started a war, and their number one enemy, the people that Ahmadinejad said should be wiped from the face of the earth. There is no question that that is their commitment, Mr. Speaker, to do that.

Iran has been fomenting violence in Iraq for years. And we have tolerated it far more than we should. And I do not know that we can resolve the issue in Iraq as long as Iran is sending munitions, supplies and money and providing training for terrorists to go into Iraq.

But it is happening. It has been going on for more than 2 years, perhaps more than 3 years. And there has been a big price paid for that. Syria also to a lesser extent.

□ 2315

But I don't know anybody that believes that if you could have taken Syria and Iran out of this equation with Iraq, if the border essentially had been sealed and they stayed out of that involvement, I don't know anybody that believes the issue wouldn't have been resolved in Iraq, that there wouldn't be peaceful passivity there and a solid, stable government and this economy that is now growing to the point where they have doubled their GDP since the time of liberation would have been even greater than it is today. The soil supplies would be greater. The electrical production would be greater.

But a lot of that progress with that was not yet made in Iraq, has been held back by the terrorists that are trained and funded and supported by Iran. And I remember what our President said: If you are terrorist, you are an enemy. If you support a terrorist, house a terrorist, fund a terrorist, train a terrorist, you are our enemy. It doesn't matter where you are or who you are.

Iran fits in that category. Syria fits in that category. Now the pressure is up, and the world's spotlight, the world stage is Iraq and Israel.

Now, imagine a free Iranian people, a free Iranian people that next month, just the fifth of next month, will be celebrating a constitution that was established, however briefly, 100 years ago that defends their freedom and their rights the same way that our rights and our freedom are defended by our Constitution. I will say close to that. They have something to celebrate.

And as that centennial roles around on August 5, next month, I am hopeful that will be an inspiration for the Iranian people that one day soon they can rise up and they can grab ahold of control of Iran and again be a free people inspired by that constitution from a century ago, inspired by a free Iraq and a prosperous Iraqi people and inspired by the potential for a world across the Middle East where all people breathe free.

If that happens, that has cured the type of habitat that breeds terror. Freedom doesn't breed terror. Free people never go to war against other free people. There is a bright future there in that part of the world. Freedom can echo across those Arab countries the same way it echoed across Eastern Europe when the wall went

down in 1989. That is my prayer and that is my hope, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the gentleman from Georgia yielding to me, and I appreciate his presentation.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I want to say the gentleman from Iowa in just a brief colloquy with him, and of course thanking him for being with us tonight, that I am sure that he would agree that our Commander-in-Chief needs to rely on the combatant commanders. Certain today of course is General Casey, before that General Sanchez, before that General Franks, to let him know in regard to how many troops need to be on the ground and where they need to be positioned and how long they need to stay.

I know that we have heard a lot from Members on the other side of the aisle particularly calling for a date certain for a troop withdrawal or reduction or redeployment 6,000 miles away, to Okinawa or whatever.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure my colleague from Iowa would agree that this is a call that we need to leave to the combatant commanders to make these decisions. I know that because of the insurgency, the up tick in the insurgency, as these Islamic extremists continue to struggle in their death throes post-Zarqawi, there is going to be some tough times; and this is certainly not the time to give them your playbook. Would you not agree with that?

Mr. KING of Iowa. I would absolutely agree.

I think pretty soon fall football practice will start, and I can't imagine a football coach inviting the other coach in to watch your fall drills, or "Here is my playbook. Here is how we run these plays and here is how I call them." You would never do it. You would never sit down to a poker game and play your hole cards face up.

When you are at war, intelligence is a big part of it. And to be able to tip your hand to say, no, we are going to pull out of here on such and such a date, the enemy could go underground, hole up. They could use that period of time to store more weapons, more armaments, do more training, just stay out of combat; and then, when that moment comes, come back out of their holes in the ground and turn around and attack Americans and Coalition troops and Iraqis.

This is such a solid concept that you are addressing here. It is such a solid concept that I am surprised that there is anyone on the other side of the aisle that promotes and supports such a thing.

About a week ago, former President Clinton also stood with you on this issue and with me on this issue on how ridiculous it would be to establish a date certain to pull out of Iraq.

You illustrated that first year, some months ago, the statement was made that we should pull troops back to the horizon. Now I envision that to be kind of back there where the sun sets on the hill or rises on the hill. Either way it

would be a horizon. And it does turn out that the horizon was Okinawa. I don't think anybody in the world imagined that the horizon really meant Okinawa.

Mr. GINGREY. I thank again the gentleman from Iowa.

My good friend, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODE), has joined us at this late hour. At this time, I would like to call on him for his remarks concerning the Iraqi situation.

Mr. GOODE. I thank the gentleman.

I would like to restate some of the comments that we heard earlier today from the new Prime Minister of Iraq and make some of the points he said about how Iraq of today is different than what the Iraq of a few years ago was.

He said, "We have gone from a small one-party state ruled by a dictator and a small elite to a multi-party system where politics is the domain of every citizen and parties compete at all levels. What used to be a state-controlled media is now completely free and uncensored; something Iraq had never witnessed since its establishment as a modern state, and something which remains alien to most of the region. What used to be a command economy in Iraq we are rapidly transforming into a free market economy. In the past 3 years, our gross domestic product per capita has more than doubled, and it is expected that our economy will continue to grow."

He went on to say, "While small sections of central Iraq are unstable, large sections have remained peaceful but ignored for far too long. They were the most deprived areas of Iraq under the previous regime and have been the most valiant in Iraq's struggle for freedom. We need to make an example out of these stable areas as models for the rest of the country.

"Reconstruction projects in these areas will tackle unemployment, which will weaken the terrorists. They will become prototypes for other, more volatile regions to aspire to. Undoubtedly, reconstruction in these areas will fuel economic growth and show what a prosperous, stable, democratic, and federal Iraq would look like."

Today, Saddam Hussein is in prison awaiting the end of his trial. Zarqawi, the leader of the al Qaeda in Iraq, was eliminated by United States troops. Iraqi security forces now number over 265,000 and are participating in more than 90 percent of all security operations in the country. Iraqi citizens are coming forth with tips about insurgents and terrorist activities. More than 70 percent of Iraqi citizens voted in a series of free and fair elections. Those figures are some that those of us in this country could be envious of.

The progress in Iraq has not been without cost. This past week, a citizen of the Fifth District of Virginia from Greene County, a little community of Ruckersville, was killed by an IED. He was Corporal Adam Fargo. He went to William Monroe High School. He vol-

unteered for service in the United States Army. He, like so many of us who have volunteered on behalf of our country, has made the positive statistics and the statements and the changes in Iraq possible. But it is not just for the country of Iraq, it is for the United States of America.

We have indeed been fortunate in this country. Over the last 200 some odd years since our Nation was founded, rarely have there been attacks upon our homeland. Most of the fighting in World War II was abroad. All of the fighting in World War I was abroad. In Korea, the fighting was abroad. In Vietnam, the fighting was in Asia. And now, when we are in the Middle East, back in the Gulf War of 1990, 1991, the fighting was there. We liberated Kuwait. And now today, following September 11 when we were hit on our own soil, in Afghanistan men and women in our Armed Forces are standing up for America, and some have given their lives, have given their all for our Nation.

Our Nation is a beacon on a hill. It is the land of the free and the home of the brave because of those persons like Adam Fargo who have stood by our country and made those of us who are in the United States of America far safer and given us the ability to enjoy democracy and the greatest freedom in the world.

We need to thank all of our troops, and particularly those for whom we can never express enough gratitude for they have given their lives so that all of us may be free and that our democracy can be a shining light for the rest of the world.

Mr. GINGREY. I thank the gentleman from Virginia. I don't think anyone could possibly say it any better.

We must not break faith with those who have died for this cause and those who have been severely injured and their families. We have an obligation to them and to the Iraqi people.

I know all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle were comforted to have the opportunity today to hear from the Iraqi Prime Minister and to have him answer some of these tough questions in regard to their commitment as well as our commitment. Because, as he said, we are a freedom-loving people throughout the world. They feel the same about liberty as we do, and their commitment to it is there, and it is strong, and their deep appreciation.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the leadership for giving this opportunity to spend about 30 minutes with our colleagues; and now we will turn it over to our friends on the other side of the aisle for their time.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for the re-

maining time until midnight as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to address the House tonight. The 30-Something Working Group is always prepared to come to the floor not only to share with the Members but the American people about some of the issues that we would love for the entire Congress to work on, Mr. Speaker, if we worked in a bipartisan way.

My friends on the other side of the aisle who just finished talking about Iraq, the beautiful thing about our democracy is that we have the opportunity to voice our opinion in the way we see it.

I think it is also important for us to realize what the reality is not only here in America but in Iraq and the Middle East and what is going on right here in the Midwest, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, or what is not going on as it relates to investing in the Midwest, making sure that we invest in America, using coal for energy, innovation, and also making sure that we can work with our farmers here in the United States so we don't have to depend on Middle East oil and we don't have to send our men and women into harm's way to make sure that we are able to put gas in our tanks here in the United States.

As you know, in our innovation agenda and also energizing America agenda, in our new direction for America, here in this side of the aisle we are for investing in the United States, we are for making sure that we can cut our dependency on Middle East oil so that we don't find ourselves in the middle of these conflicts that we are in right now.

As you know, we have been talking for several weeks about our new direction for America. I am glad Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ is here again tonight, as she always is, and it is great. It is like old times.

We have been working together for I know 12 years since I have been elected. You have been an elected official for 14 years. I met you when I came into the Florida House of Representatives. Mr. Speaker, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ was the chair of the Education Committee when I showed up in Florida legislature, and I know that she is going to have a bright future here in the House of Representatives.

But I can tell you what the good news is. It is that we have the will and the desire on this side of the aisle to stand up on behalf of the American people, making sure we raise the minimum wage for working families and those that go to work every day, punch in and punch out, know what it means to have a 15-minute break in the morning and a 15-minute break in the evening.

□ 2330

For those individuals that are working the midnight shift, we are with those families. We want to make sure