

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

(Mr. HINCHEY 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 Jersey (Mr. GARRETT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey 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 Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana 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 Arizona (Mr. FRANKS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

RESTORING FISCAL DISCIPLINE TO GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) is recognized for half the remaining minutes prior to midnight as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that we are going to get the rest of the minutes until midnight; that the other side did not plan to come, just a point of order, I guess, and you can tell us at the appropriate time when our time is up. We just want to thank you for the time that we have here this evening.

It is almost midnight at our Nation's Capitol in Washington, D.C., and yet, as members of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition, we are 37 members strong, and we are here on the floor of the United States House of Representatives because we believe the time has come to restore fiscal discipline and common sense to our Nation's government.

Today, the U.S. national debt is \$8,538,760,336,803.43, and for every man, woman, and child in America, your share of the national debt is \$28,564.23. As you walk the Halls of Congress, you will notice this poster outside the door of some Members of Congress, which signifies that they are members of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition, and each day this number, unfortunately, changes, and, unfortunately, each day this number goes up.

I am very pleased to be joined this evening by one of the founding members of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition, someone who has really been outspoken in the area of trying to restore fiscal discipline to our Nation's government and particularly been doing a lot of work in the area of accountability, being accountable for the taxpayers' dollars, and that is my friend Mr. JOHN TANNER from Tennessee. At this time I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. TANNER. I appreciate my colleague being here tonight, and I want to take a couple of minutes to talk about something that is not a political matter, really. It is a matter of our government: theirs, ours, Independents, Americans.

We have seen financial mismanagement of the assets of us all on a scale that really I don't remember in any history book of American history since this country was founded. Look, this is not something that is easy to talk about, because everyone who is in public office wants to give good news to people. We all have to run for elections, and one can't really run for an election talking about doom and gloom or about financial mismanagement. People want to hear uplifting things, people want to have hope, people want to get better. But, unfortunately, things are getting worse, and they are getting worse by the minute. That chart that you have has already changed. We are borrowing almost \$1 million a minute, as we stand here tonight.

You know, under our system of government, we have an executive branch, we have a judicial branch, and we have a legislative branch. The legislative branch is supposed to make the law, the executive branch is supposed to execute the law, or carry it out, and the judicial branch is to interpret the law. Well, we have a breakdown. The legislative branch in the last 5½ years has abdicated completely its responsibility to oversee the money that is taken away from the citizens of this country involuntarily in the form of taxation.

The tax laws are written right here, in this room and on the other side of the Capitol in the Senate, and they are appropriated to the executive branch to be spent, hopefully on behalf of the citizens of this country. What we have seen, according to the September 6 GAO report, that is, the General Accounting Office report, is a complete abdication of any financial responsibility.

As a businessperson, one looks at the government of the United States and one sees a failing business. Not only is it failing because we continue to borrow massive amounts of money in my name and yours and everybody else's around here as a citizen of this country, but Congress, this Congress is not even asking this administration what did you do with the money. And if they asked the administration, the administration couldn't tell them.

The one thing I think that the American people ought to demand out of this Congress, or any other Congress, is what happened to the money. Tell us what you did with the money. We may not agree with it, but we want to know what happened to it. Well, they can't tell us. Sixteen of 23 Federal agencies, according to the GAO, cannot produce an audit. In other words, they can't tell you what they did with the money.

Not only that, you have a trailer picture you have shown before with all these trailers in Hope, Arkansas. The September 6 GAO report reflects that Congress has appropriated \$38 billion to 23 different Federal agencies for Katrina relief, the great hurricane; but no central agency tracks the funding. So, in effect, neither Congress nor the American people have any way of knowing how the money is spent.

But we do know this: more than \$10.6 billion has been awarded to private contractors for gulf coast recovery and reconstruction. Only 30 percent of all of those contracts were bid on a full and open competition. The others were just given as sole source single contracts to people for a myriad of things. FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, spent \$3 million for 4,000 camp beds that were never used and \$10 million to renovate a military barracks that was used as temporary housing for six people. No private company in the country could stand this kind of financial mismanagement.

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Because of this subcontractor system that was put in place because of these sole source contracts, just given to friends I guess of the administration, taxpayers paid an average of \$2,480 per roof for a repair job that should have cost under \$300, according to a report from Knight-Ridder newspaper.

Credit card abuse. Credit card abuse by government employees after the storm led to the purchase of 2,000 sets of dog booties costing more than \$68,000, a 63-inch plasma screen television costing \$8,000, and 20 flat bottom boats, only eight of which FEMA has in its records, at twice the retail price. I wish I was making this stuff up. It comes out of the GAO report.

The Department of Homeland Security Inspector General identified 1,395 cases of reported criminal activity, including officials who accepted bribes to inflate the number of meals provided by one of these sole source government contractors and to falsify the amount of debris a company had removed.

After Katrina, FEMA purchased 24,967 manufactured homes and 1,755 modular homes at a cost of \$915 million for housing and temporary offices. The Inspector General said that as of January of this year, only 4,600 manufactured homes and 100 modular homes had been used at all. You have got pictures of them sinking in the mud in Hope, Arkansas.

Mr. ROSS. FEMA at one time had 10,777. At this time, they are down, to