

have squandered the Clinton administration's projected 10-year surplus of \$5.6 trillion and have put us into a projected deficit of \$3.5 trillion.

Last Tuesday, the American people told the Republicans that enough is enough and demanded a change in the way that Congress does business. They voted in a Democratic majority to return our country to a path of strong fiscal responsibility and back to the pay-as-you-go system.

Madam Speaker, the current Republican leadership has incurred more foreign debt in these 6 years than the previous 42 Presidents combined incurred. When we assume the majority in January, Democrats are committed to fiscal responsibility, and we will reinstate pay-as-you-go, working effectively as we did in the 1990s when President Clinton and the Congress balanced the budget.

MAKING IT FIRM THAT IT IS ILLEGAL TO BE IN AMERICA WITHOUT PERMISSION

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, according to the Dallas Morning News, "Farmers Branch, Texas, on Monday adopted strict measures against illegals, requiring apartment renters to provide proof of citizenship or residency and making English the city's official language."

"The city also unanimously agreed to let police apply to participate in a Federal program that would enable them to check the residency status of suspects that they arrest and initiate deportation proceedings in certain cases. These measures, believed to be the first of their kind in the State of Texas, brought cheers from some supporters, but sparked anger among some Hispanics."

Madam Speaker, cities across the Nation are taking positive action in dealing with illegals. These are common-sense steps the Federal Government has refused to take for political reasons.

Of course, the pro-illegal immigrant crowd has threatened lawsuits. It seems odd that illegals can use American courts to prevent cities from enforcing laws against illegal entry.

The example of Farmers Branch, Texas, is a statement that cities cannot and will not continue to bear the costs in education, health care and social services of illegals. This Nation must be firm that it is illegal to be in America without permission.

And that's just the way it is.

PROVIDING PROPER OVERSIGHT OF THE ADMINISTRATION

(Ms. WATSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WATSON. Madam Speaker, since the beginning of the war in Iraq, con-

gressional Republicans have refused to provide any oversight of the Bush administration in its handling of the war.

When no weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq, House Republicans refused to investigate how the intelligence could have been so bad.

When the administration sent our troops into combat without the proper body armor, House Republicans refused to hold anyone in the administration accountable.

When milestone after milestone passed without things getting better in Iraq, congressional Republicans refused to hold oversight hearings and allowed the Bush administration to continue with the status quo when a change was clearly needed.

Today, our Nation desperately needs for Congress to do its job and provide real oversight of the administration. When Democrats take control of Congress in January, we vow to provide proper oversight of the actions of this administration. It is something that is required of us all by the U.S. Constitution.

DEMOCRATS WANT TO HELP LOWER PRESCRIPTION DRUGS PRICES FOR AMERICA'S SENIORS

(Mr. FILNER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, millions of American seniors are trying to make the best of the Medicare prescription drug plan that congressional Republicans and President Bush signed into law 3 years ago.

Today, seniors are demanding changes in this program. They want a plan that does not create a giant gap in coverage, where they can lose coverage for months on end and where they still must pay their monthly payments.

The giant doughnut hole, as we call it, leaves many seniors in the predicament of paying for groceries, paying their rent or the drugs they need to live healthier and longer lives. They may cut their pills into two or take them every second or third day. That is a recipe for disaster, and this is not a decision that seniors should have to make in America today.

Democrats have long opposed this doughnut hole, and one of our top priorities next year is to eliminate it by making prescription drugs cheaper. How are we going to do this? It is simple. We are going to do the same thing the Veterans Administration does today, and that is, give the Secretary of Health and Human Services the ability to negotiate on behalf of all seniors for lower drug prices.

Today, American veterans pay 42 percent less for their drugs because of this negotiating authority. If we make prescription drugs cheaper, we can fill in the doughnut hole so seniors no longer fall into it. This is one of our top priorities as we become the majority party in Congress next year.

DEMOCRATS WANT TO WORK WITH REPUBLICANS TO HELP MIDDLE CLASS AMERICANS

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, now that the elections are over, it is time for Democrats and Republicans to come together to work in a bipartisan fashion to help all Americans.

Throughout this year, Democrats have talked about a forward-looking agenda, one that encompasses all Americans. We want to expand economic opportunity to millions of Americans who have been left behind by increasing the minimum wage for the first time in 9 years. We want to expand educational opportunities to teens who want to attend college, by cutting interest rates on student loans so that they can better afford college. We also want to help seniors better afford their prescription drugs by cutting drug prices and filling the doughnut hole.

Democrats touted these plans, but that doesn't mean Republicans can't join us in implementing them when the new Congress convenes in January. Raising the minimum wage, helping college students better afford their education and helping seniors pay for their prescription drugs is something we all, Democrats and Republicans alike, should be interested in. We will have the opportunity to follow through on this agenda in January.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment bills of the House of the following titles:

H.R. 860. An act to provide for the conveyance of the reversionary interest of the United States in certain lands to the Clint Independent School District, El Paso County, Texas.

H.R. 5842. An act to compromise and settle all claims in the case of Pueblo of Isleta v. United States, to restore, improve, and develop the valuable on-reservation land and natural resources of the Pueblo, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed bills of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 3501. An act to amend the Shivwits Band of the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah Water Rights Settlement Act to establish an acquisition fund for the water rights and habitat acquisition program.

S. 3687. An act to waive application of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act to a specific parcel of real property transferred by the United States to 2 Indian tribes in the State of Oregon, and for other purposes.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair

will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later today.

AMENDING TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE, TO EXTEND CERTAIN EXPIRING PROVISIONS OF LAW

Mr. BUYER. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6314) to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend certain expiring provisions of law and to expand eligibility for the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance program.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 6314

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF CERTAIN EXPIRING PROVISIONS OF LAW ADMINISTERED BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) **AUTHORITY FOR HEALTH CARE FOR PARTICIPATION IN DOD CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WARFARE TESTING.**—Section 1710(e)(3)(D) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking “December 31, 2005” and inserting “December 31, 2007”.

(b) **GRANT AND PER DIEM GRANT ASSISTANCE FOR HOMELESS VETERANS.**—Section 2011(a)(2) of such title is amended by striking “September 30, 2005” and inserting “September 30, 2007”.

(c) **TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION FOR SERIOUSLY MENTALLY ILL AND HOMELESS VETERANS.**—Section 2031(b) of such title is amended by striking “December 31, 2006” and inserting “December 31, 2007”.

(d) **ADDITIONAL SERVICES FOR HOMELESS AND SERIOUSLY MENTALLY ILL VETERANS.**—Section 2033(d) of such title is amended by striking “December 31, 2006” and inserting “December 31, 2007”.

(e) **ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON HOMELESS VETERANS.**—Section 2066(d) of such title is amended by striking “December 31, 2006” and inserting “December 31, 2007”.

(f) **GOVERNMENT MARKERS IN PRIVATE CEMETERIES.**—Section 2306(d)(3) of such title is amended by striking “December 31, 2006” and inserting “December 31, 2007”.

(g) **ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE ALLOWANCE FOR WORK-STUDY.**—Section 3485(a)(4) of such title is amended in subparagraphs (A), (C), and (F) by striking “December 27, 2006” and inserting “June 30, 2007”.

SEC. 2. EXPANSION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR SURVIVORS' AND DEPENDENTS' EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

(a) **EXPANSION OF ELIGIBILITY.**—Section 3501(a)(1) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking the period at the end of subparagraph (A) and inserting a semicolon;

(2) by striking the comma at the end of subparagraph (B) and inserting a semicolon;

(3) by striking “, or” at the end of subparagraph (C) and inserting a semicolon;

(4) by striking the comma at the end of subparagraph (D) and inserting “; or”;

(5) by inserting after subparagraph (D) the following new subparagraph:

“(E) the spouse or child of a person who at the time of application by such spouse or child for educational assistance under this chapter is a member of the Armed Forces

who, as determined by the Secretary, has a total disability permanent in nature incurred or aggravated in the active military, naval, or air service;”.

(b) **CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.**—Such title is further amended—

(1) in section 3511—

(A) in subsection (a)(1)—

(i) by striking “Each eligible person” and inserting the following: “Each eligible person, whether made eligible by one or more of the provisions of section 3501(a)(1) of this title.”;

(ii) by striking “a period” and inserting “an aggregate period”; and

(iii) by striking the second sentence;

(B) in subsection (b)(3), by striking “section 3501(a)(1)(D)” and inserting “subparagraph (D) or (E) of section 3501(a)(1)”;

(C) in subsection (c), by striking “or 3501(a)(1)(D)(i)” and inserting “3501(a)(1)(D)(i), or 3501(a)(1)(E)”;

(2) in section 3512—

(A) in subsection (a), by striking “an eligible person (within the meaning of section 3501(a)(1)(A) of this title)” and inserting “an eligible person whose eligibility is based on the death or disability of a parent”;

(B) in subsection (b)—

(i) in paragraph (1)(A)—

(I) by inserting after “section 3501(a)(1) of this title” the following: “or a person made eligible by the disability of a spouse under section 3501(a)(1)(E) of this title”;

(II) by striking “or 3501(a)(1)(D)(ii) of this title” and inserting “3501(a)(1)(D)(ii), or 3501(a)(1)(E) of this title”;

(ii) in paragraph (1)(B), by adding at the end the following new clause:

“(iii) The date on which the Secretary notifies the member of the Armed Forces from whom eligibility is derived that the member has a total disability permanent in nature incurred or aggravated in the active military, naval, or air service.”; and

(iii) in paragraph (2), by striking “or (D) of this title” and inserting “(D), or (E) of this title”;

(3) in section 3540, by striking “and (D)” and inserting “(D), and (E)”;

(4) in section 3563, by striking “each eligible person defined in section 3501(a)(1)(A) of this title” and inserting the following: “each eligible person whose eligibility is based on the death or disability of a parent”;

(5) in section 3686(a)(1), by striking “or (D)” and inserting “(D), or (E)”;

(6) in section 5113(b)(3)(B), by striking “or (D)” and inserting “(D), or (E)”.

(c) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to a payment of educational assistance for a course of education pursued after the date of the enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER) and the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Indiana.

Mr. BUYER. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, today I rise and urge my colleagues to pass H.R. 6314, a bill that would extend several existing Department of Veterans Affairs benefits provisions.

This bill will extend these provisions of health care services to veterans exposed by chemical and biological testing under Projects 112 and SHAD, and treatment and rehabilitation programs for seriously mentally ill and homeless veterans until December 31, 2007. The

bill would also extend VA's homeless grant and per diem programs until September 30, 2007, and extend additional services for mentally ill and homeless veterans until December 31, 2007. It would extend VA's Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans, as well as the program which is providing government markers in private cemeteries until that date.

The work/study provisions of the legislation allowing veterans to assist VA and other government agencies would be extended until June 30, 2007. The work/study program is an increasingly popular benefit that provides veterans with an alternative use of their GI Bill if they choose not to go to college.

The bill also provides education benefits for the family members of severely injured veterans who are undergoing long-term convalescence while on active duty. Spouses and children of servicemembers who are determined by the VA to be permanently and totally disabled due to a service-connected cause or causes would be eligible to receive Chapter 35 education benefits while the servicemember is still on active duty while undergoing treatment. This Chapter 35 provision would enable spouses and dependent children of severely wounded servicemembers to access their Dependents' Educational Assistance benefits while the servicemember is going through extended convalescence prior to discharge.

Under the current law, these beneficiaries must wait until the member is discharged, and since the spouses of these members most often become the primary breadwinner, I believe it is important to give them as much of a headstart as possible on becoming more competitive in the job market. The amount of the benefit remains the same.

I thank the Blinded Veterans Association for bringing this important issue to the attention of myself and members of the committee. We met with Army Sergeant 1st Class Jeffrey Mittman and his wife Christine. Sergeant 1st Class Mittman was blinded by an IED and is undergoing extensive rehabilitation and facial reconstruction.

Madam Speaker, this young soldier is articulate, has a very positive outlook on his life and is truly an inspiration. One look at his wife and you can immediately pick up the burdens she is bearing in caring not only for her husband, but also for her children. His wife Christy is a model of the love and support that she is providing to her husband as they face these challenges together. In fact, I think of this as the Christine Mittman provision, a provision not only that would help Christy, but also other spouses lessen the financial stress.

So, in essence, while Christy is providing leadership and mentoring for her children, caring for her husband instead of waiting until he completes all of the facial reconstruction and rehabilitation necessary, she can start her educational opportunities now.